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The benefits of the RRTC Program have been well established over the years in that similar projects have been completed successfully. These final priorities will generate new knowledge through research, dissemination, utilization, training, and technical assistance projects.

The benefit of these final priorities and project requirements will be the establishment of new RRTCs that generate, disseminate, and promote the use of new information to improve options and participation in the community for individuals with disabilities.

Applicable Program Regulations: 34 CFR part 350.

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(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 84.133B, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center Program)

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 762(g) and 764(b)(2).

Dated: June 7, 2004.

Troy R. Justesen,

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Appendix—Analysis of Comments and Changes

We discuss substantive issues under the title of the priority to which they pertain. Generally, we do not address technical and other minor changes and suggested changes we are not authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority.

General

Comment: One commenter praised NIDRR for requiring that RRTCs articulate goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for the proposed research activities, but expressed concern about the lack of review criteria by which such activities can be reviewed objectively. The commenter suggested that

the criteria be added or that these outcomes be treated as a competitive preference priority.

Discussion: The Department's regulations in CFR 350.54 contain objective criteria by which applicants' articulation of goals, objectives, and expected outcomes are reviewed through our peer review process.

Changes: None.

Measuring Rehabilitation Outcomes and Effectiveness

Comment: One commenter suggested that requiring applicants to address all four outcomes specified for this priority will result in pedestrian projects and suggested that applicants be allowed to choose a subset, perhaps no more than two of these outcomes, on which to concentrate.

Discussion: NIDRR thinks that the first three outcomes listed under the priority are interrelated and that it would diminish the usefulness of the proposed center to allow applicants to disaggregate the topics. The fourth outcome addresses the utilization of outcomes data. NIDRR is committed to ensuring utilization of research findings as documented in its Long Range Plan. Outcomes data can influence service delivery decisions, service quality, and payment. For this reason, NIDRR wants to conduct research that facilitates use of outcomes findings by key stakeholders.

Changes: None.

Health and Wellness in Long-Term Disability

Comment: One commenter asked whether NIDRR considers mental health disorders as long-term primary disabling conditions.

Discussion: NIDRR does consider mental health disorders as long-term primary disabling conditions.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter requested that NIDRR define long-term disabilities for the purpose of a competition under this program.

Discussion: Long-term disability has established definitions in a number of different contexts. Applicants are free to choose a definition, provided they give justification for the definition used. Applicants may specify uses of the term and applicable reference for the purposes of their proposal. The peer review process will evaluate merits of the proposals.

Changes: None.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Interventions

Comment: One commenter requested that the TBI interventions priority encourage the use of the ICF to assess functional outcomes in treatment of TBI.

Discussion: NIDRR agrees that the ICF is an important framework for use in assessing functional outcomes in treatment of TBI; however, NIDRR has no basis for requiring that all applicants use this framework. Nothing in the priority precludes an applicant from suggesting such an approach. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the applicant's proposal.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the TBI intervention priority should require applicants to identify or evaluate methodological issues that affect the ability to conduct research and to demonstrate the

efficacy or effectiveness, or both, of this research.

Discussion: NIDRR agrees that better understanding of methodological issues that affect the ability to conduct research is important; however, NIDRR has no basis for requiring that all applicants address this issue. Nothing in the priority precludes an applicant from incorporating such study in the proposed research approach. The peer review process will evaluate the merits of the applicant's proposal.

Changes: None.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)—Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (RRTC) Program—Health and Function Outcomes for Individuals With Disabilities; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 84.133B-7.

DATES: Applications Available: June 10, 2004.

Deadline for Notice of Intent to Apply: July 9, 2004.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: August 3, 2004.

Eligible Applicants: States; public or private agencies, including for-profit agencies; public or private organizations, including for-profit organizations; institutions of higher education; and Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

Estimated Available Funds: \$2,100,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$675,000-\$700,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$700,000.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding \$700,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Note: The maximum amount includes direct and indirect costs. The maximum allowable indirect cost rate is 15%.

Estimated Number of Awards: 3.

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

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of the RRTC program is to improve the effectiveness of services authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act).

For FY 2004, the competition for new awards focuses on projects designed to meet the priorities we describe in the Priorities section of this notice. We intend these priorities to improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Priorities: These priorities are from the notice of final priorities for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Absolute Priorities: For FY 2004 these priorities are absolute priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) we consider only applications that meet one or more of these priorities.

These priorities are:

Priority 1—Measuring Rehabilitation Outcomes and Effectiveness; Priority 2—Health and Wellness in Long-Term Disability; and Priority 3—Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Interventions.

General requirements for all RRTCs funded under one of these priorities and specific requirements for each priority are in the notice of final priorities for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Applicants must select and focus research on one of these priorities. Applicants are allowed to submit more than one application as long as each application addresses only one priority.

Program Authority: 29 U.S.C. 762(g) and 764(b)(2).

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, and 97, (b) the regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 350, and (c) the notice of final priorities for this program, published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

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

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants.

Estimated Available Funds: \$2,100,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$675,000–\$700,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$700,000.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding \$700,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant

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

Note: The maximum amount includes direct and indirect costs. The maximum allowable indirect cost rate is 15%.

Estimated Number of Awards: 3.

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

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

III. Eligibility Information

1. **Eligible Applicants:** States; public or private agencies, including for-profit agencies; public or private organizations, including for-profit organizations; institutions of higher education; and Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

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

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. **Address to Request Application Package:** You may obtain an application package via Internet or from the ED Publications Center (ED Pubs). To obtain a copy via Internet use the following address: <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/index.html>.

To obtain a copy from ED Pubs, write or call the following: 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: 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 84.133B–7.

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 program contact person listed under 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.

Notice of Intent to Apply: Due to the open nature of the RRTC competition, and to assist with the selection of reviewers for this competition, NIDRR is requiring all potential applicants to

submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). While the submission is mandatory, the content of the LOI will not be peer reviewed or otherwise used to rate an applicant's application. We will notify only those potential applicants who have failed to submit an LOI that meets the requirements listed below.

Each LOI should be limited to a maximum of four pages and include the following information: (1) The title of the proposed project, which absolute priority will be addressed, the name of the institution, the name of the Project Director or Principal Investigator (PI), and the names of partner institutions and entities; (2) a brief statement of the vision, goals, and objectives of the proposed project and a description of its activities at a sufficient level of detail to allow NIDRR to select potential peer reviewers; (3) a list of proposed project staff including the Project Director or PI and key personnel; (4) a list of individuals whose selection as a peer reviewer might constitute a conflict of interest due to involvement in proposal development, selection as an advisory board member, co-PI relationships, etc.; and (5) contact information for the Project Director or PI. Submission of a LOI is a prerequisite for eligibility to submit an application.

NIDRR will accept a LOI via surface mail, e-mail, or facsimile by July 9, 2004.

The LOI must be sent to: Surface mail: Ruth Brannon, U.S. Department of Education, 550 12th Street, SW., room 6054, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202; or fax (202) 205–8515; or e-mail: ruth.brannon@ed.gov.

If a LOI is submitted via e-mail or facsimile, the applicant must also provide NIDRR with the original signed LOI within seven days after the date the e-mail or facsimile is submitted.

For further information regarding the LOI requirement contact Ruth Brannon at (202) 245–7274.

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. We recommend that you limit Part III to the equivalent of no more than 125 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; or the one-page abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, or the letters of support. However, you must include all of the application narrative in Part III.

The application package will provide instructions for completing all components to be included in the application. Each application must include a cover sheet (ED Standard Form 424); budget requirements (ED Form 524) and narrative justification; other required forms; an abstract; a Human Subjects narrative; a Part III narrative; resumes of staff; and other related materials, if applicable.

3. *Submission Dates and Times:*

Applications Available: June 10, 2004.

Deadline for Notice of Intent to Apply: July 9, 2004.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: August 3, 2004.

The dates and times for the transmittal of applications by mail or by hand (including a courier service or commercial carrier) are in the application package for this competition. The application package also specifies the hours of operation of the e-Application Web site.

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

4. *Intergovernmental Review:* This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79.

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

6. *Other Submission Requirements:* Instructions and requirements for the transmittal of applications by mail or by hand (including a courier service or commercial carrier) are in the application package for this competition.

Application Procedures:

Note: Some of the procedures in these instructions for transmitting applications differ from those in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (34 CFR 75.102). Under the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553) the Department generally offers interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed regulations. However, these amendments make procedural changes only and do not establish new substantive policy. Therefore, under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(A), the Secretary has determined that proposed rulemaking is not required.

Pilot Project for Electronic Submission of Applications: We are continuing to expand our pilot project for electronic submission of applications to include additional formula grant programs and additional discretionary grant competitions. The Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Program—Health and Function Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities competition—CFDA Number 84.133B-7 is one of the programs included in the pilot project. If you are an applicant under the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Program—Health and Function Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities competition, you may submit your application to us in either electronic or paper format.

The pilot project involves the use of the Electronic Grant Application System (e-Application). If you use e-Application, you will be entering data online while completing your application. You may not e-mail an electronic copy of a grant application to us. If you participate in this voluntary pilot project by submitting an application electronically, the data you enter online will be saved into a database. We request your participation in e-Application. We shall continue to evaluate its success and solicit suggestions for its improvement.

If you participate in e-Application, please note the following:

- Your participation is voluntary.
- When you enter the e-Application system, you will find information about its hours of operation. We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to initiate an e-Application package.

- You will not receive additional point value because you submit a grant application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you submit an application in paper format.

You may submit all documents electronically, including the Application for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424), Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications.

- Your e-Application must comply with any page limit requirements described in this notice.

- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement, which will include a PR/Award number (an identifying number unique to your application).

- Within three working days after submitting your electronic application, fax a signed copy of the Application for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424)

to the Application Control Center after following these steps:

1. Print ED 424 from e-Application.
2. The institution's Authorizing Representative must sign this form.
3. Place the PR/Award number in the upper right hand corner of the hard copy signature page of the ED 424.
4. Fax the signed ED 424 to the Application Control Center at (202) 245-6272.

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

Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of System Unavailability: If you elect to participate in the e-Application pilot for the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Program—Health and Function Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities competition and you are prevented from submitting your application on the application deadline date because the e-Application system is unavailable, we will grant you an extension of one business day in order to transmit your application electronically, by mail, or by hand delivery. We will grant this extension if—

1. You are a registered user of e-Application, and you have initiated an e-Application for this competition; and

2. (a) The e-Application system is unavailable for 60 minutes or more between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Washington, DC, time, on the application deadline date; or

- (b) The e-Application system is unavailable for any period of time during the last hour of operation (that is, for any period of time between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC, time) on the application deadline date.

We must acknowledge and confirm these periods of unavailability before granting you an extension. To request this extension or to confirm our acknowledgement of any system unavailability, you may contact either (1) the person listed elsewhere in this notice under For Further Information Contact (see VII. Agency Contact) or (2) the e-GRANTS help desk at 1-888-336-8930.

You may access the electronic grant application for the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers Program—Health and Function Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities competition at: <http://e-grants.ed.gov>.

V. Application Review Information

Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this competition are in 34 CFR 75.210 of EDGAR and 34 CFR 350.54. The specific selection criteria to

be used for this competition are 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.

Note: NIDRR will provide information by letter to grantees on how and when to submit the report.

4. *Performance Measures:* To evaluate the overall success of its research program, NIDRR assesses the quality of its funded projects through review of grantee performance and products. Each year, NIDRR examines, through expert peer review, a portion of its grantees to determine:

- The degree to which the grantees are conducting high-quality research, as reflected in the appropriateness of study designs, the rigor with which accepted standards of scientific and engineering methods or both are applied, and the degree to which the research builds on and contributes to the level of knowledge in the field;

- The number of new or improved tools, instruments, protocols, and

technologies developed and published by grantees that are deemed to improve the measurement of disability and rehabilitation-related concepts and to contribute to changes and improvements in policy, practice, and outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their families;

- The percentage of grantees deemed to be implementing a systematic outcomes-oriented dissemination plan, with measurable performance goals and targets, that clearly identifies the types of products and services to be produced and the target audiences to be reached, and describes how dissemination products and strategies will be used to meet the needs of end-users, including individuals with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds, and promotes the awareness and use of information and findings or both from NIDRR-funded projects;

- The percentage of consumer-oriented dissemination products and services (based on a subset of products and services nominated by grantees to be their "best" outputs) that are deemed to be of high-quality and contributing to advances in knowledge and to changes and improvements or both in policy, practices, services, and supports by individuals with disabilities and other end-users, including practitioners, service providers, and policy makers; and

- The percentage of new studies funded each year that assess the effectiveness of interventions or demonstration programs using rigorous and appropriate methods.

NIDRR uses information submitted by grantees as part of their Annual Performance Reports (APRs) for these reviews. NIDRR also determines, using information submitted as part of the APR, the number of publications in refereed journals that are based on NIDRR-funded research and development activities.

Department of Education program performance reports, which include information on NIDRR programs, are available on the Department's Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/planning.html>.

Updates on the GPRA indicators, revisions and methods appear in the

NIDRR Program Review Web site: <http://www.cessi.net/pr/grc/index.htm>.

Grantees should consult these sites, on a regular basis, to obtain details and explanations on how NIDRR programs contribute to the advancement of the Department's long-term and annual performance goals.

VII. Agency Contact

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 550 12th Street, SW., room 6046, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202. Telephone: (202) 245-7462 or via Internet: donna.nangle@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the TDD number at (202) 245-7317 or the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) 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 to the program contact person listed in this section.

VIII. Other Information

Electronic Access to This Document:

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Dated: June 7, 2004.

Troy R. Justesen,

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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