Dated: April 13, 2017.

Ruth E. Ryder,

Deputy Director, Office of Special Education Programs, delegated the duties of the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Technical Assistance and Dissemination To Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities—Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education is issuing a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2017 for Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities—Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 84.326P.

DATES: *Applications Available:* April 19, 2017.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: June 5, 2017.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: August 2, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Julia Martin Eile, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Room 5175, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202–5108. Telephone: (202) 245–7431.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1–800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of the Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program is to promote academic achievement and to improve results for children with disabilities by providing technical assistance (TA), supporting model demonstration projects, disseminating useful information, and implementing activities that are supported by scientifically based research.

Priority: In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(v), this priority is from allowable activities specified in the statute (see sections 663 and 681(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. 1463 and 1481)(d)).

Absolute Priority: For FY 2017 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, this priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet this priority.

This priority is:

Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center.

Background:

To improve outcomes for, and protect the rights of, infants, toddlers, and preschool children (young children) with disabilities and their families, States must have effective systems [1] for implementing IDEA and providing high-quality services under Part C and Part B, section 619. Effective systems must include implementation supports [2] that enable local programs and practitioners to implement, with fidelity, services and interventions [3] supported by evidence (as defined in this notice). The majority of States, however, have identified areas for improvement within their systems (Lucas et al., 2015), and local programs often lack necessary implementation supports.

States can use the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP),[4] a comprehensive, multiyear plan that is focused on improving a State-identified measureable result (SIMR), to plan how to enhance their systems to better implement IDEA and interventions based on evidence. States reported in their SSIPs multiple challenges that affect States' abilities to successfully implement their SSIPs, including the high turnover of State administrators and limited collaboration across those agencies that are part of delivering high-quality inclusive programs.[5]

In order to increase high-quality inclusive opportunities for children with disabilities, State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators must be active collaborators with other early childhood systems (*e.g.,* home visiting programs, Head Start programs, child care programs, public preschool programs) and engage in broader early childhood initiatives within the State. Further, IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators report that they are often not included as partners on State and local leadership teams that are developed to address broader early childhood initiatives, but that collaboration with their IDEA counterparts is necessary for developing and increasing access and meaningful participation in inclusive settings for young children with disabilities.

This priority will fund a cooperative agreement to establish and operate a national Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center (Center). The Center will provide TA to States to enable them to maintain high-quality systems with implementation supports to implement IDEA consistent with its requirements and to provide high-quality IDEA services for young children with disabilities and their families. The Center will work with IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators to increase their competencies to lead systemic improvements and work collaboratively with other early childhood systems to increase access to, and participation in, high-quality inclusive programs for young children with disabilities.

Priority:

The purpose of this priority is to fund a cooperative agreement to establish and operate an Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center to achieve, at a minimum, the following:

[1] For the purpose of this priority, ''systems'' include: governance; finance; personnel and workforce; data; accountability and quality improvement; and quality standards (The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2015).

[2] For the purpose of this priority, ''implementation supports'' include: professional development and training; ongoing consultation and coaching; performance assessments; data systems to support decision making; administrative supports; and systems interventions to align policies and funding mechanisms across multiple levels of a system (Fixsen, Blasé, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009).

[3] For the purpose of this priority, ''interventions'' include the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) recommended practices. The DEC recommended practices bridge the gap between research and practice, providing guidance to families of young children with disabilities and practitioners who work with them. The practices have been shown to result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who serve them (Division for Early Childhood, 2014).

[4] Each State was required to submit an SSIP as part of its State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report beginning in Federal Fiscal Year 2013. Each State identified a SIMR under Parts C and B of IDEA.

[5] IDEA Part C requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, factoring in each child's routines, needs, and outcomes, early intervention services be made available to all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities in ''natural environments,'' including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. IDEA Part B, section 619 requires that to the maximum extent appropriate, all children with disabilities, including preschool children with disabilities, must be educated in the least restrictive environment, and removal from the regular education environment occurs only if the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

(a) Increased capacity of State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to improve and sustain State systems (including governance, finance, personnel and workforce, data, accountability and quality improvement, and quality standards) to effectively implement IDEA regulations and deliver high-quality IDEA services to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

(b) Increased capacity of State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to include implementation supports within their State systems to support local programs in delivering effective services and interventions for young children with disabilities and their families.

(c) Increased capacity of State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to implement their SSIPs and make progress towards meeting their SIMRs to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

(d) Improved State and local systems to increase access to, and participation in, high-quality, inclusive programs for young children with disabilities.

(e) Increased knowledge, skills, and competencies of IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators to lead systemic improvement efforts, actively engage in broader early childhood initiatives, use TA effectively, and build more effective and sustainable State systems that provide high-quality services and inclusive learning opportunities that improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

In addition to these programmatic requirements, to be considered for funding under this priority, applicants must meet the application and administrative requirements in this priority. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) encourages innovative approaches to meet these requirements, which are:

(a) Demonstrate, in the narrative section of the application under ''Significance of the Project,'' how the proposed project will—

(1) Address the current and emerging needs of States under IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to implement and sustain high-quality, effective, and efficient systems that have the implementation supports in place to support local programs in delivering effective services and the DEC Recommended Practices within inclusive programs to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families. To meet this requirement the applicant must—

(i) Present applicable national and State data demonstrating the needs of States to improve their systems to implement IDEA, deliver high-quality IDEA services for young children with disabilities and their families, implement DEC Recommended Practices, and increase opportunities to participate in inclusive programs;

(ii) Demonstrate knowledge of current issues and ongoing challenges to implementing IDEA in a manner consistent with its statutory and regulatory provisions, implementing the SSIP to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families, increasing the capacity of Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators to effectively lead systemic improvement, and supporting collaborative relationships between early childhood and IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs;

(iii) Demonstrate knowledge of broader early childhood initiatives and how IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs and children with disabilities could be included within the initiatives; and

(iv) Present information about the current capacity of IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs and coordinators to support systemic change and implement the recommendations in the Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, 2015).

(2) Improve IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 systems to ensure implementation of IDEA, and build capacity to support local programs to implement, scale up, and sustain high-quality services and inclusive programs, and indicate the likely magnitude or importance of the improvements.

(b) Demonstrate, in the narrative section of the application under ''Quality of the Project Services,'' how the proposed project will—

(1) Ensure equal access and treatment to members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. To meet this requirement, the applicant must describe how it will—

(i) Identify the needs of the intended recipients for TA and information; and

(ii) Ensure that TA services and products meet the needs of the intended recipients;

(2) Achieve its goals, objectives, and intended outcomes. To meet this requirement, the applicant must provide—

(i) Measurable intended project outcomes; and

(ii) The logic model by which the proposed project will achieve its intended outcomes. A logic model used in connection with this priority communicates how a project will achieve its intended outcomes and provides a framework for both the formative and summative evaluations of the project;

(3) Use a conceptual framework to develop project plans and activities, describing any underlying concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, or theories, as well as the presumed relationships or linkages among these variables, and any empirical support for this framework;

Note: Rather than use the definition of ''logic model'' in 34 CFR 77.1(c), OSEP uses the definition in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of these application requirements. This definition, unlike the definition in 34 CFR 77.1(c), differentiates between logic models and conceptual frameworks. The following Web sites provide more information on logic models: *www.osepideasthatwork.org/logicModel* and *www.osepideasthatwork.org/resources-grantees/program-areas/ta-ta/tad-project-logic-model-and-conceptual-framework*.

(4) Be based on current research and make use of practices supported by evidence. To meet this requirement, the applicant must describe—

(i) The current research on the effectiveness of systems change, capacity building, and inclusive practices that will inform the TA and related research-based improvement strategies;

(ii) The current research about adult learning principles and implementation science or improvement science that will inform the proposed products; and

(iii) How the proposed project will incorporate current research and practices supported by evidence in the development and delivery of its TA products and services;

(5) Develop products and provide services that are of high quality and sufficient intensity and duration to achieve the intended outcomes of the proposed project. To address this requirement, the applicant must describe—

(i) How it proposes to identify or develop the knowledge base on: How to implement components of an effective IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 system identified in the Early System Framework for Building High-Quality Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Programs (Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2015); implementation supports within the system to support providers in delivering effective services and implementing DEC Recommended Practices; and indicators of high-quality inclusion and how States, districts, and

early childhood programs are implementing high-quality inclusive programs;

(ii) Its proposed approach to universal, general TA,[6] which must identify the intended recipients of the products and services under this approach and should include, at minimum—

(A) A plan for ensuring that IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 program staff, other early childhood providers, and relevant TA centers can easily access and use products and services developed by the proposed project;

(B) A plan for increasing awareness and recognition at the national level of how IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 services and young children with disabilities and their families can be intentionally included within broader early childhood initiatives; and

(C) A plan for years 3–5 that describes activities, including developing and strengthening existing resources, guidance, and tools focused on supporting all IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs in implementing IDEA requirements and supporting the programs in meeting their SIMRs.

(iii) Its proposed approach to targeted, specialized TA,[7] which must identify—

(A) The intended recipients of the products and services under this approach;

(B) Its proposed approach to measure the readiness of potential TA recipients to work with the project, assessing, at a minimum, their current systems, available resources, and ability to build capacity at the local level;

(C) The process by which the proposed project will collaborate with OSEP-funded centers and other federally funded TA centers to develop and implement a coordinated TA plan when they are involved in a State;

(D) The process by which the proposed project will collaborate with the proposed Early Childhood Personnel Center to develop the content of professional development for IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators to increase their knowledge, skills, and competencies; and

(E) The process by which the proposed project will increase its TA efforts to States in years 3–5 to achieve the intended project outcomes;

(iv) Its proposed approach to intensive, sustained TA,[8] which must identify—

(A) The intended recipients of the products and services under this approach;

(B) Its proposed approach to measure the readiness of the State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to work with the project, including their commitment to the initiative, alignment of the initiative to their needs, current systems, available resources, and ability to build capacity at the local level;

(C) Its proposed plan for assisting State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to build training systems that include professional development based on adult learning principles and coaching;

(D) Its proposed plan for working with appropriate levels of the Part C and Part B, section 619 and early childhood systems (*e.g.,* regional TA providers, early intervention service programs and providers, local educational agencies (LEAs), Head Start programs, child care programs, home visiting programs, public preschools) and families to ensure that there is communication between each level and that there are systems in place to support the use of research-based practices;

(E) The process by which the proposed project will collaborate with OSEP-funded centers and other federally funded TA centers to develop and implement a coordinated TA plan when they are involved in a State;

(F) The process by which the proposed project will ensure the use of effective TA practices and continuously evaluate the practices to improve the delivery of TA; and

(G) The process by which the proposed project will increase its TA efforts in years 3–5 to support all IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 programs in implementing IDEA requirements and meeting their SIMRs.

(6) Develop products and implement services that maximize efficiency. To address this requirement, the applicant must describe—

(i) How the proposed project will use technology to achieve the intended project outcomes;

(ii) With whom the proposed project will collaborate and the intended outcomes of this collaboration; and

(iii) How the proposed project will use non-project resources to achieve the intended project outcomes.

(c) In the narrative section of the application under ''Quality of the Evaluation Plan,'' include an evaluation plan for the project as described in the following paragraphs. The evaluation plan must describe: Measures of progress in implementation, including the criteria for determining the extent to which the project's products and services have reached its target population; measures of intended outcomes or results of the project's activities in order to evaluate those activities; and how well the goals or objectives of the proposed project, as described in its logic model, have been met.

(d) Demonstrate in the narrative section of the application under ''Adequacy of Project Resources,'' how—

(1) The proposed project will encourage 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, as appropriate;

(2) The proposed key project personnel, consultants, and subcontractors have the qualifications and experience to carry out the proposed activities and achieve the project's intended outcomes;

(3) The applicant and any key partners have adequate resources to carry out the proposed activities; and

(4) The proposed costs are reasonable in relation to the anticipated results and benefits.

(e) Demonstrate, in the narrative section of the application under ''Quality of the Management Plan,'' how—

(1) The proposed management plan will ensure that the project's intended outcomes will be achieved on time and within budget. To address this requirement, the applicant must describe—

(i) Clearly defined responsibilities for key project personnel, consultants, and subcontractors, as applicable; and

[6] ''Universal, general TA'' means TA and information provided to independent users through their own initiative, resulting in minimal interaction with TA center staff and including one-time, invited or offered conference presentations by TA center staff. This category of TA also includes information or products, such as newsletters, guidebooks, or research syntheses, downloaded from the TA center's Web site by independent users. Brief communications by TA center staff with recipients, either by telephone or email, are also considered universal, general TA.

[7] ''Targeted, specialized TA'' means TA services based on needs common to multiple recipients and not extensively individualized. A relationship is established between the TA recipient and one or more TA center staff. This category of TA includes one-time, labor-intensive events, such as facilitating strategic planning or hosting regional or national conferences. It can also include episodic, less labor-intensive events that extend over a period of time, such as facilitating a series of conference calls on single or multiple topics that are designed around the needs of the recipients. Facilitating communities of practice can also be considered targeted, specialized TA.

[8] ''Intensive, sustained TA'' means TA services often provided on-site and requiring a stable, ongoing relationship between the TA center staff and the TA recipient. ''TA services'' are defined as negotiated series of activities designed to reach a valued outcome. This category of TA should result in changes to policy, program, practice, or operations that support increased recipient capacity or improved outcomes at one or more systems levels.

(ii) Timelines and milestones for accomplishing the project tasks;

(2) Allocation of key project personnel and any consultants and subcontractors and how these allocations are appropriate and adequate to achieve the project's intended outcomes;

(3) The proposed management plan will ensure that the products and services provided are of high quality, relevant, and useful to recipients; and

(4) The proposed project will benefit from a diversity of perspectives, including those of families, educators, TA providers, doctoral and post-doctoral scholars, researchers, and policy makers, among others, in its development and operation.

(f) Address the following application requirements. The applicant must—

(1) Include, in Appendix A, a logic model that depicts, at a minimum, the goals, activities, outputs, and intended outcomes of the proposed project;

(2) Include, in Appendix A, a conceptual framework for the project;

(3) Include, in Appendix A, personnel-loading charts and timelines, as applicable, to illustrate the management plan described in the narrative;

(4) Include, in the budget, attendance at the following:

(i) A one and one-half day kick-off meeting in Washington, DC, after receipt of the award, and an annual planning meeting in Washington, DC, with the OSEP project officer and other relevant staff during each subsequent year of the project period.

Note: Within 30 days of receipt of the award, a post-award teleconference must be held between the OSEP project officer and the grantee's project director or other authorized representative;

(ii) A two and one-half day project directors' conference in Washington, DC, during each year of the project period;

(iii) Four trips annually to attend Department briefings, Department-sponsored conferences, and other meetings, as requested by OSEP; and

(iv) A one-day intensive 3+2 review meeting in Washington, DC, during the last half of the second year of the project period;

(5) Include, in the budget, a line item for the following:

(i) An annual set-aside of five percent of the grant amount to support emerging needs that are consistent with the proposed project's intended outcomes, as those needs are identified in consultation with and approved by the OSEP project officer. With approval from the OSEP project officer, the project must reallocate any remaining funds from this annual set-aside no later than the end of the third quarter of each budget period;

(ii) An annual budget of a minimum of $500,000 to address the need to increase knowledge and implement high-quality inclusive practices across early childhood systems;

(iii) An annual budget of a minimum of $200,000 to address the needs in the finance systems for Part C; and

(iv) An annual budget of a minimum of $50,000 to collaborate with the proposed Early Childhood Personnel Center, if funded, to increase the knowledge, skills and competencies of IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators

(6) Engage doctoral students or post-doctoral fellows in the project to increase future leaders in the field who are knowledgeable on effective IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 systems, implementation supports, interventions to support inclusion in early childhood programs, and effective TA practices;

(7) Maintain a Web site that meets government or industry-recognized standards for accessibility; and

(8) Include, in Appendix A, an assurance to assist OSEP with the transfer of pertinent resources and products and to maintain the continuity of services to States during the transition to this new award period, as appropriate.

Fourth and Fifth Years of the Project:

In deciding whether to continue funding the project for the fourth and fifth years, the Secretary will consider the requirements of 34 CFR 75.253(a), as well as—

(a) The recommendation of a 3+2 review team consisting of experts selected by the Secretary. This review will be conducted during a one-day intensive meeting that will be held during the last half of the second year of the project period;

(b) The timeliness with which, and how well, the requirements of the negotiated cooperative agreement have been or are being met by the project; and

(c) The quality, relevance, and usefulness of the project's products and services and the extent to which the project's products and services are aligned with the project's objectives and likely to result in the project achieving its intended outcomes.

Definitions:

For the purposes of this priority:

Strong theory means a rationale for the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice that includes a logic model.

Supported by evidence means supported by at least strong theory.

References:

Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014. Retrieved from *www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices.*

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2015). *A system framework for building high-quality early intervention and preschool special education programs.* Retrieved from the ECTA Web site: *http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/ecta-system_framework.pdf.*

Fixsen, D. L., Blasé, K. A., Naoom, S. F., & Wallace, F. (2009). Core implementation components. *Research on Social Work Practices, 19*(5), 531–540.

Lucas, A., Kahn, L., Derrington, T., Whaley, K., Winer, A., Nelson, R., * * * Taylor, C. (2015). *State of the states on systemic improvement planning: A national overview of Phase 1 SSIPs* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from *http://ectacenter.org/googleresults.asp?q=State%20of%20the%20States.*

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. (August, 2011). *Competencies for early childhood educators in the context of inclusion: Issues and guidance for States.* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Author.

U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). *Joint policy statement on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs.* Washington, DC: Author. *Retrieved from www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion.*

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

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1463 and 1481.

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.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 79 apply to all applicants except federally recognized Indian Tribes.

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

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Cooperative agreement.

Estimated Available Funds: The Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act, 2017, would provide, on an annualized basis, $54,345,000 for the Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program, of which we would use an estimated $3,400,000 in Years 1 and 2, and $5,400,000 in Years 3–5 for this competition. The actual level of funding, if any, depends on final congressional action. However, we are inviting applications to allow enough time to complete the grant process if Congress appropriates funds for this program.

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in FY 2018 from the list of unfunded applications from this competition.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding $3,400,000 in Years 1 and 2, and $5,400,000 in Years 3–5 for a single budget period of 12 months.

Estimated Number of Awards: 1.

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

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:* State educational agencies; local educational agencies (LEAs), including public charter schools that operate as LEAs under State law; IHEs; other public agencies; private nonprofit organizations; freely associated States and outlying areas; Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations; and for-profit organizations.

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

3. *Eligible Subgrantees:* (a) Under 34 CFR 75.708(b) and (c) a grantee may award subgrants—to directly carry out project activities described in its application—to the following types of entities: IHEs and private nonprofit organizations suitable to carry out the activities proposed in the application.

(b) The grantee may award subgrants to entities it has identified in an approved application.

4. *Other General Requirements:* (a) Recipients of funding under this competition must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities (see section 606 of IDEA).

(b) Each applicant for, and recipient of, funding must, with respect to the aspects of their proposed project relating to the absolute priority, involve individuals with disabilities, or parents of individuals with disabilities ages birth through 26, in planning, implementing, and evaluating the project (see section 682(a)(1)(A) of IDEA).

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. *Address to Request Application Package:* You can obtain an application package via the internet or from the Education Publications Center (ED Pubs). To obtain a copy via the internet, use the following address: *www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/index.html*. To obtain a copy from ED Pubs, write, fax, or call: ED Pubs, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 22207, Alexandria, VA 22304. Telephone, toll free: 1–877–433–7827. FAX: (703) 605–6794. If you use a TDD or a TTY, call, toll free: 1–877–576–7734.

You can contact ED Pubs at its Web site, also: *www.EDPubs.gov* or at its email address: *edpubs@inet.ed.gov*.

If you request an application package from ED Pubs, be sure to identify this competition as follows: CFDA number 84.326P.

Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of the application package in an accessible format (*e.g.,* braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) by contacting the person or team listed under *Accessible Format* in section VII of this notice.

2. *Content and Form of Application Submission:* Requirements concerning the content and form of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this competition. *Page Limit:* The application narrative (Part III of the application) is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. You must limit Part III to no more than 70 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, reference citations, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, graphs, and screen shots.
- Use a font that is 12 point or larger.
- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial. An application submitted in any other font (including Times Roman or Arial Narrow) will not be accepted.

The page limit and double-spacing requirements do 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 abstract (follow the guidance provided in the application package for completing the abstract), the table of contents, the list of priority requirements, the resumes, the reference list, the letters of support, or the appendices. However, the page limit and double-spacing requirements do apply to all of Part III, the application narrative, including all text in charts, tables, figures, graphs, and screen shots.

We will reject your application if you exceed the page limit in the application narrative section, or if you apply standards other than those specified in this notice and the application package.

3. *Submission Dates and Times:*

Applications Available: April 19, 2017.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: June 5, 2017.

Applications for grants under this competition must be submitted electronically using the *Grants.gov* Apply site (*Grants.gov*). For information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, or in paper format by mail or hand delivery if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, please refer to *Other Submission Requirements* in section IV of this notice.

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

Individuals with disabilities who need an accommodation or auxiliary aid in connection with the application process should contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. If the Department provides an accommodation or auxiliary aid to an individual with a disability in connection with the application process, the individual's application remains subject to all other requirements and limitations in this notice. Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: August 2, 2017.

4. *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.

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

6. *Data Universal Numbering System Number, Taxpayer Identification Number, and System for Award Management:* To do business with the Department of Education, you must—

a. Have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);

b. Register both your DUNS number and TIN with the System for Award Management (SAM), the Government's primary registrant database;

c. Provide your DUNS number and TIN on your application; and

d. Maintain an active SAM registration with current information while your application is under review by the Department and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.

You can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet at the following Web site: *http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.* A DUNS number can be created within one to two business days.

If you are a corporate entity, agency, institution, or organization, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service. If you are an individual, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration. If you need a new TIN, please allow two to five weeks for your TIN to become active.

The SAM registration process can take approximately seven business days, but may take upwards of several weeks, depending on the completeness and accuracy of the data you enter into the SAM database. Thus, if you think you might want to apply for Federal financial assistance under a program administered by the Department, please allow sufficient time to obtain and register your DUNS number and TIN. We strongly recommend that you register early.

Note: Once your SAM registration is active, it may be 24 to 48 hours before you can access the information in, and submit an application through, *Grants.gov.*

If you are currently registered with SAM, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you will need to update your registration annually. This may take three or more business days.

Information about SAM is available at *www.SAM.gov.* To further assist you with obtaining and registering your DUNS number and TIN in SAM or updating your existing SAM account, we have prepared a SAM.gov Tip Sheet, which you can find at: *www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/sam-faqs.html.*

In addition, if you are submitting your application via *Grants.gov*, you must (1) be designated by your organization as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (2) register yourself with *Grants.gov* as an AOR. Details on these steps are outlined at the following *Grants.gov* Web page: *www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html.*

7. *Other Submission Requirements:* Applications for grants under this competition must be submitted electronically unless you qualify for an exception to this requirement in accordance with the instructions in this section.

a. *Electronic Submission of Applications.*

Applications for grants under the Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center competition, CFDA number 84.326P, must be submitted electronically using the Governmentwide *Grants.gov* Apply site at *www.Grants.gov*. Through this site, you will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit your application. You may not email an electronic copy of a grant application to us.

We will reject your application if you submit it in paper format unless, as described elsewhere in this section, you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement *and* submit, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. Further information regarding calculation of the date that is two weeks before the application deadline date is provided later in this section under *Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement.*

You may access the electronic grant application for the Early Childhood Systems Technical Assistance Center competition at *www.Grants.gov*. You must search for the downloadable application package for this competition by the CFDA number. Do not include the CFDA number's alpha suffix in your search (*e.g.,* search for 84.326, not 84.326P).

Please note the following:

- When you enter the *Grants.gov* site, you will find information about submitting an application electronically through the site, as well as the hours of operation.
- Applications received by *Grants.gov* are date and time stamped. Your application must be fully uploaded and submitted and must be date and time stamped by the *Grants.gov* system no later than 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. Except as otherwise noted in this section, we will not accept your application if it is received—that is, date and time stamped by the *Grants.gov* system—after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements. When we retrieve your application from *Grants.gov*, we will notify you if we are rejecting your application because it was date and time stamped by the *Grants.gov* system after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.
- The amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the submission process through *Grants.gov.*
- You should review and follow the Education Submission Procedures for submitting an application through *Grants.gov* that are included in the application package for this competition to ensure that you submit your application in a timely manner to the *Grants.gov* system. You can also find the Education Submission Procedures pertaining to *Grants.gov* under News and Events on the Department's G5 system home page at *www.G5.gov*. In addition, for specific guidance and procedures for submitting an application through *Grants.gov*, please refer to the *Grants.gov* Web site at: *www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html.*
- You will not receive additional point value because you submit your application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, as described elsewhere in this section, and submit your application in paper format.
- You must submit all documents electronically, including all information you typically provide on the following forms: the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), the Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424, Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications.
- You must upload any narrative sections and all other attachments to your application as files in a read-only Portable Document Format (PDF). Do not upload an interactive or fillable PDF file. If you upload a file type other than a read-only PDF (*e.g.,* Word, Excel, WordPerfect, etc.) or submit a password-protected file, we will not review that material. Please note that this could result in your application not being

considered for funding because the material in question—for example, the application narrative—is critical to a meaningful review of your proposal. For that reason it is important to allow yourself adequate time to upload all material as PDF files. The Department will not convert material from other formats to PDF. Additional, detailed information on how to attach files is in the application instructions.

- Your electronic application must comply with any page-limit requirements described in this notice.
- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive from *Grants.gov* an automatic notification of receipt that contains a *Grants.gov* tracking number. This notification indicates receipt by *Grants.gov* only, not receipt by the Department. *Grants.gov* will also notify you automatically by email if your application met all the *Grants.gov* validation requirements or if there were any errors (such as submission of your application by someone other than a registered Authorized Organization Representative, or inclusion of an attachment with a file name that contains special characters). You will be given an opportunity to correct any errors and resubmit, but you must still meet the deadline for submission of applications.

Once your application is successfully validated by *Grants.gov*, the Department will retrieve your application from *Grants.gov* and send you an email with a unique PR/Award number for your application.

These emails do not mean that your application is without any disqualifying errors. While your application may have been successfully validated by *Grants.gov*, it must also meet the Department's application requirements as specified in this notice and in the application instructions. Disqualifying errors could include, for instance, failure to upload attachments in a read-only PDF; failure to submit a required part of the application; or failure to meet applicant eligibility requirements. It is your responsibility to ensure that your submitted application has met all of the Department's requirements.

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

Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of Technical Issues with the Grants.gov System: If you are experiencing problems submitting your application through *Grants.gov*, please contact the *Grants.gov* Support Desk, toll free, at 1–800–518–4726. You must obtain a *Grants.gov* Support Desk Case Number and must keep a record of it.

If you are prevented from electronically submitting your application on the application deadline date because of technical problems with the *Grants.gov* system, we will grant you an extension until 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, the following business day to enable you to transmit your application electronically or by hand delivery. You also may mail your application by following the mailing instructions described elsewhere in this notice.

If you submit an application after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date, please contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** and provide an explanation of the technical problem you experienced with *Grants.gov*, along with the *Grants.gov* Support Desk Case Number. We will accept your application if we can confirm that a technical problem occurred with the *Grants.gov* system and that the problem affected your ability to submit your application by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. We will contact you after we determine whether your application will be accepted.

Note: The extensions to which we refer in this section apply only to the unavailability of, or technical problems with, the *Grants.gov* system. We will not grant you an extension if you failed to fully register to submit your application to *Grants.gov* before the application deadline date and time or if the technical problem you experienced is unrelated to the *Grants.gov* system.

Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement: You qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, and may submit your application in paper format, if you are unable to submit an application through the *Grants.gov* system because—

- You do not have access to the internet; or
- You do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the *Grants.gov* system;

and

- No later than two weeks before the application deadline date (14 calendar days or, if the fourteenth calendar day before the application deadline date falls on a Federal holiday, the next business day following the Federal holiday), you mail or fax a written statement to the Department, explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevents you from using the internet to submit your application.

If you mail your written statement to the Department, it must be postmarked no later than two weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax your written statement to the Department, we must receive the faxed statement no later than two weeks before the application deadline date.

Address and mail or fax your statement to: Julia Martin Eile, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Room 5175, Potomac Center Plaza (PCP), Washington, DC 20202–5108. FAX: (202) 245–7590.

Your paper application must be submitted in accordance with the mail or hand-delivery instructions described in this notice.

b. *Submission of Paper Applications by Mail.*

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you may mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier) your application to the Department. You must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.326P), LBJ Basement Level 1, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20202–4260.

You must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

(1) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark.

(2) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.

(3) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

(4) Any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If you mail your application through the U.S. Postal Service, we do not accept either of the following as proof of mailing:

(1) A private metered postmark.

(2) A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

Note: The U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office.

We will not consider applications postmarked after the application deadline date.

c. *Submission of Paper Applications by Hand Delivery.*

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you (or a courier service) may deliver your paper application to the Department by hand. You must deliver the original and two copies of your application by hand, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention:

(CFDA Number 84.326P), 550 12th Street SW., Room 7039, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202–4260.

The Application Control Center accepts hand deliveries daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, except Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

Note for Mail or Hand Delivery of Paper Applications: If you mail or hand deliver your application to the Department—

(1) You must indicate on the envelope and—if not provided by the Department—in Item 11 of the SF 424 the CFDA number, including suffix letter, if any, of the competition under which you are submitting your application; and

(2) The Application Control Center will mail to you a notification of receipt of your grant application. If you do not receive this notification within 15 business days from the application deadline date, you should call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245–6288.

V. Application Review Information

1. *Selection Criteria:* (a) *Significance (5 points).*

(1) The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project.

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

(i) The extent to which the proposed project will address specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities that have been identified.

(ii) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project.

(b) *Quality of the project services (40 points).*

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

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

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

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

(ii) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed activities and the quality of that framework.

(iii) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.

(iv) The extent to which the proposed products and services are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to the outcomes intended to be achieved by the proposed project.

(v) The extent to which the products and services to be developed and provided by the proposed project involve the use of efficient strategies, including the use of technology, collaboration with appropriate partners, and the leveraging of non-project resources.

(c) *Quality of the project evaluation (20 points).*

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(ii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide data and performance feedback for examining the effectiveness of project implementation strategies and the progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(iii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will produce quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate the project has met intended outcomes.

(d) *Adequacy of project resources (15 points).*

(1) The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources, including the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.

(2) In determining the adequacy of resources, 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.

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

(i) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (*i.e.,* project director, project staff, and project consultants or subcontractors).

(ii) The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization and key partners.

(iii) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the anticipated results and benefits.

(e) *Quality of management plan (20 points).*

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

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

(i) 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.

(ii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director, project staff, and project consultants or subcontractors are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

(iii) The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project.

(iv) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.

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 of Education (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

3. *Additional Review and Selection Process Factors:* In the past, the Department has had difficulty finding peer reviewers for certain competitions because so many individuals who are eligible to serve as peer reviewers have conflicts of interest. The standing panel requirements under section 682(b) of IDEA also have placed additional constraints on the availability of reviewers. Therefore, the Department has determined that for some discretionary grant competitions,

applications may be separated into two or more groups and ranked and selected for funding within specific groups. This procedure will make it easier for the Department to find peer reviewers by ensuring that greater numbers of individuals who are eligible to serve as reviewers for any particular group of applicants will not have conflicts of interest. It also will increase the quality, independence, and fairness of the review process, while permitting panel members to review applications under discretionary grant competitions for which they also have submitted applications.

4. *Risk Assessment and Special Conditions:* Consistent with 2 CFR 200.205, before awarding grants under this competition the Department conducts a review of the risks posed by applicants. Under 2 CFR 3474.10, the Secretary may impose special conditions and, 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.

5. *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 $150,000), under 2 CFR 200.205(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 SAM. 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.

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. *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.*

4. *Performance Measures:* Under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, the Department has established a set of performance measures, including long-term measures, that are designed to yield information on various aspects of the effectiveness and quality of the Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program. The Department will use these measures, which focus on the extent to which projects provide high-quality products and services, the relevance of project products and services to educational and early intervention policy and practice, and the use of products and services, to improve educational and early intervention policy and practice.

Projects funded under this competition are required to submit data on these measures as directed by OSEP.

Grantees will be required to report information on their project's performance in annual and final performance reports to the Department (34 CFR 75.590).

5. *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, 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: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (*e.g.,* braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) by contacting the Management Support Services Team, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Room 5113, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202–2500. Telephone: (202) 245–7363. If you use a TDD or a TTY, call the FRS, toll free, at 1–800–877–8339.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. Free internet access to the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations is available via the Federal Digital System at: *www.gpo.gov/fdsys.* 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 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.

Dated: April 14, 2017.

Ruth E. Ryder,

Deputy Director, Office of Special Education Programs, delegated the duties of the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 2017–07930 Filed 4–18–17; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Personnel Development To Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities—Early Childhood Personnel Center

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education is issuing a notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year (FY) 2017 for Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities—Early Childhood Personnel Center, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number 84.325B.

DATES:

Applications Available: April 19, 2017.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: June 5, 2017.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: August 2, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tracie Dickson, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Room 5181, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202–5076. Telephone: (202) 245–7844.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1–800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purposes of this program are to: (1) Help address State-identified needs for personnel preparation in special education, early intervention, related services, and regular education to work with children, including infants and toddlers, with disabilities; and (2) ensure that those personnel have the necessary skills and knowledge, derived from practices that have been determined through scientifically based research and experience, to be successful in serving those children.

Priority: In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(v), this priority is from allowable activities specified in the statute (see sections 662 and 681 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)).

Absolute Priority: For FY 2017 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, this priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet this priority.

This priority is:

Early Childhood Personnel Center.

Background:

All infants, toddlers, and preschool children (young children) with disabilities should have access to high-quality early childhood programs (U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, 2015). To achieve this, it is essential to have an early childhood workforce [1] that is able to provide to young children with disabilities and their families the specialized services and supports necessary for active participation and ongoing learning in early childhood programs. Research suggests, though, that much of the current early childhood workforce is not adequately prepared to do this (National Governor's Association, 2010), as does a survey of IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators (Bruder, 2010).

To address this challenge, IDEA Part C (section 635) requires the State lead agency to develop and support high-quality, coordinated comprehensive systems of personnel development (CSPD) [2] and IDEA Part B (section 612) requires the State educational agency (SEA) to ensure that personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 coordinators have indicated that their greatest technical assistance (TA) need is in implementing a high-quality, cross-sector CSPD (Lucas et al., 2015).

A critical piece of a State CSPD is the quality of preservice preparation, but many programs that prepare early childhood educators do not require courses, content, or practicum experiences in working with young children with disabilities and their families. Furthermore, many programs do not address relevant personnel standards from State or national professional organizations in their curricula.

This priority will fund a cooperative agreement to establish and operate a national Early Childhood Personnel Center (Center) to improve the quality of personnel who serve young children with disabilities and their families. The Center will provide TA to State Part C and Part B, section 619 programs on implementing a high-quality CSPD. The Center will also provide to the faculty of institutions of higher education (IHEs) TA on programs of study for providing high-quality services and inclusive programs for young children with disabilities and their families.

Priority:

The purpose of this priority is to fund a cooperative agreement to establish and operate an Early Childhood Personnel Center (Center) to achieve, at a minimum, the following:

(a) Increased capacity of State IDEA Part C, Part B, section 619 programs, and other early childhood service sectors (*e.g.,* Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care, State-funded pre-K) to implement, scale up, and sustain a coordinated CSPD to ensure local personnel have the competencies to deliver high-quality services and inclusive programs to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families;

(b) Increased knowledge, skills, and competencies of State IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 administrators to lead systemic improvement efforts, actively engage in broader early childhood initiatives, use TA effectively, and build more effective and sustainable State systems that can support a competent early childhood workforce that can improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families; and

(c) Increased knowledge, skills, and competencies of early childhood IHE faculty to align programs of study to State and national professional organization personnel standards, integrate Division of Early Childhood

[1] For purposes of this priority, ''early childhood workforce'' refers to personnel who provide early care, developmental, and education services to children birth through age five, including early intervention service providers, service coordinators, early childhood special educators, related services providers, public or private preschool teachers, home and center-based child care providers, Head Start and Early Head Start teachers, and home visitors.

[2] CSPD is a requirement under IDEA Part C in section 635(a)(8) of the IDEA and 34 CFR 303.118. Though a CSPD is not a requirement under IDEA Part B, the Personnel/Workforce section of the System Framework for Building High-Quality Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Programs (Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2015) was developed for use by both IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619. The Personnel/Workforce section of the framework identifies the following components of a high-quality CSPD: Leadership, coordination, and sustainability; State personnel standards; preservice personnel development; in-service personnel development; recruitment and retention; and evaluation. For more background on CSPD see: *http://ecpcta.org/cspd/.*