

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RIN 1820-ZA09

Rehabilitation Short-Term Training

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

ACTION: Notice of final priority for fiscal year 1997.

SUMMARY: The Secretary announces a final funding priority for fiscal year 1997 under the Rehabilitation Short-Term Training program. The Secretary takes this action in order to improve the leadership among top-level managers and administrators of the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This priority takes effect on August 18, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sylvia Johnson, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 330 Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2649. Telephone: (202) 205-9312. Deaf and hearing impaired individuals may call (202) 205-8133 for TDD services. Internet: Sylvia_Johnson@ed.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice contains a final priority under the Rehabilitation Short-Term Training program. This program supports special seminars, institutes, workshops, and other short-term courses in technical matters relating to vocational, medical, social, and psychological rehabilitation programs, independent living services programs, and client assistance programs.

On May 20, 1997 the Secretary published a notice of proposed priority for this program in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 27680).

Note: This notice of final priority does *not* solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition is published in a separate notice in this issue of the **Federal Register**.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

In response to the Secretary's invitation in the notice of proposed priority, seven parties submitted comments. An analysis of the comments and of the changes in the priority since publication of the notice of proposed priority follows. Technical and other minor changes—and suggested changes the Secretary is not legally authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority—are not addressed.

Comment: Two commenters identified two specific issues—increasing client choice and relationships with private sector

rehabilitation—that should be included as focal points in the development of leadership training.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees with the importance of both of these topics to the public program of vocational rehabilitation. The first, client choice, was recommended as an example of an issue to be addressed in the proposed priority. The issue of private sector relationships was not used as an example, but the Secretary points out that there may be many issues of high importance to the public vocational rehabilitation program, and opinions will differ as to which is more important. That is why the advisory committee for the leadership institute is charged with final selection of issues that the institute will address through its training. Given the diversity of views reflected on the advisory committee, the most critical issues should surface as the appropriate foci for the institute. Increasing client choice and relationships with private sector rehabilitation may be among them.

Changes: None.

Comment: Two commenters suggested that private sector rehabilitation professionals be included as training participants.

Discussion: The Secretary points out that the priority was established in response to a specific need for training of public vocational rehabilitation professionals and their unique needs. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) recently established 10 community rehabilitation program continuing education centers. These centers train staff of community rehabilitation programs that have a service arrangement with a State vocational rehabilitation agency to provide services to individuals with disabilities served by the State agency. These centers provide a broad, integrated sequence of training activities on a variety of issues, which may include leadership training.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter pointed out that in-service training grants would already have been awarded, along with negotiated three-year budgets, and suggested that RSA should allow flexibility in renegotiating in-service training grants to help pay for the States' share of leadership training activities.

Discussion: The Secretary makes clear that the institute is responsible for determining the fee for each participant in the leadership training program. The Secretary did not specify that States must use dollars from their in-service training grants for this purpose. It is up to each State to determine how it will

meet the mandatory participant fee established by the institute.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter suggested that, since the proposed leadership institute must coordinate with State VR in-service training programs and Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs (RCEPs), they should be represented on the advisory committee.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that the perspective from both the in-service training program and the RCEPs should be represented on the advisory committee as they are a very significant source of training for State agency staff. State VR agency administrators are represented on the proposed advisory committee, but the Secretary agrees that it also would be important to include the State VR agency training specialist perspective. Likewise, RCEP representation was not specifically mentioned in the priority, but the Secretary agrees it should also be included.

Changes: The priority has been changed to require the inclusion of both RCEP and State agency training specialist representation on the advisory committee.

Comment: Two commenters identified specific models of leadership (e.g., Total Quality Management, the Bass Model of Transformational Leadership, or models that focus on behavioral characteristics of leadership) that should be incorporated into the activities of the leadership institute.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that there are many excellent models of leadership training that could be incorporated into the training curricula of the institute. It is the Secretary's expectation that applicants for this institute will propose those that are most appropriate for leaders in the field of rehabilitation. Peer reviewers will consider the appropriateness of models in assessing the applications.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the competition should include an efficient means for determining whether the leadership models selected for the training institute apply to the field of rehabilitation.

Discussion: As previously noted, the Secretary expects that the applicants will propose leadership models that are most appropriate for the field of rehabilitation. In addition, the Secretary points out that the selection criteria for the Short-Term Training program include "Relevance to the State-Federal rehabilitation service program." Within the context of the purpose of the grant, leadership training for public vocational

rehabilitation administrators, this should adequately address the concern.

Changes: None.

Comment: Two commenters suggested specific training approaches (e.g., mentoring, distance learning, competency based training) that should be incorporated into the curriculum of leadership training.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that there are many excellent training approaches that could be incorporated into the curriculum of the leadership institute. It is the Secretary's expectation that applicants will propose those that are most appropriate for their particular project.

Changes: None.

Comment: Two commenters suggested that training should support the needs of mid-level managers and supervisors in addition to top-level managers and administrators.

Discussion: The Secretary believes that supervisory and mid-level management training is different from leadership training—supervision and mid-level management relate more generally to improving day-to-day performance while leadership training moves groups of employees in new directions and toward realizing organizational visions. The current system of RCEPs and in-service training can provide supervisory training. The leadership institute will focus on leadership training for top-level managers and administrators.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the priority should require more than one leadership institute.

Discussion: The Secretary has determined that in order to ensure consistency of training and to ensure consistent substantial involvement of the Department with the institute, one leadership institute best meets the Department's needs. The Secretary also points out that an advisory committee, jointly selected by RSA and the institute, will be selected specifically to maintain the responsiveness of the institute and to keep it current in its content and approach.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter suggested that the background section of the priority should recognize the need for improving processes in order to achieve high quality outcomes.

Discussion: The Secretary believes that the substance of the comment is consistent with the intent of the statements in the background section. The context of the wording makes clear that State agency emphasis should be placed on outcome. This is consistent

with both the current wording of the priority and the comment.

Changes: None.

Priority

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) and section 302(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Secretary gives an absolute preference to applications that meet the following priority. The Secretary funds under this competition only applications that meet this absolute priority:

National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute

Background

The Secretary has determined that it is in the best interest of the State VR Services program to develop one national leadership training institute that focuses on leadership skills as applied to the unique issues facing State VR agencies. Progressive levels of training are needed to meet the varying needs of top-level managers and administrators. An advisory committee will provide input into the curriculum and direction concerning which issues the institute will address. Participating State agencies will be required to provide some degree of support to the program, as determined by the institute. The institute will evaluate its performance and report on progress annually. The notice of proposed priority published on May 20, 1997 in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 27680) includes more detail on the background related to this priority.

Priority

The Secretary will establish a National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute that will focus on developing the leadership skills of top-level managers and administrators in State VR agencies. The project must have plans for addressing the leadership needs in all VR agencies funded under the Act.

The project must employ a curriculum that focuses on the development of leadership skills and on the application of those skills to current challenges and issues in the VR program. The project must be capable of structuring leadership curricula around current VR issues of national significance, such as using VR standards and indicators to assess and improve agency performance, coordinating effectively with generic employment and training programs, and increasing client choice. Actual issues will be determined by the advisory committee (described later in this notice) and the Secretary.

The project must employ a curriculum that includes several levels of training to meet the needs of audiences ranging from new State administrators and directors to seasoned administrators and directors. The project's curriculum must include sequential courses that allow for repeated practice of newly learned skills over time, with performance feedback. The project must provide training in a peer setting.

The project must coordinate its training activities with activities conducted under the State VR In-Service Training program and the Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program. These programs are also charged with improving the leadership skills of State agency personnel. Therefore, collaboration and coordination are necessary.

The project must establish an advisory committee that includes RSA central and regional office representatives, representatives of State VR agency administrators and trainers, rehabilitation counselors, VR clients, Regional Continuing Education Centers, other educators and trainers of VR personnel, and others as determined to be appropriate by the grantee and RSA. This committee must provide substantial input on and direction to the training curriculum, including the specific VR issues to be incorporated.

The project must include an evaluation component based upon clear, specific performance and outcome measures. The results must be reported in its annual progress report.

The project must provide for some degree of participant contribution to training costs.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000) focuses the Nation's education reform efforts on the eight National Education Goals and provides a framework for meeting them. Goals 2000 promotes new partnerships to strengthen schools and expands the Department's capacities for helping communities to exchange ideas and obtain information needed to achieve the goals.

This final priority would address the National Education Goal that every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The final priority furthers the objectives of this Goal by focussing available funds on projects that improve the leadership skills of top administrators of State VR agencies, which will improve the

responsiveness of the VR system to adults with disabilities and their vocational pursuits.

Intergovernmental Review

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

Applicable Program Regulations

34 CFR Parts 385 and 390.

Authority: 29 U.S.C. 774.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 84.246D, Rehabilitation Short-Term Training)

Dated: July 14, 1997.

Judith E. Heumann,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 97-18928 Filed 7-16-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No.: 84.246L]

Rehabilitation Short-Term Training; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997

Purpose of Program: The Rehabilitation Short-Term Training

program provides Federal support for developing and conducting special seminars, institutes, workshops, and technical instruction in areas of special significance to the delivery of vocational, medical, social, and psychological rehabilitation services.

Eligible Applicants: States and public or nonprofit agencies and organizations, including Indian tribes and institutions of higher education, are eligible for assistance under this program.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: August 18, 1997.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: September 17, 1997.

Applications Available: July 18, 1997.

Available Funds: \$250,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$200,000-\$250,000.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$250,000.

Estimated Number of Awards: 1.

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

Maximum Award: In no case does the Secretary make an award greater than \$250,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. The Secretary rejects and does not consider an application that proposes a budget exceeding this maximum amount.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR Parts 385 and 390.

Priority: The priority in the notice of final priority for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the

Federal Register, applies to this competition.

For Applications Contact: The Grants and Contracts Services Team, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 3317 Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202; or call (202) 205-8351.

For Information Contact: Sylvia Johnson, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 3320, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2649. Telephone: (202) 205-9312. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of application notices for discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; on the Internet Gopher Server (at [gopher://gcs.ed.gov](http://gcs.ed.gov)); or on the World Wide Web (at <http://gcs.ed.gov>). However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Authority: 29 U.S.C. 774.

Dated: July 14, 1997.

Judith E. Heumann,

Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 97-18929 Filed 7-16-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-U