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U. S. Department of Education Proposed Criteria Investing In Innovation (i3) Grants

I. Total i3 Funds Available

\$650 Million

II. Funding Ranges

Up to \$50 million each for Scale-Up Grants;
Up to \$30 million each for Validation Grants; and
Up to \$5 million each for Development Grants.

III. Purpose of Program

The purpose of the Investing In Innovation (i3) Fund program is to provide competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement, in order to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement or student growth for high-need students. The i3 Fund will provide support to LEAs, and nonprofit organizations that partner with one or more LEAs, or a consortium of schools, that apply and successfully compete for any of the three types of grants.

These grants will:

- allow eligible entities to expand and develop their work so that their work can serve as models of best practices,
- allow eligible entities to work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community, and
- identify and document best practices that can be shared and taken to scale based on demonstrated success.

IV. Types of Grants

In this notice, the Department proposes to award three types of grants within the Investing in Innovation Fund:

1. **Scale-Up Grants** would provide funding to scale up practices, strategies, or programs for which there is strong evidence that the proposed practice, strategy, or program will have a statistically significant effect on improving student achievement or student growth, and

that the effect of implementing the proposed practice, strategy, or program will be substantial and important.

2. **Validation Grants** would provide funding to support practices, strategies, or programs that show promise, but for which there is currently only moderate evidence that the proposed practice, strategy, or program will have a statistically significant effect on improving student achievement and that with further study, the effect of implementing the proposed practice, strategy, or program may prove to be substantial and important. Thus, proposals for Validation grants would not need to have the same level of research evidence to support the proposed project that would be required for Scale-up grants.
3. **Development Grants*** would provide funding to support new, high-potential, and relatively untested practices, strategies, or programs whose efficacy should be systematically studied. An applicant would have to provide evidence that the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or one similar to it, has been attempted previously, albeit on a limited scale or in a limited setting, and yielded promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.

**USDE anticipates using a two-tier process to review the applications for Development grants. This two-tier review would include a pre-application process to select applicants that would be invited to submit a full application.*

USDE anticipates that the pre-application process will require an applicant to submit a short summary of its proposed project and that we will use some or all of the selection criteria that follow to rate the proposed projects, but with a particular focus on the need for the project and quality of the project design and the strength of research, significance of effect, and magnitude of effect in support of the proposed project.

Applicants that are rated highly in the pre-application phase would be invited to submit a full application, from which the awards for Development grants would be made.

An applicant must provide a rationale for the proposed practice, strategy, or program that is based on research findings or reasonable hypotheses, including related research or theories in education and other sectors. Thus, proposals for Development grants would not need to provide the same level of evidence to support the proposed project that would be required for Validation or Scale-up grants.

TABLE 1

Differences between the three types of i3 grants in terms of the evidence required to support the proposed practice, strategy, or program.

	Scale-Up Grants	Validation Grants	Development Grants
Strength of Research	<i>Strong evidence</i>	<i>Moderate evidence</i>	<i>Reasonable hypotheses</i>
Significance of Research	<i>Statistically significant</i>	<i>Statistically significant</i>	<i>Warrants further study</i>
Magnitude of Effect	<i>Substantial and important</i>	<i>Potential to be substantial and important</i>	<i>Promising</i>

In addition, the three types of grants differ in terms of the expectations to scale up successful projects during or following the end of the grant period, either directly or through partners, and the level of funding that would be available.

USDE intends to make one or more awards for each type of grant, Scale-Up, Validation, Development.

TABLE 2

Differences between the three types of i3 grants in terms of expectations to scale up and the funding to be provided.

	Scale-Up Grants	Validation Grants	Development Grants
Scale up	<i>National, Regional, or State</i>	<i>Regional or State</i>	<i>Further develop and scale</i>
Funding to Be Provided	<i>Highest</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Modest</i>

V. Funding Categories

An applicant must state in its application whether it is applying for a Scale-Up, Validation, or Development grant. An applicant may not submit an application for the same proposed project under more than one type of grant. An applicant will be considered for an award only for the type of grant for which it applies.

VI. Proposed Priorities

Projects funded under each of the three types of grants would provide services to high-need students and must focus on one or more absolute priority directly tied to the reform areas of the ARRA; applicants could also choose, but are not required, to meet one or more of the competitive priority areas.

VII. Types of Priorities

USDE proposes eight priorities for the Investing in Innovation Fund.

Proposed Priorities 1, 2, 3, and 4 are proposed as absolute priorities and are aligned with the four reform areas under the ARRA; **all applicants must apply under one of these four priorities.** Under an absolute priority, USDE will consider only applications that meet the priority.

Proposed Priorities 5, 6, 7, and 8 are proposed as competitive preference priorities and are aligned with other key education reform goals of the Department. Under a competitive preference priority, USDE would give competitive preference to an application by

1. awarding additional points, depending on the extent to which the application meets the priority or
2. selecting an application that meets the priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the.

USDE may apply one or more of the competitive preference priorities to one or more of the three types of grants (Scale-Up, Validation, Development grants).

VIII. Proposed Absolute Priorities

1. Innovations That Support Effective Teachers And School Leaders

Under proposed Absolute Priority 1, USDE would provide funding to support practices, strategies, or programs that increase the number or percentages of highly effective teachers and school leaders or reduce the number or percentages of ineffective teachers and school leaders, especially

for high-need students, by identifying, recruiting, developing, placing, rewarding, and retaining highly effective teachers and school leaders (or removing ineffective teachers and school leaders).

2. Innovations That Improve The Use Of Data

Under proposed Absolute Priority 2, USDE would provide funding to support strategies, practices, or programs that encourage and facilitate the evaluation, analysis, and use of student achievement or student growth data by educators, families, and other stakeholders in order to inform decision-making; improve student achievement or student growth, and teacher, school leader, school, or LEA performance and productivity; or enable data aggregation, analysis, and research.

3. Innovations That Complement The Implementation Of High Standards And High-Quality Assessments

Under proposed Absolute Priority 3, USDE would provide funding for practices, strategies, or programs that support States' efforts to transition to college- and career- readiness standards and assessments, including curricular and instructional practices, strategies, or programs in core academic subjects that are aligned with high academic content and achievement standards and with high-quality assessments based on those standards.

Proposals may include practices, strategies, or programs that:

- (a) increase the success of under-represented student populations in academically rigorous courses and programs;
- (b) increase the development and use of formative assessments or interim assessments, or other performance-based tools and metrics that are aligned with student content and academic achievement standards; or
- (c) translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practices that meet the needs of all students, including high-need students.

4. Innovations That Turn Around Persistently Low Performing Schools

Under proposed Absolute Priority 4, USDE would provide funding to support strategies, practices, or programs that turn around persistently low-performing schools through either whole-school reform or targeted approaches to reform.

Applicants addressing this priority must focus on either:

- (a) Whole-school reform, such as comprehensive interventions to assist, augment, or replace persistently low-performing schools; or
- (b) Targeted approaches to reform, including, but not limited to:
 - (1) providing more time for students to learn core academic content by expanding the school day, school week, or the school year, or by increasing instructional time for core academic subjects during the day and in the summer;
 - (2) integrating student supports to address non- academic barriers to student achievement; or

(3) creating multiple pathways for students to earn regular high school diplomas (e.g., transfer schools, awarding credit based on demonstrated evidence of student competency, offering dual- enrollment options).

IX. Proposed Competitive Preference Priorities

5. Innovations For Improving Early Learning Outcomes

USDE proposes to give competitive preference to proposals that include practices, strategies, or programs to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs.

Proposals must focus on

(a) improving young children’s school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects;

(b) improving and aligning developmental milestones and standards with appropriate outcome measures; and

(c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade

6. Innovations That Support College Access And Success

USDE proposes to give competitive preference to proposals for practices, strategies, or programs that enable K-12 students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college.

Proposals must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that address students’ preparedness and expectations related to college; help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

7. Innovations To Address The Unique Learning Needs Of Students With Disabilities And Limited English Proficient Students

USDE proposes to give competitive preference to proposals that include innovative strategies, practices, or programs to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students.

Proposals must focus on particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes and increase graduation rates for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

8. Innovations That Serve Schools In Rural Leas

USDE proposes to give competitive preference to proposals that focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools.

Proposals must include practices, strategies, or programs that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and school leader effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

X. Cost Effectiveness as a Rating Factor and Number of Students to Be Served

USDE believes that an important aspect of evaluating applications under the Investing in Innovation Fund is assessing the extent to which a proposal is feasible and can be brought to scale in a cost-effective manner.

To judge the cost-effectiveness of a proposed project, USDE proposes that

- (1) applicants provide estimated start-up and operating costs per student (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project,
- (2) as well as for the applicant to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students for Development Grants and Validation Grants; and to reach 100,000, 500,000, and 1,000,000 students for Scale-up Grants.

XI. Eligibility

Eligible applicants: Entities eligible to apply for Investing in Innovation Fund grants include:

- (a) an LEA or
- (b) a partnership between a nonprofit organization and
 - (1) one or more LEAs, or
 - (2) a consortium of schools.

Eligibility requirements: To be eligible for an award, an eligible applicant (LEA or partnership) must meet several statutory requirements and one additional requirement.

To be eligible for an award, an applicant (LEA or Partnership) must:

- (1) Have significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in ESEA/NCLB (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities).
- (2) Have exceeded the State's annual measurable objectives consistent with section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA/NCLB for two or more consecutive years or have demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement for all groups of students described in that section through another measure;
- (3) Have made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and school leaders, as demonstrated with other meaningful data;
- (4) Demonstrate that they have established partnerships with the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, and that the private sector will provide matching funds in order to help bring results to scale; and
- (5) In the case of a nonprofit organization, it must provide in its application the names of the LEAs with which it will partner, or the names of the schools in the consortium with which it will partner.

If a nonprofit organization applicant intends to partner with additional LEAs or schools that are not named in its application, it must describe in its application the demographics and other

characteristics of these LEAs and schools and the process it will use to select them as partners. An applicant must identify its specific partners before a grant award will be made.

Federal Register Notice: *At the time of publication of this notice, the pending House and Senate appropriations bills would, if enacted, make technical changes to provisions of the authorizing legislation i3 program.*

These changes would modify the eligibility by:

- (1) making minor alterations to the sections concerning the basis for awards and the special eligibility rule, and*
- (2) removing the reference to State measurable annual achievement objectives.*

In addition to these minor changes to the eligibility requirements, enactment of the proposed legislation would authorize eligible entities that include a partnership with a nonprofit organization, to make subgrants within the partnership.

Assistant Deputy Secretary Jim Shelton: *"In the original statute the eligibility requirement is spelled out very clearly, that the districts that were applying had to make two years of consecutive AYP. There actually is proposed language in both the house incidental appropriations bill which moves away from the AYP requirement focusing much more on student achievement and growth.*

And so we anticipate that by the time the actual application is let, there may be a different eligibility requirement that would not include AYP. However this notice reflects the current law, it does include the AYP requirement and until the time as that - the other language is adopted. We need to actually go ahead with the assumption that that is going to be the case."

XII. Note about Eligibility for an Entity that Includes a Nonprofit Organization

To be eligible for an award, the statute requires that an application submitted by a nonprofit organization, in partnership with one or more LEAs or a consortium of schools, be considered to have met the eligibility requirements in paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) above in this notice, if the nonprofit organization has a record of meeting those requirements.

USDE is proposing that a nonprofit organization applicant be considered to have met these eligibility requirements through its record of work with an LEA.

Therefore, an applicant that is a nonprofit organization would not necessarily need to select as a partner for its Investing in Innovation Fund grant an LEA, or a consortium of schools that meets the eligibility requirements in paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) described above.

Rather, the nonprofit organization would have to demonstrate that it has a record of meeting those requirements through the assistance it has provided to one or more LEAs in the past.

XIII. Cost Sharing/Matching Funds From Private Sector Partners

To be eligible for an award, an applicant must demonstrate that it has established one or more partnerships with an entity or organization in the private sector, which may include philanthropic organizations, and that the entity or organization in the private sector will provide matching funds in order to help bring project results to scale. **An applicant must obtain matching funds or in-kind donations equal to at least 20 percent of its grant award.**

The Secretary may consider decreasing the 20 percent matching requirement in the most exceptional circumstances, on a case-by-case basis. An applicant that anticipates being unable to meet the 20 percent matching requirement must include in its application a request to the Secretary to reduce the matching level requirement, along with a statement of the basis for the request.

XIV. Evaluation Requirements

An applicant receiving funds under this program must comply with the requirements of any evaluation of the program conducted by the Department. In addition, an applicant is required to conduct an independent evaluation of its proposed project and must agree, along with its independent evaluator, to cooperate with any technical assistance provided by the Department or its contractor.

XV. Participation in “Communities of Practice”

Grantees will be required to participate in, organize, or facilitate, as appropriate, communities of practice for the Investing in Innovation Fund. A community of practice is a group of grantees that agrees to interact regularly to solve a persistent problem or improve practice in an area that is important to them. Establishment of communities of practice under the Investing in Innovation Fund will enable grantees to meet, discuss, and collaborate with each other regarding grantee projects.

XVI. Definitions

Consortium of schools means two or more public elementary or secondary schools acting collaboratively for the purpose of applying for and implementing an Investing in Innovation Fund grant jointly with an eligible nonprofit organization.

Nonprofit organization means an entity that meets the definition of “nonprofit” under 34 CFR 77.1(c), or an institution of higher education as defined by section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

Strong evidence means evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and studies that in total include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the State, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity).

The following are examples of strong evidence:

- (1) more than one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (as defined in this notice) or well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (as defined in this notice) that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program; or
- (2) one large, well-designed and well-implemented randomized controlled, multisite trial that supports the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program.

Moderate evidence means evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity), or studies with high external validity but moderate internal validity.

The following would constitute moderate evidence:

- (1) at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study supporting the effectiveness of the practice strategy, or program, with small sample sizes or other conditions of implementation or analysis that limit generalizability;
- (2) at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental study that does not demonstrate equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry but that has no other major flaws related to internal validity; or
- (3) correlational research with strong statistical controls for selection bias and for discerning the influence of internal factors.

Highly effective school leader means a principal or other school leader whose students, overall and for each subgroup as described in section 1111(b)(3)(C)(xiii) of the ESEA (i.e., economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, migrant students, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, student gender), demonstrate high rates (e.g., more than one grade level in an academic year) of student growth. Applicants may supplement this definition as they see fit so long as school leader effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth.

Highly effective teacher means a teacher whose students achieve high rates (e.g., more than one grade level in an academic year) of student growth. Applicants may supplement this definition as they see fit so long as teacher effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth.

High-need student means a student at risk of educational failure, or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who are far below grade level, who are over-age and under-credited, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a regular high school diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are limited English proficient.

Persistently low-performing schools means Title I schools in corrective action or restructuring in the State and the secondary schools (both middle and high schools) in the State that are equally as low-achieving as these Title I schools and are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds.

National level, as used in reference to a Scale-up grant, describes a project that is able to be effective in a wide variety of communities and student populations around the country, including rural and urban areas, as well as with different groups of students described in ESEA (i.e., economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, migrant students, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, student gender).

Regional level, as used in reference to a Scale-up or Validation grant, describes a project that is able to serve a variety of communities and student populations within a State or multiple States, including rural and urban areas, as well as with different groups of students described in ESEA (i.e., economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, migrant students, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, student gender)

Student achievement means, at a minimum--

- (a) For tested grades and subjects: A student's score on the State's assessments under ESEA and may also include other measures of learning, as appropriate, such as those described in paragraph (b) of this definition.
- (b) For non-tested grades and subjects: An alternative academic measure of student learning and performance (e.g., performance on interim assessments or on other classroom-based assessments; rates at which students are on track to graduate from high school; percentage of students enrolled and achieving at successful levels in Advanced Placement, pre-Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual-enrollment courses).

Student growth means the change in student achievement data for an individual student between two or more points in time. Growth may be measured by a variety of approaches, but any approach used must be statistically rigorous and based on student achievement data, and may also include other measures of student learning

XVII. Rating Criteria

The seven criteria by which applications would be judged are:

- 1. The Need For The Project And The Quality Of Its Design;**
- 2. The Strength Of Research, Significance And Magnitude Of Effect;**
- 3. The Experience Of The Applicant;**
- 4. The Quality The Project Evaluation;**
- 5. The Strategy And Capacity To Scale Up The Program;**
- 6. The Project's Sustainability; and**
- 7. The Quality Of The Management Plan And Personnel.**

XVIII. Proposed USDE i3 Time Line

Release of i3 Notice	10/9/2009
Public Comments Due	11/9/2009
Release of Final Notice	Late winter/early spring 2010
Development Pre-Applications Due	Spring 2010
Validation and Scale-Up Applications Due	Spring 2010
Development Full Applications Requested	Late spring/early summer 2010
Development Full Applications Due	Summer 2010
Awards for Validation and Scale-Up Grants	Late summer/early fall 2010
Awards for Development Grants	Late summer/early fall 2010

XIX. Invitation To Comment

USDE has invited public comments on the proposed i3 criteria, which must be received by USDE on or before November 9, 2009. Comments may be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal or via postal mail, commercial delivery, or hand delivery.

XX. Sources

All information in this document was taken from the following USDE sources:

Federal Register

October 9, 2009 (Volume 74, Number 195)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Docket ID ED-2009-OII-0012 - RIN 1855-AA06

Investing in Innovation

CFDA Numbers: 84.396A, 84.396B and 84.396C.

AGENCY: Office of Innovation and Improvement.

ACTION: Notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria.

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/E9-24387.htm>

USDE Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund - PowerPoint Presentation

October 2009

Transcript - USDE News Conference

October 6, 2009