

## APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS FOR CONGRESSIONALLY-DIRECTED GRANTS

Introduction: In the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008, Congress directed the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), FIPSE, U.S. Department of Education, to award grants to 333 identified institutions and organizations. As these awards do not result from the Department's regular peer review processes, *the U.S. Department of Education makes no judgment as to the merit or quality of these awards.*

The Department's role in the processing of Congressionally-directed awards is limited to the following: 1) negotiating the precise terms and conditions of the award, resulting in an approved grant application; and 2) monitoring the progress and budget of the grant project through review of progress and final reports and the closeout of the account.

Declining a Congressionally-directed grant: Institutions identified as recipients of Congressionally-directed grants may choose to decline the award. Typically, this occurs for one of two reasons: 1) institutional priorities have changed since the grant was solicited; or 2) the institution has a policy against acceptance of earmarked awards. To decline an award, a qualified representative of the recipient organization must send an e-mail to that effect to OPE's coordinator of Congressionally-directed grants, [Bette.Dow@ed.gov](mailto:Bette.Dow@ed.gov). The Department will then inform the Congressional sponsor that the award has been declined.

Preparing the Grant Application: The boundaries of your grant activities are set by the language used by Congress in defining your award, various government-wide regulations issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the rules and regulations of OPE, U. S. Department of Education. Staff will look to these three sources in determining whether your grant application can be approved.

Additional information on the interpretation of Congressional language and applicable OMB and Department of Education regulations follow in these materials.

Application Deadlines: **To ensure timely processing and prompt access to the grant funds, the Department of Education strongly suggests that all applications be submitted by March 31, 2008.** Applications will be processed in the order received. Assuming a grant application is submitted in conformity with the Congressional appropriations language and relevant regulations, **recipient institutions can generally expect that the review process will be completed within 4-6 weeks.** Program staff will set aside time to review applications immediately following the March 31, 2008 submission date, and OPE fully expects that applications submitted by that date will be reviewed and approved for implementation in mid-May 2008. Applications not submitted by March 31 will be processed as staff time permits.

Recipients who are unable to submit their completed applications by March 31, 2008, should contact [Bette.Dow@ed.gov](mailto:Bette.Dow@ed.gov) beforehand with an explanation and an estimate of when the application will be submitted.

All applications for FY 2008 Congressionally-directed grants must be processed, reviewed, and approved by September 30, 2008. **This deadline is absolute** -- earmarked funds will revert to the U.S. Treasury on October 1, 2008, if agreement on your application has not been reached by then.

Application Review Process: Upon receipt of your completed application through the Department's e-Grants system, the application will be printed and referred to an OPE program officer for review. That review will be limited to the factors noted above: 1) Does the application conform to the Congressional language in the appropriations bill? and 2) Does the application conform to the regulations of OMB and the Department of Education? Should questions arise, the reviewing program officer will communicate by e-mail or telephone with the project director listed on the title page of the application.

Once approved by a program officer, the application will be forwarded to the staff coordinator of Congressionally-directed grants. The coordinator's role is to examine all approved applications in order to ensure that each awardee is treated in a consistent fashion. Upon the coordinator's recommendation, the award will be placed on a "slate" with others for approval by appropriate authorities in the Department. There follows a week-long "Congressional notification period" in which your Congressional sponsor is informed that the grant application has been approved. Upon expiration of the Congressional notification period, Grant Award Notification (GAN) documents are printed and mailed to both the named project director and to whoever signed the title page of the grant application as the authorized institutional representative. *Receipt of the GAN signifies that the award has been properly made and the institution may begin to draw down funds from the grant.* Any public announcements of grant awards prior to receipt of the GAN are considered premature.

Applicants are advised that telephone calls and e-mails inquiring about the status of a submitted application are counter-productive. Department staff will contact the named project director if clarifications or changes in an application are required.