

exception to the rulemaking provisions of 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(1).

D. Michael Hutchinson,

Acting Chairman, Committee for the Implementation of Textile Agreements.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA No. 84.116N]

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education—Special Focus Competition (Invitational Priority: Institutional Cooperation and Student Mobility in Postsecondary Education between the United States, Canada and Mexico); Notice Inviting Application for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM: To provide grants to improve postsecondary education opportunities by focusing on problem areas or improvement approaches in postsecondary education.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This program is a Special Focus Competition pursuant to 34 CFR 630.11(b)(1) to support projects addressing a particular problem area or improvement approach in postsecondary education. The competition also includes an invitational priority to encourage proposals designed to support the formation of educational consortia of American, Canadian and Mexican institutions to encourage cooperation in the coordination of curricula, the exchange of students and the opening of educational opportunities throughout North America.

The invitational priority is issued in cooperation with Canada and Mexico. Canadian and Mexican institutions participating in any consortium proposal responding to the invitational priority may apply, respectively, to Human Resources Development Canada and the Mexican Bureau of University Development for additional funding under separate Canadian and Mexican competitions.

Eligible Applicants: Institutions of higher education or combinations of such institutions and other public and private nonprofit educational institutions and agencies.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: March 14, 1997.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: May 13, 1997.

Applications Available: December 2, 1996.

Available Funds: \$1,150,000.

Estimated Range of Awards: \$100,000–\$150,000, for three years.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$102,000, for three years.

Estimated Number of Awards: 10.

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

Project Period: Up to 36 months.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75 (except as noted in 34 CFR 630.4(a)(2)), 77, 79, 80, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) the regulations for this program in 34 CFR Part 630.

Priorities

Invitational Priorities

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1) and 34 CFR 630.11(b)(1), the Secretary is particularly interested in applications that meet the following invitational priority. However, an application that meets this invitational priority does not receive competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

Invitational Priority: Projects that support consortia of institutions of higher education that promote institutional cooperation and student mobility between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Selection Criteria

In evaluating applications for grants under this program competition, the Secretary uses the following selection criteria chosen from those listed in 34 CFR 630.32:

(a) **Significance for Postsecondary Education.** The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its significance in improving postsecondary education by determining the extent to which it would—

(1) Achieve the purposes of the program competition, as referenced in § 630.11(b)(1), by addressing a particular problem area or improvement approach in postsecondary education;

(2) Address an important problem or need;

(3) Represent an improvement upon, or important departure from, existing practice;

(4) Involve learner-centered improvements;

(5) Achieve far-reaching impact through improvements that will be useful in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings; and

(6) Increase the cost-effectiveness of services.

(b) **Feasibility.** The Secretary reviews each proposed project for its feasibility by determining the extent to which—

(1) The proposed project represents an appropriate response to the problem or need addressed;

(2) The applicant is capable of carrying out the proposed project, as evidenced by, for example—

(i) The applicant's understanding of the problem or need;

(ii) The quality of the project design, including objectives, approaches, and evaluation plan;

(iii) The adequacy of resources, including money, personnel, facilities, equipment, and supplies;

(iv) The qualifications of key personnel who would conduct the project; and

(v) The applicant's relevant prior experience;

(3) The applicant and any other participating organizations are committed to the success of the proposed project, as evidenced by, for example—

(i) Contribution of resources by the applicant and by participating organizations;

(ii) Their prior work in the area; and

(iii) The potential for continuation of the proposed project beyond the period of funding (unless the project would be self-terminating); and

(4) The proposed project demonstrates potential for dissemination to or adaptation by other organizations, and shows evidence of interest by potential users.

(c) **Appropriateness of funding projects.** The Secretary reviews each application to determine whether support of the proposed project by the Secretary is appropriate in terms of availability of other funding sources for the proposed activities.

In accordance with 34 CFR 630.32 the Secretary announces the methods that will be used in applying the selection criteria.

The Secretary gives equal weight to the selection criteria on significance, feasibility, and appropriateness. Within each of these criteria, the Secretary gives equal weight to each of the criteria listed above. In applying the criteria, the Secretary first analyzes an application in terms of each individual criterion. The Secretary then bases the final judgement of an application on an overall assessment of the degree to which the applicant addresses all selection criteria.

For Applications or Information Contact: Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), U.S. Department of Education, 7th and D Streets, S.W., Room 3100, ROB-3, Washington, D.C. 20202-5175. Telephone: (202) 708-5750 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday. Individuals may also request applications by submitting the name of

the competition, their name, and postal mailing address to the e-mail address (FIPSE@ED.GOV). By January 15, 1997, individuals will also be able to obtain the application text from the Internet address (http://www.ed.gov/prog_info/FIPSE/). 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; or on the Internet Gopher Server (at GOPHER://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.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1135-1135a-3.

Dated: November 18, 1996.

David A. Longanecker,
Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary
Education.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Energy Research Financial Assistance Program Notice 97-04; Natural and Accelerated Bioremediation Research Program

AGENCY: Office of Energy Research,
DOE.

ACTION: Notice inviting research grant
applications.

SUMMARY: The Office of Health and Environmental Research (OHER) of the Office of Energy Research (ER), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), hereby announces its interest in receiving applications for research grants in the Natural and Accelerated Bioremediation Research (NABIR) Program. The NABIR Program is made up of the following scientific research elements: Acceleration; Assessment; Biogeochemical Dynamics; Biomolecular Science and Engineering; Biotransformation and Biodegradation; Community Dynamics and Microbial Ecology, and System Engineering, Integration, Prediction, and Optimization. The NABIR program also includes a social-legal element called Bioremediation and its Social Implications and Concerns (BASIC). Grant applications are being solicited in

each of the first six scientific research elements, as well as in the BASIC element, but not in the System Engineering, Integration, Prediction, and Optimization element.

DATES: Applicants are encouraged (but not required) to submit a preliminary application for programmatic review. Early submission of preliminary applications is encouraged, to allow time for meaningful dialogue. A brief preliminary application should consist of two to three pages of narrative describing the research objectives and methods of accomplishment together with a brief summary of the principal investigator's publication and research background; only one copy is required. The deadline for receipt of formal applications is 4:30 p.m., E.S.T., January 30, 1997, to be accepted for merit review and to permit timely consideration for award in fiscal year 1997. An original and seven copies of the application must be submitted; however, applicants are requested not to submit multiple applications using more than one delivery or mail service.

ADDRESSES: If submitting a preliminary application, referencing Program Notice 97-04, it should be sent e-mail to john.houghton@oer.doe.gov. Formal applications referencing Program Notice 97-04 on the cover page must be forwarded to: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Research, Grants and Contracts Division, ER-64, 19901 Germantown Road, Germantown, MD 20874-1290, ATTN: Program Notice 97-04. This address must also be used when submitting applications by U.S. Postal Service Express Mail or any other commercial overnight delivery service, or when hand-carried by the applicant.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. John Houghton, Environmental Sciences Division, ER-74, Office of Health and Environmental Research, Office of Energy Research, U.S. Department of Energy, 19901 Germantown Road, Germantown, MD 20874-1290, telephone (301) 903-8288, e-mail john.houghton@oer.doe.gov, fax (301) 903-8519.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The mission of the NABIR Program is to provide the scientific understanding needed to use natural processes and to develop new methods to accelerate those processes for the bioremediation of contaminated soils, sediments, and groundwater at DOE facilities. The program will be implemented through seven interrelated scientific research elements (Acceleration, Assessment, Biogeochemical Dynamics, Biomolecular Science and Engineering, Biotransformation and Biodegradation,

Community Dynamics and Microbial Ecology, and System Engineering, Integration, Prediction, and Optimization); and a social and legal element called Bioremediation and its Social Implications and Concerns (BASIC). A document entitled Natural and Accelerated Bioremediation Research Program Plan (DOE/ER-0659T) contains an initial planning description of the NABIR Program and each of the science elements. It is available via the Internet using the following web site address: <http://www.er.doe.gov/production/oher/nabir/cover.html>. The NABIR Program Plan is also available from the Office of Scientific and Technical Information, P.O. Box 62, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 (DOE and DOE grantees only) and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Technology Administration, National Technical Information Service, Springfield, VA 22161, (703) 487-4650 (public source). Additional information about NABIR, such as references to infrastructure that could be available to the research community, can be accessed from the NABIR Homepage: <http://www.lbl.gov/NABIR/>. Each scientific research element is directed by a program manager from OHER, who is responsible for providing support and overall direction for the element, including determining the relevance of the proposed research to the goals and objectives of the program element to the NABIR and other DOE programs. The NABIR program also has Science Team Leaders, selected through a previous peer review process, who will provide scientific leadership and coordination to the community of NABIR investigators.

Program Focus

The NABIR Program supports long-term, hypothesis-driven research directed at specific topics that will provide the understanding necessary to develop effective new technologies for DOE site cleanup. This research will help determine the future viability of bioremediation technologies at the DOE sites. The NABIR Program will not support research to evaluate the risk to humans or to the environment. Although the program is directed at specific goals, it supports research that is more fundamental in nature than demonstration projects.

The initial theme for the NABIR Program will be an emphasis on field-scale research and metal and radionuclide contamination, specifically on the metals and radionuclides associated with weapons production. However, the research program will support laboratory, theoretical, modeling, and other non-field research