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MEMORANDUM

TO: **Interested Parties**
FROM: **Penn Hill Group**
DATE: **April 12, 2013**
SUBJECT: **Final Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria for the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3), and the FY 2013 Competition for i3 Development Grants**

Background

On March 27, the Department of Education published in the Federal Register a “[Notice of Final Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria](#)” (NFP) for the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and a [Notice Inviting Applications](#) (NIA) for i3 Development grants. As in the past couple years, the Department will conduct the FY 2013 Development grants competition through a two-staged process, with applicants first submitting brief (up to seven-page) pre-applications, and applicants making it through the pre-application phase then submitting full applications. **The deadline for pre-applications is April 26 ([pre-application package](#))**, and organizations planning to submit a pre-application are asked (but not required) to **submit a notice of intent to apply by April 16.**¹ The Department expects to publish application notices for the other two i3 grant categories – Scale-up grants and Validation grants – later this spring.

The purpose of this memo is to summarize (1) the most significant elements of the NFP, focusing particularly on changes to the proposed priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria that the Department published in December; and (2) the most significant elements of the NIA.

NOTICE OF FINAL PRIORITIES, REQUIREMENTS, DEFINITIONS, AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Priorities

The December 15 Notice of Proposed Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria (NPP) proposed 10 priorities for use in the i3 competitions. Most of these priorities also included sub-priorities that the Department could include or not include in individual competitions. For example, proposed priority #1, Improving the Effectiveness of Teachers and Principals, included nine different sub-priorities (developing new methods of recruitment,

¹ The Department’s website also indicates that ED intends to post a pre-recorded webinar on the Development grants competition during the week of April 8, but as of the date of this memo no additional information was available. Interested parties interested should track the website at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html>.

developing models of induction support, creating career pathways, etc.) that the Department could choose from in running a competition.

Note also that, as is generally the case with NPPs, the original notice did not describe how the Department would use each of the proposed priorities. The Department's general regulations allow ED to establish for a competition: (1) "absolute priorities," which means that only applications that address a priority (or one of the absolute priorities used in a competition) will be considered; (2) "competitive preference priorities," which means that applications meeting the priority receive extra points in the grant competition; and (3) "invitational priorities," which are areas of activity or emphasis that are of particular interest to the Secretary, but applicants addressing them receive no special consideration. When it launches a competition, the Department decides whether to make a priority absolute, competitive, or invitational, and it is not required to take public comment on that decision.

The NFP includes 11 priorities – the 10 original ones and a priority for novice applicants – and makes changes to some of the sub-priorities. The 11 final priorities, and highlights of significant changes, are as follows:

1. Improving the Effectiveness of Teachers and Principals – *NFP (1) clarifies that grantees may use program funds for both developing and implementing (not just developing) models of recruitment, preparation, etc.; (2) specifies that various activities must be evidence-based; and (3) adds a new sub-priority on principal preparation.*
2. Improving Low-Performing Schools – *NFP (1) adds a sub-priority on supporting turnaround efforts in secondary schools; (2) replaces the proposed sub-priority on developing the capacity of external partners with a sub-priority on supporting turnaround efforts by increasing access to external partners; (3) revises the sub-priority on changing a school's organizational design to require that these changes include differentiating staff roles and extending and enhancing instructional time; and (4) changes the sub-priority on wraparound services to a broader sub-priority on providing programs, supports and strategies that improve students' non-cognitive abilities, enhance student engagement in learning, or mitigate the effects of poverty.*
3. Improving Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education – *NFP clarifies that the sub-priority on out-of-school and extended-day programs encompasses activities that extend the day, week or year, as well as before-school, after-school, and summer-learning programs.*
4. Improving Academic Outcomes for Students with Disabilities—*NFP includes new language on implementing coherent systems of support, designing and implementing strategies for educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings, and improving both secondary and postsecondary data collection (as opposed to just postsecondary in the original) on academic and related student outcomes.*
5. Improving Academic Outcomes for English Learners -- *NFP makes a minor change in the sub-priority on teacher evaluation to clarify that it covers teachers of students who are currently and were formerly English Learners.*

6. Improving Parental and Family Engagement – *NFP makes only minor changes in the original text.*
7. Improving Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity – *No changes.*
8. Effective Use of Technology -- *NFP includes language on using technology to provide personalized learning experiences and to close achievement gaps, and offers “embedded, real-time assessment and feedback to students and teachers” as an example of an activity that could be supported under the sub-priority on integration of technology with the implementation of rigorous standards.*
9. Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practices – *NFP makes minor changes in the title and language of this priority to clarify that it is about supporting broad adoption of effective practices in different learning environments and with diverse learners.*
10. Serving Rural Communities – *No changes.*
11. Supporting Novice Applicants – *Added in the NFP. Provides a priority to applicants that have never directly received an i3 grant.*

Requirements

The program requirements in the NFP are the same as those proposed in the December notice. In brief:

- All i3 grants must be designed to implement practices that will improve achievement or other outcomes for high-need students.
- All grants must implement practices that serve K-12 students, although practices that begin in kindergarten (and then extend services or support into the elementary grades) or serve postsecondary students (but begin in the secondary grades or earlier) are permitted.
- The eligible applicants are: (1) LEAs; and (2) partnerships between (a) nonprofit organizations that have a record of raising achievement, closing achievement gaps, or improving other student outcomes and (b) one or more LEAs or a consortium of schools.
- All grantees must meet matching requirements, as specified in the specific notice inviting applications.
- Applicants must meet the evidence standard applicable to the specific grant category: “evidence of promise” or “strong theory” for Development grants; “moderate evidence of effectiveness” for Validation grants; and “strong evidence of effectiveness” for Scale-up grants.
- No grantee may receive more than two new grants under a single category in a single year, and no grantee may receive, in any two-year period, more than one Scale-up or Validation grant. Further, no grantee may receive in a single year new i3 grants that total an amount greater than the maximum award for a Scale-up grant and the maximum amount for a Validation grant.
- Each grantee must conduct an independent evaluation subject to several requirements described in the notice.

Definitions

The Department made only very minor changes to the definitions proposed in the December notice. As we described in more detail in our January 9 memo on the NPP, the program will now be subject to new definitions of “evidence of promise,” “moderate evidence or promise,” “strong evidence of promise,” and “strong theory” that are somewhat more detailed and prescriptive than the definitions used in past i3 competitions. The evidentiary standards are also more clearly tied to the standards used by the What Works Clearinghouse.

Selection Criteria

The Department received no comments on the criteria proposed in the December notice, and made no changes. The selection criteria are close to those used in previous i3 competitions. In conducting i3 competitions, the Department may use any mix of the i3-specific criteria and selection criteria from the Department’s general (EDGAR) regulations.

NOTICE INVITING APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Priorities

The application notice for Development grants specifies eight absolute priorities for the FY 2013 competition. Applicants must address one of the first seven absolute priorities, as well as one of the applicable sub-priorities, in order to be considered for an award. Note that this requirement also applies to applicants covered by the eighth selected priority, Serving Rural Communities – they must also address one of the other seven. The structuring of the competition in this manner will, in essence, allow the Department to run a sheltered competition for applicants that would carry out a project in a rural area that addresses one of the other seven priorities. The competition includes no competitive priorities or invitational priorities.

The absolute priorities and associated sub-priorities that the Department has selected for this competition are²:

1. Improving the Effectiveness of Teachers and Principals

- Increasing the equitable access to effective teachers for low-income and high need students
- Extending highly effective teachers’ reach to serve more students

2. Improving Low-Performing Schools³

² The sub-priorities that the Department has elected to use for the FY 2013 Development grants competition are listed immediately under the priority. The descriptions of those sub-priorities are summarized here; parties interested in a particular sub-priority should review the actual language in the Federal Register.

³ In order to qualify for this priority, an applicant must propose to serve schools that are among the lowest-performing schools in the State on academic measures, that have the largest performance gaps among student subgroups in the schools of the State, or that have the lowest graduation rates or the highest graduation-rate gaps

- Recruiting, developing, or retaining highly effective staff to work in low-performing schools
- Implementing programs, supports, or other strategies that improve students' non-cognitive abilities and enhance student engagement in learning or mitigate the effects of poverty

3. Improving Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

- Redesigning STEM course content and instructional practices to engage students and increase student achievement

4. Improving Academic Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

- Designing and implementing systems that define and measure the effectiveness of special education teachers and related service providers
- Designing and implementing strategies that improve student achievement for students with disabilities in inclusive settings

5. Improving Academic Outcomes for English Learners

- Aligning and implementing the curriculum and instruction used in grades 6-12 for language development and content courses in order to provide sufficient exposure to, engagement in, and acquisition of academic language and literacy practices necessary for English learners to be college- and career-ready

6. Improving Parental and Family Engagement

- Developing and implementing initiatives that train parents and families in the skills and strategies that will support students in improving academic outcomes
- Developing tools or practices that provide students and parents with improved, ongoing access to and use of data and other information about students' progress and performance

7. Effective Use of Technology

- Providing access to learning experiences that are personalized, adaptive, and self-improving
- Developing and implementing technology-enabled strategies for teaching and learning concepts and content that are difficult to teach using traditional approaches

among the secondary schools in the State. In addition, projects must complement the broader turnaround efforts underway in those schools.

8. Serving Rural Communities. This priority has no sub-priorities but goes to applicants that address one of the other priorities and propose to students a majority of whom are enrolled in the schools of rural LEAs.

Other Provisions and Information

The definitions, requirements, and selection criteria applicable to this competition are as provided for in the NFP. Note that, as we described above, an application for a Development grant must be supported by “evidence of promise” or a “strong theory of evidence” as defined in the NFP.

The Department anticipates making 10-20 Development grants of up to \$3 million. The notice also provides an anticipated grant size of \$3 million. The project period will be 36 to 60 months. Grantees will be required to provide matching funds, obtained from private-sector organizations, equal to at least 15 percent of the Federal grant; however, the Secretary may consider reducing the matching requirement on a case-by-case basis.