

Archived Information

INTERPRETING THE LANGUAGE OF A CONGRESSIONALLY-DIRECTED GRANT

In most cases, the appropriations language authorizing your grant award contains specific limitations to which the recipient institution must adhere in using Congressionally-directed grant funds. The Department of Education is also bound by those limitations in processing your award. Congressional language will be read literally and no deviations from that language can be permitted in the absence of a separate, correcting amendment passed by Congress.

Please note that materials submitted to Congressional sponsors in the process of soliciting an earmark award are not binding – only the actual language of the appropriations bill will be used to determine Congressional intent.

The Department assumes that Congress has chosen its appropriations language with precision; consequently, for example, an application for an award “to support the nursing and sociology programs” will be expected to provide support for both of these academic programs (in whatever proportions), not one or the other. Likewise, an award “for equipment” must be spent entirely on equipment purchases and related expenses (see materials to follow). Some Congressionally-directed awards list quite specific purposes to which the award must be applied; others offer only general guidance or none at all.

For example:

-- If the appropriations language says a grant is to be made to an institution for “equipment and program support,” that institution can choose which equipment and programs to support with the grant funds.

-- If the appropriations language says that a grant is to be awarded for “library improvements, including equipment and technology,” the Department can only approve funding for equipment to be used in the library; equipment and technology needed elsewhere on the campus may not be purchased with this award.

-- If the appropriations language says that a grant is to be awarded to “Texas State University System,” the Department can only award that grant to the System office; the grant cannot be made to any particular institution within that System, or to any other institution or organization.

Should you have questions about how your appropriations language will be interpreted, contact the coordinator of directed grants, david.johnson@ed.gov.