

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS FOR CONGRESSIONALLY-DIRECTED GRANTS

Introduction: In the FY 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill, Congress directed the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), U.S. Department of Education, to award grants to 418 identified institutions and organizations.

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

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) changes in institutional priorities 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, david.johnson@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, and various government-wide regulations issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Additional information on the interpretation of Congressional language and applicable OMB and Department of Education regulations follows 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 18, 2005.** 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 18, 2005, submission date, and OPE fully expects that applications submitted by that date will be reviewed and approved for implementation beginning May 1, 2005. Applications not submitted by March 18 will be processed as staff time permits.

Recipients who are unable to submit their completed applications by March 18, 2005, should contact david.johnson@ed.gov beforehand with an explanation and an estimate of when the application will be submitted.

All applications for FY 2005 Congressionally-directed grants must be processed, reviewed and approved by September 30, 2005. This deadline is absolute -- grant awards

will be unavailable for draw down or obligation 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-Grant 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 Department's regulations and the guidelines issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)? 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 his 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 as 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 whomever 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.*