REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION CONSORTIA (R*TECS)

Goal: To improve teaching and learning by providing technical assistance and professional development for the effective use of educational technology.

Relationship of Program to Volume 1, Department-wide Objectives: R*TECs provide technical assistance to support strategic plan Objective 1.1 (states develop and implement standards), Objective 1.4 (talented and dedicated teachers), Objective 1.5 (families and communities), Objective 1.7 (technology), Objective 2.4 (special populations help), Objective 3.4 (lifelong learning), and Objective 4.3 (research, evaluation and improvement).
FY 2000—$10,000,000
FY 2001—$10,000,000 (Requested budget)

OBJECTIVE 1: PROMOTE EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND THE LEVERAGING AND COORDINATION OF OTHER RESOURCES.

Indicator 1.1 Recipients of R*TEC products, services and information-particularly those representing underserved schools: At least 85 percent of recipients (individuals or agencies) of the R*TEC services and products – including those developed and produced through the Consortia, collaboration among R*TECs, and strategic alliances – will indicate that these products and services are of high quality and meet their needs.

Targets and Performance Data			Assessment of Progress	Sources and Data Quality
*Percentage of R*TEC Clients in **FY 1999** who agree or strongly agree that R*TEC services and products are*			**Status:** FY 1999 data show target exceeded in the products area and targets nearly met in the services area. **Explanation:** R*TEC projects collect client ratings on a number of relevant elements. The data used in this report reflect an overall measure of quality and relevance to client needs. Closer analysis of the data reported by projects shows the following: • In all categories, the percentage of clients that strongly agree with a particular rating (rather than simply agree) has increased compared with FY 1998. • The ratings pertaining to impact were asked of all respondents, regardless of whether relevant to the service or product received; this resulted in a relatively large number of respondents who "neither agreed nor disagreed" with some of the statements. • Client satisfaction among those who work with underserved clients was generally equal or higher than among R*TEC clients overall.	**Source:** Second Annual Program Performance Report, FY 1999. *Frequency*: Annually. *Next Update:* 2000. **Validation Procedure:** Data supplied by individual R*TEC projects, through the work of external evaluators hired by the projects. No formal verification procedure applied. **Limitations of Data and Planned Improvements:** The program faces two distinct challenges in collecting reliable data. One is the lack of completely external sources of data on program performance (data are collected by the project evaluators). In FY 2001, the Department will begin external evaluation activities. The other is that there are slight variations in data collection practices and procedures across projects. Consistent methods and definitions will be developed and agreed to in FY 2000 and 2001. Furthermore, the 2001 projects will discuss capturing only the most relevant subset of quality and impact ratings for each service or product to be rated, thus providing a better picture of perceived impact. **See Challenges section below.
	Services (85% Baseline)	**Products (85% Baseline)**		
High Quality	84%	93%		
Relevant to Needs	74%	89%		
*Percentage of R*TEC Clients in **FY 1999** who agree or strongly agree that R*TEC services and products are useful for*				
Improving Student Learning	73%	83%		
Equitable Access	61%	67%		
Integrating Technology	71%	84%		
Making Better-Informed Decisions	70%	73%		

KEY STRATEGIES

Strategies Continued from 1999

- Disseminate high-quality information and resources on the effective planning and use of technology in education.
- Assess customer satisfaction about major areas of work, and document and evaluate performance
- Collaborate with SEAs, LEAs, and other educational entities to inform and support better planning, increased access to technologies, more advanced uses of technology, and enhanced instructional practice.
- Support increasing communication and collaboration among consortia and coordination with other programs, particularly those that focus on educational technology.
- Assess the value and impact of alliances (through surveys, focus groups, or other means of inquiry) and use the findings to improve alliances over time.

New or Strengthened Strategies

- To address concerns about data reliability, the Department will start engaging in some external evaluation activities starting with the upcoming new cycle of R*TEC grants. The Department is also meeting with present R*TEC projects in early 2000 to discuss better consistency in data collection practices between projects; the outcome of these discussions will also affect the new cycle of grantees who will receive awards in 2000.
- To address the continued challenges faced by the program with respect to a rapidly evolving field, the Department is fostering continued sharing among R*TEC and with other experts. Furthermore, the need to keep abreast of latest technological developments has been stressed in the recompetition application package for prospective grantees to consider.
- To address concerns regarding the very limited resources available to R*TECs, the Department continues to engage each project in conversations about the most effective service delivery strategies, and in ensuring tha key products and services developed by one R*TEC can become available and known beyond their region.

HOW THIS PROGRAM COORDINATES WITH OTHER FEDERAL ACTIVITIES

- Many important educational technology initiatives by all levels of government as well as the private sector have been launched since inception of the R*TEC program. R*TEC grantees have played a variety of roles in order to leverage resources to benefit customers: collaborators, providing technical assistance and other forms of support, linking with other resources, playing an advisory or facilitator role, acting as catalysts, conveners, building and sustaining networks and playing an advocacy role (source: First Annual Program Performance Report, FY 1998).
- Specifically regarding collaboration and coordination with other federally funded technology-focused projects and programs, both Department staff and individual R*TEC projects have initiated collaboration or responded to requests for the same. We have included a few examples of programs that are not federally funded because of their importance to the field—the purposes of each initiative are known to the reader and are not described here in detail:
  - Department staff and staff at other agencies have consulted to coordinate an appropriate role for the R*TECs to help launch critical initiatives. As a result, R*TEC projects provided technical assistance and helped organize and host informational meetings. This has been the case for such programs as FCC's E-rate, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, the Technology Innovation Challenge Grant, the Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology Program, and HUD and Agriculture's Empowerment Zones initiative.
  - R*TEC projects, on their own initiative and while keeping Department staff informed, have initiated collaborations with such efforts as the Council of Chief State School Officers' work with state technology coordinators, Milken Foundation/Milken Exchange project to develop teacher competencies in the use of technology for teaching and learning, the International Society for Technology in Education's (ISTE's) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE's) initiatives on developing technology standards, and the National Science Foundation's Urban and Rural Systemic Initiatives.
  - R*TEC projects have actively participated as presenters at regional and national conferences.
    Additionally, R*TECs collaborate with State Education Agencies and other education representatives within states (e.g., universities, intermediate service units) to leverage educational technology resources.

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING PROGRAM GOAL

- The field is changing very rapidly in its adoption of educational technology infrastructures, and new initiatives are being launched rapidly at all levels of government and within communities. This requires frequent adjustments in R*TEC service delivery strategies and priorities setting efforts, as well as continuous professional development.
- The needs of the field are quite broad, and R*TECs are still learning how to leverage and target very limited resources within an extremely broad programmatic charter.

****Data Collection Practices**

Data collection practices have changed somewhat from 1998 to 1999 and while each set of data stands on its own, longitudinal comparisons between these two years may not be entirely meaningful. Conversations with projects planned for early 2000 regarding consistency in data collection will likely result in some substantive adjustments for future years.

INDICATOR CHANGES

From FY 1999 Annual Plan (two years old)

Adjusted

- The four indicators that focused on products, services and client satisfaction were combined into one indicator that focuses on client satisfaction and captures many of the elements from the old plan. The projects still capture rather comprehensive data about the breadth of their work and its impact on customers, reporting the full set of data in their Annual Program Performance Report.

Dropped

- The two indicators specifically focusing on the leveraging and coordination of resources have been dropped from the plan submitted to Congress—data pertinent to this subject are still being captured by the projects through their system-wide collection and reported in their Annual Program Performance Report.

From FY 2000 Annual Plan (last year's)

Adjusted

- Indicator 1.1 (performance measures) now includes customer's assessment of the areas in which R*TECs performance will have an impact.

Dropped—None.

New—None.