

“Investing in Innovation” (i3) Program Overview

The U.S. Department of Education expects to fund \$650 million in grants through the “Investing in Innovation” (i3) Program, the competitive federal stimulus funding for education. On October 9, 2009, the Department of Education published the “Notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria” in the Federal Register. The purpose of the i3 grant program is to expand and take to scale the most promising practices, strategies and programs to improve student achievement. Eligible grant applicants include an LEA or a nonprofit organization that is working in collaboration with one or more LEAs or with a consortium of schools. The grant competition is slated for spring 2010.

This program overview starts with a general overview of the Investing in Innovation (i3) program. A summary of the absolute and competitive priorities follows, starting on page 3 of this document. This includes a discussion of how the AVID system may address each of the absolute and competitive priorities. The program overview concludes with a summary of the grant selection criteria, starting on page 6.

For more information about the i3 Program, please contact the AVID Division Director in your region. Contact information is provided on page 10 of this summary.

General Overview

Program Purpose

The purpose of the i3 program is to provide competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement, in order to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement or student growth for high-need students, as well as to promote school readiness, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and improve teacher and school leader effectiveness. Grants will allow eligible entities to expand their work, identify, document and share best practices, and take successful practices to scale.

Grant Eligibility

Eligible entities for i3 grants include (1) an LEA, or (2) a nonprofit organization working in collaboration with one or more LEAs or with a consortium of schools. To be eligible for an award, an applicant must have (1) significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities), (2) have exceeded the State’s annual measurable objectives for two or more consecutive years or have demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement for all groups of students through another measure, (3) have made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and school leaders, as

demonstrated with other meaningful data; and (4) have established partnerships with private sector organizations that will provide matching funds to help bring results to scale.

Types of Grants

Three types of grants will be available: (1) *Development grants* of up to \$5 million for promising programs; (2) *Validation grants* of up to \$30 million for existing programs that have moderate research evidence of their efficacy, and that may have substantial and important impacts on student achievement; and (3) *Scale-up grants* of up to \$50 million for existing programs that have strong research evidence of substantial and important impacts on student achievement. The program funding must be obligated by September 30, 2010.

The three types of grants available are summarized in the following table.

	Development Grant	Validation Grant	Scale Up Grant
Estimated funding	Up to \$5 million	Up to \$30 million	Up to \$50 million
Evidence required	Reasonable research-based findings or theories	Moderate – either high internal validity and medium external validity, or vice versa	Strong – both high internal validity and high external validity
Scaling required	Further develop and scale	Able to be scaled to the regional or state level	Able to be scaled to the national, regional, or state level

Matching Requirements

The applicant must demonstrate that they have established one or more partnerships with an entity or organization in the private sector (which may include philanthropic organizations). To help bring project results to scale, the private sector partners must provide matching funds or in-kind donations equal to at least 20% of the grant award.

Proposed Absolute Priorities and Competitive Priorities
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Each application must respond to at least one of the proposed absolute priorities. Applications that also respond to one or more of the competitive priorities may earn extra points on their proposal and are therefore more likely to be funded. The absolute and competitive priorities are listed in the following table; more detailed descriptions are provided following the table.

<i>Proposed Absolute Priorities</i>
1. Innovations that Support Effective Teachers and School Leaders
2. Innovations that Improve the Use of Data
3. Innovations that Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High-Quality Assessments
4. Innovations that Turn Around Persistently Low-Performing Schools
<i>Proposed Competitive Priorities</i>
5. Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes
6. Innovations that Support College Access and Success
7. Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students
8. Innovations that Serve Schools in Rural LEAs

Proposed Absolute Priorities (must respond to at least one in the application):

1. ***Innovations that Support Effective Teachers and School Leaders***: practices, strategies, or programs that increase the number or percentages of highly effective teachers and school leaders or reduce the number or percentages of ineffective teachers and school leaders, especially for high-need students, by identifying, recruiting, developing, placing, rewarding, and retaining highly effective teachers and school leaders (or removing ineffective teachers and school leaders). In such initiatives, teacher or school leader effectiveness should be determined by an evaluation system that is rigorous, transparent, and fair; performance should be differentiated using multiple rating categories of effectiveness; multiple measures of teachers' effectiveness should be taken into account, with data on student growth as a significant factor; and the measures should be designed and developed with teacher involvement.

Discussion: AVID does not directly address all of the components of this absolute priority. The AVID system does increase the number of highly effective teachers by providing professional development in proven best practices for student success. However, AVID does not address the evaluation of teacher or school leader effectiveness. Therefore, AVID may be included in a proposal addressing this absolute priority as a strategy to increase teacher effectiveness, but not as a component of a program to evaluate teacher performance.

2. ***Innovations that Improve the Use of Data***: strategies, practices, or programs that encourage and facilitate the evaluation, analysis, and use of student achievement or student growth data

by educators, families, and other stakeholders in order to inform decision-making; improve student achievement or student growth, and teacher, school leader, school, or LEA performance and productivity; or enable data aggregation, analysis, and research. Where applicable, these data would be disaggregated using student subgroups (economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, migrant students, students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, student gender).

Discussion: AVID does not directly address this absolute priority, although the AVID system requires data collection and encourages the review and use of data to inform and improve instructional practice.

3. ***Innovations that Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High-Quality Assessments:*** practices, strategies, or programs that support States' efforts to transition to college- and career readiness standards and assessments, including curricular and instructional practices, strategies, or programs in core academic subjects that are aligned with high academic content and achievement standards and with high-quality assessments based on those standards. Proposals may include practices, strategies, or programs that: (a) increase the success of under-represented student populations in academically rigorous courses and programs (such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses; dual enrollment programs; early college high schools; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses, especially those that incorporate rigorous and relevant project-, inquiry-, or design-based contextual learning opportunities); (b) increase the development and use of formative assessments or interim assessments, or other performance-based tools and metrics that are aligned with student content and academic achievement standards; or (c) translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practices that meet the needs of all students, including high-need students.

Discussion: AVID is a clear fit within this absolute priority, particularly under subsection (a), increasing success of under-represented students.

4. ***Innovations that Turn Around Persistently Low-Performing Schools:*** strategies, practices, or programs that turn around persistently low-performing schools through either whole-school reform or targeted approaches to reform. Applicants addressing this priority must focus on either: (a) Whole-school reform, such as comprehensive interventions to assist, augment, or replace persistently low-performing schools; or (b) Targeted approaches to reform, including, but not limited to: (1) providing more time for students to learn core academic content by expanding the school day, school week, or the school year, or by increasing instructional time for core academic subjects during the day and in the summer; (2) integrating student supports to address nonacademic barriers to student achievement; or (3) creating multiple pathways for students to earn regular high school diplomas (e.g., transfer schools, awarding credit based on demonstrated evidence of student competency, offering dual enrollment options).

Discussion: AVID could be a strong component for a grant proposal focused on low-performing schools. Schoolwide AVID could be a component of a whole-school reform intervention that includes intensive professional development for all teachers. AVID also

could be a component of targeted approaches to reform, particularly under subsection (b)(2) integrating student supports to address nonacademic barriers. AVID provides integrated student support that addresses both academic and nonacademic barriers (such as family commitment and support) to student achievement.

Proposed Competitive Preference Priorities (extra points):

5. ***Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes***: practices, strategies, or programs to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. Proposals must focus on (a) improving young children’s school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects; (b) improving and aligning developmental milestones and standards with appropriate outcome measures; and (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.

Discussion: AVID does not directly address this competitive priority.

6. ***Innovations that Support College Access and Success***: We propose to give competitive preference to proposals for practices, strategies, or programs that enable K-12 students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two or four-year college. Proposals must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that address students’ preparedness and expectations related to college; help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

Discussion: The AVID system directly addresses this competitive preference priority. The AVID Elective in grades 7-12 is a near-perfect match, and AVID classes have specific curriculum and instruction to address the components listed. Implementing schoolwide AVID (where all teachers complete AVID training) across a district would be a strong component of a proposal under this competitive priority. The Department of Education refers to K-12 students; AVID Elementary (grades 4-6) could be a cornerstone of a plan that builds a systemwide approach from elementary to high school.

7. ***Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students***: innovative strategies, practices, or programs to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. Proposals must focus on particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes and increase graduation rates for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

Discussion: School districts can address this competitive priority by implementing the AVID ELL program for the middle and high school levels, which was developed with support from the Irvine Foundation. Demonstration projects currently underway in California and Texas are implementing and refining this expansion work. AVID Elementary, designed for all

students in grades 4-6, directly addresses the needs of limited English proficient students and students with disabilities through embedded best teaching practices and strategies.

8. ***Innovations that Serve Schools in Rural LEAs***: focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. Proposals must include practices, strategies, or programs that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and school leader effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

Discussion: AVID has the structure to serve small rural schools districts. Additional training costs may be incurred due to travel requirements.

Proposed Selection Criteria for Grant Awards

The Department of Education published the proposed selection criteria for each type of grant in the October 9, 2009 “Notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria.” The Department of Education has indicated that it anticipates using a two-tier process to review the applications for Development grants. This two-tier review would include a pre-application process to select applicants that would be invited to submit a full application. The pre-application process is expected to require an applicant to submit a short summary of its proposed project. The Department of Education expects to use some or all of the published selection criteria to rate the proposed projects, but with a particular focus on the need for the project and quality of the project design and the strength of research, significance of effect, and magnitude of effect in support of the proposed project. Applicants that are rated highly in the pre-application phase would be invited to submit a full application, from which the awards for Development grants would be made.

The selection criteria are generally similar for the three types of grants, differing mainly in the level of evidence to be presented (section B below) and the Strategy and Capacity to Scale discussion (see section E below). Therefore, the selection criteria for the Scale-up Grants only are summarized below. Please see the “Notice of proposed priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria” (which is posted on the AVID Center website) for detail about the selection criteria for the Validation and Development grants.

A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design

In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).

2. The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy (i.e., logic model), with actions that are (i) aligned with the priorities the applicant is seeking to meet, and (ii) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect

The Secretary considers the strength of the existing research evidence and the significance of effect in support of the proposed project, as well as the magnitude of the effect on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, or increasing high school graduation rates. Applicants may also demonstrate success through an intermediate variable that is directly correlated with improving these outcomes, such as teacher or school leader effectiveness, or improvements in school climate.

In determining the strength of the existing research evidence and the significance of effect to support the proposed project, as well as the magnitude of the effect, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that there is strong evidence that the proposed practice, strategy, or program will have a statistically significant effect on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, or increasing high school graduation rates, and that the effect will be substantial and important.
2. The importance and magnitude of the effect expected to be obtained by the proposed project, including the extent to which the project will substantially and measurably improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, or increase high school graduation rates. The evidence in support of the importance and magnitude of the effect would be the research-based evidence provided by the applicant to support the proposed project.

C. Experience of the Applicant

In determining the experience of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The past performance of the applicant in implementing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.
2. The extent to which an applicant provides information and data demonstrating that it has (or has supported an LEA in taking actions that have)—
 - a. Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA;
 - b. Exceeded the State's annual measurable objectives consistent with section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA for two or more consecutive years or demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement for all groups of students described in that section

through another measure, such as measures described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA (i.e., the National Assessment of Educational Progress); and

- c. Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and school leaders, as demonstrated with other meaningful data.

D. Quality of the Project Evaluation

In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include an experimental study or, if a well-designed experimental study of the project cannot be conducted, the extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well-designed quasi-experimental study.
2. The extent to which, for either an experimental study or quasi-experimental study, the study will be conducted of the practice, strategy, or program as implemented at scale.
3. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
4. The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate replication or testing in other settings.
5. The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to effectively carry out the project evaluation.
6. The extent to which the proposed evaluation is rigorous, independent, and neither the program developer nor the project implementer is evaluating the impact of the project. Note: We encourage applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/idocviewer/doc.aspx?docid=19&tocid=1>; and (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/tech_methods/.

E. Strategy and Capacity to Scale

The Secretary considers the quality of the applicant's strategy and capacity to bring the proposed project to scale on a national, regional, or State level. In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to scale, the Secretary considers:

1. The number of students to be reached by the proposed project and the applicant's capacity to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.

2. The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, management capacity) to bring the project to scale on a national, regional, or State level working directly, or through partners, either during or following the end of the grant period.
3. The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations. Evidence of this ability includes the proposed project's demonstrated success in multiple settings with different types of students, the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.
4. The applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes start-up and operating costs per student (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project, as well as for the applicant or others to reach 100,000, 500,000, and 1,000,000 students.
5. The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project to support replication.

F. Sustainability

In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the Scale-up grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of current and future partners; and evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success.
2. The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the LEA, schools, or nonprofit organization at the end of the Scale-up grant.

G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks, as well as plans for sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.
2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.

3. The qualifications, including relevant expertise and experience, of the project director and key personnel of the independent evaluator, especially in designing and conducting large-scale experimental and quasi-experimental studies of educational initiatives.

AVID Center Contact Information
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