

performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multi-year award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>.

4. *Performance Measures:* Under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), the Department has established a set of performance measures, including long-term measures, that are designed to yield information on various aspects of the effectiveness and quality of the Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program. These measures focus on the extent to which projects provide high-quality products and services, are relevant to improving outcomes for children with disabilities, and contribute to improving outcomes for children with disabilities. We will collect data on these measures from the project funded under this competition.

The grantee will be required to report information on its project's performance in annual reports to the Department (34 CFR 75.590).

VII. Agency Contact

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael Slade, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 4175, Potomac Center Plaza (PCP), Washington, DC 20202-2550. Telephone: (202) 245-7527.

If you use a TDD, call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

VIII. Other Information

Accessible Format: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotope, or computer diskette) by contacting the Grants and Contracts Services Team, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 5075, PCP, Washington, DC 20202-2550. Telephone: (202) 245-7363. If you use a TDD, call the FRS, toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

Electronic Access to This Document: You can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the **Federal Register**, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) on the Internet at the

following site: <http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister>.

To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at this site. If you have questions about using PDF, call the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), toll free, at 1-888-293-6498; or in the Washington, DC, area at (202) 512-1530.

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Delegation of Authority: The Secretary of Education has delegated authority to Andrew J. Pepin, Executive Administrator for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to perform the functions of the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Dated: May 28, 2009.

Andrew J. Pepin,

Executive Administrator for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. E9-12903 Filed 6-2-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; Technology and Media Services for Individuals With Disabilities—National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS); Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 84.327P.

DATES:

Applications Available: June 3, 2009.

Deadline for Transmittal of

Applications: July 6, 2009.

Deadline for Intergovernmental

Review: September 1, 2009.

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purposes of the Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program are to: (1) Improve results for children with disabilities by promoting the development, demonstration, and use of technology; (2) support educational media services activities designed to be of educational value in the classroom setting to children with disabilities; and (3) provide support for captioning and video description of educational materials that are appropriate for use in the classroom setting.

Priority: In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(v), this priority is from allowable activities specified in the statute or otherwise authorized in the statute (see sections 674 and 681(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. 1474 and 1481(d)).

Absolute Priority: For FY 2009 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, this priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3) we consider only applications that meet this priority.

This priority is:

Technology and Media Services for Individuals With Disabilities—NIMAS.

Background: The National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) was established by the Secretary of Education, pursuant to sections 612(a)(23)(A) and 674(e)(4) of IDEA, for publishers to create electronic files that can be used by States and accessible media producers (AMPs) to produce accessible versions of print instructional materials. Publishers must apply NIMAS in the production of electronic file sets for all print instructional materials, as defined in section 674(e)(3)(C) of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1474(e)(3)(C)), published after July 19, 2006. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that publishers use a common standard to create electronic files that facilitate the production of accurate and reliable accessible versions of instructional materials. The goal is to help increase the quality, availability, and timely delivery of print instructional materials in accessible formats to children in elementary and secondary schools who are blind or who have print disabilities.

The Department of Education (Department) funded the NIMAS Development Center in September 2004 and charged it with providing recommendations to the Department on revisions and updates to the technical specifications of NIMAS. These updates were needed to ensure that NIMAS remained current with technological advances, was consistent with updates to the Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) specification (DAISY is a worldwide standard for digital talking books), and addressed concerns that were identified during the implementation of NIMAS. The NIMAS Development Center also has developed technical clarification documents, conducted training and presentations, and contributed to the development of production and workflow models for publishers, distributors, AMPs, States, and local educational agencies (LEAs). Foremost among the NIMAS

Development Center's activities to promote, develop, and use technology related to making NIMAS a more effective standard has been its use of a NIMAS advisory board to address the challenges of maintaining alignment with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard upon which NIMAS is based and supporting the development and use of Mathematical Markup Language (MathML). The following Web site provides more information on the work of the NIMAS Development Center: <http://www.nimas.cast.org>.

The Department seeks to fund a center to continue some of the work of the NIMAS Development Center that was funded in 2004, including the provision of technical updates to NIMAS at least once during its five-year project period to ensure that state-of-the art technology is being used.

Priority: The purpose of this priority is to fund a cooperative agreement to support the establishment and operation of a NIMAS center (Center) that will maintain and update the technical specifications of NIMAS to ensure that children with blindness and other print disabilities will have access to as broad a range of print instructional materials as possible through the use of electronic file formatting technology.

To be considered for funding under this absolute priority, applicants must meet the application requirements contained in this priority. Any project funded under this absolute priority also must meet the programmatic and administrative requirements specified in the priority.

Application Requirements. An applicant must include in its application—

(a) A logic model that depicts, at a minimum, the goals, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. A logic model communicates how a project will achieve its outcomes and provides a framework for both the formative and summative evaluations of the project;

Note: The following Web site provides more information on logic models: <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm>.

(b) A plan to implement the activities described in the *Project Activities* section of this priority;

(c) A plan, linked to the proposed project's logic model, for a formative evaluation of the proposed project's activities. The plan must describe how the formative evaluation will use clear performance objectives to ensure continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project, including objective measures of progress in implementing the project and

ensuring the quality of products and services;

(d) A budget for a summative evaluation to be conducted by an independent third party;

(e) A budget for attendance at the following:

(1) A one day kick-off meeting to be held in Washington, DC, within four weeks after receipt of the award, and an annual planning meeting held in Washington, DC, with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Project Officer during each subsequent year of the project period.

(2) A three-day Project Directors' Conference in Washington, DC, during each year of the project period.

(3) A one-day trip annually to attend Department briefings, Department-sponsored conferences, and other meetings, as requested by OSEP.

Project Activities. To meet the requirements of this priority, the Center, at a minimum, must conduct the following activities:

Technical Assistance and Dissemination Activities.

(a) Facilitate and support the technical compatibility of the NIMAS file set with the National Instructional Materials Access Center's (NIMAC) distribution system, including the technologies employed by publishers and other production facilities to create both high-quality NIMAS files as well as accessible commercial products.

(b) Maintain a Web site that meets government or industry-recognized standards for accessibility and that links to the Web site operated by OSEP's Technical Assistance Coordination Center (TACC) and the Web site for each OSEP-funded project that supports the implementation of NIMAS.

(c) Prepare and disseminate to the Department (1) reports at least midway through the project period on issues identified regarding the implementation of NIMAS and (2) recommendations on revising the technical specifications of NIMAS no later than during the fourth year of the project period. In consultation with the OSEP Project Officer, make selected reports, documents, and other materials available to, at a minimum, publishers, software developers, and AMPs.

Leadership and Coordination Activities.

(a) Establish and maintain a Standards Board to recommend updates to the technical specifications of NIMAS, including the extent to which future versions of NIMAS should incorporate universal design features, and provide technical support to OSEP throughout the project period. At a minimum, the Standards Board must meet on an

annual basis in Washington, DC, and may meet more frequently through alternate means such as teleconferencing. The Standards Board must include: Technology experts; software engineers; accessible instructional materials (AIM) producers; and representatives from the publishing industry, the DAISY consortium, the Access Board, NIMAC, and the National Center on AIM that OSEP intends to fund in FY 2009. The Center must submit the names of proposed members of the Standards Board to OSEP for approval within eight weeks of receipt of the award.

(b) Communicate with, and solicit input from, a wide range of stakeholders, including currently funded OSEP programs (e.g., NIMAC, the American Printing House for the Blind, Bookshare.org for Education, and Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic), and the National Center on AIM that OSEP intends to fund in FY 2009.

(c) Participate in, organize, or facilitate, as directed by OSEP, communities of practice (see <http://www.tacomunities.org>) that are aligned with the Center's objectives as a way to support discussions and collaboration among key stakeholders such as technology experts; software engineers; AIM producers; and representatives from the publishing industry, the DAISY consortium, the Access Board, NIMAC, and the National Center on AIM that OSEP intends to fund in FY 2009.

(d) Maintain ongoing communication with the OSEP Project Officer through monthly phone conversations and e-mail communication.

Waiver of Proposed Rulemaking: Under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) (5 U.S.C. 553), the Department generally offers interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed priorities and requirements. Section 681(d) of IDEA, however, makes the public comment requirements of the APA inapplicable to the priority in this notice.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1474 and 1481.

Applicable Regulations: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98, and 99.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 79 apply to all applicants except federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to institutions of higher education (IHEs) only.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement.

Estimated Available Funds: \$400,000.

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in FY 2010 from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition.

Maximum Awards: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding \$400,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Estimated Number of Awards: 1.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:* State educational agencies (SEAs); LEAs, including public charter schools that are considered LEAs under State law; IHEs; other public agencies; private nonprofit organizations; outlying areas; freely associated States; Indian tribes or tribal organizations; and for-profit organizations.

2. *Cost Sharing or Matching:* This competition does not require cost sharing or matching.

3. *Other: General Requirements—*(a) The projects funded under this competition must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities (see section 606 of IDEA).

(b) Applicants and grant recipients funded under this competition must involve individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities ages birth through 26 in planning, implementing, and evaluating the project (see section 682(a)(1)(A) of IDEA).

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. *Address to Request Application Package:* Education Publications Center (ED Pubs), P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Telephone, toll free: 1-877-433-7827. FAX: (301) 470-1244. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), call, toll free: 1-877-576-7734.

You can contact ED Pubs at its Web site, also: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html> or at its e-mail address: edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

If you request an application package from ED Pubs, be sure to identify this competition as follows: CFDA number 84.327P.

Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) by contacting the person or team listed under *Accessible Format* in section VIII of this notice.

2. *Content and Form of Application Submission:* Requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this competition.

Page Limit: The application narrative (Part III of the application) is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. You must limit the application narrative to the equivalent of no more than 50 pages, using the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, abstracts, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs.

- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).

The page limit does not apply to Part I, the cover sheet; Part II, the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; Part IV, the assurances and certifications; or the one-page abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, the references, or the letters of support. However, the page limit does apply to all of the application narrative section (Part III).

We will reject your application if you exceed the page limit or if you apply other standards and exceed the equivalent of the page limit.

3. *Submission Dates and Times:*

Applications Available: June 3, 2009.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: July 6, 2009.

Applications for grants under this competition may be submitted electronically using the Electronic Grant Application System (e-Application) accessible through the Department's e-Grants site, or in paper format by mail or hand delivery. For information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, or in paper format by mail or hand delivery, please refer to section IV.6. *Other Submission Requirements* of this notice.

We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements.

Individuals with disabilities who need an accommodation or auxiliary aid in connection with the application process should contact the person listed under *For Further Information Contact* in section VII of this notice. If the Department provides an accommodation or auxiliary aid to an individual with a disability in connection with the application process, the individual's application remains subject to all other requirements and limitations in this notice.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: September 1, 2009.

4. *Intergovernmental Review:* This competition is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372 is in the application package for this competition.

5. *Funding Restrictions:* We reference regulations outlining funding restrictions in the *Applicable Regulations* section of this notice.

6. *Other Submission Requirements:* Applications for grants under this competition may be submitted electronically or in paper format by mail or hand delivery.

a. *Electronic Submission of Applications.*

If you choose to submit your application to us electronically, you must use e-Application, accessible through the Department's e-Grants Web site at: <http://e-grants.ed.gov>.

While completing your electronic application, you will be entering data online that will be saved into a database. You may not e-mail an electronic copy of a grant application to us.

Please note the following:

- Your participation in e-Application is voluntary.

- You must complete the electronic submission of your grant application by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.

E-Application will not accept an application for this competition after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process.

- The hours of operation of the e-Grants Web site are 6:00 a.m. Monday until 7:00 p.m. Wednesday; and 6:00 a.m. Thursday until 8:00 p.m. Sunday, Washington, DC time. Please note that, because of maintenance, the system is unavailable between 8:00 p.m. on Sundays and 6:00 a.m. on Mondays, and between 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and

6:00 a.m. on Thursdays, Washington, DC time. Any modifications to these hours are posted on the e-Grants Web site.

- You will not receive additional point value because you submit your application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you submit your application in paper format.

- You must submit all documents electronically, including all information you typically provide on the following forms: The Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), the Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424, Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications. You must attach any narrative sections of your application as files in a .DOC (document), .RTF (rich text), or .PDF (Portable Document) format. If you upload a file type other than the three file types specified in this paragraph or submit a password protected file, we will not review that material.

- Your electronic application must comply with any page limit requirements described in this notice.

- Prior to submitting your electronic application, you may wish to print a copy of it for your records.

- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgment that will include a PR/Award number (an identifying number unique to your application).

- Within three working days after submitting your electronic application, fax a signed copy of the SF 424 to the Application Control Center after following these steps:

- Print SF 424 from e-Application.

- The applicant's Authorizing Representative must sign this form.

- Place the PR/Award number in the upper right hand corner of the hard-copy signature page of the SF 424.

- Fax the signed SF 424 to the Application Control Center at (202) 245-6272.

- We may request that you provide us original signatures on other forms at a later date.

Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of System Unavailability: If you are prevented from electronically submitting your application on the application deadline date because e-Application is unavailable, we will grant you an extension of one business day to enable you to transmit your application electronically, by mail, or by hand delivery. We will grant this extension if—

- You are a registered user of e-Application and you have initiated an

electronic application for this competition; and

- (a) E-Application is unavailable for 60 minutes or more between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date; or

- (b) E-Application is unavailable for any period of time between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.

We must acknowledge and confirm these periods of unavailability before granting you an extension. To request this extension or to confirm our acknowledgment of any system unavailability, you may contact either (1) the person listed elsewhere in this notice under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** (see VII. Agency Contact) or (2) the e-Grants help desk at 1-888-336-8930. If e-Application is unavailable due to technical problems with the system and, therefore, the application deadline is extended, an e-mail will be sent to all registered users who have initiated an e-Application.

Extensions referred to in this section apply only to the unavailability of e-Application. If e-Application is available, and, for any reason, you are unable to submit your application electronically or you do not receive an automatic acknowledgment of your submission, you may submit your application in paper format by mail or hand delivery in accordance with the instructions in this notice.

b. Submission of Paper Applications by Mail.

If you submit your application in paper format by mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier), you must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.327P) LBJ Basement Level 1, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20202-4260.

You must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

- (1) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark.

- (2) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.

- (3) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

- (4) Any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If you mail your application through the U.S. Postal Service, we do not accept either of the following as proof of mailing:

- (1) A private metered postmark.

- (2) A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

If your application is postmarked after the application deadline date, we will not consider your application.

Note: The U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office.

c. Submission of Paper Applications by Hand Delivery.

If you submit your application in paper format by hand delivery, you (or a courier service) must deliver the original and two copies of your application by hand, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Application Control Center, Attention: (CFDA Number 84.327P) 550 12th Street, SW., Room 7041, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202-4260.

The Application Control Center accepts hand deliveries daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, except Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

Note for Mail or Hand Delivery of Paper Applications:

If you mail or hand deliver your application to the Department—

- (1) You must indicate on the envelope and—if not provided by the Department—in Item 11 of the SF 424 the CFDA number, including suffix letter, if any, of the competition under which you are submitting your application; and

- (2) The Application Control Center will mail to you a notification of receipt of your grant application. If you do not receive this grant notification within 15 business days from the application deadline date, you should call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

V. Application Review Information

1. *Selection Criteria:* The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 75.210 and are listed in the application package.

2. *Review and Selection Process:* In the past, the Department has had difficulty finding peer reviewers for certain competitions because so many individuals who are eligible to serve as peer reviewers have conflicts of interest. The Standing Panel requirements under IDEA also have placed additional constraints on the availability of reviewers. Therefore, the Department has determined that, for some discretionary grant competitions, applications may be separated into two or more groups and ranked and selected for funding within the specific groups.

This procedure will make it easier for the Department to find peer reviewers by ensuring that greater numbers of individuals who are eligible to serve as reviewers for any particular group of applicants will not have conflicts of interest. It also will increase the quality, independence, and fairness of the review process while permitting panel members to review applications under discretionary grant competitions for which they also have submitted applications. However, if the Department decides to select an equal number of applications in each group for funding, this may result in different cut-off points for fundable applications in each group.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. *Award Notices:* If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN). We may notify you informally, also.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we notify you.

2. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements:* We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements in the *Applicable Regulations* section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the *Applicable Regulations* section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. *Reporting:* At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multi-year award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>.

4. *Performance Measures:* Under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), the Department has established a set of performance measures, including long-term measures, that are designed to yield information on various aspects of the effectiveness and quality of the Technology and Media Services for Individuals with Disabilities program.

These measures focus on the extent to which projects provide high-quality products and services, are relevant to improving outcomes for children with disabilities, and contribute to improving outcomes for children with disabilities. We will collect data on these measures from the project funded under this competition.

The grantee will be required to report information on its project's performance in annual reports to the Department (34 CFR 75.590).

VII. Agency Contact

For Further Information Contact: Michael Slade, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 4175, PCP, Washington, DC 20202-2550. Telephone: (202) 245-7527.

If you use a TDD, call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

VIII. Other Information

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Electronic Access to This Document: You can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the **Federal Register**, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) on the Internet at the following site: <http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister>.

To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at this site. If you have questions about using PDF, call the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), toll free, at 1-888-293-6498; or in the Washington, DC, area at (202) 512-1530.

Note: The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. Free Internet access to the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations is available on GPO Access at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/nara/index.html>.

Delegation of Authority: The Secretary of Education has delegated authority to Andrew J. Pepin, Executive Administrator for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to perform the functions of the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

Dated: May 28, 2009.

Andrew J. Pepin,

Executive Administrator for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. E9-12905 Filed 6-2-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Proposed Guidance on Voluntary Voting System Guidelines

AGENCY: United States Election Assistance Commission.

ACTION: Notice of proposed updates and revisions to the 2005 Voluntary Voting System Guidelines and request for public comment.

SUMMARY: The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) (Pub. L. 107-252; 42 U.S.C. 15301 *et seq.* (October 29, 2002)) established the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC). Section 202 of HAVA directs the EAC to adopt voluntary voting system guidelines (VVSG) and to provide for the testing, certification, decertification, and recertification of voting system hardware and software. The VVSG provides specifications and standards against which voting systems can be tested to determine if they provide basic functionality, accessibility, and security capabilities.

As required by Section 222(d) of HAVA the EAC is placing its proposed updates and revisions out for a 120-day public comment period. The EAC is asking for comments regarding all sections of the standards impacted by the update process. This updated and revised version of the VVSG will be known as Voluntary Voting System Guidelines v.1.1 (VVSG v.1.1).

The EAC made the decision to update and revise the 2005 VVSG as a result of feedback received through its Voting System Testing and Certification Program. As the EAC has worked to test and certify voting systems it observed and received feedback from various sources that the standards being tested to were at times ambiguous and difficult to apply in testing. This ambiguity has led to challenges in making testing consist both within a test laboratory and across different laboratories. In addition, the EAC has received feedback from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) that the creation of formalized test suites for the 2005 VVSG would be aided by a clarification of certain portions of document. This information, combined with the EAC's issuance of seventeen interpretations of the VVSG to clarify various standards,