

various end user groups to be brought on-line; the services to be provided; the information resources to be made available; the public and private organizations and agencies that will participate in the project; and the mechanisms to be employed for informing end users about the existence of the system, ensuring that prospective end users possess adequate skills to use the system, and providing ongoing training for end users.

As in the case of demonstration projects, the emphasis is on the application of technology, rather than the technology itself. Proposals must include compelling evidence that the technology to be employed is both appropriate to the proposed task and cost-effective. Examples of applications in this category would include the establishment of community information networks; creation of wide-area networks within school systems or districts; and provision of Internet access to an isolated group or population. Projects that include extensive software or hardware development will not be considered.

Note: No award in Category Two will exceed \$250,000.

Category Three (Planning Projects)

In this category the TIIAP will support planning processes in which organizations, or groups of organizations, develop strategies and plans for the enhanced application of information infrastructure. Planning projects are encouraged for rural or underserved populations where telecommunications could provide enhanced economic opportunity or where business development is insufficient to sustain growth.

Proposals in this category must include clear descriptions both of the planning process (or methodology) to be employed and of the expected outcomes of the process. Each planning project should address how end users will have access to information and will be connected to one another. Applicants should identify the anticipated end users of the information infrastructure and describe the number and diversity of end users, as well as the social and economic benefits expected from implementation.

In addition, NTIA encourages applications that demonstrate partnerships among groups, communities, and entities for the purpose of sharing or leveraging resources. These partnerships or coalitions should demonstrate that, if appropriate, they will continue to operate effectively once TIIAP support is concluded and/or the project plans

are implemented. Applicants should also clearly document the administrative or institutional support that has been generated for any planning grant.

Planning grants are divided into two sub-categories:

1. Statewide or Local

This sub-category includes planning proposals that illustrate that the economic and social benefits from an advanced information infrastructure are many and can encompass many sectors, including business, education and training, public and social services, and environmental goals. Planning grants in this sub-category should be multidisciplinary in scope and should focus on the needs of several sectors (e.g., education, health, public information, etc.). For example, the TIIAP awarded grants in fiscal year 1994 to state governments and universities to develop comprehensive statewide information infrastructure plans.

2. Regional or National

Planning activities in this subcategory may focus on a single sector or topic, as long as the project is regional (i.e., involving multiple states) or national in scope. For example, the TIIAP awarded a grant in fiscal year 1994 to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education to develop a plan to build an ongoing capacity to "broker" the educational resources of western colleges and universities by using existing telecommunications networks to make higher education more widely available in rural areas of 15 states in the West.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed according to the following evaluation criteria. The weight of each criterion will vary according to the category of the proposal, as explained below.

(1) Problem Definition

Applicants must clearly explain *why* the proposed project is needed, and *how* the project will meet the needs identified. This may seem obvious; however, a proposal will often fail to survive the competition because the applicant has spent too much effort on unnecessary rhetoric, and too little effort on clearly defining the *actual problem to be solved or the need to be addressed* by the project. It is essential that the problem definition present a convincing case as to why and how a particular problem, task, or social need can best be addressed through the application of information infrastructure.

(2) Applicant Qualifications

Every applicant must present evidence that it has both the experience and the expertise to bring the project to a successful conclusion. Applicants should take care to describe the qualifications of the participating organizations, the key personnel associated with the project, their relationship to the applicant organization, and the applicant's experience in addressing information-related issues. Experience may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including projects successfully completed and participation in comprehensive planning activities. In addition, each applicant should present evidence that it is not only a capable organization but also an appropriate and credible organization to undertake the project it proposes.

(3) Support for End Users

Since the success of the NII will depend on both its accessibility and the value it offers to end users, projects supported by the TIIAP must demonstrate a high degree of attention to the needs, skills, and working conditions of the targeted end users. The program will look carefully at the degree of end user involvement in the design of proposed projects and at the plans for training users and/or upgrading their skills. Applicants should explain clearly how targeted end users will benefit from the services offered, or how the project will provide the public with easily accessible, useful and useable information. NTIA expects applicants to consider carefully safeguards to protect the privacy of the end users of the information infrastructure funded through this grant program. In addition, applicants proposing projects dealing with individually identifiable information (student grades, medical records, etc.) will be required to prescribe mechanisms for protecting the confidentiality of such information and the privacy of any individuals involved.

(4) Partnerships and Community Support

Broad community support is essential to the viability of TIIAP projects. Partnerships will diverse sectors of the community will be considered an integral part of the proposal. The most successful partnerships are those that create "win-win" situations for all parties involved; every partner both contributes to and benefits from the partnership. Partners must also demonstrate the ability to work together. Evidence of strong community support