

also includes a solid commitment of a high-quality, non-Federal match. Beyond the mandatory commitment of a non-Federal match, TIIAP is concerned with the long term sustainability of a project. Applicants should discuss how they plan to sustain the project after the period of Federal funding is over. Finally, a representative sample of thoughtful letters of support from diverse elements of the community may provide evidence of solid support that will help assure the project's success.

(5) Reducing Disparities in Access to and Use of the Natural Information Infrastructure

One of the Administration's primary NII goals is reducing gaps between information "haves" and "have-nots." Therefore, TIIAP will support projects that increase an underserved population's access to social services and information made available via information infrastructure. Of primary importance is the applicant's plan to redress disparities of access. For example, difficulties in access to information infrastructure may arise from living in a remote rural area or from economic hardship in the inner city. Redressing these disparities in access may involve unique sharing arrangements, innovative outreach strategies, or sensitivity to local conditions of populations that are traditionally underserved. Whatever a particular situation, the applicant must demonstrate that the project will reduce disparities of access and use.

(6) Technical Quality

Technical quality in the TIIAP focuses not on innovation for its own sake, but on consistency with the vision of a nationwide, seamless, interactive network of networks. Therefore, projects proposed to the TIIAP must demonstrate an awareness of, and a realistic approach to, questions of interoperability and scalability. The TIIAP will not support standalone small- or large-scale systems that cannot communicate effectively with other systems. Similarly, the program will not consider proposals for systems that are likely to limit rather than permit growth in the number of sites served, the number of end users accommodated, the number of institutions connected, or the range of information and communication services provided. Where feasible, applicants should seek to build upon existing information infrastructure. Applicants must demonstrate knowledge of existing information infrastructure in the area to be served by the project. Applicants must also address how they intend to

deal with the issue of rapid obsolescence by describing their plans to accommodate advances in information and telecommunications technologies. In addition to demonstrating technological soundness, applicants must show that the approach proposed is both cost-effective and appropriate to the need or problem that is to be addressed. Proposals in Category Three (Planning Projects) will also be rated on the soundness of the planning methodology that is presented in the application.

(7) Evaluation and Dissemination

An evaluation of each project is critical in order to answer the essential question of whether or not the project has achieved its goals. Evaluation summaries will be particularly important as projects progress and comparisons can be made and conclusions drawn. For these reasons, every project proposed to the TIIAP must present a clearly defined evaluation strategy that offers rational criteria for measuring the effectiveness of the project in reaching its goals during the grant award period and identifies specific evaluation instruments to be employed. The applicant should also demonstrate adequate experience in arranging and conducting a project evaluation, with the attendant budget for a thorough and useful evaluation. In conjunction with the evaluation strategy, the TIIAP will review the applicant's plan to disseminate the knowledge gained as a result of implementing the project.

(8) Ability to Serve as a Model

In Category One, the TIIAP is interested in supporting projects whose ultimate impact will extend far beyond the scope of the activities funded. Therefore, the program will examine closely the degree to which a proposed project has the potential to serve as a model for others to follow. A focus of this criterion will be the extent to which a project is innovative, not necessarily in terms of the technology to be used, but rather in the application of the technology in a particular setting, in the service of a particular population, or in the solution of a particular problem. Projects will also be judged on whether they can be replicated in other communities and can serve as a catalyst or blueprint for other sectors of society or other providers of services. In addition, the program will examine whether a subsequent evaluation of the project can contribute significantly to our understanding of how the national information infrastructure can be used to improve the delivery of a wide range

of social services and promote economic development. Implicit in this concept of a model project is financial viability. Therefore, applicants who intend for their projects to be considered as models must address the issue of the sustainability of the project beyond the grant period.

The above evaluation criteria are weighted as follows:

Criteria	Category one (percent)	Category two (percent)	Category three (percent)
(1) Problem Definition ..	10	10	10
(2) Applicant Qualifications	10	10	10
(3) Support for End Users	10	15	15
(4) Partnerships and Community Support	10	15	20
(5) Reducing Disparities	10	25	15
(6) Technical Quality	15	10	10
(7) Evaluation and Dissemination	15	10	10
(8) Ability to Serve as a Model	20	5	10

Selection Process

TIIAP grants are awarded on the basis of a competitive review process. Each application will be thoroughly reviewed by a panel of outside readers, who have demonstrated expertise in both the programmatic and technological aspects of the application. The review panels will evaluate applications according to the criteria listed in this Notice and make non-binding recommendations to the program staff. Under the guidance of the TIIAP Director, staff will prepare proposed slates of the highest rated projects to be funded for consideration by the NTIA Administrator, who is the selecting official.

The TIIAP Director will propose the slates to the NTIA Administrator in two stages: a slate of Category Two applications, and a slate of applications in Categories One and Three. Acting on these recommendations, the Administrator will select the applications to be negotiated for possible grant award.

In making their decisions, the Program Director and the Administrator will consider the following:

1. The evaluations of the outside reviewers;