

January 15, 2015

Friends and Colleagues,

Here at the National Institute on Disability Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), we continue to partner closely with our co-workers at the Administration on Community Living (ACL) on the transition of our program to the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). We have been warmly welcomed by all levels of the organization, and the commitment to our mission shown by Administrator Greenlee has been unwavering. I thank her for her leadership and partnership.

Thanks to the hundreds of you who joined our December stakeholder call to address your questions regarding our pending move. If you missed it, you can find it in the “What’s New” section of the NIDILRR Homepage: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr/index.html>.

Physically, we remain housed within the Department of Education, and will until later in 2015. We expect that our personnel will officially become HHS employees within a month. Transferring our systems, grants, and all other administrative components of our program will occur in the first half of 2015. Ensuring a seamless transition for our grantees and other stakeholders both within and outside of government has been a top priority.

Our grant forecast is now available at the following location:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/nidrr/fy15nidrrandaclgrantcompetitions.html#fy15grantforecasttable>.

The grant forecast outlines our funding priorities for FY15. These will be published through ACL and HHS. This has required us to learn and navigate new processes, while developing new relationships to implement them. A tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work is occurring to ensure that our notices meet strict quality control standards. Prospective applicants will continue to submit proposals through grants.gov. Nothing for potential grantees has changed.

However, given the level of uncertainty regarding the timeline for transitioning to a new grant management and peer review system, we have made the difficult decision to not publish our Field Initiated Projects (FIP) funding opportunity for FY15. Instead, we will fund FIP applications that were submitted in FY14 and scored well within the funding range. These are outstanding and diverse projects that will contribute greatly to the field. This is the only competition for FY15 where we are exercising this option to fund additional high-scoring applications that were submitted in FY 2014.

I know this will come as disappointing news to some, but I am not willing to risk the potential adverse consequences – for large numbers of FIP applicants and NIDRR grantees – of managing a peer review or funding process that will simultaneously occur during a transition to a new grant management software system. Even the most well-planned transitions face unforeseen challenges. The complexity of this competition, and the extended timeline and staff preparation needed from publication through funding would necessarily straddle both ED and HHS systems and there are numerous steps that are outside the control of any one entity.

We remain committed to our mission of creating new knowledge and promoting its effective use to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. Your partnership and feedback will increase our chances of success. I look forward to hearing from you as we continue our important work together.

John Tschida
Director