INVESTING IN INNOVATION FUND (i3)

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding

the 2010 Highest-Rated i3 Applicants

August 11, 2010

A. GENERAL QUESTIONS ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A HIGHEST-RATED APPLICANT

1) **How did the U.S. Department of Education determine the highest-rated applicants?**

   The Department selected over 330 highly qualified, independent peer reviewers to assess the nearly 1,700 applications it received for the i3 program. Each panel of peer reviewers assessed approximately 10-20 applications using the seven selection criteria outlined in the Notice of final priorities, requirements, definitions and selection criteria published in the Federal Register on March 12, 2010, and then Department staff reviewed applications for eligibility before relying on the reviewers' assessment in naming applicants highest-rated. An overview of the i3 review process can be found on the i3 website at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2010/review-process.doc *.*

2) **Are highest-rated i3 applicants the same as i3 grantees?**

   No, each highest-rated applicant must first provide the Department with adequate evidence that the required private-sector matching funds have been committed.

3) **Will everyone that (i) is highest-rated and (ii) provides adequate evidence of their match become an i3 grantee?**

   Yes, each highest-rated applicant that provides the Department with adequate evidence of its required private-sector match will become an i3 grantee.

4) **How much time do highest-rated applicants have to secure their required matches?**

   Highest-rated applicants have until September 8, 2010 to provide the Department with adequate evidence that they have secured a commitment for the required private-sector match.

5) **Is anyone that is not named a highest-rated applicant still able to win an i3 grant?**

If a highest-rated applicant is unable to secure its required match, it is possible that the Department may contact other eligible applicants (based on rank order as set by reviewers' scores) to see if they are able to secure a commitment for the required match within a truncated time period.

6) **Did the Department use raw or standardized scores for the i3 competition? Why?**

Generally, in large-scale competitions, the Department uses a statistical standardization process which adjusts for the effect of any large-scale differences in reviewer approaches to assigning raw scores. Given the large volume of applications, panels, and reviewers in the Validation and Development categories and other related factors, scores for these applications were standardized, using the Department's process that it has used for more than twenty years. However, the smaller number of applications in the Scale-Up category did not support the use of standardization, and therefore raw scores were used for these applications.

B. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HIGHEST-RATED APPLICANTS

7) **Where can I see the applications, comments, and scores for all of the highest-rated applicants?**

Comments and scores for all highest-rated applications will be posted on the i3 Web site at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html. As is the Department's normal process, the Department is working to redact proprietary and privacy information from applications before posting them, so applications will be posted after we complete the redaction process.

8) **What are the characteristics of the pool of highest-rated applicants?**

- *There are a total of 49 highest-rated applications across all three competitions – 4 in Scale-Up, 15 in Validation, and 30 in Development.*

- *Highest-rated i3 applications will serve high-need students across the country – specifically, over 250 project locations spanning 42 states and 2 territories (DC and American Samoa) served.*

- *All Absolute Priorities are addressed.*

    o *12 (24 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Absolute Priority 1 (Innovations that Support Effective Teachers and Principals), including two Scale-Up, four Validation, and six Development applications;*

    o *9 (18 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Absolute Priority 2 (Innovations that Improve the Use of Data), including two Validation and seven Development applications;*

- *15 (31 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Absolute Priority 3 (Innovations that Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High-Quality Assessments), including five Validation and 10 Development applications; and*

- *13 (27 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Absolute Priority 4 (Innovations that Turn Around Persistently Low-Performing Schools), including two Scale-Up, four Validation, and seven Development applications.*

- *All Competitive Preference Priorities are addressed.*

  - *13 (27 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Competitive Preference Priority 5 (Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes), including three Scale-Up, three Validation, and seven Development applications;*

  - *20 (41 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Competitive Preference Priority 6 (Innovations that Support College Access and Success), including one Scale-Up, five Validation, and 14 Development applications;*

  - *28 (57 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Competitive Preference Priority 7 (Innovations to Address the Unique Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students), including four Scale-Up, three Validation, and 19 Development applications; and*

  - *18 (37 percent) of the highest-rated applications addressed Competitive Preference Priority 8 (Innovations that Serve Schools in Rural LEAs), including three Scale-Up, eight Validation, and seven Development applications.*

9) **How many of the highest-rated applicants need matches?**

The Department will review each applicant's supporting documentation as evidence of the required match commitment on a rolling basis to determine whether it meets the standard set out in the Notice of Final Priorities, and will communicate with each applicant accordingly. Applicants are therefore encouraged to submit their match documentation as soon as possible, although it is not required until September 8.

10) **How many of the highest-rated applicants requested waivers of the matching requirement? Received waivers?**

None of the highest-rated applicants included in its application, a request to reduce or waive the required private- sector match.

C. QUESTIONS ABOUT i3 APPLICANTS THAT ARE NOT NAMED HIGHEST-RATED

11) When will i3 applicants that are not highest-rated receive their comments and scores?

All i3 applicants that are not among the highest-rated will receive their respective reviewers' comments and scores in the coming 2-4 weeks.

12) Will information on i3 applicants that are not highest-rated be posted online?

The Department is committed to sharing information in a user-friendly way with the public. This is why we launched www.data.ed.gov and posted summary information on all i3 applications received. We remain committed to transparency and our plans moving forward are as follows:

- *Applications, reviewers' comments, and scores will be posted online for all eligible Scale-Up applicants, regardless of whether they are highest-rated or not.*

- *Selected information about high-scoring Validation and Development applications that are not highest-rated will be posted online at a later date.*

- *Additional summary information – such as the distribution of scores across the i3 competition – will also be posted online at a later date.*

D. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT i3

13) When will the i3 grantees be announced?

i3 grantees will be announced by mid to late September 2010.

14) Who served as an i3 peer reviewer?

The Department received approximately 1,400 resumes and selected over 330 peer reviewers – distinguishing between subject matter experts and research/evaluation experts – representing a broad range of education practitioners, researchers, evaluators, social entrepreneurs, strategy consultants, and grant makers. All peer reviewers were rigorously assessed for expertise using the i3 program's priorities and the skills and attributes outlined in the i3 call for reviewers, as well as screened multiple times for conflicts of interest.

The Department will post a list of all i3 peer reviewers after awards are made. This list will not identify the applications that each reviewer reviewed.

15) Where can I find additional information on the i3 matching requirement and related resources?

There are two documents on the i3 website that may be particularly useful:

- *The frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to the i3 match requirement are available in Section E of the i3 Program Guidance and FAQs at: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/faqs.pdf.*

- *Securing the i3 Private-Sector Match: A Resource for Applicants (May 7, 2010) is available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/privatesectormatch.doc*

16) Where can I find additional information on the i3 program?

There are several resources on the i3 website that may be of interest, including:

- *i3 At-A-Glance : http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/i3-at-a-glance.doc*

- *Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) Program Guidance and FAQs: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/faqs.pdf*

- *Summary of i3 Applications Received: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/application-summary.pdf*

- *Overview of the i3 Review Process:* http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2010/review-process.doc