



PUBLIC NOTICE

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PERKINS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND TO CONDUCT NATIONAL OUTREACH FOR THE NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission’s (Commission) Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) has selected the Perkins School for the Blind (Perkins) to conduct national outreach efforts to promote the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) pilot. For this effort, Perkins is partnering with the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults; FableVision, Inc.; and other national and local consumer groups, parent groups, agencies, and associations.

The NDBEDP is a program mandated by Section 105 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) that provides funding of up to \$10 million annually for the local distribution of communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind.¹ On April 4, 2011, the Commission adopted the *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, establishing the framework for a two- to three-year pilot program to fulfill this CVAA mandate.² In that *Order*, the Commission concluded that a wide variety of outreach efforts would be needed to make this program effective in reaching the diverse population of individuals who are deaf-blind.³ To this end, the Commission adopted a rule requiring each state-level certified program participating in the NDBEDP pilot program to conduct outreach to the residents of its state.⁴ In addition, the Commission determined that outreach would be necessary on a national level to reach and inform the greatest number of consumers, service providers, and others about the NDBEDP.⁵ The Commission stated that it would set aside \$500,000 of the \$10 million annually allocated for the NDBEDP for these national outreach efforts during each TRS Fund year of the pilot program.⁶

¹ Pub. L. 111-260, 124 Stat. 2751 (2010) (as codified in various sections of 47 U.S.C.); see also Pub. L. 111-265, 124 Stat. 2795 (2010) (technical corrections to the CVAA). Section 105 of the CVAA adds Section 719 to the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, which is codified at 47 U.S.C. § 620. The CVAA allows the Commission to allocate these funds from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service Fund (TRS Fund).

² See *In the Matter of Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, Section 105, Relay Services for Deaf-Blind Individuals*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Report and Order, FCC 11-56, 26 FCC Rcd 5640 (2011) (*NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*).

³ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5675, ¶ 79.

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.610(e)(1)(vi). Such outreach may include, but is not limited to, the provision of information about the state-level certified program, contact information, available equipment, and ways to apply for equipment and related services provided by the program. *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5675, ¶ 79. The NDBEDP pilot program will cover the reasonable costs of such local outreach efforts.

⁵ *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5675-76, ¶ 80.

⁶ See *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5675-76, ¶ 80.

On October 21, 2011, CGB issued a Public Notice inviting proposals to conduct this national outreach effort, particularly from entities that have significant experience with and expertise in conducting outreach and working with members of the deaf-blind community.⁷ Of the three applications received, the Perkins proposal was the most comprehensive in terms of experience and expertise in working with individuals who are deaf-blind and accessible communications technologies and equipment, as well as the scope of work to be done.⁸ In addition, in order to conduct its national outreach, Perkins has arranged to partner with a branding and marketing agency, and demonstrated support from and partnerships with deaf-blind related consumer and parent groups, agencies, and associations across the United States. In contrast, while a second proposal, submitted by Unison, had a strong focus on branding and marketing, it did not appear to have experience or expertise working with individuals who are deaf-blind or accessible communications technologies and equipment. In addition, it did not demonstrate support from or partnerships with deaf-blind related entities, and the scope of work described was not as comprehensive as that of Perkins. The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., the third applicant, demonstrated significant experience and expertise working with individuals who are deaf-blind and accessible communications technologies and equipment, as well as some support from related agencies, associations, and consumers. However, its focus was on providing information at deaf-blind related events, rather than branding and marketing, which is needed for the NDBEDP national outreach effort. In addition, the Lighthouse proposed to conduct various other activities as part of its functions, such as training to improve the ability of NDBEDP certified program personnel to communicate and interact with individuals who are deaf-blind. While laudable, such training is outside the scope of this national outreach effort. Each of the applicants proposed activities that would be nationwide in scope and each of which would require all or nearly all of the available funding, thereby precluding the grant of multiple applications. As a result of this review, CGB concluded that Perkins was best suited to conduct national outreach efforts for the duration of the NDBEDP pilot program, as described in its proposal.

CGB's grant of authorization to Perkins and its partners, made for the purpose of receiving national outreach funds under the NDBEDP, is conditioned on compliance, at a minimum, with the following requirements:

- Consulting with programs certified by the Commission to participate in the NDBEDP, consumers, advocacy groups, professional associations, and other organizations;
- Establishing clear and concise messaging about the NDBEDP;
- Creating a fully accessible website that will, among other things, link visitors to state deaf-blind equipment distribution programs, provide information about eligibility and services, and contain accessible videos⁹ about the NDBEDP;
- Hosting a toll-free number to provide consumers with basic information about the NDBEDP and referral to the entity in their states that is certified to participate in the NDBEDP;
- Promoting the NDBEDP at key conventions and conferences;
- Creating an electronic tool kit that includes sample press releases and templates for announcements, digital postcards, and newsletters about the NDBEDP;

⁷ See *FCC Invites Applicants to Conduct National Outreach for the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, Public Notice, DA 11-1767, 26 FCC Rcd 14517 (Oct. 21, 2011) (*NDBEDP National Outreach PN*). See also *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5675-76, ¶ 80.

⁸ Perkins augmented its own experience and expertise in these areas by partnering with the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults.

⁹ At a minimum, such videos must be closed captioned and contain video descriptions.

- Providing marketing materials to local, state, and national groups that are effective in communicating information about the NDBEDP to individuals who are deaf-blind; and
- Exploring opportunities to partner and collaborate with other entities.¹⁰

Perkins and its partners will begin these activities on July 1, 2012.¹¹ The NDBEDP pilot program (including its state and national outreach components) will run for two years, with an option for the Commission to extend the program for another year.

The NDBEDP Administrator will be responsible for overseeing this national outreach effort and will work in collaboration with the TRS Fund Administrator.¹² The TRS Fund Administrator, as directed by the NDBEDP Administrator, will review cost submissions and release funds for this national outreach effort, and will collect and provide related data to the Commission and the NDBEDP Administrator.¹³

About Perkins School for the Blind and Its Partners

For more than 180 years, Perkins has provided education and services for children and adults around the world who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired with or without other disabilities.¹⁴ Perkins is a world-recognized leader in the field of blindness education and was the first school established in the U.S. for people with visual impairments.¹⁵ Perkins promotes and develops universally designed technology tools that are accessible to all.¹⁶

Authorized by an Act of Congress in 1967, the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) is a comprehensive national vocational and rehabilitation program exclusively serving youth and adults who are deaf-blind.¹⁷ HKNC has a network of field services and staff providing information, training, and support to individuals, organizations, and communities across the country.¹⁸

¹⁰ Perkins and its partners may engage in other outreach activities, beyond those listed above, that are designed to be effective in educating members of the deaf-blind community about the NDBEDP. For example, the *NDBEDP National Outreach PN* listed other national outreach activities and deliverables that may be provided under the authorization granted.

¹¹ The Commission also anticipates launching the NDBEDP pilot program on or around July 1, 2012. See *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5649, ¶ 22.

¹² The Commission delegated authority to CGB to take the administrative actions necessary to implement and administer the NDBEDP, including designation of a Commission official as the NDBEDP Administrator. See *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5685-86, ¶ 106. The NDBEDP Administrator is responsible for certifying programs to participate in the NDBEDP; allocating funding and reviewing reimbursement claims with the TRS Fund Administrator; establishing an NDBEDP website and overseeing other outreach efforts; assessing the pilot program; conferring with stakeholders; working with Commission staff to adopt permanent rules for the NDBEDP; and serving as the Commission's point of contact for the NDBEDP. See 47 C.F.R. § 64.610(h)(1).

¹³ See 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.610(h)(2)(i) and (iii).

¹⁴ See <http://www.perkins.org> (visited April 16, 2012).

¹⁵ See *id.*

¹⁶ See *id.*

¹⁷ See <http://www.hknc.org> (visited April 16, 2012).

¹⁸ See *id.*

Founded in 1996, FableVision creates original educational media, storytelling, and interactive apps, and partners with other like-minded organizations and individuals on mission-driven products and projects designed to reach all learners.¹⁹ The company develops branding and marketing campaigns, websites, interactive games and activities, animated films, interactive museum kiosks, mobile apps, and books for a range of clients, including publishers, museums, broadcasters, and educational institutions.²⁰

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS: To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or call the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice), 202-418-0432 (TTY).

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¹⁹ See <http://www.fablevision.com> (visited April 16, 2012).

²⁰ See *id.*