

PD-ABS-037

**EcoLinks
Annual Workplan for Partnership Grants
July 1999 – June 2000
(Revised)**

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**Submitted by
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1999 Workplan EcoLinks Partnership Grants

I Introduction

A EcoLinks Structure and Objectives

EcoLinks is a cooperative program for Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States (ENI region) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). EcoLinks is comprised of three components that are managed by different organizations:

Environmental Information System

The Environmental Information System, managed by Devtech, consists of a website on best practices for market-based solutions, policies and partnerships and provides other information necessary for the successful implementation of EcoLinks.

Technology Transfer and Environmental Trade and Investment Promotion

This initiative, implemented by the U.S. Department of Commerce and USAID's Global Technology Network, with USAID funds, identifies the demand for trade and investment in environmental technologies and management systems in the ENI region and then matches opportunities with U.S. sources. Environmental Technology Representatives have been recruited by the Foreign Commercial Service in Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Kazakhstan to facilitate this technology transfer and investment.

Partnership Grants

Partnership grants are competitively awarded, cost-shared grants that support projects or activities that solve priority environmental problems and that are jointly managed by partners from the ENI region and the U.S. (or across borders within the ENI region). This component is managed by the Institute of International Education (IIE), under a five-year cooperative agreement with USAID. IIE has awarded a subcontract to the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) to serve as its main partner and assist in administering partnership grant activities.

The implementation activities of the Partnership Grants are the subject of this workplan. The primary objectives of the Partnership Grants are the following:

- Strengthen the capacity of businesses and local governments to develop market-based solutions¹ to environmental problems, with emphasis on the urban and industrial sectors in the ENI region
- Create lasting environmentally-focused partnerships between the ENI region and the United States and among countries within the region

In addition, EcoLinks Partnership Grants support USAID's strategic objective 1.6

Increased environmental management capacity to promote sustainable economic growth

Three intermediate results that are relevant for the strategic objective are

- Increased institutional ability to identify and remedy environmental problems
- Best practices adopted by industrial and public sectors
- Increased environmental trade, finance, and investment

B Expected Outcomes

As a result of EcoLinks partnership grants, the following long-term outcomes are expected

Local and regional governments, businesses and relevant associations are better able to

- prepare acceptable project proposals that identify and remedy environmental problems
- form partnerships across borders to address mutual urban and industrial environmental problems and issues
- develop market-based solutions to environmental problems
- develop and implement best practices

C Status of Program Implementation

The network of EcoLinks regional and field offices is operational in 9 countries. Regional offices are established in Washington, Szentendre and Moscow. Field offices are open in Sofia, Bucharest, Zagreb, Skopje, Kiev, Almaty and Khabarovsk. An organizational chart is shown in Annex A.

Both Challenge Grants and Quick Response Awards have been successfully launched. Project Leaders in 14 countries are eligible to apply for Challenge Grants, including the Northern Tier.

¹ Market-based solutions are defined as solutions that are both economically and environmentally sound. They are usually performance-oriented, respond to economic incentives, rely on market pricing, and result in positive financial returns. Examples are public-private partnerships on public infrastructure projects, cleaner production practices, voluntary business standards, pricing mechanisms based on full-cost accounting, and the free flow of environmental trade and investment.

countries that can participate on an exceptional basis. These Project Leaders can team up with organizations in 22 other countries, including the United States. The first cycle of Challenge Grants was completed in Central Europe. This was a fast-track pilot cycle, with limited technical assistance and partnership facilitation. Three grant topics were announced – cleaner production, environmental management systems and global climate change. Over 400 projects were received of which about 80 were approved. Of this amount, 45 full applications were submitted to the selection panel and 21 were approved. The second cycle was launched in May with the same grant topics, adding the three NIS countries. Applications are due at the end of September.

Quick Response Awards are available in 22 countries, including the United States. As of June 30, 27 QRAs had been awarded. Of this amount, 12 QRAs led to challenge grant applications.

Twinning Grants will be designed and launched in late 2000, if funds are available.

D Challenges for the Next Year

In June the Chief of Party visited each of the EcoLinks offices and USAID/FCS missions in Central Europe to evaluate program performance to date, identify any implementation problems and request ideas for improving the program. As a result of these meetings and other staff consultations, the following issues have been identified as priority issues to be addressed in this workplan.

Quality of grant proposals

The success of EcoLinks depends not upon the number of applications received, but rather upon the results of the projects that are funded. Successful projects, in turn, result from well-prepared proposals. Unfortunately, many of the challenge grant proposals received in the first cycle were weak. Program officers are conducting in-country workshops, but they are more “informational” in nature rather than training-oriented.

EcoLinks plans to strengthen the capacity of the applicants to prepare better proposals by expanding and improving its workshops in the target countries. Two types of workshops are planned. First, a workshop will be organized to publicize the RFA, explain the grant topics and train how to shape a project concept. Second, after project concepts have been approved, another workshop will be held to train the participants in all the elements of a good proposal, from setting goals and objectives to preparing a budget.

Re-design of Challenge Grant topics

Wastewater and solid waste are two priority environmental issues in the region, and many applicants have a difficult time preparing proposals that fit under the current challenge grant topics. These topics will be refined to accommodate these two issues, with the view to maintain a pollution prevention approach. We propose to broaden the Cleaner Production topic so that it can more readily include waste minimization and recycling/reuse issues. The handling of medical wastes will also be included under this topic. Environmental Management Systems will be replaced with Water/Wastewater as the second topic. Global Climate Change will remain as

the third topic It is expected that these three topics will remain the same for both the third and fourth cycles

Partner searches in CEE/NIS

Although most applicants prefer U S partners, there are a few requests for partners in the CEE/NIS countries However, EcoLinks has had difficulty in finding suitable partners in the region, primarily because the REC's databases of businesses and associations are outdated EcoLinks plans to identify a network of resource organizations and/or individuals in each country to assist in finding partners in the region At the same EcoLinks will explore whether the Environmental Technology Representatives recruited by the Foreign Commercial Service can also assist in identifying partners in their countries

Cost-sharing

Both IIE and REC have started to meet their cost-share obligations under the cooperative agreement The REC has made in-kind contributions, amounting to \$42,000, and IIE has committed \$50,000 over the next two years In addition, IIE has identified and contacted five U S foundations that have environmental activities in the region and that may have an interest in supporting EcoLinks-related activities IIE will follow up with these prospective donors at a senior level and make the case that their support is needed However, it is difficult to persuade foundations and corporations to support programs that are sponsored by the U S Government USAID will take the lead to explore possible funding from U S foundations, corporations and/or trusts to extend the program beyond the terminal date for USAID funding IIE will follow up with USAID on the status by April 2000

II Current Grants Programs

EcoLinks grants programs include the following elements

- Policies and procedures are fair and transparent
- An independent selection panel awards grants on a competitive basis
- Partnership facilitation is interwoven into the grant-making process
- Cost sharing is required to leverage the grants budget and to obtain a commitment from project partners
- Solicited grants are awarded for pre-selected topics to maximize the impact of the grants program and to focus on priority problems
- Grants are awarded to reputable, financially viable organizations that demonstrate their capacity to manage and account for grant funds in a responsible manner

During 1998 two types of grants programs were launched

- 1 Challenge Grants (\$5000 to \$50,000) support one-year cooperative projects or activities that help build the capacity of businesses and local governments to solve specific environmental problems and needs

- 2 Quick-Response Awards (up to \$5,000) facilitate initial contacts and support immediate needs, such as travel to conferences or technology demonstrations

Both grants programs will be continued next year. It is estimated that about 75 Challenge Grants and 60 Quick Response Awards will be awarded. Projected cumulative program expenditures from July 1998 to June 2000 are shown in Annex B. At June 30, 2000 program expenditures should total \$6.6 million.

A description of Challenge Grants and Quick Response Awards is provided below.

A Challenge Grants

Purpose

To build the capacity of professionals in business and local government to develop market-based solutions to urban and industrial environmental problems. Market-based solutions are solutions that are both economically and environmentally sound. They are usually performance-oriented, respond to economic incentives, rely on market pricing, and result in positive financial returns.

Activity Team

The activity team consists of a Project Leader, up to two Partners and optional Associates. The Project Leader is the organization in the region that has the specific environmental problem to be addressed under one or more of the topics in the Request for Applications. At least one of the Partners must come from a different country. Partners are expected to help build the capacity of the Project Leader through the exchange of expertise, experience and information. Optional associates include other stakeholders, such as NGOs, universities and research institutes, who can provide additional support and assistance.

Eligible organizations

Eligible organizations for Project Leaders and Partners are the following:

- Businesses
- Local and regional governments
- Utilities
- Associations of businesses, local governments or relevant professionals

Project Leaders and Partners receive grant funds directly from EcoLinks and cannot participate in more than one EcoLinks grant at a time. Associates may participate in multiple EcoLinks grants.

Eligible countries

Project Leaders must come from one of the following countries:

- Bulgaria
- Croatia*
- Kazakhstan
- Macedonia
- Romania
- Russia Far East (Khabarovskı Kraı, Primorskı Kraı, Sakhalın Island)
- Slovakia
- Ukraine

*Restrictions apply to eligible municipalities

In addition, organizations from the following countries may apply on an exceptional basis as a Leader Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland These organizations do not receive direct technical assistance, communication support or partnership facilitation from EcoLinks Grants As a pilot planned for cycle 3, a total of six Challenge Grants can be awarded to organizations from these countries There is no limit to the number of concept papers that are cleared to proceed to the full application stage This screening process will be reviewed after the completion of cycle 3 *Note USAID is considering other options for handling these Northern Tier countries on an exceptional basis Any changes to the above procedures will be communicated to EcoLinks by October 31, 1999*

Partners and Associates may come from one of the following countries

United States	Latvia
Armenia	Lithuania
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Macedonia
Bulgaria	Moldova
Croatia	Poland
Czech Republic	Romania
Estonia	Russia
Georgia	Slovakia
Hungary	Turkmenistan
Kazakhstan	Ukraine
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan

Qualifications

Grant applicants should be reputable, financially viable organizations and they should demonstrate that they have the capacity to manage and account for grant funds in a responsible manner An English speaker is required for each project partner

Amount

\$5,000 to \$50,000 each (about 75 grants per year)

Illustrative activities funded

Environmental consulting services, technology demonstrations, pre-feasibility assessments of environmental projects/investments, professional exchanges, training, publications and translation of technical publications

Not funded

Investment in technologies or equipment over \$2500

Cost-sharing

25% of the total value of the proposal, in cash or in-kind contribution, to be negotiated between the project partners

Application Process Concept Papers

Two Requests for Applications are announced each year with three grant topics. The grant topics will be refined to include water/wastewater and solid waste projects. The applicants prepare concept papers that are screened by the program officers and cleared to proceed to the next step. The screened concepts are forwarded to the Foreign Commercial Service Officers in each country who review the legitimacy and viability of the applicants. If requested, USAID Missions may receive a list of screened concept papers so that they can advise of any “red flags”

The screening criteria for the concept papers are the following

- The activity fits under one or more of the grant topics
- The environmental problem of the Project Leader is clearly defined and the basis for the project concept
- The project activity complies with the legal requirements of the country
- The activity is completed within one year and is expected to yield measurable results at the end
- The budget is within the limit
- There is a competent English speaker in each partner organization
- The project activity does not duplicate activities already funded by USAID in the country
- If the Leader is a business, it must be legally registered. Companies are required to provide a company profile, including references
- If the Leader is a municipality, it must be able to demonstrate the commitment and support of the organization’s leadership

Partnership Facilitation

After the project concepts are screened and cleared, the applicants find suitable partners. EcoLinks will assist in identifying partners in the U S or in the region. Quick Response Awards are available to initiate these partnerships.

If the applicants need assistance in finding partners, they complete a Partner Search form that briefly describes the project activity and their organization and lists any criteria for the target partner. The Partner Search form is then forwarded to the U S Program Manager and the CEE Program Coordinator who conduct searches on behalf of the applicant in both the U S and the ENI region.

For the U S search, the U S Program Manager taps a number of resources to identify potential organizations that match the partner criteria: IIE's in-house database of environmental suppliers, its network of resource organizations, USAID's Global Technology Network, and other associations and networks. Promising partners are personally contacted by the U S program staff who determine their interest in the proposed project and encourage their participation. The list of potential partners is screened and narrowed by the U S Program Manager to about three to five possible partners.

For the ENI search, the CEE Program Coordinator contacts a network of resource organizations or individuals in the region. He may also contact the FCS Environmental Technology Representatives, pending approval of the Foreign Commercial Service for this assistance.

After both the U S and ENI searches are completed, the U S Program Manager and the CEE Program Coordinator submit a short list of potential partners to the applicant. The applicant is free to contact the most promising candidates directly and make the partner selection.

Full Applications

The applicants (both the Project Leader and Partners) prepare the full application and submit it by the deadline to the designated EcoLinks office. All applications are forwarded to an independent selection panel that scores each application and then meets to discuss them. The winners are selected at the meeting on a competitive basis.

The selection criteria are the following:

- The capacity of the Project Leader to implement the project is strengthened through a partnership that provides for the sharing of experience, expertise, information and/or technology.
- The project promotes market-based solutions to urban or industrial environmental problems. The project is both economically and environmentally sound. It also demonstrates an understanding of market incentives and their application.

- The project is clearly defined and relevant to the local situation
- The objectives are feasible and can be reached within the project scope
- The implementation plan clearly defines the key activities that are required to achieve the objectives as well as the tasks, timelines and deliverables for each partner. The plan describes how the project will be managed and defines the roles of each partner
- The members of the project team are capable of managing and completing the project, both financially and organizationally
- The project generates tangible results by the end of the grant period. These results are verifiable, measurable and consistent with the expected outcomes
- The project has a high potential to result in a best practice or model that can be replicated in another organization or country
- The budget is complete, reasonable and cost-effective. It is clearly explained, proposing realistic and cost-effective solutions and spending limited funds in the most efficient manner

Start-up meetings

A winner's meeting for all project partners is organized in the home country to sign the grant agreements, to meet other winners and learn about their projects, and to meet the EcoLinks grants officer assigned to the project who will explain the reporting requirements and procedures for funds disbursements. USAID Missions will be invited to these meetings as observers

Monitoring and reporting

The projects are monitored by EcoLinks staff, and grant funds are disbursed in installments. The grantees are required to submit a mid-term progress report and a final report. Both reports contain a narrative performance report and an expense report

Schedule

	Announce RFA	Concept Papers	Full Applications	Selection Meeting
Cycle 2	May 25, 1999	July 19, 1999	Sept 22, 1999	Nov 8-9, 1999
Cycle 3	Jan 17, 2000	Feb 21, 2000	April 24, 2000	June 5-6, 2000
Cycle 4	May 22, 2000	June 26, 2000	Sept 18, 2000	Nov 13-14, 2000

B Quick Response Awards

Purpose

To initiate one-to-one partnerships, either to prepare a Challenge Grant proposal or to facilitate environmental trade and investment

Eligibility

Same types of organizations as Project Leaders for Challenge Grants Only one Quick-Response Award can be given to an organization during a calendar year

Applicants must come from one of the following countries

United States	Latvia
Armenia	Lithuania
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Macedonia
Bulgaria	Moldova
Croatia	Poland
Czech Republic	Romania
Estonia	Russia*
Georgia	Slovakia
Hungary	Turkmenistan
Kazakhstan	Ukraine
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan

* If the QRA is intended to lead to a Challenge Grant application, then the Russian partner organization must be located in the Russia Far East

Amount

Up to \$5000 each (about 60 will be awarded during the year)

Illustrative activities funded

Travel to technology demonstrations and consultant services for small-scale tasks The award can offset part of the costs to link up with a potential partner

Selection Process

Quick Response Awards are approved on a rolling basis, and the application procedures are streamlined, fast, and non-bureaucratic The applicant submits a short application to either the Country Program Officer or the Regional Program Manager, with a justification for the award The application is forwarded to the Foreign Commercial Officer in the country to review the legitimacy and viability of the applicant After the RPM recommends the application and the Foreign Commercial Service Officer reviews it, the application is forwarded to the Chief of Party for final approval The EcoLinks Grants Administrator disburses the funds Both a final expense report and a short narrative report of achievements are required after the activity is completed

USAID receives a quarterly report listing all Quick-Response Awards approved during the prior quarter

III New Initiatives

A Twinning/Trilateral Grants

In late 2000 a new grants program, Twinning Grants, will be designed and launched, if funds are available. Although implementation is not expected during the period of this workplan, a concept for Twinning Grants is provided to facilitate a smooth start-up when funds become available. A lead-time of 4-6 months is necessary for pre-launch development. The following description was developed as a result of preliminary discussions with USAID and EcoLinks staff members. In addition, EcoLinks organized an informal working group of outside experts that met on July 21 to advise EcoLinks how to shape Twinning Grants to achieve the desired results.

Purpose

To build institutional capacity of associations, businesses and local governments to establish the “enabling environment” for sustainable development. This enabling environment is comprised of three components - environmental policy reform, management capacity and financing and investment.

Twining Grants are distinguished from Challenge Grants in a number of ways. Twining Grants are larger in size and fewer in number, and more directly support longer-term technical, trade and investment relationships that in turn support institutional-building and policy reform. Challenge Grants focus on specific environmental problems, while Twining Grants are more issue-oriented. While Challenge Grants emphasize capacity building of professionals, Twining Grants emphasize institutional capacity building.

Objectives

Twining Grants can support one or more of the following objectives:

- Strengthen membership organizations (associations of professionals, mayors, industrial organizations, etc)
- Promote dialogue between private sector and policymakers/regulators
- Promote environmental advocacy
- Promote public-private partnerships
- Promote market-based solutions to urban and industrial environmental problems
- Replicate and disseminate best practices
- Develop environmental leadership

Approach

The approach is to support the development of sustainable partnerships between entities in the region and the United States or within the region. These partnerships will initially focus on two-

year activities that are funded by the Twinning Grants. It is expected that the partnerships will continue after USAID-financing has ended. In an ideal scenario, two organizations in two different ENI countries team up with an U.S. organization.

Amount

Up to \$250,000 (4 grants awarded per year)

Cost-sharing

Minimum 25% of the total budget, either in-kind or financial

Project duration

Up to two years

Illustrative activities

- Develop certification programs
- Provide consulting services
- Develop and implement training programs
- Produce guidebooks and resource materials
- Organize professional exchanges

Activity team and eligible organizations

The Activity Team consists of a Team Leader and one or two Partners. The Team Leader must be an association of relevant organizations or professionals. The Partners may be businesses, local governments, or associations. It is expected that applicants find their partners, without assistance from EcoLinks.

Eligible countries

Team Leaders must come from one of the following countries

Bulgaria

Croatia*

Kazakhstan

Macedonia

Romania

Russia Far East

Slovakia

Ukraine

United States

*Restrictions apply

Partners may come from the following countries

United States	Latvia
Armenia	Lithuania
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Macedonia
Bulgaria	Moldova
Croatia	Poland
Czech Republic	Romania
Estonia	Russia
Georgia	Slovakia
Hungary	Turkmenistan
Kazakhstan	Ukraine
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan

If the Team Leader is from the United States, then it is the institutional capacity of the ENI partner(s) that should be strengthened as a result of the Twinning Grant. Also, an U S Team Leader should contribute most of the cost-share

Qualifications

Grant applicants should be reputable, financially viable organizations. The Team Leader should demonstrate that it has a track record in managing and accounting for substantial grant funds in a responsible manner. An English speaker is required for each project partner.

Request for Application and Grant Topics

The selection process is competitive and one Request for Applications will be issued during the year. The RFA will invite concept papers for one of three grant topics. The proposed topics support the establishment of the enabling environment for sustainable development and are the following:

- Environmental policy reform
- Environmental management capacity
- Environmental financing and investment

Examples of the kind of projects that might be funded under each of the topics are listed below.

Environmental policy reform

- Prepare studies and promote dialogue to remedy policy barriers to environmental trade and investment
- Identify and assess economic incentives that encourage more responsible environmental behavior
- Prepare options papers for local authorities to mobilize fiscal resources for environmental activities

- Exchange information about EU environmental requirements and/or plans to comply with them
- Establish voluntary business initiatives and self-regulation measures
- Organize workshops for local governments to explain future environmental regulations and for businesses to discuss their capacity to comply with them
- Build capacity to lobby for appropriate policy measures

Environmental management capacity

- Establish or strengthen relevant associations and networks
- Develop certification programs for environmental professionals
- Develop standards for environmental auditors and conduct training programs to certify them
- Provide training for environmental management systems and cleaner production
- Disseminate and exchange information on best practices in technology transfer
- Disseminate and exchange information on the benefits and risks of different models of public-private partnerships
- Provide training how to develop outreach techniques and cooperative channels with other stakeholders
- Develop public information mechanisms (e.g. ‘green ratings’ for industries) to promote good environmental management practices

Environmental financing and investment

- Train practitioners how to prepare and market financial packages for environmental projects
- Train local governments how to prepare and evaluate bid solicitations for municipal projects
- Develop and promote standards for environmental due diligence performed by financial institutions
- Identify and remedy environmental liability problems associated with investments
- Prepare studies that identify and assess innovative financing approaches
- Assess and promote different models for public-private partnerships

Application Process

The first step is to establish the Activity Team. It is expected that the application process is a collaborative exercise, involving all the partners. The Team prepares a short concept paper describing the proposed project and demonstrating that it fits under one of the grant topics. The concept paper is submitted to an EcoLinks Grants panel by the deadline. The panel decides whether to reject it, to approve it, or to advise how to modify it to fit closer with program objectives. If the paper requires modifications, it must be revised and re-submitted by a second deadline for final concept papers. The revised concept papers are once again reviewed by the EcoLinks Grants panel and the promising ones are approved to proceed to the next step.

The Activity Team next prepares the full application, according to the application guidelines. Proposal-preparation workshops are available to assist the applicants in preparing quality proposals.

The full applications are sent to an independent selection panel that scores the applications and then meets to discuss them. At the selection meeting the winners are selected on a competitive basis.

Selection Criteria

The full applications are evaluated by the following criteria:

- The proposal includes a vision and a strategy to sustain the partnership after USAID financing has ended.
- The proposed partnership strengthens institutional capacity of ENI organizations to address key environmental issues and foster sustainable development.
- The project is clearly defined and relevant to the local situation.
- The objectives are feasible and can be reached within the project scope.
- The implementation plan clearly defines the key activities that are required to achieve the objectives as well as the tasks, timelines and deliverables for each partner. The plan describes how the project will be managed and defines the roles of each partner.
- The members of the project team are capable of managing and completing the project, both financially and organizationally.
- The project generates tangible results by the end of the grant period. These results are verifiable, measurable and consistent with the expected outcomes.
- The project has a high potential to result in a best practice or model that can be replicated in another organization or country.
- The budget is complete, reasonable and cost-effective. It is clearly explained, proposing realistic and cost-effective solutions and spending limited funds in the most efficient manner.

Start-up meetings

The winners will meet in one location to sign the grant agreements, to meet other winners and learn about their projects, and to meet the EcoLinks grants officer assigned to the project who will explain the reporting requirements and procedures for funds disbursements.

Monitoring and reporting

The projects are monitored by EcoLinks staff, and grant funds are disbursed in multiple installments. The grantees are required to submit quarterly progress reports and a final report. Both reports contain a narrative performance report and an expense report. The mid-term

progress report includes a sustainability plan, explaining how the partners will continue their partnership after the grant has ended. It is expected that the final report will result in a best practice that can be posted to the website.

B Proposal-preparation workshops

EcoLinks plans to strengthen the capacity of the applicants to prepare better proposals by expanding and improving its workshops in the target countries. This initiative requires that the EcoLinks program officers be trained to provide this assistance, possibly in collaboration with other partners in their countries. Two types of workshops are planned. First, a workshop will be organized to publicize the RFA, explain the grant topics and train how to shape a project concept. Second, after project concepts have been approved, another workshop will be held to train the participants in all the elements of a good proposal, from setting goals and objectives to preparing a detailed budget.

EcoLinks will prepare a Request for Proposal to develop a training module and conduct a train-the-trainers workshop for EcoLinks program officers in October. The training module should be based on an existing module to reduce development costs, but it should be tailored to the EcoLinks program guidelines and selection criteria. The RFA will be distributed to a short list of organizations who have experience in developing environmental training programs in the region.

C Recommended guidelines for mission buy-in

Although IIE is not responsible for obtaining mission buy-ins to the program, it expects to be involved in technical and budget discussions and in negotiations. It is important to maintain the regional character of the program and to avoid becoming a series of country programs. EcoLinks is a cost-effective program because it centralizes certain key program activities, such as partners searching and grants selection, and it systematically handles common administrative tasks.

The following guidelines are recommended in negotiating mission agreements for direct program financing:

- Current policies and procedures should remain in effect, whenever possible.
- Any request to adopt special policies and procedures in a particular country should be reviewed by USAID/Washington and IIE to ensure that program objectives are achieved and the spirit of EcoLinks is maintained.
- If a mission requests a change in policies and procedures, then the budget impact of the revised scope of work needs to be evaluated.

- If the mission funds additional grants in its country, the additional administrative costs related to the increased grants volume need to be assessed

IV Program Management

A Organization and Program Staffing

EcoLinks' organization structure is divided into three regions U S , CEE and NIS Each region is headed by a Regional Program Manager who reports to the Chief of Party in Washington, DC (see Annex A Organizational Chart) There are Program Officers in the target countries of each region, reporting to the Regional Program Manager

IIE's Washington, DC office is the U S regional office and main headquarters, REC's Szentendre office is the CEE regional office, and IIE's office in Moscow serves as the NIS regional office In addition, EcoLinks staff is based in seven target countries for challenge grants Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Russia Far East

The Chief of Party is Winston Bowman who has overall responsibility for the management of EcoLinks, including program design, accountability of funds, reporting, and evaluation He is also responsible for effective communications and relations with USAID/FCS, REC and other partner organizations

The Regional Program Managers are responsible for managing the day-to-day EcoLinks activities in their region and coordinating these activities with their counterparts in other regions and with other EcoLinks partners Major responsibilities include grants administration, program communications, staff supervision, field office operations, coordination with USAID/FCS, budgeting and expense control Patty Lai is the U S Program Manager, Jacek Podkanski is the CEE Program Manager and Chan Barksdale is the NIS Program Manager

Country Program Officers are responsible for representing EcoLinks in their countries, providing outreach and publicity, administering and monitoring grants, conducting training workshops and coordinating with the local USAID/FCS mission to enlist its active support of the program

Regional staff in Szentendre and Washington work together develop the policies and procedures of the grants program, prepare the Request for Applications, find partners for applicants, train the Program Officers, coordinate all aspects of the grants program with the Program Officers, organize the grants selection process, coordinate the program with USAID, FCS and other partners, organize the grant selection process, monitor the grant projects and expenses, prepare and track program budgets, and prepare management reports

The Grants and Financial Administrator is responsible for the administration of grant funds and for the overall financial management of EcoLinks, ensuring that EcoLinks' financial control and reporting system complies with acceptable accounting standards and USAID requirements Additional responsibilities include developing financial policies and procedures, preparing

program budgets, reviewing and approving all financial and expense reports, disbursing grant funds and preparing special financial reports

The following positions will be filled in 1999

- Program Associate for the Washington, DC office (July 1999)
- Program Associate for the Skopje office (September 1999)

In addition, USAID has requested that EcoLinks establish satellite offices in Vladivostok and Sakhalin Island. If the budget is approved, part-time program officers will be recruited for these two offices.

B Program Coordination

Several mechanisms or activities provide program coordination with other EcoLinks partners or staff.

Monthly Partner Meetings

Once a month at least one representative from USAID and each of the three components meet to discuss any implementation issues, update each other on program progress and coordinate any joint activities.

Weekly Conference Calls

Each week the COP has a conference call with the three Regional Program Managers to coordinate and monitor implementation of the EcoLinks Grants program and to exchange ideas about program development.

Field visits

The COP regularly visits each of the missions and EcoLinks offices in the target countries to update them on program status and to discuss any implementation issues in the country.

Annual Grants Training Program

A training program is held each year for the EcoLinks Grants staff to further train them in program management, to introduce new initiatives, to discuss and resolve any implementation problems, to increase their understanding of key environmental issues, and to build team spirit. To the extent possible the training program will be coordinated with other program-related initiatives.

Annual Partner Meetings

Each year all the senior representatives of the partner organizations in both Washington and the field meet to assess program achievements to date and to develop and coordinate major initiatives for the next year.

C Communications and Outreach Program

A communications and outreach program publicizes EcoLinks' activities and its successes. As part of this communications initiative, a separate graphic identity and logo convey a uniform and professional image to the target audience.

Informational Materials

The following materials are planned to be printed and distributed:

- A leaflet that describes best practices or successes resulting from awarded grants (to be discussed with USAID and coordinated with the annual marketing report)
- A marketing report that describes EcoLinks achievements for all three components during the year and how the funds were spent (contingent on Devtech's budget)

Requests for Applications

The Request for Applications will be widely advertised in the press of countries eligible for challenge grants and posted to the EcoLinks website.

Press Releases

Press releases will be prepared periodically and distributed to selected journalists, in cooperation with USAID staff in Washington and in the ENI missions.

Website postings

All of the above information will be posted to the EcoLinks website as well as the websites of IIE, REC and EcoLinks resource organizations. In addition, program news and successes will be regularly posted to the EcoLinks website.

Presentations at Conferences and Related Events

The Chief of Party, Regional Program Managers, and Country Program Officers will continually represent EcoLinks at conferences and related events in both the U.S. and the ENI region.

E Reporting and Evaluation

Reporting

The following reports are produced that enable EcoLinks and USAID managers to monitor EcoLinks' financial control and performance:

Reports to EcoLinks Management

- Monthly expense reports and program activity reports, including grants
- Monthly progress reports from Country Program Officers which include basic activity statistics, major tasks accomplished, outcomes of meetings, upcoming conferences and opportunities, and any problems or obstacles. These reports are submitted by the Regional Program Managers with a brief summary

Reports to USAID

- Quarterly financial status reports
- Quarterly performance reports
- Annual workplan

Evaluation

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators have been established by which the progress and success of EcoLinks is measured and evaluated. Indicators support USAID Strategic Objective 1.6, USAID Intermediate Results and the following expected outcomes:

Local governments, businesses and relevant associations are better able to

- prepare acceptable project proposals that identify and remedy environmental problems
- form partnerships across borders to address mutual urban and industrial environmental problems and issues
- develop market-based solutions to environmental problems
- develop and implement projects that result in best practices

The following results framework correlates USAID Intermediate results, EcoLinks activities, the proposed performance indicators, and their targets

Intermediate Results	EcoLinks Activities	Second Year Performance Indicators	Targets
IR 4 Increased institutional ability to identify and remedy environmental problems	Proposal-writing workshops	-Number of Challenge Grant proposals scored acceptable or above	80
	Partnership facilitation	-Number of partner searches that result in an on-going relationship (e g , challenge grant proposal)	40
	Challenge Grants	- Number of projects that result in institutional changes that enhance the project participant's ability to identify and remedy environmental problems*	40
IR3a Best practices adopted by industrial and public sectors	Challenge Grants	-Number of projects that result in a best practice to solve an environmental problem	20
		-Number of projects that result in a market-based solution to an environmental problem	70
IR2 Increased environmental trade, finance and investment	Quick Response Awards	Number of QRAs that result in an agreement to pursue environmental trade, finance or investment	25
	Challenge Grants	Number of projects that result in an agreement to further pursue environmental trade, finance or investment	12
Other	Quick Response Awards	Number of QRAs that result in a challenge grant proposal	30

* Institutional changes may include the following

- development of a long-term strategy or plan that will serve as a guideline for future environmental activities
- development or implementation of policies or procedures that enhance the participant's ability to identify or remedy environmental problems
- creation of a new organizational unit or position within the participant's organization that enhance its ability to identify or remedy environmental problems
- improvement of skills of participating organization's employees that enhance their ability to identify or remedy environmental problems
- assumption of a leadership position by the participant to promote an environmental initiative
- other linkages with organizations that strengthen the participant's ability to identify or remedy environmental problems

In addition, EcoLinks Grants management will use the following internal indicators to measure staff performance in efficiently managing the program

- 1 Number of EcoLinks information workshops
- 2 Number of people attending EcoLinks information workshops
- 3 Number of proposal-writing workshops
- 4 Number of people attending proposal-writing workshops
- 5 Number of workshop participants who evaluate the workshop 3 above on a scale of 1 to 5 in terms of enhanced ability to prepare a project proposal
- 6 Number of total people informed about EcoLinks (via letters, email, events, conferences, phone calls, etc)
- 7 Number of concept papers received and reviewed
- 8 Number of full applications received and reviewed
- 9 Number of QRAs received and processed
- 10 Number of partner searches initiated (Szentendre/Washington staff only)
- 11 Number of submitted final applications that resulted from partner matching
- 12 Number of start-up meetings and dates
- 13 Number of field visits to grantees
- 14 Number of active challenge grants projects

These indicators may be refined during the course of the program's life to better measure the impact of the awarded grants. At the end of the second year, IIE will conduct an evaluation of the program, in collaboration with USAID. This evaluation will provide feedback from USAID and other EcoLinks partners on the extent to which the EcoLinks Team met program objectives and the effectiveness of the management structure that supports program implementation. It will compare actual performance with the targets in the workplan, address any problems that were encountered and discuss any other programmatic or financial situation which is substantially different from what was anticipated. The results of the evaluation will guide the development of the next year's workplan.

V. Implementation Plan

This workplan covers the period July 1999 to June 2000 and includes 6 major tasks with corresponding activities

- Task 1 Implement Quick Response Awards
- Task 2 Re-design Challenge Grant topics
- Task 3 Implement Challenge Grants (two cycles)
- Task 4 Develop and conduct proposal-preparation workshops
- Task 5 Implement communications initiatives
- Task 6 Report and evaluate

Task 1 Implement Quick Response Awards

- Evaluate and process applications on a rolling basis

Task 2 Re-design Challenge Grant Topics

- Prepare draft descriptions of topics and examples
- Distribute to USAID and experts
- Revise drafts
- Train program officers on new topics

Task 3 Implement Challenge Grants (two cycles)

- Recruit expert panel for advising on selection criteria and evaluating grant applications
- Revise RFA, selection criteria and point scoring system
- Publicize RFA
- Conduct local workshops to explain RFA and the grant topics and train how to shape a project concept
- Review and approve concept papers for potential projects
- Assist applicants to find suitable partners, if necessary
- Conduct local workshops to train how to prepare full proposals
- Collect and screen applications and send them to experts for evaluation
- Organize and convene selection meeting of expert panel
- Notify winners and declined applicants
- Prepare grant awards and contracts
- Organize and convene start-up meeting
- Disburse initial grant funds
- Monitor progress on a continuous basis

- Review and approve mid-term financial and performance reports
- Disburse next tranche of grant funds
- Review and approve final financial and performance reports
- Disburse final tranche of grant funds
- Disseminate results of project

Implement activity steps for second grants cycle (same as above)

Task 4 Develop and conduct proposal-preparation workshops

- Prepare RFP and distribute to short list
- Select contractor
- Review draft training module and course plan
- Train program officers
- Conduct workshops

Task 5 Implement communications initiatives

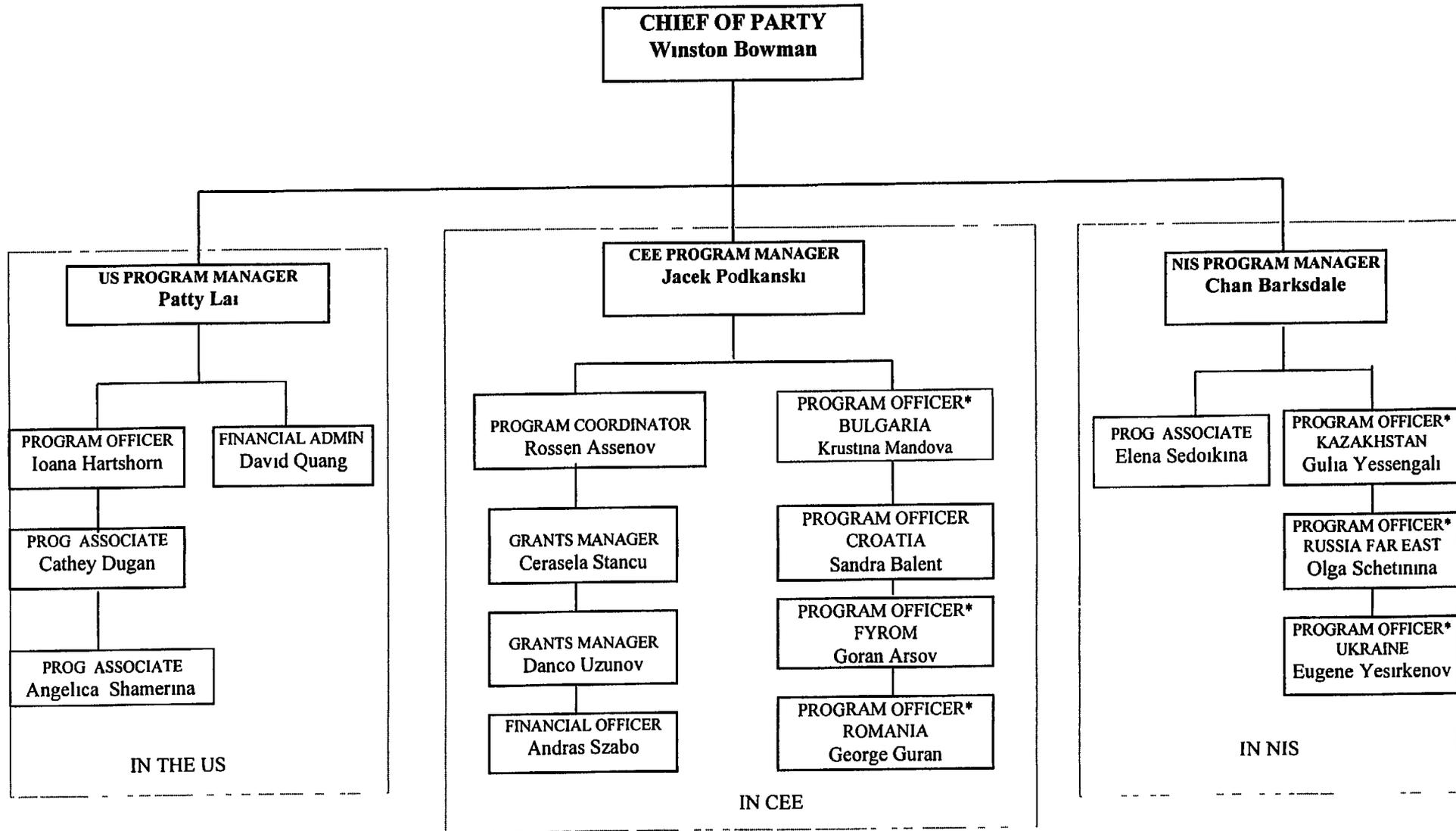
- Prepare and print leaflet on success stories
(to be discussed with USAID and coordinated with marketing report)
- Assist in preparing marketing report
- Prepare and distribute regular press releases
- Post EcoLinks information to websites
- Present EcoLinks at conferences and related events

Task 6 Report and evaluate

- Prepare monthly progress report to EcoLinks
- Prepare quarterly reports to USAID
- Prepare annual report to USAID

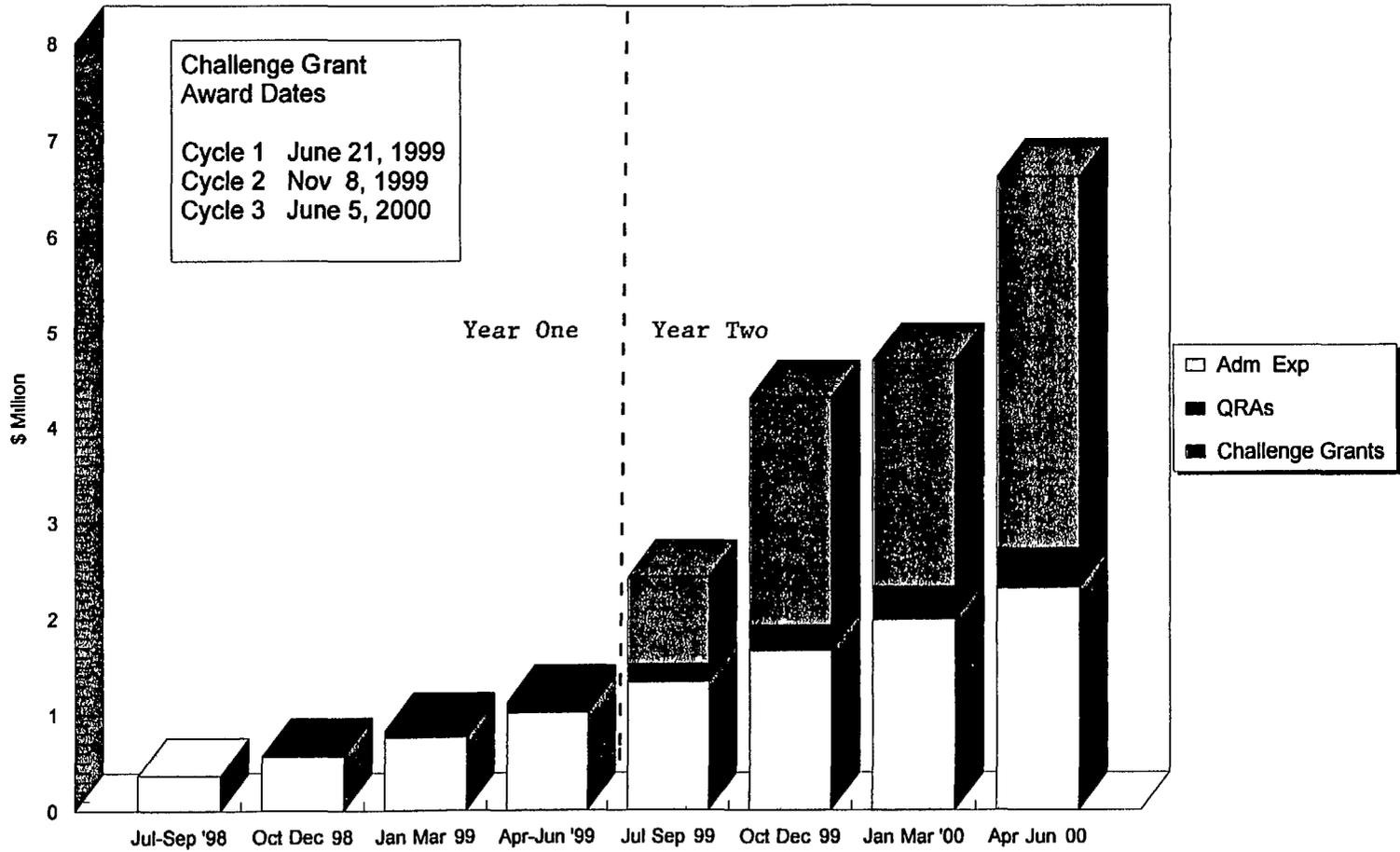
September 20, 1999

Annex A - ECOLINKS Partnership Grants Organizational Chart



* Program Associates also report to these Country Program Officers

**ANNEX B
ECOLINKS CUMULATIVE PROGRAM EXPENDITURES (in \$ Million)**



RP

ANNEX C EcoLinks Grants Program Timeline 1999 – 2000

Implementation Tasks	July '99	Aug '99	Sept '99	Oct '99	Nov '99	Dec '99	Jan '00	Feb '00	Mar '00	April '00	May '00	Jun '00	Jul '00	Aug '00	Sept '00	Oct '00	Nov '00	Dec '00	Jan '01	
1 Quick Response Awards	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
2 Revise Challenge Grant Topics																				
Revise topics and examples		█	█																	
Train staff on topics				█																
3 Challenge Grants																				
Second Cycle																				
Review concept papers	█																			
Match partners	█	█																		
Collect applications			█																	
Evaluate applic /select grantees				█	█															
Notify grantees						█														
Conduct start-up meetings							█													
Monitor projects								█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Third Cycle																				
Prepare RfA						█														
Publicize RfA							█													
Conduct local workshops							█	█	█	█										
Review concept papers								█												
Match partners								█	█	█										
Collect applications										█										
Evaluate applic /select grantees											█	█								
Notify grantees												█								
Conduct start-up meetings													█							
Monitor project														█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Fourth cycle																				
Prepare RfA										█										
Publicize RfA											█									
Conduct local workshops											█	█	█	█						
Review concept papers												█								
Match partners													█	█	█					
Collect applications															█					
Evaluate applic/select grantees																█	█			
Notify grantees																			█	
Conduct start-up meetings																				█

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ANNEX C (cont)

Implementation Tasks	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
4 Proposal Preparation Workshops																			
Prepare RFP/Select Contractor																			
Review Training and Course Plan																			
Train Staff																			
Conduct Workshops																			

Deadlines Announce RFA Concept Papers Full Applications Selection Meeting

Challenge Grants

Cycle 2	May 25, 1999	July 19, 1999	Sept 22, 1999	Nov 8 & 9, 1999
Cycle 3	Jan 17, 2000	Feb 21, 2000	April 24, 2000	June 5 & 6, 2000
Cycle 4	May 22, 2000	June 26, 2000	Sept 18, 2000	Nov 13 & 14, 2000