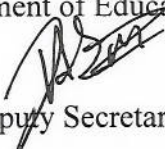# MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 15, 2010

TO: Bridget Dooling
           Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
           Office of Management and Budget

THROUGH: Kathy Axt
           Regulatory Information Management Services
           U.S. Department of Education

FROM: Jim Shelton
           Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Innovation and Improvement

SUBJECT: Emergency Clearance of Open Innovation Web Portal that would collect
           information regarding innovative solutions to problems facing education

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) has developed a web-based platform, the Open Innovation Web Portal (Portal), to support communication and collaboration among a wide range of key education stakeholders, including practitioners, funders, and the general public. Once this platform goes on-line, it will allow geographically dispersed but like-minded entities to discover each other and work together to address some of the most intractable challenges in education.

OII plans to promote this platform as a tool for use with the Investing in Innovation grant program (i3), which was established as the "Innovation Fund" in the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (ARRA), signed into law by the President on February 17, 2009. Since passage of ARRA, the Department has worked with all possible speed to develop the i3 program, which will conduct three separate competitions. This new program will provide $650,000,000 in competitive grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), non-profit organizations working in collaboration with LEAs, or non-profit organizations working in collaboration with a consortium of schools. The Department must obligate funds to i3 grantees before the end of fiscal year 2009, September 30, 2010. The Department requests emergency approval under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) of the information collection request (ICR) for the Portal so that prospective applicants to the i3 competitions may use the Portal to identify partners, find matching funding, and improve the quality of their applications.

We expect to publish an Application Notice for the competition during the first week of February.[1] In order for applicants to make use of the Portal in preparing their applications, we need the Portal to go on-line on the date the application notice is published in the <u>Federal Register</u>. So the Department may make grants on a timely basis, the Department must set a deadline for receipt of applications of no later than the end of May.

Grants funded under the i3 competitions will support the development, validation, and scaling of new and innovative solutions in the field of education and support solutions that demonstrate proven effectiveness. The foci of the competitions are to support effective teachers and school leaders, improve the use of data, support the implementation of high standards and high-quality assessments, and turn around failing schools.

Part of our intent in implementing the i3 program is to identify innovative new approaches proposed by individuals and organizations that have previously had limited experience in obtaining grants in the education sector yet have promising evidence-based ideas for improving American education. These applicants in particular face challenges in identifying schools or LEAs with which to partner given their limited experience in the field. Further, organizations without existing relationships in education may find it difficult to secure the private sector matching funds required of all grantees under ARRA. Receiving OMB's approval on an emergency basis is thus essential to launching the Portal and supporting improved student achievement through school improvement and reform, one of the primary objectives of ARRA. Failure to approve this emergency request would cause substantial harm to precisely the applicants that the i3 program hopes to entice and as a direct result would negatively impact the schools and students who would benefit most from new and improved approaches to education.

In order to meet the timeline for the i3 program, we need approval of the ICR for the Portal prior to the expiration of the time periods established under the PRA. Approval of the Portal ICR is essential to implementation of the i3 program authorized under ARRA because, without use of the Portal, the Department will not receive the highest quality applications from the broadest possible pool of potential applicants. The Department cannot reasonably comply with normal PRA clearance procedures because use of those procedures will prevent the Department awarding grants under the i3 program before the end of the fiscal year. Thus, we ask that OMB approve an expedited PRA <u>Federal Register</u> comment period that requests any comments by February 4, 2010, and that OMB approve the ICR for the Portal no later than February 4, 2010. The public will have a second chance to comment as part of the 60-day process during the regular collection approval process.

We believe that the Portal could benefit the Department as we hold future competitions under the i3 program and other programs of the Department. Therefore, we expect to continue use of the

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[1] Please note that the Department is also preparing an emergency ICR for the i3 application package, which we will submit in the next day or two at the most.

Portal beyond the period needed for this year's i3 competitions. Thus, we will submit in the near future an ICR through the standard information clearance process that will seek paperwork approval for the standard three year period.

The Secretary requests approval of this emergency request by February 4, 2010.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request. If you have questions, please contact Jefferson Pestronk of OII at 202.453.7448 or jefferson.pestronk@ed.gov.