

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies

CFDA Number: 84.305E

<u>COMPETITION</u>	Letter of Intent Due Date	Application Package Available	Application Due Date
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PART I GENERAL OVERVIEW

1. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

In this announcement, the Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) invites applications for research projects that will contribute to its research program in Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies (State/Local Evaluation). For the FY 2012 competition, the Institute will consider only applications that meet the requirements outlined below under *Part II Requirements of the Proposed Research*.

Separate announcements will be available on the Institute's web site that pertain to the other research and research training grant programs funded through the Institute's National Center for Education Research and to the discretionary grant competitions funded through the Institute's National Center for Special Education Research (<http://ies.ed.gov/>). An overview of the Institute's research grant programs is available at <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/overview.asp>.

2. OVERVIEW

For FY 2012, the Institute will support rigorous evaluations of education programs or policies that are implemented by State or local education agencies to improve student academic outcomes.

The Institute recognizes that evidence-based answers for all of the decisions that education decision-makers and practitioners must make every day do not yet exist. Furthermore, education leaders cannot always wait for scientists to provide answers. One solution for this dilemma is for the education system to integrate rigorous evaluation into the core of its activities. The Institute believes that the education system needs to be at the forefront of a *learning society* – a society that plans for and invests in learning how to improve its education programs by turning to rigorous evidence when it is available and by insisting that, when we cannot wait for evidence of effectiveness the program or policy we decide to implement *be evaluated as part of the implementation*.

Making rigorous evaluation of programs a standard education practice will enable educators to improve specific programs and ultimately lead to higher quality education programs in general. Through rigorous evaluations of education programs and practices, we can distinguish between those programs that produce the desired outcomes and those that do not; identify the particular groups (e.g., types of students, teachers, or schools) for which a program works; and determine which aspects of programs need to be modified in order to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, rigorous evaluations have shown that *Check & Connect*, a dropout prevention program, reduces dropout rates (Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, & Hurley, 1998; Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow, 2005).

States and districts can use the results of rigorous evaluations to identify and maintain successful policies and programs and to inform the redesign or termination of ineffective ones, thereby making the best use of their resources. Rigorous evaluations can also identify ways to improve successful interventions. For example, the evaluation of the federal Early Reading First program to improve preschool children's literacy and language skills found positive impacts on students' print and letter knowledge and none of the feared negative impacts on social-emotional skills (Jackson et al., 2007). In addition, it also identified the need for greater attention on improving children's oral language and phonological awareness.

If "new" is not necessarily "better" and if "good" programs could become even more effective, then it behooves us to evaluate the effects of programs on their intended outcomes (e.g., math achievement, graduation completion rates) when the new programs are implemented. Only appropriate empirical evaluation can identify those programs that do in fact improve student outcomes. The Institute believes that substantial improvements in student outcomes can be achieved if State and local education agencies

rigorously evaluate their education programs and policies. To this end, the Institute will provide resources to conduct rigorous evaluations of State and local education programs and policies.

The Institute intends the State/Local Evaluation research program to address education programs and policies that are selected and implemented by State or local education agencies to improve student outcomes directly or indirectly, rather than interventions that are selected by researchers from agencies outside of State or local education agencies (e.g., institutions of higher education, research firms). The work of the Institute is grounded in the principle that effective education research must address the interests and needs of education practitioners and policymakers, as well as students, parents and community members (see <http://ies.ed.gov/director/board/priorities.asp> for the Institute's priorities). One purpose of the State/Local Evaluation research program is to encourage researchers to develop partnerships with stakeholder groups to advance the relevance of their work, the accessibility of their publications, and the usability of their findings for the day-to-day work of education practitioners and policymakers.

The program or policy examined may be an education intervention that the State or local education agency is planning to adopt or an intervention that is already an existing practice but is innovative, has not yet been evaluated, and is not yet universal. The program or policy examined must be at sufficient scale to ensure appropriate generalizability of the findings. There should be sufficient numbers of students, schools, or districts to allow for subgroup analyses of the impact on specific student populations and analyses of moderating conditions that may affect the impact of the intervention. Along with being widely implemented, the intervention is to be implemented under conditions of routine practice.

In addition, through the State/Local Evaluation research program, the Institute intends to invest in the examination of programs and policies that substantially modify or differ from existing practices. The modest interventions that States and districts make on an ongoing basis, such as small changes in daily schedules or making minor adjustments to teacher certification systems, are not the targets of this research program. For example, although the Institute does not intend to fund evaluations of two different versions of the *same* textbook, an applicant could propose to compare the effects of textbooks from *different* publishers or using the same textbook with and without an expensive education technology supplement to the textbook. Finally, the Institute is most interested in programs and policies that could be transferred to other districts and States.

PART II REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

A. Basic Requirements

a. Resubmissions

Applicants who intend to revise and resubmit a proposal that was submitted to one of the Institute's previous competitions but that was not funded must indicate on the application form that their FY 2012 proposal is a revised proposal and include the application number of the previous application (an 11 character alphanumeric identifier beginning "R305" or "R324"). The prior reviews will be sent to this year's reviewers along with the resubmitted proposal. Applicants should indicate the revisions that were made to the proposal on the basis of the prior reviews using no more than 3 pages of Appendix A. Applicants who revise and resubmit a proposal should be aware that the FY 2012 application will be reviewed according to the FY 2012 Request for Applications.

Applicants who have submitted a somewhat similar proposal in the past but are submitting the current proposal as a *new* proposal must indicate on the application form that their FY 2012 proposal is a new proposal. Applicants should provide a rationale explaining why the current proposal should be considered to be a "new" proposal rather than a "revised" proposal at the beginning of Appendix A using no more than 3 pages. Without such an explanation, if the Institute determines that the current proposal is

similar to a previously unfunded proposal, the Institute may send the reviews of the prior unfunded proposal to this year's reviewers along with the current proposal.

b. Applying to multiple competitions or topics

Applicants may submit proposals to more than one of the Institute's competitions in FY 2012. In addition, within a particular competition, applicants may submit multiple proposals. However, applicants may submit a given proposal only once (i.e., applicants may not submit the same proposal or similar proposals to multiple competitions). If the Institute determines prior to panel review that an applicant has submitted the same proposal or similar proposals within or across competitions and the proposal is judged to be compliant and responsive to the submission rules and requirements described in the Request for Applications, the Institute will select one version of the application to be reviewed by the appropriate scientific review panel. If the Institute determines after panel review that an applicant has submitted the same proposal or similar proposals within or across competitions and if the proposal is determined to be worthy of funding, the Institute will select the competition under which the proposal will be funded.

4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

A. Purpose of the Evaluation

The Institute intends to fund rigorous evaluations to determine the overall impact of fully developed education programs or policies implemented under conditions of routine practice by a State, district, or consortium of States or districts and to determine the impact across a variety of conditions (e.g., different student populations, different types of schools). By *overall impact*, the Institute means the degree to which an intervention on average has a net positive impact on the outcomes of interest in relation to the program or practice to which it is being compared. By referring to *impact across a variety of conditions*, the Institute conveys the expectation that subgroup analyses of different student populations, types of schools, and other potential moderating conditions will be conducted to determine if interventions produce positive impacts for some groups or under some conditions. By *fully developed*, the Institute means interventions that are ready to be implemented by schools or districts – that is, all of the materials, manuals, and other supports are ready to be distributed to and used by schools or districts. By *conditions of routine practice*, the Institute means that the program or policy is implemented without special support by developers of the intervention or the research team, to improve, for example, the fidelity of the implementation of the intervention.

B. Significance of the Project

Applicants must address the significance of their proposed project by providing a compelling rationale justifying why the proposed evaluation is important to conduct. To help reviewers assess the importance of the proposed evaluation, applicants should provide a comprehensive description of the intervention and a clear rationale for the *practical* importance of the intervention. Specifically, applicants should address the following six topics: (a) Description of the intervention and its implementation, (b) Rationale for the intervention, (c) Student and other outcomes, (d) Wide implementation, (e) Importance of the proposed evaluation, and (f) Entity responsible for implementation of the intervention. By addressing these six topics, the applicant is presenting the significance of the proposed project.

a. Description of the intervention and its implementation

Under this research program, interventions are limited to those that are delivered through State or local education agencies at any level from prekindergarten through high school. In addition, evaluations of postsecondary level (sub-baccalaureate or baccalaureate) interventions that are intended to increase access for traditionally underserved populations and that are delivered through State or local education agencies are appropriate.

All applicants should clearly describe the intervention (e.g., features, components) and how it is intended to be implemented. When applicants clearly describe the intervention and its implementation, reviewers are better able to evaluate the relation between the intervention and its intended outcomes.

For interventions that have not yet been implemented by the State or district, applicants must indicate the date when the State or district will begin implementation of the intervention. If the intervention has already been implemented in some schools but is not yet universal within the State or district and the proposed evaluation will, for example, take advantage of expansion of the intervention to additional schools or districts, applicants must indicate the date when the State or district will begin the implementation of the intervention in new schools or districts.

Strong applications will also include detailed descriptions of what the comparison group experiences. By clearly describing the components of the intervention and the comparable program that the comparison group will receive or experience, reviewers are better able to judge whether (a) the intervention is sufficiently different from what the comparison group experiences so that one might reasonably expect a difference in student outcomes and (b) fidelity measures and observations of the comparison group are sufficiently comprehensive and sensitive to identify and document critical differences between the intervention and comparison conditions.

b. Rationale for the intervention

Applicants should explain the rationale for the intervention. Why is the intervention likely to improve student outcomes? The Institute recognizes that oftentimes interventions that emerge out of a practice context are not based on a formal theory of change. However, applicants should articulate a general theory of change for the proposed intervention. That is, applicants should describe what the intervention is expected to change and how this will ultimately result in improved student outcomes (e.g., school readiness, grades, achievement test scores, high school graduation). For example, a State might implement a program to provide incentives to recruit master teachers to teach at chronically low-performing schools. The theory of change might be that (a) monetary incentives will increase the number of master teachers who are willing to leave their current schools to teach at low-performing schools, (b) master teachers will provide coaching that will enhance instruction of other teachers in the school, and (c) enhanced instruction will lead to better student outcomes.

The theory of change helps reviewers judge whether the intervention is likely to produce a positive impact on desired outcomes relative to current practice. It also provides a framework for determining critical features of the intervention and its implementation that should be measured. In the previous example, the theory of change suggests that the evaluation team might need to measure (a) the number of master teachers in treatment and comparison schools prior to and after the implementation of the intervention; (b) whether master teachers in the treatment group are aware of the incentive program once the intervention has been implemented; (c) number of hours, type, and quality of coaching provided by master teachers at treatment and control schools; (d) quality of instruction provided by regular teachers prior to and after implementation of the intervention; and (e) student outcomes.

c. Student and other outcomes

This research program is limited to interventions that are intended to improve student outcomes from prekindergarten through high school (e.g., school readiness, grades, achievement on State exams, high school graduation rates) or to improve transition from high school to postsecondary education (access to college) directly (e.g., tutoring program for low-achieving students) or indirectly (e.g., incentives to retain effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools are posited to improve directly the quality of instruction and indirectly to improve student outcomes). Strong applications will include reliable and valid measures of the proximal and distal outcomes expected from the intervention. When impacts are found on the proximal as well as distal outcomes, greater evidence is provided for the theory of change.

d. Wide implementation

The intervention must be developed to the point where it is ready to be implemented across the State or district. In cases where a specified program will be implemented, the applicant should provide evidence that the program is ready to go or will be ready by the start of the evaluation. In cases where a new

policy has been set, the applicant should show that the new policy will be implemented during the timeframe of the grant. Evidence that implementation will take place can include, for example, new State laws or regulations, appropriation of targeted funds, and the establishment of new authorities for implementation and oversight. Evidence from implementation of similar interventions in other locales or from prior research studies can be provided to support feasibility of implementation. In addition, applicants should discuss whether the intervention is designed so that it is feasible and affordable for other States or districts to adopt the intervention should an evaluation show that the intervention improves the intended outcomes.

The Institute intends for evaluations funded through the State/Local Evaluation program to determine if programs implemented under typical operating conditions are effective in a variety of settings across a range of education contexts. The applicant should detail the conditions under which the intervention will be implemented.

e. Importance of the proposed evaluation

As described in *Sections 4.B.a-4.B.d*, the applicant should describe what the intervention is, why the intervention is hypothesized to improve student outcomes, the specific outcomes that the intervention targets, how it will be implemented (widely and under typical operating conditions), and the feasibility and affordability of the intervention. All of this information lends support to the applicant's justification for the importance of the proposed evaluation. Applicants should clearly summarize for reviewers their argument for why the proposed evaluation is important to fund.

f. Entity responsible for implementation of the intervention

The State/Local Evaluation awards are to evaluate interventions implemented by States and districts. By *State or district implementation*, the Institute means that a State Education Agency or Local Education Agency has decided, apart from participation in any evaluation, to fund the implementation of the intervention and will oversee the implementation of the intervention as part of its regular responsibilities. This restriction does not preclude interventions that are delivered by entities outside of State or district personnel so long as the State or district has contracted, or otherwise established an agreement, with the outside entity to deliver the intervention. Applicants must clearly describe who is responsible for the implementation of the intervention.

C. Methodological Requirements

The proposed research design must be appropriate for answering the research questions or hypotheses that are posed.

Applicants may propose retrospective studies of past performance or prospective studies of future performance of interventions (or a combination of both). In the case of retrospective studies, applicants must meet all of the existing requirements with the exception noted in *Section 4.C.f Fidelity of implementation of the intervention* and must demonstrate that they have access to the scope of data necessary to conduct the study.

a. Research questions

Applicants should pose clear, concise hypotheses or research questions.

b. Sample

The applicant should define, as completely as possible, the sample to be selected and sampling procedures to be employed for the proposed study, including justification for exclusion and inclusion criteria. Additionally, the applicant should describe strategies to increase the likelihood that participants will remain in the study over the course of the evaluation (i.e., reduce attrition).

c. Research design

The applicant must provide a detailed research design. Applicants should describe how potential threats to internal validity would be addressed. Studies using random assignment to intervention and comparison conditions have the strongest internal validity for causal conclusions and, thus, are preferred whenever they are feasible. When a randomized trial is used, the applicant should clearly state and present a convincing rationale for the unit of randomization (e.g., students, classroom, teacher, or school). Applicants should explain the procedures for assignment of groups (e.g., schools) or participants to intervention and comparison conditions and how the integrity of the assignment process will be ensured.¹ Even with randomization, applicants should explain how they will document that the intervention and comparison conditions are equivalent at the outset of the study.

The procedures used for random assignment are expected to depend upon the intervention's implementation. In some cases, the State or district may be able to assign all appropriate units to the treatment and control groups while in others only a subset of units, often volunteers, can be randomly assigned. The two experimental evaluations of the School Development Program (SDP) illustrate these two approaches (Cook et al. 1999; Cook, Murphy, & Hunt, 2000).

Lotteries are often used to randomly assign participants to treatment and control groups. Lotteries are especially useful for randomly assigning groups to these two conditions in situations where participants have to apply to receive an intervention but resources are not sufficient to provide the program to all applicants (see Kemple & Snipes, 2000 for an example regarding the Career Academies Evaluation). When proposing a lottery design, it is important to document that oversubscription will occur; whether participants may take part in multiple lotteries (e.g., apply to a number of charter or magnet schools), and if so, how the design will address this; and whether those who do not gain entry through the lottery will remain available as the control group (e.g., students who lose a charter or magnet school lottery may go to private schools or to other districts where data collection is not possible and so attrite from the control group).

Random assignment can also be implemented through a staggered roll-out of the program or policy with the treatment group receiving the intervention immediately and the control group receiving it at a future time. This type of implementation also allows a district or State to more easily manage the implementation of the intervention and spread the cost over a number of years. For example, if a new intervention program is deployed for one-third of a state's districts each year over a three year period and the districts take part in a lottery to determine when each will receive it, then in Year 1, one-third of the districts can be the treatment group and the remaining districts are the control group. In the second year, the second group joins the treatment group, and the control group is the one-third of the districts not yet receiving the intervention. In the third year, all districts are participating. When proposing a staggered randomized design, it is important to justify that the time between the roll-out of the intervention for the treatment group and when the control group will receive it will be long enough to expect the intervention to improve the treatment group's outcomes relative to the control group.

Random assignment can also be done when everyone will receive some variation of the intervention. In such a case, the State or district implements a program or policy but tries out variations in an attempt to determine the most successful way to structure the program or policy or whether variations may have differential subgroup impacts (for example, see Hastings, Van Weelden, & Weinstein, 2007 for a study on variations in information provided to parents on school choice in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district).

Applicants proposing to use a design other than a randomized design should make a compelling case that randomization is not possible. When a randomized trial is not possible, applicants should propose

¹ The What Works Clearinghouse describes what randomized control trials and quasi-experiments must do to meet the WWC's evidence standards in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (2008) available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/library/>.

alternative designs that substantially minimize selection bias or allow it to be modeled. Acceptable alternatives include appropriately structured regression discontinuity designs (for example, see Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, & Dawson, 2005 regarding the impact of preschool). Applicants proposing regression discontinuity designs should document the appropriateness of the assignment variable (e.g., that there is a true discontinuity and no manipulation of the assignment variable) and include sensitivity analyses to assess the influence of key procedural or analytic decisions on the results. Applicants are reminded that evaluation studies using regression discontinuity designs should meet the standards of the Institute's What Works Clearinghouse (see the WWC Standards for Regression Discontinuity Designs available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/library/>).

The Institute will also consider other well-designed quasi-experimental designs that come close to true experiments in minimizing the effects of selection bias (resulting in differences in the membership of the intervention and comparison groups) on estimates of effect size. This involves demonstrating equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program entry on the variables that are to be measured as program outcomes (e.g., student achievement scores) or obtaining such equivalence through statistical procedures such as propensity score balancing or regression. It also involves demonstrating equivalence or statistically removing the effects of other variables on which the groups may differ and that may affect intended outcomes of the program being evaluated (e.g., demographic variables, experience and level of training of teachers, motivation of students). Finally, it involves a design for the initial selection of the intervention and comparison groups that minimizes selection bias or allows it to be modeled. For example, short comparative interrupted time-series analyses have been used to evaluate whole-school reform programs for schools serving at-risk student populations (Bloom, et al., 2001; Bloom, 1999; Kemple & Herlihy, 2004; Kemple, Herlihy, & Smith, 2005). The acceptability of a quasi-experimental design for a causal analysis depends on the specifics of the evaluation. For example, matching designs using only commonly available variables (such as race/ethnicity and gender) are unlikely to be considered strong enough to control for unobserved factors involved in selection and related to the outcomes. Instrumental variable analyses should be based on instruments shown to be strongly correlated with the independent variable and correlated with the outcome through that independent variable (but not directly correlated with the outcome or indirectly correlated with the outcome through unobserved variables).

d. Power

Applicants should clearly address the statistical power of the evaluation design to detect a reasonably expected and minimally important effect. When justifying what constitutes a reasonably expected effect, applicants should indicate clearly (e.g., by including the statistical formula) how the effect size was calculated. If a primary research question focuses on subgroups (e.g., boys, children from low-income families), applicants should show that the proposed sample has sufficient power to address the proposed question about specific subgroups.

Many evaluations of education interventions are designed so that clusters or groups of students (e.g., classrooms, schools), rather than individual students, are assigned to intervention and comparison conditions. In such cases, the power of the design depends in part on the degree to which the observations of individuals within clusters are correlated with each other on the outcomes of interest. For determining the sample size, applicants need to consider the number of clusters, the number of individuals within clusters, the potential adjustment from covariates, the minimum effect to be reliably detected, the intraclass correlation (i.e., the variance between clusters relative to the total variance between and within clusters), and the desired power of the design (note, other factors may also affect the determination of sample size, such as the structure of the design [e.g., if a blocking factor is used], repeated observations, attrition of participants).² Strong applications will include empirical justification

² For more information, see Donner, A. & Klar, N. (2000). *Design and Analysis of Cluster Randomization Trials in Health Research*. New York: Oxford University Press; Murray, D. M., Varnell, S. P., & Blitstein, J. L. (2004). Design and analysis of group-randomized trials: A review of recent methodological developments. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(3), 423-432; W.T. Grant Foundation & University of Michigan, http://sitemaker.umich.edu/group-based/optimal_design_software.

for the intraclass correlation, anticipated minimum effect, and other estimation parameters used in the power analysis

e. Measures

Applicants must include relevant measures of outcomes that are of practical interest to schools. For student outcomes, these could be standardized measures of student achievement, State end-of-course exams, attendance, tardiness, drop-out rates, or graduation rates. For interventions that are intended to directly affect teachers, these measures could be measures of mobility, service in hard-to-staff schools, or knowledge of instructionally relevant content. The applicant should provide information on the reliability, validity, and appropriateness of proposed measures. In strong applications, investigators will make clear that the skills or content the intervention is designed to address are captured in the various measures that are proposed. If additional measures need to be developed, applicants should make the case for their need, describe what will be developed and how it will be developed, and to the extent possible, provide examples of items (examples of items may be included in Appendix B). Applicants should describe their data collection procedures, as well as the timing of the data collection (providing a project timeline is one way to accomplish this). The Institute recommends that, where possible, States and districts incorporate the use of administrative data (e.g., State achievement test data, data on grades, drop-out rates, high school graduation rates, teacher mobility) in the evaluation.

Applicants should clearly identify how the proposed measures align with the proposed intervention's theory of change.

If measures (including those of fidelity, below) are to be developed and/or collected by another institution, that institution must be included in the application, and the measures and the instruments (e.g., surveys of participants) that will be used must be described, as well as the data collection procedures and the timing of the data collection. It is not acceptable to simply propose that grant funds be used to contract with an unspecified organization to develop and/or collect the measures.

f. Fidelity of implementation of the intervention

Applicants should have a clear plan for how the intervention will be implemented in education settings and what supports are needed to ensure that the intervention will be implemented as intended (e.g., pre-intervention training for school staff who will deliver the intervention, observations of school staff while they deliver the intervention, and feedback provided on their performance by coaches). Applicants should specify how the implementation of the intervention will be documented and measured. Investigators should make clear how the fidelity measures capture the core components of the intervention. In strong applications, investigators will propose methods that permit the identification and assessment of factors associated with the fidelity of implementation (e.g., additional planning time for teachers); such information may provide insight into what supports are needed within schools or districts to successfully implement the intervention with high fidelity. In strong applications, researchers describe how fidelity data will be incorporated into analyses of the impact of the intervention.³ Applicants should also collect data on the conditions in the school setting that may affect the fidelity of implementation and that can help the researchers understand why the intervention is or is not implemented with high fidelity.

If the applicant is proposing an evaluation that relies on secondary data analyses of historical data that does not contain fidelity information, the applicant is *not* required to include fidelity data. The applicant should provide an explanation for why data on fidelity of implementation of the intervention will not be included in the project. The Institute recognizes that there may be some proposals that will rely on secondary analyses of administrative data (e.g., State assessment data) and include both historical data and future data (e.g., a comparative interrupted time series design in which the time frame for the data goes from 2004 through 2014). In such cases, it may or may not be reasonable for the applicant to collect additional data on fidelity of implementation of the intervention. The Institute is interested in

³ See, e.g., Hulleman, C. S. & Cordray, D. S. (2009). Moving from the lab to the field: The role of fidelity and achieved relative intervention strength. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 2, 88-110.

funding strong research proposals. As with all methodological issues, applicants should provide a clear rationale for the decisions they make regarding the proposed research approach.

g. Comparison group

Comparisons of interventions against other conditions are meaningful only to the extent that one can tell what the comparison group receives or experiences. Applicants should compare intervention and comparison groups on the implementation of critical features of the intervention so that, for example, if there is no observed difference between intervention and comparison student outcomes, they can determine if key elements of the intervention were also provided in the comparison condition (i.e., a lack of distinction between the intervention treatment and the comparison treatment). The purpose here is to obtain information useful for *post hoc* hypotheses about why the experimental treatment does or does not improve student learning relative to the counterfactual.

Applicants should give thoughtful consideration to the selection of the counterfactual. In evaluations of education interventions, individuals in the comparison group typically receive some kind of treatment; rarely is the comparison group a "no-treatment" control. For some evaluations, the primary question is whether the intervention treatment is more effective than a particular alternative treatment. In such instances, the comparison group receives a well-defined treatment that is usually an important comparison to the target intervention for theoretical or pragmatic reasons. In other cases, the primary question is whether the intervention treatment is more effective than what is generally available and utilized in schools. In such cases, the comparison group might receive what is sometimes called "business-as-usual." That is, the comparison group receives whatever the school or district is currently using or doing in a particular area. Business-as-usual generally refers to situations in which the standard or frequent practice across the district or region is a relatively undefined education treatment. However, business-as-usual may also refer to situations in which a branded intervention (e.g., a published curriculum or program) is implemented with no more support from the developers of the program than would be available under normal conditions. In either case, *using a business-as-usual comparison group is acceptable*. When business-as-usual is one or another branded intervention, applicants should specify the treatment or treatments received in the comparison group. In all cases, applicants should account for the ways in which what happens in the comparison group is important to understanding the net impact of the intervention treatment.

The applicant should describe strategies they intend to use to avoid contamination between treatment and comparison groups. Applicants do *not* necessarily need to randomize at the school level to avoid contamination between groups. Applicants should explain and justify their strategies for reducing contamination.

h. Moderating and mediating variables

Applicants should provide a theoretical rationale to justify the inclusion (or exclusion) of factors/variables in the design of the evaluation that have been found to affect the success of education programs (e.g., teacher experience, fidelity of implementation, characteristics of the student population). The research should demonstrate the conditions and critical variables that affect the success of a given intervention. The most scalable interventions are those that can produce the desired effects across a range of education contexts. Observational, survey, or qualitative methodologies are encouraged as a complement to experimental methodologies to assist in the identification of factors that may explain the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the intervention.

The Institute expects evaluations funded through this program to examine relevant moderating factors. Moderating variables that are measured in the intervention condition that are also likely to affect outcomes in the comparison condition should be measured in the comparison condition (e.g., teacher experience/time in position).

The Institute recognizes that most evaluation studies are not designed or powered to rigorously test the effects of specific mediating variables. However, the Institute encourages applicants to propose exploratory analyses to better understand potential mediators of the intervention.

i. Data analysis

All proposals must include detailed descriptions of data analysis procedures. For quantitative data, specific statistical procedures should be described. The relation between hypotheses, measures, and independent and dependent variables should be clear. For qualitative data, the specific methods used to index, summarize, and interpret data should be delineated. In strong applications, researchers describe how questions or hypotheses related to moderators, subgroups, and fidelity of implementation will be addressed in the data analyses.

Most evaluations of education interventions involve clustering of students in classes and schools and require the effects of such clustering to be accounted for in the analyses, even when individuals are randomly assigned to condition. Such circumstances generally require specialized multilevel statistical analyses using computer programs designed for such purposes. Strong applications will provide sufficient detail for reviewers to judge the appropriateness of the data analysis strategy.

j. Cost analysis

Applications will include a cost-feasibility analysis to assess the financial costs of program implementation and to assist States, districts, and schools in understanding whether implementation of the program is practicable given their available resources. Data should be collected on the monetary expenditures for the resources that are required to implement the program. Financial costs for personnel, facilities, equipment, materials, and other relevant inputs should be included. Annual costs should be assessed to reflect expenditures across the lifespan of the program. The Institute is *not* asking applicants to conduct an economic evaluation of the program (e.g., cost-benefit, cost-utility, or cost-effectiveness analyses), although applicants may propose such evaluation activities if desired.⁴

D. Personnel

Competitive applicants will have research teams that collectively demonstrate expertise in the relevant content domain, the type of program or policy being evaluated, the methodological expertise required for conducting this proposed study, and experience working with schools or other education agencies. In the project narrative, applicants should briefly describe the qualifications, roles, responsibilities, and percent of time to be devoted to the project for key personnel. Reviewers will also consider the applicant's track record for disseminating research findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals. For States and districts that have not conducted rigorous evaluations of the type described in this Request for Applications, the Institute strongly advises States and districts to involve researchers who have conducted such evaluations in the design and implementation of the evaluation and the analysis of data. Involvement of such researchers should begin with the development of the proposal.

All proposals to the competition must include the involvement of State or local education agencies. Because the intervention selected for evaluation is determined by a State, district, or consortium of districts, the Institute expects that State and/or district personnel will have a significant role in the evaluation. Applicants must include State and/or district personnel with responsibility for the intervention as part of the team submitting the application.

At the same time, evaluations of State or local education programs and policies require the design and conduct of the evaluation to be independent from the developer/distributor of the intervention. The individuals involved in the design of the evaluation, the determination of random assignment, the data collection, and the analysis of data should be individuals who did not and do not participate in the

⁴ For additional information on how to calculate the costs of a program or conduct an economic evaluation, applicants might refer to Levin, H.M. & McEwan, P.J. (2001). *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

development or distribution of the intervention. The principal investigator must be an individual who has not been involved in the development or distribution of the intervention. The evaluation team must have no financial interest in the outcomes of the evaluation.

The requirements do not preclude the developer or distributor from having some role in the evaluation. For example, a developer/distributor may use a train-the-trainers model and may conduct a professional development training session for district personnel who will subsequently train the teachers in their schools on the intervention. However, involvement of the developer or distributor must not jeopardize the objectivity or independence of the evaluation. Strong applications will carefully describe the role, if any, of the developer/distributor in the intervention. Note that developers or distributors must not provide any training or support for the implementation that would not normally be available to users of the intervention under conditions of routine implementation.

If aspects of the proposed project will be conducted by another organization (e.g., measurement development, data collection, data analysis), that organization must be included in the application and the personnel responsible for that work should be described in this section.

E. Resources

Competitive applicants will have access to institutional resources that adequately support research activities and access to schools in which to conduct the research. Applicants should discuss the overall management of the research project and what resources and procedures are available to support the successful completion of this project.

Strong applications will document the availability and cooperation of the schools or other education delivery settings and the State or local education agencies that will be required to carry out the research proposed in the application via a letter of support from the education organizations. These letters should convey that the organizations understand what participation in the evaluation will involve (e.g., if assigned to a wait-list control condition, a school will not receive the intervention for x-number of years). In addition, if restricted data is to be used in the evaluation, applicants should include letters giving access to and permission to use the data for the purposes of the project.

F. Additional Considerations

Applicants who have received previous research grants from the Institute should describe the results and outcomes of prior or currently held awards (e.g., findings, publications).

G. Awards

The scope of State/Local Evaluation projects may vary greatly. A smaller project might involve several schools within a large urban school district. A larger project might involve large numbers of students, many schools, and several school districts within a State.

Typical awards for projects are \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 (total cost = direct + indirect costs) per year for up to 5 years. The maximum duration of the award is 5 years and the maximum award for a 5-year project is \$5,000,000 (total cost).

Funds available through this program must be used solely for purposes of the evaluation. **Funds must not be used to support the implementation of the intervention (e.g., purchase curriculum, provide salary support for teachers).**

PART III GENERAL SUBMISSION AND REVIEW INFORMATION

5. MECHANISM OF SUPPORT

The Institute intends to award grants pursuant to this request for applications. The maximum length of the award period is five years.

6. FUNDING AVAILABLE

Typical awards for projects are \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 (total cost = direct + indirect costs) per year for up to 5 years. The maximum duration of the award is 5 years and the maximum award for a 5-year project is \$5,000,000 (total cost). The size of the award depends on the scope of the project. Please see specific details in *Part II Requirements of the Proposed Research* section of this announcement.

Although the plans of the Institute include the research program described in this announcement, awards pursuant to this request for applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications. The number of projects funded depends upon the number of high quality applications. The Institute does not have plans to award a specific number of grants under this competition.

7. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants that have the ability and capacity to conduct scientifically valid research are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities.

Applicants are reminded that a representative from either a State or local education agency with oversight or responsibility for the policy or program must be included on the team that is submitting the application.

8. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Research supported through this program must be relevant to education in the United States.

Recipients of awards are expected to publish or otherwise make publicly available the results of the work supported through this program. Institute-funded investigators must submit final, peer-reviewed manuscripts resulting from research supported in whole or in part by the Institute to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC, <http://eric.ed.gov>) upon acceptance for publication. An author's final manuscript is defined as the final version accepted for journal publication and includes all graphics and supplemental materials that are associated with the article. The Institute will make the manuscript available to the public through ERIC no later than 12 months after the official date of publication. Institutions and investigators are responsible for ensuring that any publishing or copyright agreements concerning submitted articles fully comply with this requirement.

Applicants must budget for one meeting each year (for up to 3 days) in Washington, D.C. with other grantees and Institute staff. At least one project representative must attend the meeting.

Applicants are reminded to apply their negotiated off-campus indirect cost rate, as directed by the terms of the applicant's negotiated agreement with the federal government, when conducting research in field settings.

Research applicants may collaborate with, or be, for-profit entities that develop, distribute, or otherwise market products or services that can be used as interventions or components of interventions in the proposed research activities. Involvement of the developer or distributor must not jeopardize the objectivity of the research.

Applicants may propose studies that piggyback onto an existing study (i.e., that require access to subjects and data from another study). In such cases, the Principal Investigator of the existing study must be one of the members of the research team applying for the grant to conduct the new project.

If an application is being considered for funding based on the technical merit scores from the scientific peer review panel and the research relies on access to secondary data sets, the applicant will need to provide documentation that they have access to the necessary data sets in order to receive a grant. This means that if an applicant does not have permission to use the proposed data sets at the time of application, the applicant will need to provide documentation to the Institute from the entity controlling the data set(s) indicating that the applicant has permission to use the data for the proposed research for the time period discussed in the proposal before the grant will be awarded. Similarly, applicants who had permission to use a proposed data set prior to the application may be asked to provide documentation that they continue to have permission to use the data set to conduct the proposed research during the project period.

If an application is being considered for funding based on the technical merit scores from the scientific peer review panel and the research relies on access to education delivery settings (e.g., districts and schools), the applicant will need to provide documentation that they have access to the necessary districts and schools in order to receive the grant. This means that if an applicant does not have permission to conduct the proposed project in the necessary number of districts and schools at the time of application, the applicant will need to provide documentation to the Institute indicating that the applicant has successfully recruited the necessary number of districts and schools for the proposed research before the full first-year costs will be awarded. Similarly, applicants who recruited sufficient numbers of districts and schools prior to the application may be asked to provide documentation that the districts and schools originally recruited for the application continue to be willing partners in the research.

If an application is being considered for funding based on the technical merit scores from the scientific peer review panel, the applicant will need to provide the Institute with documentation from the State or district verifying that the State or district intends to begin implementation of intervention *by the date specified in the application* (see *Section 4.B.a Description of the intervention and its implementation*). This documentation must be provided in order for the grant to be awarded.

The Institute strongly advises applicants to establish a written agreement among all key collaborators and their institutions (e.g., Principal and Co-Principal Investigators) regarding roles, responsibilities, access to data, publication rights, and decision-making procedures within three months of receipt of an award.

9. DESIGNATION OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

The applicant institution is responsible for identifying the Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator is the individual who has the authority and responsibility for the proper conduct of the research, including the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports. An applicant institution may elect to designate more than one Principal Investigator. In so doing, the applicant institution identifies them as individuals who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the research project intellectually and logistically. All Principal Investigators will be listed on any grant award notification. However, institutions applying for funding must designate a single point of contact for the project. The role of this person is primarily for communication purposes on the scientific and related budgetary aspects of the project and should be listed as the Principal Investigator. All other Principal Investigators should be listed as Co-Principal Investigators.

10. LETTER OF INTENT

The Institute asks all applicants to submit a letter of intent by 4:30 p.m. Washington D.C. time on the relevant due date for the competition to which they plan to submit. The information in the letters of intent enable Institute staff to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer review panels and secure sufficient reviewers to handle the anticipated number of applications. The Institute encourages all

interested applicants to submit a letter of intent, even if they think that they might later decide not to submit an application. The letter of intent is not binding and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application. The letter of intent must be submitted electronically using the instructions provided at: <https://iesreview.ed.gov>. Receipt of the letter of intent will be acknowledged via email.

A. Content

The letter of intent should include:

- a. Descriptive title
- b. Brief description of the proposed project
- c. Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the Principal Investigator and any co-Principal Investigators
- d. Name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators and contractors
- e. Duration of the proposed project
- f. Estimated total budget request (the estimate need only be a rough approximation).

B. Format and Page Limitation

Fields are provided in the letter of intent for each of the content areas described above. The project description should be single-spaced and should not exceed one page (about 3,500 characters).

11. MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF ELECTRONIC APPLICATIONS

Grant applications must be submitted electronically through the Internet using the software and Application package provided on the Grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov/>. Applicants must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in the Institute's Grants.gov Application Submission Guide and the instructions in the User Guides provided by Grants.gov.

Applications submitted in paper format will be rejected unless the applicant (a) qualifies for one of the allowable exceptions to the electronic submission requirement described in the Federal Register notice announcing the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies (CFDA Number 84.305E) competitions described in this Request for Applications and (b) submits, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Institute that documents that the applicant qualifies for one of these exceptions. For more information on using Grants.gov, applicants should visit the Grants.gov web site.

12. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND APPLICATION PACKAGE

A. Documents Needed to Prepare Applications

To complete and submit an application, applicants need to review and use three documents: the Request for Applications, the IES Grants.gov Application Submission Guide, and the Application Package.

- The *Request for Applications* for the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies Grant Program (CFDA 84.305E) describes the substantive requirements for a research application.

✓ Request for Applications <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/>

- The *IES Grants.gov Application Submission Guide* provides the instructions for completing and submitting the forms included in the Application Package.

✓ IES Grants.gov Application Submission Guide <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/>

Additional help navigating Grants.gov is available in the Grants.gov User Guides:

✓ Grants.gov User Guides <http://grants.gov/applicants/resources.jsp>

- The *Application Package* provides all of the forms that need to be completed and submitted. The application form approved for use in the competitions specified in this RFA is the government-wide SF-424 Research and Related (R&R) Form (OMB Number 4040-0001). The applicant must follow the directions in *Section C* below to download the Application Package from Grants.gov.

B. Date Application Package is Available on Grants.gov

The Application Package will be available on <http://www.grants.gov/> by the following date:

Application Package Available by

July 21, 2011

C. Download Correct Application Package

a. CFDA number

Applicants must first search by the CFDA number for each IES Request for Applications *without* the alpha suffix to obtain the correct downloadable Application Package. For the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies Request for Applications, applicants must search on: **CFDA 84.305**.

b. Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies Application Package

The Grants.gov search on CFDA 84.305 will yield more than one Application Package. For the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies Request for Applications applicants must download the package for the appropriate deadline marked:

Application Package:

Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies CFDA 84.305E

In order for the application to be submitted to the correct grant competition, applicants must download the Application Package that is designated for the grant competition and competition deadline. Using a different Application Package, even if that package is for an Institute competition, will result in the application being submitted to the wrong competition; applications submitted to the wrong competition may not be reviewed for the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies competition.

13. SUBMISSION PROCESS AND DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted **electronically and received by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, D.C. time** on the application deadline date, using the standard forms in the Application Package and the instructions provided on the Grants.gov web site.

Potential applicants should check the Grants.gov web site for information about the electronic submission procedures that must be followed and the software that will be required.

14. APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Overview

In this section, the Institute provides instructions regarding the content of the (a) project summary/abstract, (b) project narrative, (c) Appendix A, (d) Appendix B, (e) Appendix C, and (f) bibliography and references cited. Instructions for all other documents to be included in the application (i.e., the SF-424 forms, biographical sketches, narrative budget justification, and human subjects narrative) are provided in the IES Grants.gov Application Submission Guide.

B. General Format Requirements

Margin, format, and font size requirements for the project summary/abstract, project narrative, Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, and bibliography are described in this section. To ensure that the text is easy for reviewers to read and that all applicants have the same amount of available space in which to describe their projects, applicants must adhere to the type size and format specifications for the entire narrative including footnotes.

a. Page and margin specifications

For the purposes of applications submitted under this RFA, a "page" is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

b. Spacing

Text must be single spaced in the narrative.

c. Type size (font size)

Type must conform to the following three requirements:

- The height of the letters must not be smaller than a type size of 12 point.
- The type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch (cpi). For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text must not exceed 15 cpi.
- The type size must yield no more than 6 lines of type within a vertical inch.

Applicants should check the type size using a standard device for measuring type size, rather than relying on the font selected for a particular word processing/printer combination. The type size used must conform to all three requirements. Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the application; consequently, the use of small type will be grounds for the Institute to return the application without peer review.

Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements is necessary so that no applicant will have an unfair advantage by using small type or by providing more text in their applications. *Note, these requirements apply to the PDF file as submitted.* As a practical matter, applicants who use a 12-point Times New Roman font without compressing, kerning, condensing, or other alterations typically meet these requirements.

Figures, charts, tables, and figure legends may be in a smaller type size but must be readily legible.

d. Graphs, diagrams, tables

Applicants are encouraged to use black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. If color is used, the applicant must ensure that the material reproduces well when photocopied in black and white.

C. Project Summary/Abstract**a. Submission**

The project summary/abstract will be submitted as a separate .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

The project summary/abstract is limited to one single-spaced page and must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements above.

c. Content

The project summary/abstract should include:

- (1) Title of the project
- (2) The RFA (Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies)
- (3) A brief description of the purpose (e.g., to evaluate a specific intervention)
- (4) A brief description of the setting in which the research will be conducted (e.g., rural school districts in Alabama)
- (5) A brief description of the population(s) from which the participants of the study(ies) will be sampled (age or grade level, race/ethnicity, SES)
- (6) A brief description of the intervention to be evaluated
- (7) A brief description of the control or comparison condition (e.g., what participants in the control condition will experience)

- (8) A brief description of the primary research method
- (9) A brief description of measures and key outcomes
- (10) A brief description of the data analytic strategy

Please see the web site <http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/projects> for examples of project summaries/abstracts.

D. Project Narrative

a. Submission

The project narrative will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

The project narrative is limited to **25 single-spaced pages** for all applicants. The 25-page limit for the project narrative does not include any of the SF-424 forms, the one-page summary/abstract, the appendices, research on human subjects information, bibliography, biographical sketches of senior/key personnel, narrative budget justification, subaward budget information, or certifications and assurances. If the narrative is determined to exceed the 25 single-spaced page limit, the Institute will remove any pages after the twenty-fifth page of the narrative.

Reviewers are able to conduct the highest quality review when applications are concise and easy to read, with pages numbered consecutively using the top or bottom right-hand corner.

c. Format for citing references in text

To ensure that all applicants have the same amount of available space in which to describe their projects in the project narrative, applicants should use the author-date style of citation (e.g., James, 2004), such as that described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Ed.* (American Psychological Association, 2009).

d. Content

To be compliant with the requirements of the Request for Applications, the project narrative must include **four** sections: (a) Significance, (b) Research Plan, (c) Personnel, and (d) Resources. Information to be included in each of these sections is detailed in *Part II: Requirements of the Proposed Research*. Incorporating the requirements outlined in this section provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the proposal.

E. Appendix A (Optional)

a. Submission

Appendix A should be included at the end of the Project Narrative and submitted as part of the same .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

Appendix A is limited to 15 pages. It must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in *Section 15.B General Format Requirements*.

c. Content

The purpose of Appendix A is to allow the applicant to include any figures, charts, or tables that supplement the research text, and examples of measures to be used in the project. In addition, in the case of a resubmission, the applicant may use up to 3 pages of the appendix to describe the ways in which the revised proposal is responsive to prior reviewer feedback. Similarly, applicants who have submitted a somewhat similar proposal in the past but are submitting the current proposal as a new proposal may use up to 3 pages in Appendix A to provide a rationale explaining why the current proposal should be considered to be a "new" proposal rather than a "revised" proposal. These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix A; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application. Narrative text related to any aspect of the project (e.g., descriptions of the proposed

sample, the design of the study, the analysis plan, or previous research conducted by the applicant) must be included in the 25-page project narrative.

F. Appendix B (Optional)

a. Submission

Appendix B should be included at the end of the Project Narrative, following Appendix A, and submitted as part of the same .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

Appendix B is limited to 10 pages. It must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in *Section 15.B General Format Requirements*.

c. Content

The purpose of Appendix B is to allow applicants who are proposing to evaluate an intervention to include examples of curriculum materials, computer screens, assessment items, or other materials used in the intervention. These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix B; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application. Narrative text regarding these materials (e.g., descriptions of research that supports the use of the intervention, the theoretical rationale for the intervention, details regarding the implementation or use of the intervention, or rationale for choosing a particular instrument) must be included in the 25-page project narrative.

G. Appendix C (Optional)

a. Submission

Appendix C should be included at the end of the Project Narrative, following Appendix B (or if no Appendix B is included, then Appendix C should follow Appendix A) and submitted as part of the same .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

Appendix C does not have a page limit. Appendix C contains letters of agreement from research partners (e.g., schools, districts, consultants, sources of data). Applicants must ensure that the letters reproduce well so that reviewers can easily read them. Applicants should not reduce the size of the letters.

c. Content

The purpose of Appendix C is to allow the applicant to include letters of agreement from partners (e.g., schools and districts), organizations holding data to be used in the project, and consultants.

Letters of agreement should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, resources, and/or data to the research project that will be required if the application is funded. The most common reason for projects to fail is loss of participating schools and districts.

H. Bibliography and References Cited

a. Submission

The section will be submitted as a separate .PDF attachment.

b. Page limitations and format requirements

There are no limitations to the number of pages in the bibliography. The bibliography must adhere to the margin, format, and font size requirements described in *Section 15.B General Format Requirements*.

c. Content

Applicants should include complete citations, including the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), titles (e.g., article and journal, chapter and book, book), page numbers, and year of publication for literature cited in the project narrative.

15. APPLICATION PROCESSING

Applications must be electronically submitted and received by **4:30:00 p.m., Washington, D.C. time** on the application deadline date listed in the heading of this request for applications. Following receipt, each application will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this request for applications. Applications that do not address specific requirements of this request will be returned to the applicants without further consideration.

16. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Applications that are compliant and responsive to this request will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below by a panel of scientists who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and request for applications.

Each application will be assigned to one of the Institute's scientific review panels. At least two primary reviewers will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, an average overall score for each application will be calculated and a preliminary rank order of applications will be prepared before the full peer review panel convenes to complete the review of applications.

The full panel will consider and score only those applications deemed to be the most competitive and to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order. A panel member may nominate for consideration by the full panel any proposal that he or she believes merits full panel review but would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

17. REVIEW CRITERIA FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT

The purpose of Institute-supported research is to contribute to solving education problems and to provide reliable information about the education practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to education for all students. Reviewers for all applications will be expected to assess the following aspects of an application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of that goal. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is also described above in *Part II Requirements of the Proposed Research*.

A. Significance

Does the applicant provide a compelling rationale for the significance of the project as defined in the Significance of Project section?

B. Research Plan

Does the applicant meet the requirements described in the Methodological Requirements section?

C. Personnel

Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the Principal Investigator and other key personnel possess appropriate training and experience and will commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed research?

D. Resources

Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed activities? Do the commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project?

18. RECEIPT AND START DATE SCHEDULE

A. Letter of Intent Receipt Dates

July 21, 2011

B. Application Deadline Dates

September 22, 2011

C. Earliest Anticipated Start Date

July 1, 2012

D. Latest Possible Start Date

September 1, 2012

The grant review and award process takes approximately eight months from the time of submission of the application. Applicants will be notified about funding decisions via email *no later than* the earliest anticipated start date (July 1, 2012).

19. AWARD DECISIONS

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

- Scientific merit as determined by peer review
- Responsiveness to the requirements of this request
- Performance and use of funds under a previous Federal award
- Contribution to the overall program of research described in this request
- Availability of funds

20. INQUIRIES MAY BE SENT TO

Dr. Allen Ruby
Institute of Education Sciences
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20208

Email: Allen.Ruby@ed.gov
Telephone: (202) 219-1591

21. PROGRAM AUTHORITY

20 U.S.C. 9501 *et seq.*, the "Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002," Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

22. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 77, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86 (part 86 applies only to institutions of higher education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.101(b), 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.211, 75.217, 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, and 75.230.

23. REFERENCES

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