



# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education

**CFDA Number: 84.324B**

<b><u>COMPETITION</u></b>	<b>Letter of Intent Due Date</b>	<b>Application Package Available</b>	<b>Application Due Date</b>
	<a href="https://iesreview.ed.gov/">https://iesreview.ed.gov/</a>	<a href="http://www.grants.gov/">http://www.grants.gov/</a>	<a href="http://www.grants.gov/">http://www.grants.gov/</a>
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## **PART I GENERAL OVERVIEW**

### **1. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

In this announcement, the Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) describes its Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education, which is funded through the National Center for Special Education Research. Separate announcements are available on the Institute's website that pertain to the research grant programs that are funded through the National Center for Special Education Research (<http://ncser.ed.gov>) and to the discretionary grant competitions and research training program funded through the Institute's National Center for Education Research (<http://ncer.ed.gov>).

The Institute invites applications to the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education discretionary grant program. For the FY 2012 competition, the Institute will consider only applications that meet the requirements outlined below in this Request for Applications.

**The Institute funds institutions of higher education interested in developing a postdoctoral research training program, and does not directly fund individuals seeking postdoctoral support.** Individuals seeking support are encouraged to contact the directors of current IES training programs (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/projects/>).

## **PART II POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **2. PURPOSE**

The Institute has established the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education (Postdoctoral) to increase the supply of scientists and researchers in education who are prepared to conduct rigorous and relevant special education research addressing issues that are important to special education leaders and practitioners and contributing to the advancement of knowledge and theory in special education. The specific intent of this program is to prepare researchers who are able to conduct the type of research that the Institute funds, prepare competitive proposals that address relevant education topics, and meet the methodological requirements specified for the Institute's research grant competitions.

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). The Institute's research grant competitions targets research questions and key student outcomes of interest to education decision-makers and practitioners. These research grant programs target key student outcomes and the types of research questions posed by education decision-makers and practitioners.<sup>1</sup> In early childhood, the primary outcomes of interest are school readiness and developmental outcomes for infants and toddlers with disabilities. From kindergarten through Grade 12, the core academic outcomes of reading, writing, mathematics, and science are the central outcomes of interest, as well as social and behavioral skills that support academic learning in school, and successful transitions to employment, independent living, and postsecondary education.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

Grounding special education policy and practice in the United States on evidence will require transformation of both the research and practice fields. Students with disabilities continue to fare much worse than their peers without disabilities, achieving lower rates of success on both in-school (e.g., achievement) and post-school outcomes (e.g., employment) (e.g., Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2005; Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002). To improve outcomes for students with disabilities, practitioners will have to turn routinely to education research when making important decisions, and education researchers will have to produce research that is relevant to those decisions. To achieve this ambitious

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<sup>1</sup> Descriptions of the Institute's research programs are available at <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/>.

agenda, there is a need for a cadre of well-trained scientists capable of conducting high quality research driven by problems of practice and conducted in consultation and collaboration with special education practitioners and leaders.

Many of the questions raised by practitioners and policymakers require answers to questions of what works in special education for whom and under what circumstances. These are causal questions that are best answered by research using randomized controlled trials or well-designed quasi-experimental studies. However, historically the special education research community has not employed group causal designs regularly or systematically to address causal research questions. Special education also provides unique challenges to researchers, because employing a randomized group design for certain disabilities (e.g., low-incidence disabilities) can pose enormous challenges for recruiting participants, selecting participants, and implementing such a design. Through its research grant programs, the Institute encourages research that addresses questions of what works, for whom, and under what circumstances by inviting applicants to submit proposals to carry out such projects under the *Efficacy and Replication* goal and the *Scale-Up Evaluations* goal in the Institute's research funding announcements.

Another category of problems raised by practitioners and policy makers is the need for a new generation of teaching materials and curricula that take advantage of expanding knowledge of how people learn, and that leverage new delivery mechanisms such as the Internet (National Research Council, 2000). The complexity of student characteristics within and across disability categories, and the diversity of placement settings and services require the development of interventions targeting students across the full spectrum of disability categories (Odom, et al., 2005). Across its research grant programs, the Institute supports projects to develop new education interventions (e.g., curricula, instructional approaches, professional development training) under the *Development and Innovation* goal in the Institute's research grants funding announcements. The conceptualization, development, implementation, and evaluation of new teaching methods will require scientists who are well trained in cognition, learning, motivation, classroom instruction, and teacher training, and who are prepared to conduct research – both development and evaluation studies – in complex, real-world education settings.

Yet another category of questions raised by the practice community focuses on assessment; the standards and accountability movement has generated a ballooning demand for assessment research in special education. There is a particular need for researchers who can address questions of how assessments for accountability can best be designed and used to capture and represent proficiency and growth for children with disabilities. Across its research grant programs, the Institute encourages the development and validation of assessments under the *Measurement* goal in the Institute's research grants funding announcements. Individuals with skills in psychometrics are needed throughout the education sector, from federal statistics agencies to state education agencies, from test developers to local school districts.

The needs of education policy and practice are served not only by research that directly addresses questions of what works but also by research that raises questions and generates hypotheses that can eventually lead to new applications or refinements of existing approaches (National Research Council, 2002). Hypothesis-generating research may rely on complex statistical methods that can tease apart potential causal influences in large datasets and can take advantage of many of the district or state longitudinal datasets that have been or are being developed. Hypothesis-generating research may also involve detailed observations, for example, of classroom instruction along with sophisticated quantitative analyses to determine the associations between specific instructional practices and child outcomes. Hypothesis-generating research may also utilize sophisticated meta-analyses to explore the characteristics of education practices or programs that are associated with the most positive outcomes, as well as identify potential moderators or mediators of those relationships. Across our research grant programs, these types of research efforts are supported under the *Exploration* goal in the Institute's research grant funding announcements.

Training is also needed in the design of experimental and quasi-experimental studies, single case designs, and in the statistical analysis of the data they provide, as well as data obtained from survey and observational studies. Although there are many doctoral training programs that focus on statistics, the application of this expertise to problems in special education requires that students be grounded in an understanding of special education and how schools work. That, in turn, requires a concentration of statistically sophisticated students and faculty whose research projects are focused on special education topics and who can develop mutually beneficial partnerships with practitioners and policy makers.

### **PART III REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAM**

#### **4. 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**

Applicants may submit proposals to more than one of the Institute's FY 2012 competitions. 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 such as to the research training program in the National Center for Special Education Research and a similar proposal to the research training program in the National Center for Education Research). If the Institute determines prior to panel review that an applicant has submitted the same proposal or similar proposals 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 to multiple 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.

#### **5. REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH TRAINING GRANTS**

##### **A. Requirements of Academic Institutions and Principal Investigators**

Under the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education:

- Grants will be awarded to academic institutions that grant doctoral degrees in fields relevant to education. An institution of higher education may hold more than one Postdoctoral award and may submit more than one Postdoctoral application as long as different faculty (i.e., Principal Investigator and key personnel) are responsible for the separate Postdoctoral Research Training grants and the grants have unique areas of research emphasis.

- Different models of postdoctoral research training fellowships are allowed. For example, several faculty members could propose to jointly train up to four postdoctoral fellows over the 5-year award period. In this case, the faculty members must document each faculty member's current education research projects that would provide training opportunities for postdoctoral fellows. Alternatively, an individual faculty member could submit a proposal for a Postdoctoral Research Training Program award. In this case, the faculty member would be the primary, and perhaps sole, mentor for the postdoctoral fellows' research and training activities, and would propose to train one or two postdoctoral fellows over the 5-year award period. Also in this case, he or she must have sufficient ongoing education research projects to support training the requested number of postdoctoral fellows. In both models, a single Principal Investigator/Training Director (hereafter referred to as Principal Investigator) must be named and will have overall responsibility for the administration of the award and interactions with the Institute.
- The Principal Investigator of the Postdoctoral award and any other core faculty who will serve as postdoctoral fellow mentors must be the Principal or Co-Principal Investigator on one or more education research projects, currently supported by the Institute or other funding sources, that are appropriate for postdoctoral level research training.
- An individual Principal Investigator may *not* hold more than one postdoctoral research training grant from the Institute at a time. By postdoctoral research training grant, the Institute means postdoctoral research training grants funded under CFDA 84.324B or CFDA 84.305B (i.e., through the National Center for Special Education Research or the National Center for Education Research).
- A group of faculty members (or two groups in which there is substantial overlap in faculty as determined by the Institute) may *not* hold more than one postdoctoral research training grant from the Institute at a time.
- Please note that the Institute will not accept applications from current recipients (i.e., individual Principal Investigator or group of faculty members) of Postdoctoral grants with start dates before the end of their current award (e.g., if a Principal Investigator has an FY2008 postdoctoral research training grant with an end date of July 30, 2012, a proposal for a new FY 2012 postdoctoral research training grant must have a start date between August 1, 2012 and September 1, 2012).
- Faculty members serving as Principal Investigators for Postdoctoral grants may be from a variety of relevant disciplines and fields (for example, economics, education, human development, political science, psychology, sociology, statistics) within qualified institutions of higher education that will provide intensive training in education research and statistics.

## **B. Requirements for Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowships**

### **a. Significance of the fellowships**

By describing and justifying the focus of the Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowships, applicants address the significance of the proposed training fellowships. Under the Postdoctoral program, the focus is on training for research in special education (i.e., research on students with disabilities). Individuals interested in postdoctoral research training fellowships to support research in general education should refer to the Postdoctoral Research Training program supported by the Institute's National Center for Education Research ([http://ies.ed.gov/funding/ncer\\_rfas/postdoc\\_training.asp](http://ies.ed.gov/funding/ncer_rfas/postdoc_training.asp)).

Applicants should clearly describe how the research that the postdoctoral fellow would be involved in relates to the specific research programs of the Institute's National Center for Special Education Research. Research programs of the Institute are organized by topic area (e.g., reading and writing, mathematics and science, early childhood education, cognition and student learning) and by research

goal (e.g., Exploration, Development & Innovation, Efficacy & Replication, Scale-Up Evaluation, Measurement). Applicants should clearly describe both the topical focus and methodological focus of the research projects on which the fellows would participate. Applicants should provide a compelling rationale justifying the importance of the proposed combination of topical and methodological focus, as well as elaborating how trainees will learn how to incorporate input from education stakeholders such as practitioners and policymakers into research. Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowships are *not* intended to provide fellows with training on all topics and all methodologies related to the Institute's research programs. It is also acceptable to propose a Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowship award that focuses on training fellows to conduct research on methodological issues that the Institute might fund through its Statistical and Research Methodology in Education program. In such cases, applicants should clearly describe the methodological issues that would be addressed.

**From the Institute's view, a Postdoctoral Research Training award would be successful if it produced researchers who are able to submit competitive applications to the Institute's special education research competitions.** Applicants should demonstrate their capacity to provide such training by describing their current research projects and the relation of these projects to the Institute's research priorities. Applicants must include a summary table in Appendix A of ongoing special education research projects that are being conducted by the Principal Investigator and any other faculty involved in training the fellows. For each project listed in this table, the following information should be provided:

- (a) Principal Investigator and other core faculty involved in the project;
- (b) brief description of the research project, including methods used;
- (c) brief explanation of how the project fits with the Institute's research programs and goals as listed in the Institute's Special Education Research Request for Applications (<http://ies.ed.gov/funding>) or the Institute's Statistical and Research Methodology in Education Request for Applications or the Institute's research program in Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies;
- (d) funding source;
- (e) duration of project; and
- (f) which specific competencies fellows could potentially gain through working on the project (e.g., specific statistical and methodological skills or content knowledge gained).

Applicants should make a compelling case for the potential contribution of the proposed research training activities for training postdoctoral fellows to **gain the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct the types of research the Institute funds.**

Principal Investigators who currently have or in the past have had a Postdoctoral Research Training grant from the Institute or from other entities should provide evidence that their current or former postdoctoral fellows have or are developing the knowledge and skills that will enable them to prepare competitive grant proposals to the Institute and/or conduct research projects that reflect the Institute's content and methodological foci and are productive as education researchers. Such applicants must include a summary table in Appendix A of current and former fellows which includes:

- (a) name of the fellows' primary postdoctoral mentor;
- (b) research projects that postdoctoral fellows who received support under a prior award have completed or are currently conducting;
- (c) research methods used or learned by fellows for each project;
- (d) publications of their fellows;
- (e) titles of research grants (if any) received by fellows; and
- (f) current positions of former postdoctoral fellows.



## **b. Research training fellowship plan**

### **(i) Research training activities**

The Institute recognizes that each postdoctoral fellow will have already gained research expertise in some areas and not others. For the purpose of this application, the applicant must include a general plan for training postdoctoral fellows to conduct rigorous special education research that engages appropriate policy and practice communities. Fellows should (a) gain the skills and understanding necessary to conduct rigorous applied research in education; (b) develop the capacity to independently carry out such research, including applying for grant funding and submitting results for publication in peer-reviewed journals; and (c) develop skills for communicating and engaging with special education practitioners and leaders. The Institute recognizes that specific training plans for fellows will depend on the knowledge and skills that fellows have acquired prior to the fellowship. Applicants should describe the types of activities and opportunities that will be available to potential fellows to facilitate the development of their research skills.

The length of the postdoctoral fellowship will typically be two to three years.

Applicants should specify the role that the fellows will play in the Principal Investigator's education research projects and how these and other training activities will produce independent researchers capable of developing their own education research programs, seeking grant support, and presenting the results of their research in peer-reviewed forums such as professional conferences and journals, and more broadly to special education practitioners and leaders.

Applicants must address how potential fellows would gain experience and training in education research methods and statistical analyses. As appropriate, in addition to direct research experience, fellows may audit courses and engage in other training activities that enhance their knowledge and professional skills (e.g., auditing courses in areas not covered in their doctoral training).

Fellows' research and training activities must address practical questions in education or questions related to improving education research methodologies. It is anticipated that fellows will submit findings from their postdoctoral research activities to peer reviewed forums such as professional conferences and journals. Fellows will attend and present at professional conferences and share research findings with practice and policy audiences. Fellows are encouraged to work with the Principal Investigator to seek independent grant support for their own research from the Institute or other sources.

### **(ii) Plan for recruiting postdoctoral fellows and eligibility requirements of fellows**

Applicants must include a plan for recruiting postdoctoral fellows, including outreach efforts to encourage applications from members of under-represented minorities. Principal Investigators are encouraged to consider recruiting fellowship candidates from disciplines other than their own.

Postdoctoral fellowship candidates must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States and must have received their doctorate prior to beginning the fellowship. Before candidates are offered a fellowship, the Institute must approve postdoctoral fellowship candidates who (a) have received postdoctoral support through other federal training programs; (b) have received support through one of the Institute's predoctoral training grant programs; or (c) have an existing relationship with the Principal Investigator (e.g., dissertation advisor).

### **(iii) Stipend support, travel, and additional costs**

The stipend amount for each fellow is \$52,500 per year (12 months) for up to 3 years. Fellows must make satisfactory progress in their research activities in order to remain eligible for

fellowship funds. The fellowship must include fringe benefits (e.g., health insurance and normal fees) at the level afforded to other employees of the applicant institution who are at a similar level and class as the postdoctoral fellows, with the Institute's contribution not to exceed \$12,000 per year per fellow. There are no funds for tuition costs; fellows are expected to audit any courses that are part of their training. Thus, the total stipend plus fringe benefits per fellow per year to be supported through Institute funds is \$64,500. The applicant institution may supplement the stipend and/or fringe benefits with other funds.

Additional funds of up to \$12,000 per year per fellow may be requested to defray the costs of recruiting fellows (e.g., advertisements, travel of applicants necessary for interviews), costs of independent research by fellows that is not covered by the funded research projects that they are working on as part of their fellowship,<sup>2</sup> and fellow registration and travel expenses to attend professional conferences. These funds may be used to take advantage of training opportunities and resources available through other entities (e.g., methodological or specialized statistical training institutes) that complement the training the postdoctoral fellows receive at the applicant's institution. A portion of these additional funds should be allocated to support fellows' travel for one research meeting each year in Washington, D.C.

An additional \$15,000 total per year (not per fellow) may be requested to support related postdoctoral fellowship expenses (e.g., travel for the Principal Investigator to attend the annual Institute meeting, administrative support for the postdoctoral fellowship program, honoraria for fellowship colloquium speakers, convening events for researchers, special education practitioners and decision makers).

Applicants should note that there are no funds for faculty research or salaries through this program. Funds for facility renovation and maintenance are not allowed.

### **c. Personnel**

Applicants must describe the qualifications of the Principal Investigator and other key personnel, specifying their proposed role in training the postdoctoral fellows within the 15-page narrative of the proposal and elaborating how the research expertise of the key personnel reflect the content and methodological foci of the Institute. Applicants should also describe any prior experience with mentoring postdoctoral fellows. Because no funds for faculty salaries are allowed under this program, applicants should make their time commitment to training the postdoctoral fellows clear in the research training fellowship narrative. Additional information on personnel should be provided in their 4-page biographical sketches (or abbreviated curriculum vitae).

### **d. Resources**

Applicants must provide a description of the resources available to support the training fellowship at the participating institution, including field settings (e.g., schools, software development laboratories) with which the Principal Investigator has a relationship that could support fellows' research projects.

### **e. Awards**

The maximum length of the grant is 5 years; the maximum amount of the award is \$687,000. These funds can be used to support a total of 8 "fellow" years (e.g., 4 fellows with 2 years of funding each; 2 fellows for 3 years plus 1 fellow for 2 years). The amount of the award will depend on the number of fellows to be supported on stipends and the number of years for each fellow. The number of fellows requested will depend upon the number of core faculty proposed to serve as postdoctoral mentors. The 5-year timeline allows for some flexibility in the number of fellows supported each year and the timing of the fellowships.

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<sup>2</sup> For the most part, the Institute expects fellows to be working on the funded research projects of the Principal Investigator and any other participating faculty. These funds are intended to provide seed money for the fellow to conduct some independent research (local travel to research sites, materials, personal computer).

## **PART IV GENERAL SUBMISSION AND REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **6. MECHANISM OF SUPPORT**

The Institute intends to award grants under the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education pursuant to this request for applications. The maximum length of the award period is five years.

### **7. FUNDING AVAILABLE**

The maximum amount of the award is \$687,000. The size of the award will depend on the number of fellows requested and the length of each fellowship (e.g., 2 or 3 years).

Although the plans of the Institute include the Postdoctoral 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 Institute does not have plans to award a specific number of grants under this program.

### **8. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Eligible applicants are academic institutions in the United States and its territories that grant doctoral degrees in fields relevant to education. The proposed Directors of these training programs must be the Principal or Co-Principal Investigator on one or more education research grants currently supported by the Institute or other funding source.

### **9. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Special Education Research Training grant recipients who have not successfully recruited the number of fellows for whom they requested funding will have their continuation funding adjusted as a result.

Research associated with these training fellowships must be relevant 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.

Postdoctoral fellowship recipients and directors of the postdoctoral training program must attend one three-day research meeting each year in Washington, D.C. with other grantees and Institute staff.

Postdoctoral fellowship recipients must complete the annual IES Special Education Postdoctoral Research Training Program Postdoctoral Fellow Survey in order to help the Institute determine if the training programs are achieving the Institute's goal of producing high quality education researchers.

U.S. Department of Education policy (34 CFR 75.562 (c)(2)) limits indirect cost reimbursement on a training grant to the recipient's actual indirect costs, as determined by its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or eight percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. For the purposes of this competition, a modified total direct cost base is defined as total direct costs less stipends, tuition and related fees, and capital expenditures of \$5,000 or more.

## **10. 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 fellowship program, 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 training program 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 training program. The role of this person is primarily for communication purposes on the scientific and related budgetary aspects of the training program and should be listed as the Principal Investigator. All other Principal Investigators should be listed as Co-Principal Investigators.

## **11. 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 current research projects that the fellows would work on
- c. Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the Principal Investigator
- 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).

## **12. MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF ELECTRONIC APPLICATIONS**

Grant applications must be submitted electronically through the Internet using the software provided on the Grants.gov Web site: <http://www.grants.gov/>. Applicants must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in the IES 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 Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education (CFDA Number 84.324B) competition 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.

### **13. 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 Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education (CFDA 84.324B) 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.

✓ 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 13.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

April 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 Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education Request for Applications, applicants must search on: **CFDA 84.324**.

##### **b. Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education Application Package**

The Grants.gov search on CFDA 84.324 will yield more than one Application Package. For the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education Request for Applications, applicants must download the package for the appropriate deadline marked:

**Application Package:**

**CFDA 84.324B – Postdoctoral Research Training Program  
in Special Education Application Package**

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 Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education competition.

#### **14. 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 website.

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

#### **15. APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS**

##### **A. Overview**

In this section, the Institute provides instructions regarding the content of the (a) training program summary/abstract, (b) training program narrative, (c) bibliography, and (d) Appendix A. Instructions for all other documents to be included in the application (i.e., 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 training program summary/abstract, training program narrative, bibliography, and Appendix A 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 of text**

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.
- 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.
- 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. Training Program Summary/Abstract**

#### **a. Submission**

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

#### **b. Page limitations and format requirements**

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

#### **c. Content**

The training program summary/abstract should include:

- (1) Title of the research training fellowship
- (2) The RFA (Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education)
- (3) Name and affiliation of the Principal Investigator
- (4) Number of fellows to be recruited and length of fellowship
- (5) Brief description of education research currently conducted by the proposed Principal Investigator and opportunities for fellows to be involved in education research projects
- (6) Brief description of the proposed training fellowship, highlighting its key research and educational features

Please see the website <http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/projects/> for examples of project summaries/abstracts.

### **D. Training Program Narrative**

#### **a. Submission**

The postdoctoral training program narrative will be submitted as a .PDF attachment.

#### **b. Page limitations and format requirements**

The postdoctoral training program narrative is limited to **15 single-spaced pages** for all applicants. If the narrative for the postdoctoral research training program is determined to exceed the 15 single-spaced page limit, the Institute will remove any pages after the fifteenth page of the narrative.

The 15-page limit for the postdoctoral training program 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.

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 program 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 postdoctoral training program narrative must include **four** sections: (a) Significance, (b) Fellowship Plan, (c) Personnel, and (d) Resources. Information to be included in each of these sections is detailed in **Part II Postdoctoral**

**Research Training Program in Special Education.** Incorporating the requirements outlined in these sections provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the proposal.

## **E. 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 research narrative.

## **F. Appendix A (required)**

### **a. Submission**

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

### **b. Page limitations and format requirements**

Appendix A 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**

#### **(i) Purpose**

In Appendix A, as described in **Section 5.B.a**, applicants must include a summary table of ongoing special education research projects that are being conducted by the Principal Investigator and other faculty involved in the proposed postdoctoral research training fellowship program. In Appendix A, the applicant also may include any figures, charts, or tables that supplement the training program narrative. For example, applicants might provide a table listing the projects that potential fellows could work on. As described in **Section 5.B.a**, applicants who currently have or in the past have had a postdoctoral research training grant from the Institute must also include information on current and former postdoctoral fellows.

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. 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 materials and letters of agreement (described below) are the only materials that may be included in Appendix A; the Institute will remove all other materials prior to review of the application. Narrative text related to any aspect of the postdoctoral research training plan must be included in the project narrative.

#### **(ii) Letters of agreement**

In Appendix A, the applicant must provide a letter of support from the participating institution. The letter should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources to the training program



that will be required if the application is funded. Letters of support should not be reduced in size.

## **16. APPLICATION PROCESSING**

Applications must be 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 applicant without further consideration.

## **17. 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 research training program 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.

## **18. REVIEW CRITERIA FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT**

The purpose of Institute-supported research is to contribute to the solution of 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 III Requirements of the Proposed Training Program**.

### **A. Significance**

Does the applicant provide a compelling rationale for the significance of the program as defined in **Section 5.B.a Significance of the Fellowships?**

### **B. Fellowship Plan**

Does the applicant address the requirements for the fellowship training plan that are detailed in **Section 5.B.b Research Training Fellowship Plan?**

### **C. Personnel**

Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the Principal Investigator and other key personnel possess the appropriate training and experience and will commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed training fellowship as detailed in **Section 5.B.c Personnel?**

### **D. Resources**

Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed training activities as detailed in **Section 5.B.d Resources?**

## **19. RECEIPT AND START DATE SCHEDULE**

### **A. Letter of Intent Receipt Date**

April 21, 2011

### **B. Application Deadline Date**

June 23, 2011

### **C. Earliest Anticipated Start Date**

March 1, 2012

### **D. Latest Possible Start Date**

September 1, 2012

## **20. AWARD DECISIONS**

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

- Overall strength of the proposed training program as determined by the peer review process
- 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

## **21. INQUIRIES MAY BE SENT TO**

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

Email: [Amy.Sussman@ed.gov](mailto:Amy.Sussman@ed.gov)

Telephone: (202) 219-2126

## **22. 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.

## **23. 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.

## **24. REFERENCES**

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Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences in Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

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Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., & Levine, P. (2005). *A Report of Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.