

# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies

CFDA Number: 84.305E

<b><u>COMPETITION</u></b>	<b>Letter of Intent Due Date</b>	<b>Application Package Available</b>	<b>Application Due Date</b>
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PART I GENERAL OVERVIEW .....	4
1. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS.....	4
PART II EVALUATION OF STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES.....	4
2. PURPOSE .....	4
3. BACKGROUND .....	5
PART III REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH .....	6
4. BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH .....	6
A. Resubmissions .....	6
B. Applying to multiple competitions or topics .....	6
5. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH.....	6
A. The Project Narrative .....	6
a. Significance .....	7
b. Research Plan.....	9
c. Personnel .....	14
d. Resources .....	15
B. Awards .....	16
PART IV GENERAL SUBMISSION AND REVIEW INFORMATION .....	16
6. MECHANISM OF SUPPORT .....	16
7. FUNDING AVAILABLE.....	16
8. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS .....	16
9. THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR .....	17
10. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIRECT COST RATES .....	17
11. DEMONSTRATING ACCESS TO DATA AND EDUCATION DELIVERY SETTINGS.....	17
12. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF RESULTS .....	18
13. SPECIAL CONDITIONS ON GRANTS .....	18
14. LETTER OF INTENT .....	18
A. Content .....	19
B. Format and Page Limitation .....	19
15. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND APPLICATION PACKAGE .....	19
A. Documents Needed to Prepare an Application .....	19
B. Date Application Package is Available on Grants.gov.....	19
C. How to Download the Correct Application Package.....	20
a. CFDA number .....	20
b. Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies Application Package .....	20
16. MANDATORY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND DEADLINE .....	20
17. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR APPLICANTS.....	20
18. WRITING YOUR APPLICATION: CONTENT AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS.....	21
A. Overview .....	21
B. General Format Requirements.....	21
a. Page and margin specifications .....	21
b. Spacing .....	21
c. Type size (font size) .....	21
d. Graphs, diagrams, tables .....	21
C. Project Summary/Abstract .....	22
a. Submission .....	22
b. Page limitations and format requirements.....	22
c. Content .....	22
D. Project Narrative.....	22
a. Submission .....	22
b. Page limitations and format requirements.....	22
c. Format for citing references in text.....	22
d. Content .....	22

E. Appendix A (Required for Resubmissions, Optional Otherwise).....	23
a. Submission .....	23
b. Page limitations and format requirements.....	23
c. Content .....	23
F. Appendix B (Optional).....	23
a. Submission .....	23
b. Page limitations and format requirements.....	23
c. Content .....	23
G. Appendix C (Optional) .....	23
a. Submission .....	23
b. Page limitations and format requirements.....	24
c. Content .....	24
H. Bibliography and References Cited .....	24
a. Submission .....	24
b. Page limitations and format requirements.....	24
c. Content .....	24
19. APPLICATION PROCESSING.....	24
20. PEER REVIEW PROCESS.....	24
21. REVIEW CRITERIA FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT.....	25
A. Significance .....	25
B. Research Plan .....	25
C. Personnel .....	25
D. Resources.....	25
22. RECEIPT AND START DATE SCHEDULE .....	25
A. Letter of Intent Receipt Date .....	25
B. Application Deadline Date .....	25
C. Earliest Anticipated Start Date.....	25
D. Latest Possible Start Date.....	25
23. AWARD DECISIONS .....	25
24. INQUIRIES MAY BE SENT TO .....	26
25. PROGRAM AUTHORITY .....	26
26. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS.....	26
27. REFERENCES.....	26

## **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). For the FY 2013 competition, the Institute will consider only applications that meet the requirements described below.

Separate announcements will be available on the Institute's website 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>.

## **PART II EVALUATION OF STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND POLICIES**

### **2. PURPOSE**

The Institute intends to fund rigorous evaluations of education programs or policies (programs/policies) that are implemented by State or local education agencies to improve student academic outcomes. These programs/policies are to be fully developed and implemented under conditions of routine practice by a State, district, or consortium of States or districts. These evaluations are to determine both the overall impact of the programs/policies and the impact across a variety of conditions. By *overall impact*, the Institute means the degree to which a program/policy has on average 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 a program/policy produces beneficial impacts for some groups or under some conditions. By *fully developed*, the Institute means a program/policy that is 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/policy is implemented without special support by developers of the program/policy or the research team to improve, for example, the fidelity of the implementation of the program/policy.

The Institute expects the grantee to provide the following at the *end* of a funded State/Local project:

- 1) Evidence of the impact of a clearly specified program/policy, implemented by a State or local education agency, on relevant student academic outcomes relative to a comparison condition using a rigorous research design which can be used to make causal inferences. The impacts include both overall impacts and impacts under a variety of conditions.
- 2) Conclusions on and revisions to the theory of change that guides the program/policy and a discussion of the broader contributions the study makes to our theoretical understanding of education processes and procedures.
- 3) If a beneficial impact is found, then the identification of the organizational supports, tools, and procedures that are needed for sufficient implementation of the core components of the program/policy under routine practice.
- 4) If a beneficial impact is not found, then a determination of whether and what type of further research would be useful to revise the program/policy and/or its implementation.
- 5) The financial costs of the program/policy.

Your application to evaluate a program/policy implemented by a State or local education agency can be submitted either to the State/Local Grants program or to the Education Research Grants program (CFDA 84.305A) under the Efficacy and Replication goal or the Effectiveness goal. When making this decision, you should keep in mind that the State/Local program requires: (a) the program/policy to be implemented by a State or Local education agency under routine conditions, (b) your key personnel must include State and/or local education agency representatives, and (c) you cannot use any of the grant funds to implement the program/policy.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

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 the effectiveness of a program or policy before its implementation, we evaluate the program/policy *as part of the implementation*. 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.

Making rigorous evaluation of programs/policies a standard education practice will enable educators to improve specific programs/policies and ultimately lead to higher quality ones. Through rigorous evaluations of education programs/policies, we can distinguish between those 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/policy works, and determine which aspects of programs/policies need to be modified in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

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 programs/policies. 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.

The Institute intends the State/Local 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 programs/policies 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 program/policy that the State or local education agency is planning to adopt or an program/policy 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 program/policy.

Along with being widely implemented, the program/policy 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 changes in programs/policies 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/policies that could be transferred to other districts and States.

## **PART III REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH**

### **4. BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH**

#### **A. Resubmissions**

If you intend to revise and resubmit an application that was submitted to one of the Institute's previous competitions but that was not funded, you must indicate on the application form that your FY 2013 application is a revised application 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 application. You must describe your response to the prior reviews using no more than 3 pages of Appendix A. Revised and resubmitted applications will be reviewed according to the FY 2013 Request for Applications.

If you submitted a somewhat similar application in the past but are submitting the current application as a new application, you must indicate on the application form that your FY 2013 application is a new application. You must provide a rationale explaining why the FY 2013 application should be considered to be a new application rather than a revision using no more than 3 pages of Appendix A. Without such an explanation, if the Institute determines that the current application is similar to a previously unfunded application, the Institute may send the reviews of the prior unfunded application to this year's reviewers along with the current application.

#### **B. Applying to multiple competitions or topics**

You may submit applications to more than one of the Institute's FY 2013 grant programs. In addition, within a particular grant program, you may submit multiple applications. However, you may not submit a given application or similar applications more than once to the FY 2013 competitions. In cases of an applicant submitting the same or similar applications, the Institute will determine whether and which applications will be accepted for review and/or will be eligible for funding.

### **5. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH**

The Institute intends to fund rigorous evaluations to determine the impacts on student outcomes of education programs or policies routinely implemented by a State education agency, a local education agency, or a consortium of State or local education agencies.

#### **A. The Project Narrative**

In your 25-page project narrative, use the **Significance** section to explain why it is important to test the impact of the program/policy. Use the **Research Plan** section to detail the evaluation of the program/policy. Use the **Personnel** section to describe the relevant expertise of your research team and their responsibilities within and time commitments to the project. Use the **Resources** section to describe your access to institutional resources, education delivery settings (e.g., schools, districts), and relevant data sources.

## **a. Significance**

In the Significance section of the project narrative you should clearly describe: (i) your research questions, (ii) the fully developed program/policy, (iii) the theory of change for the program/policy, (iv) the conditions under which the program/policy will be implemented, and (v) a compelling rationale for testing the impact of the program/policy.

### **(i) Research Questions**

You should clearly describe the aims of your project, including your hypotheses and/or research questions to be addressed. You should identify the issue or problem that the State or district is trying to address through the program/policy and discuss the overall importance of this issue or problem for the improvement of student outcomes. The importance of the issue or problem to education stakeholders, such as practitioners and policymakers, should be included in your discussion.

### **(ii) The Program/Policy**

Under the State/Local Grant program, you must evaluate a program/policy that is intended to improve student academic outcomes at any level from prekindergarten through high school (e.g., school readiness, grades, State assessment scores, high school graduation) or is intended to increase traditionally underserved populations' access to and enrollment in postsecondary education.

You should clearly describe the program/policy, including its individual components. In addition, you should describe the processes and materials (e.g., manuals, websites, training, coaching) that will be used to support its implementation. You should provide evidence that the program/policy is fully developed and that all materials required for its implementation are readily available for use in authentic education delivery settings. Also, you should note the fidelity measure(s) that you will use to assess the implementation of the program/policy as well the means you will use to determine what the comparison group is receiving. If a fidelity measure needs to be developed, you can propose devoting a short period of time (e.g., 2-6 months) to its development. However, the program/policy itself must be fully developed.

As part of your description of the program/policy, you should discuss how it substantially modifies or differs from existing practices (either in the same location or in other locations). In addition, you should discuss any previous attempts to evaluate the program/policy and clearly distinguish your proposed evaluation from prior work and the additional contribution it will make.

### **(iii) Theory of Change**

You should explain the rationale for the program/policy. Why is the program/policy likely to improve student outcomes? The Institute recognizes that oftentimes programs/policies that emerge out of a practice context are not based on a formal theory of change. However, you should articulate a general theory of change for the proposed program/policy. That is, you should describe what the program/policy is expected to change and how this will ultimately result in improved student academic outcomes. The programs/policies may effect student outcomes directly (e.g., a tutoring program for low-achieving students) or indirectly (e.g., incentives to retain effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools are posited to directly improve the quality of instruction and indirectly to improve student outcomes). 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. By including the proximal and distal outcomes expected from the program/policy in the theory of change, you provide more opportunities to test the theory and revise it accordingly.

Strong applications will also include detailed descriptions of what the comparison group experiences. By clearly describing the components of the program/policy and the comparable program/policy that the comparison group will receive or experience, you help reviewers to better judge whether the program/policy is sufficiently different from what the comparison group experiences so that one might reasonably expect a difference in student outcomes

The theory of change helps reviewers judge whether the program/policy 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 program/policy 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 program/policy; (b) whether master teachers in the treatment group are aware of the incentive program once the program/policy 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 program/policy; and (e) student outcomes prior to and after implementation of program/policy.

(iv) Conditions of Implementation

Under the State/Local Grant program, you must evaluate a program/policy 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 program/policy and to oversee the implementation of the program/policy as part of its regular responsibilities. This restriction does not preclude evaluating a program/policy that is delivered by entities outside of State or district personnel so long as the State or district education agency has contracted, or otherwise established an agreement, with the outside entity to deliver the program/policy. You must clearly describe who is responsible for the implementation of the program/policy.

For a program/policy that is to be implemented by the State or district education agency, you must indicate the date when the State or district will begin implementation. You should show that the new program/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.

If the program/policy 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 program/policy to additional schools or districts, you must indicate the date when the State or district will begin the implementation of the program/policy in new schools or districts.

You should show that the program/policy will be implemented under routine practice (e.g., typical operating conditions) and identify the variety of settings and populations for which you will be able to test its impacts.

(v) Rationale

In justifying your evaluation, you should address why the program/policy is likely to produce better student outcomes relative to current practice (or argue that the program/policy is current practice if widely used) and what is the overall practical importance of the program/policy (why education practitioners or policymakers should care about the results of the proposed evaluation).

You should provide both evidence of the program/policy's widespread use and conceptual arguments for the importance of evaluating the program/policy because of its relevance to public policy or current education practice as would be judged by practitioners and policymakers. By *widespread use*, the Institute means used across multiple states or in the majority of districts in a single state or

in the majority of schools in one or more large districts. Widespread use of the program/policy provides empirical evidence for the practical importance of its evaluation. You should also point out any broader conceptual importance your evaluation may have, for example, if the program/policy is the primary approach currently used, or if it is representative of the most commonly used approaches, or if it offers an alternative approach to the most commonly used approaches. In addition, you should describe studies that have attempted to evaluate the program/policy, note their findings, and discuss why your proposed study would be an important improvement on past work.

In addition, you should note any evidence of the feasibility and affordability of the program/policy. Such evidence could increase the likelihood of the program/policy's adoption by other States and districts if you found it improved student outcomes.

It can be helpful to end the Significance section with a summary paragraph justifying the importance of the proposed work. From the reviewers' perspective, such a paragraph organizes the arguments made throughout the Significance section and better prepares them to read the Research Plan.

## **b. Research Plan**

Your Research Plan must clearly describe (i) the sample and setting; (ii) an appropriate research design that can support causal inferences; (iii) a detailed power analysis; (iv) the measures that will be used to assess proximal and distal outcomes, fidelity of implementation, and comparison group practices; (v) key moderators or mediators; (vi) the data analyses; and (vii) a cost analysis plan.

### **(i) Sample and Setting**

You must 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. You should show how this sample addresses the overall aims of the project. Additionally, you should describe strategies to increase the likelihood that participants (e.g., districts, schools, teachers, and/or students) will join the study and remain in the study over the course of the evaluation.

### **(ii) Research Design**

You must provide a detailed description of the research design. State/Local projects are to provide causal analysis, and you must show how you will be able to make causal inferences based on the results from your design.<sup>1</sup> You should describe how potential threats to internal validity would be addressed. For all types of research designs, including those using random assignment, you should explain how you will document that the treatment and comparison groups are equivalent at the outset of the study and how you will document the level of bias occurring from overall and differential attrition rates.<sup>2</sup>

In the Significance section, you described the program/policy, how it would be implemented, and what supports are expected to be necessary for a successful implementation. In addition to discussing how your Research Design will be used to evaluate the impact of the program/policy, you must also address how it identifies and assesses of the factors associated with successful implementation of the program/policy. You should collect data on the conditions in the school and district setting that may affect the fidelity of implementation and that can help you to understand why the program/policy is or is not implemented with high fidelity. Should you propose an evaluation that relies on secondary data analyses of historical data that does not contain this information, you are not required to include this type of analysis or the collection of fidelity data in your application.

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants may find the following article useful: Song, M., & Herman, R. (2010). Critical Issues and Common Pitfalls in Designing and Conducting Impact Studies in Education: Lessons Learned From the What Works Clearinghouse (Phase I). *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(3), 351-371.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 11-16 of the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook: Version 2.1 (September 2011) available at [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference\\_resources/wwc\\_procedures\\_v2\\_1\\_standards\\_handbook.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_procedures_v2_1_standards_handbook.pdf).

In describing your design, you should give a thoughtful justification for the selection of the counterfactual. In evaluations of education programs/policies, 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 program/policy 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 program/policy for theoretical or practical reasons. In other cases, the primary question is whether the program/policy 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*. 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 program/policy (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*. For either type of business-as-usual, you should detail as much as possible the treatment or treatments received in the comparison group. By clearly describing the program/policy and the comparable treatment that the comparison group will receive, you help reviewers to better judge whether the program/policy is sufficiently different from what the comparison group receives so that one might reasonably expect a difference in student outcomes.

In addition, you should describe strategies for reducing potential contamination between treatment and comparison groups. You do *not* necessarily need to randomize at the school level to avoid contamination between groups especially if you identify conditions and processes that will reduce the likelihood of contamination.

Typical designs for State/Local projects include randomized controlled trials, regression discontinuity designs, and strong quasi-experimental designs. If you propose to use a design other than a randomized controlled trial, you must make a compelling case that randomization is not possible and that your alternative design substantially minimizes selection bias or allows it to be modeled.

- a. Randomized Controlled Trials: Studies using random assignment to program/policy and comparison conditions have the strongest internal validity for causal conclusions and, thus, are preferred. When a randomized controlled trial is used, you should clearly state and present a convincing rationale for the unit of randomization (e.g., students, classroom, teacher, or school). You should explain the procedures for random assignment of groups (e.g., schools) or participants to program/policy and comparison conditions and how the integrity of the assignment process will be ensured.<sup>3</sup>

The procedures used for random assignment are expected to depend upon the program/policy'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 a program/policy 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

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<sup>3</sup> What a randomized controlled trial must do to meet the WWC's evidence standards is described in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (2011) available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewProcess.aspx>.

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 attrit 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 program/policy 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 program/policy and spread the cost over a number of years. For example, if a new program/policy 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 program/policy. 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 program/policy for the treatment group and when the control group will receive it will be long enough to expect the program/policy 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 program/policy. 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).

- b. Regression Discontinuity Designs: Studies using regression discontinuity designs may also provide unbiased estimates of the effects of an education program/policy (for example, see Gormley, Gayer, Phillips, & Dawson, 2005 regarding the impact of preschool). If you propose to use a regression discontinuity design, you should explain the appropriateness of the assignment variable, show that there is a true discontinuity, document that no manipulation of the assignment variable has occurred and that the composition of the treatment and comparison group does not differ in ways that would indicate selection bias, and include sensitivity analyses to assess the influence of key procedural or analytic decisions on the results.<sup>4</sup>
- c. Quasi-Experimental Designs: You may propose rigorous quasi-experimental designs that come close to true experiments in minimizing the effects of selection bias (that may result in differences in the composition of the intervention and comparison groups) on estimates of the program/policy's impacts.<sup>5</sup> You must justify how the proposed design permits drawing causal conclusions about the effect of the program/policy on the intended outcomes. To this end, you should identify and justify the specific assumptions made by the design, discuss how selection bias will be minimized or modeled<sup>6</sup>, demonstrate how you will obtain equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups at program/policy entry on the variables that are to be measured as final student academic outcomes (e.g., student achievement scores) or obtain such equivalence through statistical procedures, and demonstrate how you will obtain equivalence on other variables that may affect intended outcomes of the program/policy being evaluated (e.g., demographic variables, experience and level of training of teachers, motivation of students). You

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<sup>4</sup> What a regression discontinuity design must do to meet the WWC evidence standards is described in Standards for Regression Discontinuity Designs (2010) available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewProcess.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> What a quasi-experimental design must do to meet the WWC's evidence standards with reservations is described in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (2008) available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewProcess.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., and Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

should explicitly discuss the threats to internal validity that are not addressed convincingly by the design and how conclusions from the research will be tempered in light of these threats.

The acceptability of a quasi-experimental design for a causal analysis depends on the specifics of the evaluation. 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). 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).

### (iii) Power

You should clearly address the statistical power of the research design to detect a reasonably expected and minimally important effect. You should address the clustering of participants (e.g., students in classrooms and/or schools and/or districts) in your power analysis. A strong discussion of power will include the following:<sup>7</sup>

- a. The minimum effect of the program/policy you will be able to detect and a justification as to:
  - why this level of effect would be expected from the program/policy and
  - why this would be a practically important effect.
- b. A description of how either the power for detecting the minimum effect or the minimum detectable effect size was calculated for the sample in answering the primary research questions. You should provide the statistical formula used and also
  - describe the parameters with known values used in the formula (e.g., number of clusters, number of participants within the clusters),
  - describe the parameters whose values are estimated and how those estimates were made (e.g., intraclass correlations, role of covariates),
  - describe other aspects of the design and how they may affect power (e.g., stratified sampling/blocking, repeated observations), and
  - describe predicted attrition and how it was addressed in the power analysis.
- c. Similar descriptions should be provided for any causal analyses to be done using subgroups of the proposed sample.

### (iv) Measures

You should give careful consideration to the selection of measures and justify the appropriateness of the chosen measures concerning (a) outcomes, (b) fidelity of implementation of the program/policy, and (c) what the comparison group receives.

You should describe the procedures for and the timing of the collection of data that will be used as measures and indicate procedures to guard against bias entering into the data collection process (e.g., pretests occurring after the program/policy has been implemented or differential timing of assessments for treatment and comparison groups).

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).

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<sup>7</sup> For more information, see Donner, A., & Klar, N. (2000). *Design and Analysis of Cluster Randomization Trials in Health Research*. New York, NY: 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](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/group-based/optimal_design_software).

- a. Outcomes: You should include student academic outcome measures that are of practical interest to schools, districts, and States. These may include grades, State or district standardized assessments of student achievement, state end-of-course exams, exit exams, attendance and tardiness rates, drop out and/or graduation rates. For programs/policies designed to directly change the teaching and learning environment and, in doing so, indirectly affect student outcomes, you should also provide measures of the proximal outcomes (e.g., teacher behaviors, teacher mobility, knowledge of instructionally relevant content). The Institute recommends that, where possible, States and districts incorporate the use of administrative data in the evaluation. You should provide information on the reliability, validity, and appropriateness of proposed measures. You should make clear how the measures align with the theory of change and that the skills or content the program/policy is designed to address are captured in the measures.
- b. Measures of Implementation Fidelity: You should specify how the implementation of the program/policy will be documented and measured. This will include describing your fidelity measure(s) to assess the implementation of the program/policy. You should make clear how the fidelity measures capture the core components of the program/policy. Your description of the fidelity measures and the measures of what is occurring in the comparison group (see below) should show that the two sets of measures are sufficiently comprehensive and sensitive to identify and document critical differences between what the treatment and comparison groups receive. You should also discuss how you will identify and assess factors associated with the fidelity of implementation; such information may provide insight into what supports are needed within schools or districts to successfully implement the program/policy with high fidelity.

If you are proposing an evaluation that relies on secondary data analyses of historical data that does not contain fidelity information, you are *not* required to include fidelity data. You should provide an explanation for why data on fidelity of implementation of the program/policy will not be included in the project. The Institute recognizes that there may be some applications 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 regression discontinuity design in which the time frame for the data goes from 2008 through 2016). In such cases, it may or may not be reasonable for you to collect additional data on fidelity of implementation of the program/policy. As with all methodological issues, you should provide a clear rationale for your decision regarding the proposed research approach.

- c. Measures of Comparison Group Practices: Comparisons of a program/policy against other conditions are only meaningful to the extent that you describe what the comparison group receives or experiences. You should identify the measure(s) you will use to measure the comparison group's experience so that you can compare the treatment and comparison groups on the implementation of critical features of the program/policy. Such a comparison will allow you to determine whether there was clear distinction in what the groups received or whether both groups received key elements of the program/policy. You can then use this determination for *post hoc* explanations of why the program/policy does or does not improve student learning relative to the counterfactual.

(v) Moderators and Mediators

The Institute expects State/Local evaluations to examine relevant moderating factors but recognizes that many evaluations are not powered to rigorously test the effects of a wide-range of moderators. Therefore, you should focus on a small-set of moderators for which there is a strong theoretical and/or empirical base to expect they will moderate the impact of the program/policy on the student outcomes measured. Moderating variables that are also likely to affect outcomes in the comparison condition should be measured in both in the treatment and the comparison groups. The Institute encourages your use of observational, survey, and qualitative methodologies to assist in the identification of factors that may explain the variation in the effect of the program/policy.

The Institute recognizes that most State/Local evaluations are not designed or powered to rigorously test the effects of specific mediating variables. However, the Institute encourages you to propose exploratory analyses to better understand potential mediators of the program/policy.

(vi) Data Analysis

You must include a detailed description of your data analysis procedures. You should make clear how the data analysis directly answers your research questions/hypotheses. You should include your data analysis plans for evaluating the impact of the program/policy and for additional analyses such as subgroup impacts, the roles of moderators and mediators, and fidelity of implementation (including identifying what is needed for sufficient implementation of the program/policy). For quantitative data, specific statistical procedures (including the equations for the models to be estimated) should be described. Your analysis procedures should address any clustering of students in classes and schools, even when individuals are randomly assigned to condition, which generally requires specialized multilevel statistical analyses. In addition, you should discuss how exclusion from testing and missing data will be handled in your analysis. Also, if you intend to link multiple data sets, you should provide sufficient detail for reviewers to judge the feasibility of the linking plan.

For qualitative data, you should delineate the specific methods used to index, summarize, and interpret the data. You should show how the qualitative data will be used in the quantitative analysis (e.g., incorporating fidelity of program/policy data into the impact analysis<sup>8</sup>) and/or how the qualitative analyses will complement and help explain the findings from the quantitative analysis.

(vii) Cost Analysis

A Cost-Feasibility analysis must be included. This analysis is to assess the financial costs of program implementation and assist schools in understanding whether implementation of the program is practicable given their available resources. You should collect data 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 adequately reflect expenditures across the lifespan of the program. The Institute is not asking you to conduct an economic evaluation of the program (e.g., cost-benefit, cost-utility, or cost-effectiveness analyses), although you may propose such evaluation activities if desired.<sup>9</sup>

**c. Personnel**

For your application to be competitive, you will need a research team that collectively demonstrates expertise in the relevant content domain(s), assessing the implementation of the program/policy, the methodology required to test the impact of the program/policy, and working with schools and education agencies. For States and districts that have not conducted rigorous evaluations of the type described in this Request for Applications, the Institute strongly recommends involving 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 application.

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Hulleman, C. S., & Cordray, D. S. (2009). Moving from the Lab to the Field: The Role of Fidelity and Achieved Relative Program/Policy Strength. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 2, 88-110.

<sup>9</sup> For additional information on how to calculate the costs of a program or conduct an economic evaluation, see Levin, H.M., & McEwan, P.J. (2001). *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis*. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

This section should identify all key personnel on the project team including those from other organizations. You should briefly describe the following for all key personnel:

- 1) qualifications,
- 2) roles and responsibilities within the project,
- 3) percent of time and calendar months per year (academic plus summer) to be devoted to the project, and
- 4) past success at disseminating research findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

All applications to the competition must include the involvement of State or local education agencies. Because the program/policy selected for evaluation is determined by a State(s) and/or a district(s), 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 program/policy as key personnel on the research 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 program/policy. The individuals involved in the design of the evaluation, the determination of random assignment, the data collection, and the analysis of data must be individuals who did not and do not participate in the development or distribution of the program/policy. The principal investigator must be an individual who has not been involved in the development or distribution of the program/policy. 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 program/policy. 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 program/policy. 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 program/policy under conditions of routine implementation.

If any part of the study is to be conducted by another organization (e.g., data collection, analysis of data), that organization and their personnel involved must be included in the application. It is not acceptable to simply propose that grant funds be used to contract with an unspecified organization to collect and/or analyze data.

#### **d. Resources**

You should describe the institutional resources of all institutions involved in the proposed research that will be used to support your State/Local project. You should discuss the overall management of the research project and what resources and procedures are available to support the successful completion of this project. You should describe your access to the education delivery settings (schools, districts, states) in which the research will take place and to any data sets that you require. You should document the availability and cooperation of the schools, 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. You should also document the availability and cooperation of any organizations holding data sets that will be required to carry out the research proposed in the application via letters of support from these organizations. These letters should be placed in Appendix C and should convey that the organizations understand what their participation in the evaluation will involve (e.g., annual student and teacher surveys, implementing all components of the program/policy if placed into the treatment group, not receiving the program/policy for X-number of years if placed on a wait-list control, providing specific data sets).

## **B. Awards**

Your proposed length of project should reflect the scope of work to be accomplished. **The maximum duration of a State/Local project is 5 years.** An application proposing a project length of greater than the maximum will be deemed non-responsive to the Request for Applications and will not be accepted for review.

Your budget should reflect the scope of the work to be done and will vary according to the type of program/policy being evaluated. **The maximum award for a State/Local project is \$5,000,000 (total costs = direct + indirect costs).** An application proposing a budget higher than the maximum award will be deemed non-responsive to the Request for Applications and will not be accepted for review.

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 program/policy.** The cost of the program/policy includes any materials, textbooks, software, computers, or training required to implement the program/policy. The cost of the program/policy does not include funds allocated to pay teachers or other participants for time involved in completing questionnaires, surveys, or any other assessments that are part of the evaluation. In the budget narrative, you should make clear that no grant funds will be used to support implementation of the program/policy.

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

### **6. 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.

### **7. FUNDING AVAILABLE**

Although the plans of the Institute include the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies (State/Local) program described in this announcement, awards pursuant to this Request for Applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of meritorious applications. The number of projects funded depends upon the number of high-quality applications submitted. The Institute does not have plans to award a specific number of grants under this competition.

The size of the award depends on the scope of the project. Please attend to the maximums set for project length (5 years) and budget (\$5,000,000). If you request a project length longer than the maximum length or a budget higher than the maximum award, your application will be deemed non-responsive to the Request for Applications and will not be reviewed.

### **8. 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 U.S. State or local education agency with oversight or responsibility for the policy or program must be included as key personnel on the team that is submitting the application.

You may submit an application if your institution is not located in the territorial United States. You may also propose working with sub-awardees who are not located in the territorial United States. In both cases, your proposed work must address a program or policy implemented in the United States by a State or local education agency. Also, institutions not located in the territorial U.S. (both primary grantees and sub-awardees) cannot charge indirect costs.

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

All research supported by the Institute must be relevant to education in the United States.

### **9. 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.

Your institution is responsible for identifying the Principal Investigator. Your institution may elect to designate more than one Principal Investigator. In so doing, the 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.

The Principal Investigator is expected to attend one meeting each year (for up to 3 days) in Washington, D.C. with other grantees and Institute staff. The project's budget should include this meeting. Should the Principal Investigator not be able to attend the meeting, he/she can designate another member of the research team to attend.

### **10. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDIRECT COST RATES**

When calculating your expenses for research conducted in field settings, you should apply your institution's negotiated off-campus indirect cost rate, as directed by the terms of your institution's negotiated agreement with the federal government.

Institutions, both primary grantees and sub-awardees, not located in the territorial U.S. cannot charge indirect costs.

### **11. DEMONSTRATING ACCESS TO DATA AND EDUCATION DELIVERY SETTINGS**

You may propose to conduct research that requires access to studies currently under way, secondary data sets, or education delivery settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts). In such cases, you will need to provide evidence that you have access to these resources prior to receiving funding. Whenever possible, you should include letters of support from those who have responsibility for or access to the data or settings you wish to incorporate when you submit your application. Even in circumstances where you have included such letters with your application, the Institute may require additional supporting evidence prior to the release of funds. If you cannot provide such documentation, **the Institute may not award the grant or may withhold funds.**

#### **You will need supporting evidence of partnership or access if you are:**

##### *Building off of existing studies*

You may propose studies that piggyback onto an ongoing 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.

### *Using secondary data sets*

If your application is being considered for funding based on scientific merit scores from the peer review panel and your research relies on access to secondary data sets (such as federally collected data sets, state or district administrative data, or data collected by you or other researchers), you will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary data sets in order to receive the grant. This means that if you do not have permission to use the proposed data sets at the time of application, you must provide documentation to the Institute from the entity controlling the data set(s) before the grant will be awarded. This documentation must indicate that you have permission to use the data for the proposed research for the time period discussed in the application. If you obtained permission to use a proposed data set prior to submitting your application, the Institute may ask you to provide updated documentation indicating that you still have permission to use the data set to conduct the proposed research during the project period.

### *Conducting research in education delivery settings*

If your application is being considered for funding based on scientific merit scores from the peer review panel and your research relies on access to education delivery settings (e.g., schools and districts), you will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary settings in order to receive the grant. This means that if you do not have permission to conduct the proposed project in the necessary number of settings at the time of application, you will need to provide documentation to the Institute indicating that you have successfully recruited the necessary number of settings for the proposed research before the full first-year costs will be awarded. If you recruited sufficient numbers of settings prior to the application, the Institute may ask you to provide documentation that the settings originally recruited for the application are still willing to partner in the research.

In addition to obtaining evidence of access, the Institute strongly advises applicants to establish a written agreement, within three months of receipt of an award, 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.

## **12. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF RESULTS**

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 manuscript is to be made 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.

## **13. SPECIAL CONDITIONS ON GRANTS**

The Institute may impose special conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable, has a history of unsatisfactory performance, has an unsatisfactory financial or other management system, has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant, or is otherwise not responsible.

## **14. LETTER OF INTENT**

The Institute asks that you submit a letter of intent by **4:30 p.m.** Washington D.C. time on the relevant due date for the competition to which you plan to submit. The Institute staff use the information in the letters of intent to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer review panels, secure a sufficient number of reviewers to handle the anticipated number of applications, and provide feedback to you on your research idea. The Institute encourages you to submit a letter of intent even if you think you 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. Should you miss the deadline for submitting a letter of intent, you still may submit an application. The Institute asks that you inform the relevant program officer (identified in *Section 24*) of your intention to submit an application if you miss the deadline.

#### **A. Content**

The letter of intent should include the following:

- 1) Descriptive title
- 2) Brief description of the proposed project
- 3) Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the Principal Investigator and any Co-Principal Investigators
- 4) Name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators and contractors
- 5) Duration of the proposed project
- 6) Estimated total budget request (the estimate need only be a rough approximation).

#### **B. Format and Page Limitation**

The online submission page (<http://iesreview.ed.gov>) contains fields for each of the content areas described above. You will use these fields to provide the necessary information. The project description should be single-spaced and should not exceed 1 page (about 3,500 characters).

### **15. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND APPLICATION PACKAGE**

#### **A. Documents Needed to Prepare an Application**

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

- 1) 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/>

- 2) 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://www.grants.gov/applicants/app\\_help\\_reso.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp)

- 3) The *Application Package* provides all of the forms that you must complete and submit. 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). *Section C* below explains how 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 **July 19, 2012**.

## **C. How to Download the Correct Application Package**

### **a. CFDA number**

To find the correct downloadable Application Package, you must first search by the CFDA number for each IES Request for Applications *without* the alpha suffix. 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 grant program, you must download the application Package marked:

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

You must download the Application Package that is designated for the grant competition and competition deadline. If you use a different Application Package, even if it is for an Institute competition, the application will be submitted to the wrong competition. Applications submitted using the incorrect application package may not be reviewed for Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies Grant Program grant program.

## **16. MANDATORY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND DEADLINE**

Applications must be **submitted electronically and received by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, D.C. time** on the application deadline date.

Grant applications must be submitted electronically through the Internet using the software and application package provided on the Grants.gov website: <http://www.grants.gov/>. You 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.

Please note that to submit an electronic application through Grants.gov, your institution must be registered with Grants.gov ([http://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization\\_registration.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization_registration.jsp)).

To register with Grants.gov, your institution must have

- a valid Duns and Bradstreet Universal Data Numbering Systems (DUNS) number, and
- an active registration with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR).

Your institution is strongly encouraged to start the Grants.gov registration process at least four weeks prior to the application due date.

Applications submitted in paper format will be rejected unless you (a) qualify 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 Grant Program (CFDA Number 84.305E) competition described in this Request for Applications and (b) submit, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Institute that documents that you qualify for one of these exceptions. For more information on using Grants.gov, you should visit the Grants.gov website.

## **17. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

The Institute encourages you to contact the Institute's program officers as you develop your application. Program officers can offer advice on choosing the appropriate grant program to apply under and preparing applications. They can also offer substantive advice on your research idea and draft project narrative. To identify the appropriate program officer for your research idea, see *Section 24* below.

In addition, you are encouraged to sign up for the Institute's funding opportunities webinars for advice on choosing the correct research program, grant writing, or submitting your application. For more

information regarding webinar topics, dates, and registration process, see <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/webinars/index.asp>.

## **18. WRITING YOUR 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. You must adhere to the type size and format specifications for the entire narrative, including footnotes, to ensure that your text is easy for reviewers to read and that all applicants have the same amount of available space in which to describe their projects.

#### **a. Page and margin specifications**

For the purposes of applications submitted under this RFA, a "page" is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on 1 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 3 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.

To ensure your font meets these requirements, you 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. These requirements apply to the PDF file as submitted.

When applicants use small type size, it is difficult for reviewers to read the application, and applicants may receive an unfair advantage by allowing for more text in their applications. Consequently, the use of small type font is grounds for the Institute to not accept an application for review.

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**

The Institute encourages applicants to use black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. If you choose to use color, you must ensure that the material reproduces well when photocopied in black and white.

## **C. Project Summary/Abstract**

### **a. Submission**

You must submit the project summary/abstract 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 the following:

- 1) Title of the project
- 2) The RFA (Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies)
- 3) A brief description of the purpose of the project (e.g., to evaluate a specific program/policy)
- 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 sample that will be involved in the study (e.g., age or grade level, race/ethnicity, SES)
- 6) A brief description of the program/policy 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 website <http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/projects> for examples of project summaries/abstracts.

## **D. Project Narrative**

### **a. Submission**

You must submit the project narrative as a separate .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 1-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 Institute determines that the narrative exceeds the 25 single-spaced page limit, the Institute will remove any pages after the twenty-fifth page of the narrative.

To help the reviewers locate information and conduct the highest quality review, you should write a concise and easy to read application 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, you should use the author-date style of citation (e.g., James, 2004), such as described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Ed.* (American Psychological Association, 2009).

### **d. Content**

Your project narrative must include **four sections** in order to be compliant with the requirements of the Request for Applications: (a) Significance, (b) Research Plan, (c) Personnel, and (d) Resources. Information to be included in each of these sections is detailed in *Part III: Requirements of the Proposed*

*Research.* The information you include in each of these four sections will provide the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the application.

## **E. Appendix A (Required for Resubmissions, Optional Otherwise)**

### **a. Submission**

If you have an Appendix A, you must include it at the end of the project narrative and submit it 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 18.B General Format Requirements*.

### **c. Content**

#### (i) Required Content for Resubmissions

Appendix A is required if you are resubmitting an application or are submitting an application that is similar to an application you submitted previously. If you are resubmitting an application, you must provide a description (up to 3 pages in length) of how the revision is responsive to prior reviewer comments. If you have submitted a somewhat similar application in the past but are submitting the current application as a new application, you must provide a rationale (up to 3 pages in length) explaining why the current application should be considered a "new" application rather than a "resubmitted" application.

#### (ii) Optional Content for All Applications

You may also include figures, charts, or tables that supplement the project narrative as well as examples of measures (e.g., tests, surveys, observation and interview protocols) to be used in the project in Appendix A. These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix A; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application. You should include narrative text in the 25-page project narrative, not in Appendix A.

## **F. Appendix B (Optional)**

### **a. Submission**

If you choose to have an Appendix B, you must include it at the end of the project narrative, following Appendix A (if included), and submit it 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 18.B General Format Requirements*.

### **c. Content**

In Appendix B, you may include examples of curriculum material, computer screen shots, assessment items, or other materials used in the program/policy to be evaluated. These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix B; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application. You should include narrative text describing these materials in the 25-page project narrative, not in Appendix B.

## **G. Appendix C (Optional)**

### **a. Submission**

If you choose to have an Appendix C, you must include it at the end of the project narrative, following Appendix B (or if no Appendix B is included, then Appendix C should follow Appendix A if it is included) and submit it 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, states, consultants). You must ensure that the letters reproduce well so that reviewers can easily read them. Do not reduce the size of the letters.

### **c. Content**

You should include in Appendix C the letters of agreement from partners (e.g., schools and districts), data sources (e.g., state agencies holding administrative data), 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, and resources to the research project that will be required if the application is funded. A common reason for projects to fail is loss of participating schools and districts. Letters of agreement regarding the provision of data should make it clear that the author of the letter will provide the data described in the application for use in the proposed research and in time to meet the proposed schedule.

## **H. Bibliography and References Cited**

### **a. Submission**

You must submit this section 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 18.B General Format Requirements*.

### **c. Content**

You 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.

## **19. APPLICATION PROCESSING**

Applications must be **submitted electronically 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. After receiving the applications, Institute staff will review each application 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.

Once you formally submit an application, Institute personnel will not comment on its status until the award decisions are announced except with respect to issues of completeness and eligibility.

## **20. PEER REVIEW PROCESS**

The Institute will forward all applications that are compliant and responsive to this request to be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Reviews are 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 compliant and responsive application is 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, the Institutes calculates an average overall score for each application and prepares a preliminary rank order of applications 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 application that he or she believes merits full panel review but that would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

## **21. 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. The Institute expects reviewers for all applications 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 Research*.

### **A. Significance**

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

### **B. Research Plan**

Does the applicant meet the methodological requirements described in the Research Plan 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?

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

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

July 19, 2012

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

September 20, 2012

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

July 1, 2013

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

September 1, 2013

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, 2013).

## **23. 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, and

- Availability of funds.

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

Dr. Allen Ruby  
Institute of Education Sciences  
400 Maryland Ave, SW  
CP-610e  
Washington, DC 20208

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

#### **25. 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.

#### **26. 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.

#### **27. REFERENCES**

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