

NCSER Webinar
Application Submission Process for IES Grant Opportunities

Emily Doolittle:

Thank you so much. Welcome everybody, my name is Emily Doolittle, and I'm in the National Center for Education Research, and today, with Sarah Brasiel from the National Center for Special Education Research, we are going to be presenting information about the application submission process for IES grant opportunities. Today, we're going to cover a few different things, but in a nutshell, we're going to talk about how you find the materials for submitting an application. We're going to go through some basics about using grants.gov to submit the application electronically. And that's when I'm going to turn things over to Sarah to review what actually goes into an application, and information about formatting the application components. Finally, we'll wrap up with some program specific information. Please do submit questions throughout the webinar using the Q&A function, and Sarah and I will respond as we can.

First to talk about IES, there are two research centers within IES that have active grant competitions for fiscal year 2017 funding. Within the National Center for Education Research, NCER, we'll describe for you very briefly, an overview of the kinds of programs we're competing. I'll get back to this later, but the number you need to be paying attention to if you're submitting to NCER -- the CFDA number -- is 84.305. And then we'll also be talking about research competitions through the National Center for Special Education Research -- you'll hear us refer to the National Center for Special Education Research as NCSER. And the CFDA number for those competitions is 84.324.

What are we competing this year? For FY 2017, NCER has multiple programs that may be of interest. The first one on the list is our Education Research grants program. That's our flagship program, our standing program, and you can usually count on that one being competed every year. The number for that one is CFDA 84.305A. We also support research on statistics and research methodology - 84.305D. We also have a partnerships program -- 84.305H. We have a low-cost, short-duration evaluation program -- that's 305L. We're also competing two research networks this year, one looking at science teaching in elementary school classrooms, and one on strategies for supporting college completion.

Within our primary grants program, the Education Research grants program, I just wanted to make you aware of the fact that there are multiple topic areas within this program. I'm not going to talk about all of them today, but you will hear later that it's very important to identify the topic area in the application, and so we'll come back to the importance of the topics later.

And then for NCSER, the Special Education Research center, there are two primary research grants programs. The Special Education research grants program (NCSER's flagship program), 84.324A, and then also a low-cost, short-duration evaluation competition, 324L. As with the Education Research program, the Special Education research program has multiple topic areas. It is important to note the topic area on your application. And then for those of you, who may be interested in applying to the Special Education Research competition, please do look at their request for applications very carefully, because they have a special focus this year in terms of the

types of research that's being supported. So definitely attend to that webinar.

Finally, both centers support research training programs. Within NCER, we have three topic areas, in terms of research training. Pathways to the Education Sciences, Post-Doctoral Research Training, and Methods Training for Education Researchers. And then the Special Education Center is competing a training program for Early Career folks, Early Career Development and Mentoring.

All right, so I'm just going to pause. Sarah, do we have any questions yet? Are we good?

Sarah Brasiel:

We're good.

Emily Doolittle:

Great. The first thing you'll want to do if you're new to IES, or you want to learn more about IES, is to sign up for our newsflash. This is an email alert system that can provide you with lots of information. I know I'm personally signed up for it; I get lots of emails about happenings around the Institute. Through the newsflash, you can get important announcements about funding opportunities. Please do sign up for that, if you haven't already done so. On our website, here's a screenshot of how you get there. Under News and Events, and there's the newsflash. And then once you're into the newsflash area, you can sign up for emails. You can restrict the kinds of emails you get from IES. So definitely explore that tool.

I'm going to turn things now to, finding application materials. First, you need to find the request for applications for the competition you want to apply to. This is the guiding document. I encourage you to look at it very carefully. Contained within the request for applications -- I'll call it the RFA -- you're going to find information about basic requirements for an application, as well as recommendations that we provide for having a strong application. I definitely encourage you to look at that. Then there's a whole other section that contains much of -- actually, all of this information that we'll review today -- about how you actually submit an application through Grants.gov. In addition to this webinar, and these slides, all of this information is also contained within the RFA for the competition. We'll also talk today about how you find the application package on Grants.gov to submit your application.

On the IES website, you see the Funding Opportunities tab there. That will take you here. And this is where you can find everything you need for submitting an application. And the first thing you'll want to do is find that Request for Applications that you need. That will take you to this page, and then you see that there's an option for downloading the PDF or an RFA in Word format for each of the competitions that we have out.

Please pay attention to our deadline for applications. We are accepting applications under a deadline of August 4, 2016, and Sarah and I will repeat this lot during the webinar. But please know that this is a very firm deadline, and we will come back to the significance of that later.

Finding applications packages. All of that information is located on the Grants.gov website. I'm going to walk you through now exactly how you find that information. There are actually

multiple options for getting to our application packages. What I'm going to describe for you is the pathway I find most efficient. You will want to go to the Search Grants tab on Grants.gov, and once you get there, I recommend searching by the CFDA number. That seems to be the easiest way. So as a reminder, if you're applying to an NCER competition, the number you want to have is 84.305. And for the Special Education Research competition -- NCSER competition -- the number is 84.324.

Enter the numeric part of the CFDA number into that search field. Hit search. We put in 84.305, and here is the list of those programs I described for you that NCER is competing this year. And if you put in 84.324, you see the competition packages for the NCSER opportunities. Keep in mind, when you do the search in Grants.gov, there will be more than one package that pops up. You need to make sure that you find the one for your competition. You can make sure that you have the correct application package by checking out the opportunity title and the CFDA number. I'm going to walk you through a scenario where I might want to submit to the Education Research competition, 84.305A.

Check the opportunities title out, and that CFDA number. This is what you get when you click on that link. So again, check out the title of the program and the CFDA number to make sure you have the right application package. Once you're within this opportunity on Grants.gov, you see the tab there that's for the package. Down at the bottom right of the screen, you see the place to click to get the package. I encourage you to submit your email address to Grants.gov, so you'll get updates if anything were to change with the package. I think this is pretty rare, but why not, just in case. It doesn't hurt to do so, but you don't have to submit your email address if you don't want to. And then finally, once you've gone through that step, down here on the bottom left of the screen, you see two options. You can download the instructions, and what the instructions are is the Request for Applications. So this is another way to get to that information. And then you can also download the package here.

I'll pretend like I've clicked Download Package. And this is what should pop up on your computer. You'll also see that there's an agency contact person listed there. And in terms of the components of the package, please note that there are mandatory forms and components listed here. You'll want to make sure that you've completed each of these mandatory forms. Otherwise, you will get your application rejected with errors from Grants.gov. You don't want that to happen. But also note that there are two optional forms. One is the Sub-award Budget form, not every application has a sub-award, which is why this is optional. If you are including a sub-contractor or a sub-grantee on your application, you'll need to fill out that form. Then there's also a form for disclosing lobbying activities, also optional. Finally, in terms of the package, notice that there is a Check Package for Errors button here. I encourage you to use this as you're completing the application. It will find for you any potential problems, things that could cause you heartache later if there's a problem with your application.

All right? A little bit more about Grants.gov, but before I do that, I just want to check with Sarah, are we good?

Sarah Brasiel:

Yes.

Emily Doolittle:

Okay more about Grants.gov. There are some important tips we want to make sure you have before you begin this adventure of submitting your application. First of all, Grants.gov requires your institution to be registered. Please start early. Our application deadline is just under two months away, but if your institution is not registered yet on Grants.gov, go today and start the process, because it can take five or more business days to complete the registration process, but grants.gov actually recommends you allow up to four weeks. Please take this seriously. You don't want lack of registration on Grants.gov to prevent you from submitting your application.

If you are registered on Grants.gov -- and by the way, when I say you, I mean your institution. So these are institutional registrations. Please also keep in mind that an annual update is required, and that can take about three days to complete. You definitely want to be on top of this registration aspect of the process.

Also know that Grants.gov has software requirements. You need Adobe software to do this, so make sure that you have the right version of Adobe on your computer. We've included a link here that can help you to decide if you have the right version of Adobe. Definitely go to Grants.gov and make sure that you've got the right software and you have the right version of Adobe so that you can do this process easily.

Just as a reminder, IES requires that you submit your application electronically through Grants.gov. I actually never see this occur, but I'll put it out there. Don't email a copy to me or Sarah, that won't count. You need to actually submit it through Grants.gov. And then another important aspect of the submission process -- and I had alluded to this earlier -- is that applications that come in through Grants.gov get a date and time stamp automatically when they're processed. Keep this in mind, and this is absolutely critical. Very, very important to remember this. Your application has to be fully uploaded and submitted, date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30 and zero seconds p.m. Washington D.C. time on that application deadline date, which this year is August 4. Here is an example - this has happened before, and you don't want to be in this group. If your application comes in and the time stamp is 4:30 and one second, we will not look at it. It will not be reviewed. This is another really important piece of advice. Start the process early; don't get in the situation where you might be in danger of the application coming in after the deadline.

I also want to note, though, that you do have another option. We will accept an application in paper format if you qualify for one of these exceptions. One, you don't have access to the internet, and/or you don't have the capacity to upload large documents to grants.gov. This is a rare situation, but it is an option. But you have to submit a written statement to IES no later than two weeks before the application deadline if this applies to you.

In terms of Grants.gov, sometimes things go wrong. You know, there are lots of forms, lots of fields. We're going to go through all of that. If you have any technical problems with Grants.gov, program officers at IES will not be able to help you because we don't know the Grants.gov system that well. We don't have access to that system. Do keep in mind that you

should contact Grants.gov if you're having problems with your application. They have an 800 number, there's an email address, and they also have great support on the website. So definitely go to them first if you're encountering problems. Once you put in a request for help to Grants.gov, either to that 800 number or by emailing, they will automatically assign you a case number. Definitely keep a record of it in case there are problems.

I just made a big deal about the fact that IES has a hard and firm deadline. However, if you feel that you really had a technical problem with the Grants.gov system, you can petition that we go ahead and review your application. However, I would say ten times out of ten with these late applications, it's not really a problem with the Grants.gov system; it's that the applicant didn't follow our guidance. Please take advantage of the webinars, the Grants.gov resources, the information in our RFAs, because all the information is there to make this a smooth process for you, and we're not going to accept your application if you ran out of time because you didn't follow the instructions.

And then, once you have successfully submitted your application through Grants.gov- we encourage you to use a feature in Grants.gov called Track my Application. This is a great way to double check and verify that everything has gone according to plan. Once you submit through Grants.gov, you will be assigned a tracking number, that starts with the letters GRANT followed by a series of numbers. On the Grants.gov website, under the tab for applicants, there is a spot in the tab down on the bottom right, Track your Application. You just type your tracking number into that field in the middle, and it will tell you what your application status is. In addition to tracking the application through Grants.gov, also be on the lookout for email confirmation. This is critical, because this is where it can get a little bit confusing.

You're going to get three emails from Grants.gov, and then an email from us, the U.S. Department of Education. Really pay attention to emails at this point. Emails should go to the named PI on the application, as well as the authorized representative at the institution. Both of you should be paying attention. In terms of what you get from Grants.gov, what I learned is that the second Grants.gov realizes you're trying to upload something, as soon as you hit that submit button, you will get an email automatically from Grants.gov that assigns that tracking number. Right away, you should have tracking information available to you. Shortly after that you will receive an e-mail telling you that you were successful and Grants.gov has validated your application. How quickly these emails are spaced in time really depends on when you're submitting. If you're doing it on application day, there could be a delay, because the system might be busy. Or -- and this is the one to really pay attention to -- you will get an email saying there were errors and it's been rejected. Be on the lookout for this communication, because very quickly you'll hear from Grants.gov whether your application is being processed. And then the third email from Grants.gov will tell you that we have retrieved your application from Grants.gov.

It seems like a lot, you know, with emails, things can get filtered through spam or junk or whatever. Be checking all the places in your email to make sure that this has gone smoothly. And then finally -- and this is when you should feel really good about what you've done -- you will get confirmation from us. It will be an email from the U.S. Department of Education -- This email assigns what we call a PR/Award number that is unique to your application. I've given

two examples here. It will have that part of the CFDA number that's unique to each center. So if you've submitted to NCER, it will have a number that starts with R305. And for NCSE, it will be R324. And then it will be followed by the alpha part of the CFDA number. Then the number 17 for fiscal 17 funding. And then finally the last four digits are the ones that are unique to your application. Once you have a PR/Award number, your tracking number from Grants.gov is of no use to you. You want to track your application using this PR/Award number from the Department of Education. Also keep in mind that if your application was late this email will also tell you if your application was late, and that it will not be given further consideration.

Now what happens? You've got the application in, it was on time, and you have your PR/Award number. Now the application is going to go to a system that we refer to as PRIMO, and that's IES' Peer Review website. A few weeks after you have submitted through Grants.gov and then assigned the PR/Award number by the Department, be on the lookout for an email from the contractor that supports the PRIMO website. The email address appears as follows - ieshelp@srahosting.com. The subject line will read, "IES PRIMO Applicant Notification System, ANS." And I have part one of two, or two of two. The first email says, "Here you go, you're going to have an account on PRIMO." And the second email gives you a temporary password to get into the system. The timing of this is not as precise as the other pieces I just went through. I've learned that probably sometime in September you would get this email. Basically, I would say, by early September, if you don't have this email, please feel free to contact the relevant program officer. We have recently learned that some of this communication from PRIMO tends to go into spam or junk email, and people sometimes miss it.

This is a picture of the PRIMO homepage. It's not 100% clear looking at it where to go, but there are lots of different ways to log in. So I just recommend hitting that login button at the upper right once you get this information. And at that point, you're going to go through steps to get registered.

At this point, we're going to check to see if there are any questions.

Sarah Brasiel:

Yes, one great question is when will applicants who are awarded a grant be notified? On the front of the RFA, you'll see the notification date is July 1, 2017.

Emily Doolittle:

That notification date we've set up is the absolute, last possible date you might get notified. So if you're successful in terms of the peer review of your application, we'll actually start reaching out to you much sooner than that, usually sometime in March. Also this year, now that we have this great online place for peer review information, we were able to share the results of the review with applicants much earlier than that as well. I forget when that information went out this year, but it was in March, or something like that. Or maybe April, it was quite early. You'll receive information from IES in one way or another before that July 1 date, but that's the date we've set that up just in case we're delayed in terms of processing.

All right, so with that, I'm going to turn things over to Sarah, and she's going to tell you about what to put in your application.

Sarah Brasiel:

Great, thanks, Emily. Okay. Now we're going to discuss what's included in the application, and first there's the research and related R&R form Family, the SF 424 R&R form family. You'll have a project summary -- or abstract -- and you will have a project narrative. You will have appendices A, B, C, D, and/or E, bibliography and references cited, a human subjects' narrative, biographical sketches of key personnel, narrative budget justification, and list of current and pending funding. Now that's a very long list, and we're going to be going through each of these individually to give you more information.

Okay, so let's start with the research and related form. This is the first set of forms that you'll need to fill out, and the required fields are going to be highlighted in yellow and outlined in red, which you'll see in a moment. You can see right here, a reminder of what Emily mentioned earlier, there's this Check Package for Errors button, and you want to always pay attention to that when you see it put on a form. We're going to start with the SF424 cover sheet, because it pre-populates all of the other forms. You see here how it's highlighted in yellow, and also outlined in red.

I'm going to have you pay attention now to item 4B. This is the agency routing identifier. And this is used to screen your application for responsiveness. This is very important. It's assigned to applications for the appropriate scientific review panel, based on your area of research. If your application does not include an agency routing identifier, or if it's incorrect, your application could be rejected as non-responsive. Or it could be assigned incorrectly to the wrong panel. In the next few slides, you're going to see these particular identifiers. This slide presentation is going to be sent to you and available on the website, and this will be a great reference for you as you are determining which area to apply for. You will see these codes, and these are the ones that you want to enter on item 4B of your cover sheet. These are the NCER topic areas for the 84.305A competition. We also have identifiers for the goal of a project -- type of research. We also have some of these additional competitions that Emily explained to you. You need to use these codes if you're applying to any of these, as well as a network grant. Each one of those has a different code. And then for our Special Education Research Center, we also have codes for our topic areas of research, and for the goal projects, as well as our training grants and our low-cost, short-duration competition. This is very important to make sure that you're using the correct code.

Next, we have the other project information form. And this is where you are going to attach or upload your abstract and your narrative. You will also attach some other materials here, like your bibliography. And it's very important; all of your attachments must be in PDF file format.

Now, in working with a PDF file, there are specific requirements for submitting through Grants.gov. PDF files need to be in read-only, non-modifiable format. They also have to be individual files, not password protected, have a unique name, no more than 50 characters, and no special characters, blank spaces, periods or accent marks. Any non-compliance with these requirements and your application could be rejected by Grants.gov.

Also there are some other formatting requirements. They have to adhere with the margin, format

and font size requirements, which we're going to discuss in a minute. And the PDF files must be attached to the appropriate form in the application package. The forms have little buttons that get pressed where you attach the documents. You want to make sure you're attaching the right document as labeled on that form.

Now we're going to go into some more detailed information about page limits and also formatting... We're going to start with the project summary abstract. That one is limited to just one page, single-spaced. And you're going to attach that on number seven of the form, where it says "other project information." And really important, please include in your description the research topic and the goal -- if you're applying to 305A, or 324A. Make sure you outline that in your abstract so it's clear to the panel reading your proposal. Also make sure this information agrees with whatever you have selected with item 4B on that SF424 form.

For the project narrative, it's really important to look at the RFA, because the page limit is different depending on which grant you're applying for. Find that information on the page limit in the RFA, for the project narrative. Then you're going to attach the project narrative on number eight, on the other project information form.

Now depending on the competition you're applying to, the project narrative may have different components. But in general, it has these four or five sections: significance, the research plan, the personnel, and the resources. Most of them will have those, but please check out the RFA to make sure. There might be some other sections for your particular grant that you're applying for.

It's really important when writing your project narrative that you be concise, and make sure that your narrative is easy to read, and that you number your pages consecutively, so that readers can find information that they need to while they're reviewing your proposal. Also, make sure you adhere to the type font size and format specifications for the entire project narrative, including any footnotes. And please use footnotes sparingly, or not at all.

After the narrative, you'll have a series of appendices. The first one is Appendix A, and this has a page limit of three pages, single-spaced. This is required only if you are re-submitting a proposal, that means you have submitted it in a previous competition. And you must use these three pages to describe how you revised your proposal in response to the prior feedback that you received from the reviewers. Make sure that you include your prior application number in those three pages in that appendix. Appendix A should be included at the end of the project narrative, and submitted as part of the same PDF file attachment. In other words, the same file that has your project narrative will also include that Appendix A at the end. Make sure that you're following the appropriate margin, format, and font size requirements.

Appendix B has a 15-page page limit, also single-spaced, and is going to be included at the end of Appendix A, and submitted also as part of that PDF file attachment that had the narrative. Make sure you're attending to the margin, font and format requirements. Inside of Appendix B it's common to include things like figures, charts, tables or even time lines. And if you refer to your specific RFA, it might give you some more suggestions about what to include there. Also sometimes examples of measures can be included in Appendix B, such as data collection measures that will be used in the project.

Appendix C has a ten-page limit, also single-spaced, and this is included after Appendix B and submitted as part of that same PDF attachment. In Appendix C, this is a great opportunity, if you're doing an intervention or designing or developing something, you might provide some examples of the curriculum materials, computer screen shots, and any test items that you might be developing, or any other kind of materials that you're using in the intervention or the assessment.

There's no page limit for Appendix D, but this is also included at the end of Appendix C, as part of that same PDF attachment. It needs to have the same margin, format, and font size requirements. In Appendix D, you'll include letters of agreement from research partners, such as schools or districts or consultants. Your letters should clearly indicate the understandings that these partners have of the amount of time, the space and the resources that are going to be required if this application is funded.

It's important that you do not reduce the size of the letters. They need to be able to be read. Sometimes scanning the letters can increase the file size of your application, which will make it take longer to upload. It's really important that you're checking on the file size. Application packages tend to average one to two megabytes. Check the total size of your application before you submit it. Really large applications can take a long time to upload and might put you at risk of submitting your application late and having it not accepted. Make sure you don't miss that 4:30 and zero seconds p.m. Washington D.C. time deadline.

Moving on to Appendix E, this is only required if you're doing a project that is called a Goal Three or Goal Four project, efficacy and replication or effectiveness goals. This particular appendix is limited to five pages, single-spaced. It should come after Appendix D as part of the same PDF file attachment and follow the same formatting requirements. Appendix E includes the data management plan, and inside the RFA it will explain what needs to be included in that data management plan.

Emily Doolittle:

We've had a few questions come in. One that's relevant to the appendices. Somebody asked the question, if we're not including one of those appendices, how do we -- what do we do? Do we leave it out? How do we number things? And that's exactly right, you just leave it out. I recommend using a header or a footer to label something as being part of Appendix A or B or C. If you don't need that appendix, just omit it.

Sarah Brasiel:

One thing to clarify, if you have a sponsored programs office that's very overloaded, it also might be nice to have a blank Word document that says Appendix A, this is not needed, or something.

Emily Doolittle:

Oh, yes.

Sarah Brasiel:

Because sponsored programs may think you forgot to give it to them, and it could slow things

down. Be clear in advance with them that you're not including certain appendices, so they don't need to worry about that.

Emily Doolittle:

Yes, good point. And somebody had sent in a question asking about a date that you find on the forms. These are all approved through OMB, and so the SF424 Family has a limited approval, as somebody noted, until the end of this month, of 2016. Don't worry about that. The fact that we have that package on Grants.gov means that it's still viable, you can still use it, and you'll be able to submit it through grants.gov. Sometimes these deadlines get extended. I forget exactly how the process works, but don't worry too much about that date. I believe that the date shows at the upper right of the form.

And then finally, somebody also asked about whether it's possible to see an example of an application that has been submitted to IES. And the answer is yes, you always have the option of submitting a Freedom of Information Act request. You can find out how to do that on the Department of Education website. But send an email to me or Sarah after the webinar, we can talk to you more about that, because there are other options too, depending on what it is you'd like to learn about an application.

Sarah Brasiel:

Moving on, after the appendices, we have the bibliography and references cited. This section has no page limit. We recommend that you use APA style, which is the American Psychological Association style. And you want to add this as a PDF file under number nine on the other project information form. This is separate from the PDF that includes the abstract, the narrative, and the appendices; this is its own PDF. Make sure you adhere to the margin, format and font size requirements and that your citations are complete.

Then we have the human subjects' narrative. This also has no page limit, and should be added as a separate attachment, a PDF file, on number 12 in the other project information form. Note that Item 12 on the form says "other attachments." It doesn't specifically say human subjects' narrative. But that's where you want to upload it. You either need to submit an exempt human subjects narrative, or a non-exempt human subjects narrative.

I'm just going to talk briefly about human subjects' narratives, whether it's exempt or non-exempt. There are six exemptions, and in this PowerPoint is a link you can go to, to learn more about it. And it includes information on the involvement of human subjects to determine whether exemptions are appropriate. For a non-exempt human subjects narrative, you will want to describe the characteristics of the human subjects involved, the materials, recruitment, informed consent, potential risks, protection against risks, importance of the knowledge to be gained, and collaborating sites. If you're conducting exempt human subject work, your narrative should also include all of these things. That's important.

And then this is the research and related budget form that we talked about earlier where you include both the federal money requested plus any non-federal funds that will be used to support the proposed research. And you'll notice in red and in yellow with asterisks, they've highlighted the required fields.

Now we're going to go into common mistakes applicants make when filling out the budget form.

Emily Doolittle:

And I'll just jump in to say, Sarah.

Sarah Brasiel:

Yes.

Emily Doolittle:

We do this because the budget form can cause headaches, so pay attention.

Sarah Brasiel:

You will see circled here in red, that there is a category called Participant/Trainee Support Costs. You're only going to use this particular part of the budget form -- this participant training and support costs -- if you're applying for a training grant application. And that's a 305B or the 324B. Otherwise, you should not be using this category of the budget form.

The next common mistake that we see is in the time commitment of senior and key personnel. Under senior and key personnel is where you're going to enter the information for the key personnel on your project. For the time commitment of each person on the budget form, you need to make sure to fill in the calendar month, or the academic plus summer months that they're going to be devoting to the project. You'll see that here circled in red. You see what I'm doing? You will enter either the calendar months or the academic and summer months. There are also certain set budget maximums for the grants. So make sure you pay attention to that when you look at the RFA. Different topics and different research goals each have different budget amounts. If your application were to request an amount greater than the maximum for that particular area, you would be considered non-responsive, and your application would not be forwarded to peer review.

Then there comes the narrative budget justification. And this also has no page limit. You would add it as an attachment in its own PDF file to the budget form. Again, you need to make sure you have the appropriate margin, format, and font size requirements. This is a single document, with all the budget justifications for all years of the entire project in one file. You're going to attach that at Section K of the first budget period. So here's a picture of what that looks like in Section K. Budget justification, where it says, add attachment, on the first budget period. Notice also in the bottom right corner, it says, next period. You're going to click on that to move between periods for multiple year projects. So you might have a three-year project, or a four-year project, and you're going to use that button to move between years.

And this is where it's really important to provide a lot of detail to justify to the reviewers and to IES whether or not the costs you have in your budget are actually reasonable. Make sure that what you describe in that narrative justification aligns with the budget, so make sure the numbers in your narrative match the numbers on your form. Also we recommend that you organize your information within year, by the category of the budget areas, or within category by the year of the project, so that you have that information organized really well for us and also for the

reviewers to look through.

Now if you have a sub-award, you want to make sure not to duplicate any of the costs in the main award. You also need to include the time commitment and description of responsibilities for the principal investigator and other key personnel. Clearly indicate the cost shares in the narrative budget justification.

There's also a section of the budget form that asks about indirect cost rate. You need to use your institution's negotiated federal indirect cost rate. You should use the off-campus indirect cost rate where appropriate, following the terms of your institution's negotiated agreement. Do not use as direct costs things that are really indirect costs. If you're not sure about that, you need to check your negotiated agreement, and make sure that you are only including indirect costs in the indirect costs section. The indirect cost rate agreement must be in place at the time of the award for you to claim indirect costs.

Now when you have a sub-award, you must use the R&R sub-award budget form to extract and attach each subaward budget. That's a separate form listed under optional documents. Some people have multiple sub-awards, and so you're going to need to extract and attach budgets for each of the sub-awards that you're including. Separate budgets are required only for those sub-awardees and collaborating organizations that perform a substantial portion of the work. So if you're just having a consultant do a small amount of work, you would not be completing the sub-award budget form. As a consultant, they would be listed on your regular form and budget justification. Sub-awards are for people that accomplish substantial parts of the project. This is a good area where, if you have questions, you can talk to your program officer to see what might be the best option.

Emily Doolittle:

I'll just jump in and say, this particular form can be very problematic when submitting the application. I want to reiterate some things that Sarah said, which is, to create a sub-award budget, you need to extract the budget form from this form. That's the thing that's circled in the middle at the top. And then you need to attach it here, back on to this form where you extracted the blank subaward budget form. Don't try to attach a different kind of PDF here. This can really be problematic. If you don't understand how to do this and you know there will be sub-award budgets included, definitely reach out to a program officer at IES. We are now familiar with how to use this form, and we can help you and talk you through it. But this is one area where there can be a lot of problems if you're not following the instructions to a tee.

Sarah Brasiel:

As an example, if you had three sub-awards, you would click on the big button in the top, and then you would fill that out, save it, and then upload it as an attachment there at number one. And then you'd get ready to do your next one, you'd click again, extract it, save it, fill it out and upload again, and then follow this same process again. So each time, you have to extract it, fill it out, save it, and then upload it as an attachment.

Emily Doolittle:

Right.

Sarah Brasiel:

Next we have the biographical sketches of key personnel, and these need to be attached as a single PDF file for each key person. The page limit is five pages, which is to include a four-page abbreviated CV, and the fifth page listing current and pending grant support. You attach this where it says, "Attach Biographical Sketch." That's the field in the senior key personnel profile. And we encourage you to use something new that we have. It's the IES bio sketch that's available through SciENCv.

Emily Doolittle:

SciENCv is a brand new thing for us this year. Here's where the IES bio sketch will be. The IES bio sketch is now available on the SciENCv website. This is optional. It's new for us. With this one as well, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us individually. But it provides a nice format for submitting a bio sketch. It is modeled on the NIH bio sketch, so if anybody's familiar with that, it might help.

And actually, Sarah, a question came in about a bio sketch and key personnel. This person is asking what qualifies as being key personnel on a project. Looking on the budget forms there is usually a PI and co-PI. That's who I typically think of as key personnel. However, the form for attaching the bio sketches will allow, up to 40. I'm sorry, maybe I'm jumping ahead, and that might be our next slide. On this particular form that you can see now -- you can attach up to -- 40 different bio sketches. I would personally say, include as many as you want. I mean, assuming that you have the space.

Sarah Brasiel:

With key personnel, usually we're pretty particular, especially once you get funded, making sure these people have at least 10% of their time on the project. These are people who really are committed to the project. They're not just on for a small amount of time. It can increase your risk, once you do get the funding, if you make lots of changes in key personnel. Therefore, these are people who really have a commitment to the project, and they're vital to the project. Sometimes you will see a methodologist on there as key personnel. These are really the important people to make sure this project is going to be completed. Even though you can upload 40, I would restrict it to the most important people.

Emily Doolittle:

Yes, and I think 40 would be overkill. .

Sarah Brasiel:

There are other mandatory forms that you'll need to fill out. The first is the Project/Performance Site Location form. The second is the Assurances for Non-Construction Programs. And the third is the Grants.gov Lobbying form, which is formerly the ED-Combined Assurances form. I'll just show you what these look like on the next slide. Here's the Project/Performance Site Location form that you'll fill out. The Assurances Non-Construction form, and then the Lobbying form.

Our last topic will be the application format requirement. You've heard us mention on almost

every other slide, “Make sure it complies with the formatting requirement.” So now we’ll get into that in more detail. The page size needs to be 8.5” x 11”. One inch margins at the top, bottom and both sides. The height of the letters -- of the font -- must not be any smaller than 12 point. Your type density -- including characters and spaces -- must be no more than 15 characters per inch. You also have to make sure you have no more than six lines of type within a vertical inch. In general, if you use 12 point Times New Roman font in single spacing, you should be fine on all these type size and font size requirements. We have these requirements put in place for two reasons. First, we want to make sure that your text is legible for all the reviewers, but also to ensure that everyone has the same amount of space for their project narrative.

If you have graphs, diagrams and tables -- which you are allowed to have -- you should make sure that they reproduce well in black and white. Make sure, for instance, if you have some kind of pie chart or bar graph with multiple colors, either they’re designed in a way or shaded in a way that you can actually tell the differences once it is turned into black and white. Also, they need to conform to the same type size requirements as the rest of the materials with your application. Figures, charts and table legends may be smaller in size, but still need to be legible.

And so this is just a reminder about the page limit requirement. The project summary abstract is one page. Project narrative is really going to depend on which RFA you’re applying to, so make sure you read that carefully. Appendix A has a limit of three pages. Appendix B is 15 pages. Appendix C is ten pages. Appendix E has a limit of five pages. Each biographical sketch has a limit of four pages. Each list of current and pending funding should be only one separate page. I also want to point out that we don’t have a template for current and pending funding. Usually people create a table that has the dates that they’re going to be active on that particular grant, and the amount of time. So you might ask your sponsored programs officer, or other person helping you with the grant writing, and they may have an example of current and pending from someone else’s proposal that you could use. We don’t have our own template. It is restricted to one page, and comes after the biographical sketch, which is allowed to be four pages.

Emily Doolittle:

Sarah, there are a couple of questions that have come in. One question is whether there is a structured abstract format that’s required for that project summary abstract? Within the RFA we give an example of the kinds of information you’re encouraged to include in that one-page abstract. However, you can format it any way you want. That’s more of a recommendation versus a strong requirement.

Sarah Brasiel:

And as a reminder, if you’re applying to 305A or 324A, we really would like to see the topic and the goal that you’re applying for in that abstract.

Emily Doolittle:

And then somebody asked the question about the Disclosures on Lobbying form. You need to submit all of the mandatory forms, or else it won’t go through Grants.gov, including the Disclosure on Lobbying form.

Sarah Brasiel:

There are no page limits for Appendix B, the bibliography and references cited page, human subjects' narrative, and narrative budget justification.

We're going to switch back and Emily's going to close us out with some general program information.

Emily Doolittle:

Thanks, Sarah.

We are getting to the end of the webinar. I just want to review a few basics. First of all, anybody can apply. We're very open in terms of accepting applications from whomever. By whomever, I mean, whatever institutions, whatever key personnel. You're just going to have to demonstrate in your application that you have the ability and capacity to do scientific research. We fund all sorts of institutions to do this kind of work. Also, we do not require any kind of cost sharing or matching. However, as Sarah noted when she reviewed the budget form, there is a place to enter non-federal monies that would be used to support the work, and you should include that in your application if that indeed applies to your work. However, it's not a requirement.

This is always the most interesting question. How likely is it that I'll get funded? Well, there are a few different variables. It always depends on availability of funds, obviously. However, we first and foremost make our funding decisions based upon the independent peer review of applications. The quality of your application is really important. As a reminder -- or to reiterate something said earlier that might be new to you-- program officers at IES can provide a lot of upfront support to you as you're working on an application, because we don't have any involvement in the independent peer review process. It's kind of a nice model, and we definitely encourage you to reach out to program officers if you have questions or would like some help with your application.

Finally, the award also depends on the scope of the project. Obviously you want to have alignment between the budget you submit and the actual work that you're planning to do. This will vary by goal, in 305A or 324A, or by topic within other RFAs. There is a maximum dollar amount for total funding depending on these different things. Pay attention to the relevant requests for applications. If you have applied to IES before, you will notice that we have lowered our budget maximums from prior years, so please, please, please pay attention to those maximum dollar amounts, because it's like being late on Grants.gov, if you're five dollars over the budget, you get booted out and you won't be reviewed. Don't let that happen.

Final reminders. There is an application checklist in each of our RFAs, and you should use it. Make sure you have all the required information for each mandatory form in the Grants.gov electronic application package. Make sure you've attached the correct PDF files to the proper forms. Make sure you've named them and saved them appropriately so that they will work in Grants.gov. Make sure you've completed all those certifications and assurances that are required. Finally, make sure you use the Check Package for Errors button. It is very helpful. I can't promise you it will find every potential issue in your application, but it's a good start.

Again, remember our deadline is a very firm deadline. 4:30 and zero seconds p.m. Washington D.C. time on August 4, 2016. Please do use the Track my Application link in Grants.gov and pay attention to your email after an application comes in. Also, if you're not registered on Grants.gov or if you need to update your annual registration, do it now. You want to do it early, allow a lot of time for that. Please review all of this information within the RFA. It's in every RFA we have out there. We have a lot of detailed information on how to fill out forms and upload applications. And then finally, make sure you download the application package that is indeed designated for your competition and deadline. We recommend that you submit early if at all possible. I don't think it's a good idea to wait until August 4 to start this process. Things can go wrong, and you want to make sure you have plenty of time so that you don't get caught with a, you know, getting something in late, because then that's just it for that year. As a reminder, there is that Track my Application link on Grants.gov. Last but not least -- and this is important -- do reach out to program officers at IES. You can email me, you can email Sarah, or look in the RFA that you're applying to, and you'll see contact information for the relevant program officer there as well. There are the websites that you'll need to become familiar with: the funding page on the IES website and the Grants.gov page. So I'm just going to check with Sarah and see if we have any questions coming in?

Sarah Brasiel:

Yes, we've got a great question. What if it's your first time as a principal investigator? I just can't say enough to work closely with the program officer. We are very helpful and willing to look at some of your ideas in advance and give you feedback. Remember that often these awards are made to research teams, not just an individual person. There's a wealth of experience you can bring in with your research team that shows that people have prior wisdom and experience with research, with large projects, that can strengthen the application if it's your first time.

Emily Doolittle:

We're just going to double check if there are any lingering questions out there. I know we're a little early, and so there's time to submit a question if you have one.

Sarah Brasiel:

Someone is asking about whether there is a recommended file name structure, but I'm not familiar with any kind of requirements for that?

Emily Doolittle:

Other than following the Grants.gov naming guidance for PDF files, which is a big deal, other than that, no there is not a recommended file name structure. Once we get the application from Grants.gov the whole thing becomes one big PDF, so we don't see those distinctions in file names for each component of the application. I don't think that matters.

Sarah Brasiel:

I guess I just can't reiterate enough, if you're working with those in your sponsored projects office, the more you can be specific for them, it will just make their life so much easier.

Emily Doolittle:

Yes.

Emily Doolittle:

Right. And, I mean, just -- and one thing I've been hearing more about is for certain institutions that process a lot of these applications, just make sure that yours is not at the bottom of the pile, because that might end up being late as well. Be kind to your folks at your institution, and get them the information early as well -- and the materials -- so that they can get this thing in on time.

Sarah Brasiel:

We've had several questions throughout this presentation about whether it matters what type of organization you are affiliated with. I always recommend that people go to our funding page to see what we have funded before. You'll see a lot of diverse groups. It's not just universities. There are for-profits, not-for-profits, etc. And so it's really the strength of the proposal that you put together. Like I said, the research team, the key people, even if they are consultants, the background that they may have is more important than what the organization or institution is.

Emily Doolittle:

Yes, and that's exactly right, Sarah. I mean, the only thing I would add to that is that you are asked to specifically explain your resources to do this work in your project narrative. It is wide open. Any type of organization can apply, but you need to demonstrate in your application that you actually have the capacity to do the work. Use the Resources section of the project narrative to explain that. The Appendix D letters of agreement from partners are also important to that point. If you're concerned about your particular capacity or the perception of your institution or organization applying, definitely reach out to us, and we can talk to you about it. But Sarah's advice is really good. We have abstracts on our website that describe all the work we have funded since 2002 and you'll see -- there's a lot of variety. Don't think you're not eligible, if you're not a more traditional institution.

Sarah Brasiel:

Another question is whether you are allowed to apply if you are an international research organization. Yes, you are eligible to apply, but you're not allowed to charge indirect costs. If you are an international organization applying, you want to let the program officer know. When you're filling out the application, I think it only gives you the option of selecting country U.S. Once your program officer knows, they can help you make sure you've filled out the application appropriately.

Emily Doolittle:

Yes, that's right. Because some of those forms in the Grants.gov SF 424 form family don't quite work for institutions outside of the U.S. We do have workarounds, so definitely let us know. But the big deal is that international institutions are not allowed to charge indirect costs, so keep that in mind.

Sarah Brasiel:

Also the research you're doing, you'll need to justify that it is applicable to similar education

needs and issues in the U.S.

We also had a question about, if you're a sole proprietor or an individual, or an LLC.

Emily Doolittle:

, I don't know if I know enough about that.

Sarah Brasiel:

Yes, I would work with your program officer. I think it's really more along the lines of whether or not you would be competitive. And you might actually be responsive, but what it comes down to is, can you be competitive? Have you handled this type of large project before? And as I mentioned, you'll need to talk about your resources. I really think it would be a case where you really have to talk to your program officer, explaining to them, you know, as a sounding board, if it's coming across strong.

Emily Doolittle:

Absolutely. As you said earlier, Sarah, it's about a team.

Sarah Brasiel:

Right.

Emily Doolittle:

We have grants that have multiple sub-awards or lots of partners involved. It depends what your particular structure might look like in terms of that.

One more question? Okay.

Sarah Brasiel:

Does a consultant or an advisor need to provide a letter?

Emily Doolittle:

Oh, great question, no. I don't think that those are actually that valuable. Consultants or advisors, you know, if you've included a description about them in the application that seems to be sufficient. And that being said, Appendix D does not have a page limit, so I think it can't hurt to include a letter from a consultant. But I do want to reiterate something Sarah said earlier, which is, those letters are really important to the reviewers, because they signal to the reviewers two things. For one thing they document that you have the ability to work with partners. All of our research is based in schools, or uses data from schools, so the letters signal to the reviewers that, yes, you know how to work with these school organizations. The letters also then give a degree of confidence that the work you want to do can actually happen. It's really about proving through those letters that your partners agree to work with you. It's usually the school partner piece that's most critical. But again, there's no page limit. And I do see people include letters from consultants. I don't have a good feeling for how valuable those are to our reviewers, so I can't really say.

Sarah Brasiel:

Last chance if you have questions, please send it in.

Emily Doolittle:

I think we're good. Just a reminder, please contact Sarah, me, or the program officer who's associated with the competition you're applying to; we're here to help. Thank you so much for participating today, everybody.

[end of transcript]