
**IES Funding Opportunities Webinar:
Research Training Program in Special Education: Early Career Development and
Mentoring
U.S. Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences**

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Slide 1

Hi, this is Amy Sussman. I am a Program Officer at the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER). Also running this webinar is Amanda Hoffman, who is another Program Officer at NCSER, and she will be responding to your questions, if you send questions through the Web.

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Here is the general agenda: First, we're going to give you a brief introduction to IES and NCSER in particular.

Then, we're going to move on to the details of the Early Career Program. We're going to go over in general terms its purpose, and then get into more specifics, such as the eligibility requirements, the different components, and the career development and research plans.

We'll also give you a brief overview of the topic and goal structure of the research component, which is based on our other grant program (for those unfamiliar with IES, this will make more sense later as we get into this).

Finally, we're going to end with the application submission and review process, so you'll have an idea of what to do when you're writing and submitting an application, and what the review process will be like.

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Here is the organizational structure of the Institute (IES). At the bottom, you will see that there are four different Centers in IES.

There's the National Center for Education Statistics, which is probably the one with which most people are familiar. They are involved in data collection and reporting. You might be familiar with their reports (such as the NAEP or NCATE) or their large databases (such as the NLTS-2 or ECLS-B).

There is the National Center for Education Evaluation. They are involved with large-scale evaluations. Usually, these are randomized control trials or regression discontinuity design studies. They evaluate programs or interventions that are chosen by Congress, the administration, or by IES. The research is carried out by contractors and monitored by NCEE staff. This Center is also in charge of the What Works Clearinghouse, or WWC.

There is the National Center for Education Research, NCER, and the National Center for Special Education Research, NCSER – these are the two grant-making Centers. This is where the program officers for the Education and Special Education Research grants are located and we're here to work with applicants and grantees in helping applicants apply and monitoring existing grantees.

You'll also notice that, up to the top left-hand side, there's the Standards and Review Office. This Office is responsible for the peer review process. And as you can see from this chart, it's completely separated from the Centers, so we have a strict separation of the peer review and the grant-making Centers. This allows the program officers to work closely with the applicants since the program officers aren't the ones involved in the review process.

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The overall mission of NCSER -- as one of the two granting centers -- is to sponsor a rigorous and comprehensive program of special education research designed to expand the knowledge and understanding of infants, toddlers, and students, with or at risk for disabilities from birth through high school. That's the overall mission.

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Next on the agenda is the Early Career Program.

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The Request for Application, or RFA, is called the Research Training Program in Special Education: Early Career Development and Mentoring, and this slide includes the "CFDA" number so when you go to apply for it, you can double-check – use not just the name of the competition but also the specific CFDA number to make sure you have the right application package.

Now, this is a new competition for fiscal year 2013, so as a caveat to this entire presentation, we don't have any prior experience with it. We can't say what has worked in the past and what we have seen happen. Therefore, it might be difficult to answer some of your questions.

I also want to point out here that the RFA is the final word on what is required and what is expected in the application, and the reviewers who will review your application will use the RFA to guide the review.

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The overall purpose of the Early Career Program is to develop and maintain a strong cadre of researchers interested in addressing the needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families and teachers. It aims to provide support for an integrated research and career development plan, which I'll talk about shortly, for investigators in the early stage of their academic careers.

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More specifically, this program aims to support the further development of methodological content and grant-writing expertise needed for early career investigators to develop a strong line of research.

It's to ensure that the research and training be guided closely by scientists experienced in the study of children with or at risk for disabilities--this is the mentorship component that we'll talk about soon.

And it will provide new investigators with “protected time”, if needed, to concentrate on developing research skills on a program of research. Protected time is also sometimes called “buying out” of classes, or using funds to support your salary so that you can concentrate on your research instead of having a full teaching load. You are not required to use the funds for this. It's only if you need to do this -- if you have a large teaching load.

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The awards themselves have a maximum of up to four years and up to \$400,000 total – the total is direct plus indirect costs. I need to stress here that you must adhere to these maximums in the application or your application will not be reviewed. So, just make sure you do not go even a dollar over that amount. Please note that for training awards, there is an indirect cost rate cap of 8%.

The award will be given as a cooperative agreement, which involves a partnership between the PI, which is you, and IES. I'll briefly summarize difference between our regular grants and cooperative agreements.

For a regular grant, the specific activities and goals are based on the proposal and they're set into a performance agreement which is then used as a benchmark on an annual basis to monitor progress. In this case, IES has some oversight and monitoring responsibilities. We check to make sure things are going smoothly, we provide technical assistance and advice when there are problems, but the grant is primarily carried out by the grantee -- by the PI and their institution.

And a cooperative agreement is a partnership that is also based on the activities and goals that were proposed in the application, but there's more involvement by the IES staff. IES staff will have more frequent contact with the PIs and have more input into the progression of the project activities.

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We're now going to review the eligibility requirements for Principal Investigators.

First, the focus of your proposed research must be on infants, toddlers, children, or youth with or at risk for disabilities.

Next, you must have an actual need for additional research training. You need to be able to justify why you still need training after you finish your degree or finish your post-doc work, in what aspects of research you still need training – in terms of methodology or content.

You must have completed your doctoral degree or your post-doctoral training within three years of the application due date. The date you completed your degree is the date that your institution officially awards you your Ph.D. or the date your post-doc position officially ends. In this case, it must be no earlier than September 20, 2009, because the deadline for this competition is September 20, 2012.

You must be in a tenure-track position at an institute of higher education. You may wind up having questions about this (or other eligibility requirements) but I will cover some common questions a little later.

Finally, you need to be a new PI. You cannot have had a previous IES award as a PI or co-PI. You can be on another award as a post-doc or an investigator, you just can't have acted as the principle investigator or co-PI.

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On to the basic requirements for the proposal -- these are the four things that need to be explicitly addressed in the proposal:

- The significance
- The research and career development plans
- Personnel
- And resources.

I'll cover each of these.

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In terms of significance, you will need to justify and describe the following:

First, what is your need for further career development? This is especially important if you've already received post-doctoral training. You'll need to explain why additional training is needed – or, what you need to add to the training you've already received. For example, it can be analytical skills you need to acquire or a particular content area within special education.

You'll need to justify and describe your planned program of research. This means, describe your progression from your prior research to your currently proposed research, and through the development of your overall research program over the next five years.

You will have to describe the significance of the proposed research project. This includes the empirical and theoretical rationale for the research, and the practical importance of the research questions and the research itself.

You'll also have to address the significance of the career development plan, including your mentor's role and additional training opportunities. For example, what kind of additional training opportunities will you pursue, and how does the mentoring and training support the research questions?

Finally, how will your research and career development activities enhance your knowledge and skill?

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Your research and career development plans are designed to enhance your knowledge and skills.

The plans must be **integrated**, which means that your career development plans must support the research plan.

As an example, you might be interested in conducting a meta-analysis on a critical topic in special education, such as literacy interventions for children with visual impairment. In this case, you might know the literature very well, but only have a cursory acquaintance with the meta analytical techniques involved. So, you might decide to spend the first year of your project learning the methodology through your mentor and through additional training opportunities, such as workshops, while gathering potential articles for review. Then you will apply this meta-analysis methodology in years two and three, and then possibly end with publications and grant proposal writing in year four. That's just an example of how the career development plan can be integrated with the research plan.

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So, let's focus on the research plan specifically.

First, you have the research questions and aims. So, what are the specific research questions and your specific hypotheses?

Then, there's the methodology, and this has four parts to it:

- The sample. What is your population of interest? This would include which disability category; what identifies this disability or disabilities for which children are at risk; how is this disability defined; how will inclusion in the study be determined? For this, you will also need a power analysis to make sure you obtain the necessary sample size. (And as a side note, when we say "children at risk for disabilities," we mean that they're at risk for developing disabilities based on evidence of an association between a risk factor and the development of the disability, and selection into the study must be made on an individual basis. So, what this is **not**: It is not looking at general sample characteristics

such as socioeconomic status (SES). You can't just say they're at risk because they're from low SES families. It has to be a much more specific association between the risk and the particular disability.)

- Then, there's the research design. This must be framed within the IES topic and goal structure, which we will go over in some detail later so you'll understand this better. But here, we will describe the actual research process. For example, you'll explain the iterative process of developing an intervention or you'll explain how you'll be using single-case design or an experimental design to answer your research questions.
- Then, the measures or data sources. You'll be naming and describing the measures that you'll use, including their reliability and validity. And if you're doing secondary data analysis, you'll explain the variables that you intend to use from the extant dataset.
- Then, the data analysis. You need to discuss your planned analysis procedure, such as HLM or structural equation modeling, or visual analysis in single-case design. And you need to be explicit about how the analyses address each research question and tie them each directly to the research questions.

Although the major elements need to be included, we do expect that your research plan will be less detailed than a regular special education research grant. There is not as much space because you also have to include a career development plan, plus there's the expectation that you'll further develop your research plan under the guidance of your mentor.

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Here are questions to consider when determining your research plan:

What education problem do you want to solve? What questions do you want to answer?

Next, when you're formulating your research plan, think about the underlying issue of this research question or problem and how it fits with one of the IES grant topics.

Think about what content you will address, and what sample you will study.

Finally, does your research method fit the requirements of one of the IES goals? This is something that we will cover on the next two slides.

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Here is the list of research topics covered by NCSE. I won't go over every single one, but it is a list of the special education research topics.

So, when you think about formulating your research plan, think about which topic it would normally fit under. And to do this, it would be a good idea to take a look not only at the RFA for this Early Career Program, but also the RFA for the Special Education Research Grants, which is 84.324A.

Note that the topics do not all cover the same populations. For example, many topics require children to be in at least kindergarten, but the Early Intervention program allows birth through age 5. Some topics – such as ‘autism spectrum disorders’ and ‘families’ – require children in the study to have an identified disability, not “at risk” for disability. You do need to check the details of the topic requirements with the RFA.

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The other thing to consider is the research goal. There are 5 research goals--exploration, development and innovation, efficacy and replication, effectiveness, and measurement. And at the bottom of the slide, we have a link to the Special Education Research Grants website so you can see more information about this.

Now, you'll notice that a few of them have an asterisk. Those are the ones that you're most likely going to focus on for an Early Career Program grant, and the reason is because of limited funding. The other ones, the efficacy and replication and effectiveness, tend to be larger scale

and involve more funding. So, you're more likely to focus on the three that have an asterisk. And I will go over those in a little more detail next.

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For the exploration goal, you'll be exploring the association between education outcomes and malleable factors. A malleable factor is something that can be changed by the education system. It could be a characteristic or behavior of a student or teacher, or school characteristic, or an education condition or practice, program, or policy.

And what you'll do in an exploration goal is link these malleable factors to better student learning and achievement. So, you'll identify the factor and conditions, and look for associations with student outcomes. You might also identify the conditions that will mediate or moderate the relation between the malleable factor and the student outcomes.

Possible methodological approaches to the exploration goal include analyzing secondary data, collecting and analyzing primary data, or completing a meta-analysis. The ultimate purpose of an exploration goal is to use the information obtained to develop or modify an intervention, to identify a promising intervention for a more rigorous evaluation, or to create a conceptual framework for an assessment. In other words, a successful exploration project should set you up for studying another goal.

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The Development and Innovation goal: This goal is for developing an innovative intervention, such as a curriculum, instructional approach, education practice, program, or policy, or to improve an existing education intervention.

The development or refinement of an existing intervention must be an iterative process. So, you need to obtain feedback through scientific methods such as surveys, focus groups, etc., and this must feed back into the next iteration which will then be tested. That's what we mean by an iterative process.

The project must demonstrate the intervention's feasibility in an authentic education delivery setting, and you must collect pilot data on student outcomes to show the promise of the intervention in improving student outcomes.

You might want to take a look at the RFA for the Special Education Research Grants to read more details about what constitutes a stronger versus weaker design for the pilot study, what we have called a “continuum of rigor.” For example, just simply having a pre-post test would be considered a weak design.

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The Measurement goal: Under this goal, you would develop a new assessment or refine an existing assessment, and a validate these assessments; or, you may validate existing assessments for specific purposes, such as validating a measure for a different population than it's already been validated for, or in a different context, or for a different purpose or use. Some examples of assessments include screening, progress monitoring, credentialing, accountability systems, formative assessments and summative assessments.

Now, although there are no slides for these because we don't expect them to be accomplished through an Early Career Program grant, the other goals include: (1) efficacy and replication and (2) effectiveness.

The Efficacy and Replication goal evaluates whether or not a fully developed intervention is efficacious under limited or ideal conditions. It may also gather follow-up data examining the

longer-term effects of an intervention or replicate an efficacious intervention varying the original conditions.

The Effectiveness goal is meant to evaluate whether a fully developed intervention that has evidence of efficacy is effective when implemented under routine practice (for example, how the school would normally operate) and through an independent evaluation.

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Now I'll move on to the career development plan.

There are two components of the career development plan: there's the mentoring plan and the additional training plan. Both of these components must be integrated with and support the research plan.

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For the mentoring plan, you need to choose one primary mentor; that is required. You may also choose co-mentors; these are allowed but not required.

A co-mentor is recommended when one primary mentor does not have all the relevant expertise for research and training needed. For example, you might have one mentor that has specialty in a particular content area such as literacy or a disability category such as autism. And then you might need another mentor in the methodology you want to use, such as single-case design or randomized control trials.

A co-mentor is required when your primary mentor is at a different institution from you. You'll need somebody who is actually at your institution to help mentor you in terms of the institution's own policies.

Eligibility requirements for being a mentor:

- First of all, mentors need to have the relevant expertise. They must have expertise in special education research -- children with or at risk for disabilities -- and this expertise must be relevant to the PI's own proposed research.
- Mentors must have a tenured position at an institute of higher education at the rank of associate professor or professor.
- They cannot be the PI's graduate school or dissertation advisor, or the post-doctoral supervisor. In other words, it needs to be a new mentorship relationship, not a continuation of an existing one.

You must include a detailed description of the mentoring process. This includes activities such as meetings. You have to discuss the level of involvement your mentor will have in the research, and additional guidance they will provide to you, such as how to develop a publication plan. And if there are co-mentors, you must include a plan for coordinating the mentorship.

Finally, there's the expectation that the mentor will work with you on the career development plan. We expect this collaboration begin before the application is submitted. So, when you submit a career development plan, we assume that this has already been discussed and you've gone over it already with your mentor.

And although it's not explicitly stated in the RFA, we do strongly encourage you to collaborate with your mentor in developing the research plan as well.

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The other component of a career development plan is additional training. This includes educational opportunities.

For example, you might attend an IES summer institute. We have summer institutes on randomized control trials and single-case design.

You might include a grant-writing workshop or advanced statistical coursework to learn some new analyses, such as structural equation modeling.

And you need to include a description of how the training activities will help you reach your concrete training goals and how they will support the proposed research.

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The next component that's required for the application is Personnel. The focus is mainly on you as the PI and your mentor, or mentors. You may also have other key personnel, such as consultants. As an early career researcher, you might want to spend a little bit more time on your application documenting your skills and your past experience than a more experienced researcher might do.

In this plan, you must include how the research expertise of each of you reflects the foci of IES in terms of content and methodology. Think of the topics and goals we covered earlier. How does your expertise and your mentor's expertise reflect what IES is looking for?

You must make the time commitments of your mentor or mentors clear. This includes a percent of effort in calendar years.

There's also room in the application outside the main narrative to expand on the personnel. There's space to include a brief, four-page CV (which is also called biosketch), and there's a whole section for this in the application package called "Research and Related Senior Key Personnel Profile." Again, this is in the application package, but it's not part of the narrative or appendix.

There's also Appendix A, which requires letters of agreement from each mentor. These letters should include the mentor's understanding of his or her role as mentor and the time requirements for it. In addition, for each mentor, Appendix A must include a summary table of all their ongoing and recently completed special education research projects. This includes the role of the mentor on each project (for example, were they the PI or a consultant), a brief description of the project, how the project fits within the Institute's research programs and goals, the funding source, and the duration of the project. The purpose of this table is to help reviewers understand both how qualified the mentor is to provide guidance to you, as well as their availability or time commitment for being your mentor.

There will be more information about the proposal's appendices a little bit later.

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The final component of the narrative is Resources. You must demonstrate that your institution has the capacity to support the work you are proposing.

You should not use the university boilerplate language when writing this section. "Boilerplate" means it's generic text that can be used for any research project. Instead, make sure that the resource section specifically addresses the needs of this particular project, including the training and the research component.

You should describe the institutional training support. Do they offer workshops? Are there research groups on campus that you can join?

And include startup packages. If, as a new faculty member, the institution gives you extra money or reduces your course load, you must include this as a resource in how the institution is supporting you.

There's more space for discussing resources outside the narrative, where you can demonstrate that all the organizations involved understand and agree to their roles. This includes a letter of agreement from your institution, stating that they are aware that you're applying and that they support your role as a PI in such a project.

If you have not yet started your tenure-track position, the letter from the university that is hiring you must indicate that there has been an offer and you've accepted the offer with an agreed-upon start date that is set to begin before the award begins.

This part of the application can also include letters from schools or districts involved in the research. If they are already on board -- they've already been recruited before you submit a proposal -- you include it in the appendix.

If you have not recruited schools yet, you can do so at a later point in time. Letters of commitment from the schools would eventually be needed before an award is made.

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An additional requirement for the Early Career Program is the Evaluation Plan.

For this, you will need a timeline of activities to support the research and training goals. You will include outcomes for both the research and career development plans. An example is the completion of a certain number of workshops to obtain the necessary data analysis skills. Or you might include goals for how many manuscripts are submitted for publication or the submission of grant proposals.

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Now, we're going to go over some FAQs, some Q&A.

These are based on actual questions I have already received about this grant program.

The first one: I received my Ph.D. three years ago in May 2009. Am I eligible to apply?

The answer is no because you must have received your degree or finished your post-doctoral training within three years of the application due date on September 20, 2012.

The second question: I received my Ph.D. and am working full-time as a research scientist at a university. It is a non-tenure-track position but is a stable appointment in a research center.

Am I eligible to apply?

The answer here is no, you must be in a tenure-track position to be eligible to apply.

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Next,

Although I recently received my Ph.D., I already have a faculty position, non-tenured and at the level of associate professor. Because I just finished my Ph.D., I am a junior researcher. Am I eligible to apply?

In this case, yes. As long as your position is tenure track – in other words, you will be eligible for tenure at some point – then you are eligible to apply to this program since you just received your Ph.D. within three years.

I am an assistant professor at a university and I received my Ph.D. less than three years ago; however, my department does not offer tenure and therefore I am not technically in a tenure-track position. Am I eligible to apply to the early career competition?

In this case, no, you are not eligible to apply because, as stated in the RFA -- which is what the reviewers will be using and is the final word on all requirements -- you must be in a tenure-track position to be eligible.

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Now we have some questions about who can be your mentor:

Can my mentor be someone from my dissertation committee who was not directly my advisor?

The answer is yes, as long as you did not have that advisor/advisee relationship with the researcher, he or she may serve as your mentor or co-mentor.

Finally, my primary mentor will be at a different institution. Can my co-mentor be on a different campus of the same university system? Does this count as the same institution?

The answer is yes, as long as the different campuses within the system follow the same administrative requirements, such as requirements for promotion and tenure. The reason is because we want your mentor who is at your home institution to be able to guide you in that entire process, which they would only know if they had the same rules and the same regulations within the system.

Before I move on to the next part of the talk, I'm just going to pause for a moment and see if any questions come in -- because we will be switching gears for the next part of the webinar to discuss application submission and review process.

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The next part of this webinar is the application submission and review process. This part of the talk overlaps substantially with other IES webinars. Some of you might have already participated in other webinars, so a lot of this will be redundant, though there are some aspects of it that are specific to the early career program itself.

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Writing the proposal.

The heart of the proposal -- the main part -- is your narrative. It covers the substance of what you're proposing and it is what the peer review panel will focus on. This section is limited to 25 pages.

It is comprised of four parts: significance of the research and career development, the research and career development plans, personnel, and resources.

We're not going to go over them any more now because we've already discussed them all earlier in the webinar. I just want to point out that the first two -- the significance and the research and the career development plans-- will likely take up the most space within your proposal. That's probably what you'll wind up concentrating on when writing the proposal.

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The Appendices: I've alluded to them earlier but we'll go over them a little bit more now.

Appendix A , which is limited to 10 pages, may include figures, charts, and tables that supplement what you're proposing. For example, you can include examples of measures that will be used in your research. This is also where you will include the letter of agreement from each mentor and from the institution, as well as the summary table of the special education research projects of each mentor that I described earlier.

Appendix B, which is limited to 10 pages, may include examples of curriculum materials, assessment items (for measurement goal projects), or other materials used in the intervention or the assessment that you are proposing to develop or evaluate.

Appendix C, which has no page limit, will include letters of agreement from data providers. These are schools or districts that have agreed to participate if you're doing primary data collection. They might be data providers in terms of secondary data analysis on datasets. Or, they could be other partners, such as consultants. And here, in these letters, they must clearly state their responsibility. They have to know what they're responsible for -- what their role is -- in your research project. These letters from school districts are not required, but they are encouraged, as reviewers do look for evidence of having access to the right participant population.

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Your proposal will also include a budget and budget narrative. Here, you'll provide a clear budget and budget narrative for the overall project. You will go to the IES Grants.gov Application Submission Guide, which I'll also go over a little bit more soon, and this guide will describe the budget categories. Make sure you put your budget request into the right categories based on this Application Submission Guide.

Please note that you probably have a grants office at your university to help you with your budget (at your department or the university level). You should contact your grants office in advance to let them know that a proposal will be coming to them and find out if they have their own internal, institution deadlines.

You must ensure that all the components of your proposal agree with each other. Ensure there's agreement between what you say you're going to do in the research narrative and the budget, and how the budget narrative explains that budget.

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Here we have more specific information about the budget for the Early Career Program. You can budget your salary up to 50 percent of what your academic year salary is. It can be used for protected time -- or buying out of classes -- so you can concentrate on your research. It's not required, especially if you have a startup package that already includes this, but that's what it can be used for.

You can provide honoraria for mentors for up to \$3,000 total per year. If you have more than one mentor, this \$3,000-per-year limit needs to be divided up among the multiple mentors.

The budget is expected to cover costs directly associated with the research project and career development plan. Such costs include things like salary, staff, supplies and equipment, participant compensation, local travel for data collection, registration for workshops and institutes, and travel....

Travel may be required to meet with your primary mentor if he or she is at a different institution.

Travel may also be needed to attend workshops at other institutions or to attend professional conferences, including the IES PI meeting in Washington, D.C., which is actually required of all IES PIs.

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Some important dates and deadlines: The application deadline is September 20, 2012.

The Letter of Intent, which I will describe briefly in a moment, is due July 19, 2012.

The application is actually available on grants.gov on the same day, July 19, 2012.

Finally, when you're writing and planning for your project, the start dates for the award can be anywhere between July 1, 2013, and September 1, 2013.

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Here are the materials that you will use -- and read carefully -- when writing and submitting your application.

First, there are the Requests for Applications, which are currently available on our website, and I've given the website address here. You will primarily be focusing on the Request for Applications for the Early Career Program (CFDA number 84.324B), but as I mentioned earlier, you should also be somewhat familiar with the expectations and the topics and the goals of the Special Education Research Grants program, which is CFDA number 84.324A.

You will also need the Grants.gov Application Submission Guide, which will be available on July 19, as well as the application package itself, which will also be available on grants.gov on July 19.

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For more information, you should begin by looking at our website, the IES website.

You can sign up for IES Newsflashes to get updated information. I'm going to go over some of this information in a little more detail shortly.

You will look at the IES funding webpage to find out about funding opportunities and review the current Requests for Applications.

You can look at the abstracts of projects that have been funded already under a particular topic or program. That will give you a very good sense of the kinds of projects that we fund.

And contact the relevant program officer. For the Early Career Program, that would primarily be me, Amy Sussman, because I am the Program Officer for this program. However, if I have any question about whether it might fit under a particular topic, I might ask you to talk with the program officer who is in charge of that particular topic.

Now I'll talk about how to get some of this information listed here...

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This is a screenshot showing what is under the “News and Events” tab on our website. You can go here to sign up for the IES Newsflash. The Newsflashes will tell you about the releases of RFAs, the grants that have been awarded, and training opportunities that arise. So it's very useful if you want to be a PI for IES to sign up for these Newsflashes.

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Under the “Funding Opportunities” tab, you'll get information about the RFAs, you can sign up for webinars, and you can search the abstracts of existing grants.

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Once you're on the Funding Opportunities page, you can access the RFAs and sign up for webinars. There will also be a link to the website where you'll submit your letter of intent, and there'll be a link to the website for the actual application package.

There will also be links to the descriptions of each research grant program or competition.

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Under the “For Researchers” tab, there will be a section called "Resources for Researchers." You can visit links for researchers on the IES website. You can review past webinars, you can participate in future webinars, and you can watch methodology videos.

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This is what the "Resources for Researchers" page looks like.

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Submitting a Letter of Intent – or LOI

LOIs are submitted electronically with the instructions that are provided at iesreview.ed.gov, and we encourage all researchers to submit a Letter of Intent.

The deadline is July 19, 2012, although after that deadline, you can email your LOI directly to the program officer. (I'll explain why in a moment.)

So, what is the purpose of submitting a Letter of Intent?

First, we'll communicate back to you about the information that you provide, and it may help you in cases where you might have missed some things such as forgetting a key component. For example, you may have forgotten to mention what your child measures are or you might have submitted it to the wrong competition, and we'll point you in the right direction for the correct competition or the correct program.

It also helps us plan for our panels, not only in terms of the number of reviewers needed, but also substantive expertise.

-
- For example, if your proposal includes the need for methodological expertise in single-case design, or if your population is a low-incidence population such as students with visual impairment, IES will know in advance to get panelists with that expertise on board.

Submitting a Letter of Intent is strongly suggested but is not required. We do strongly suggest it for the reasons we mentioned above. It's important to try to get it through the official system and make the deadline--but if for some reason you miss the deadline, you should still send it to the program officer to get feedback, and it could still be useful on both your end and our end.

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Grant Submission:

Make sure your institution is registered on grants.gov. Most major research universities already are, but you might be at a smaller school that has not yet registered. Your institution needs to have something called a DUNS number in order to register, and that could take months if they do not already have it. So, if you are not at an institution that regularly handles federal grants, it would be best if you checked with them about this right away.

Complete your online forms and upload your PDF. Your authorized representative at your institution will complete this process.

This next one is very important: Submit the proposal by 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time on the deadline. Earlier is safer. I can't stress this enough. And the reason why we have 4:30:00 is that if you submit just one second after 4:30, your proposal will not be accepted.

Please note that every part of the application must be submitted by the deadline. You will not be able to update your proposal after the deadline.

If you have problems uploading, contact the help line--I have the number here--and get a case number so, if you have to refer to it later, you'll have that number.

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After you submit you will receive three emails:

First, grants.gov will say they received your email and assign you a number that starts with "Grant." Then, grants.gov will say your application has been validated or rejected due to errors. If the latter, you'll have to resubmit until it's validated.

And finally, the third one is from the Department of Education itself, and you'll be assigned a grant number that starts with "R324B," which is the competition number.

Because you need to wait for notification that application was received, not just by grants.gov, but also by the Department of Education, this is another reason to submit your application at least a few days in advance. Don't just wait until the last minute-- you probably shouldn't even wait until the last day, because if any problem occurs along the way, you'll want to find out by waiting for these notifications.

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The application review process is run by the Standards and the Review Office, as I mentioned early in this talk. They do compliance screening to make sure all the format requirements are correct -- for example, that you haven't gone over the page number limit.

They look to see whether you're responsive to the requirements of the program. For example, did you submit it to the right competition?

The proposal is then assigned to a review panel with two to three reviewers with substantive and methodological expertise. If scored high enough, the application is reviewed by the full panel. Many panelists will be generalists to your topic, but there should be an expert in every procedure that you use.

You'll receive an overall score, plus scores on the four different sections: significance, research and career development plans, personnel, and resources. And so far for the other grant competitions, all applications with an overall score of outstanding or excellent have been funded.

As a caveat for this particular program, we are, for now, assuming that it will be reviewed in a similar way as other grant applications. But because this is a brand-new competition, we are not sure if there will be any changes.

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Here is the link to the website, for the Standards and Review Office, where you can find out more information about the review process.

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The Notification Process:

All applicants will receive an email notification of the status of the application. This generally occurs a few months after the panel, so don't panic if you don't hear right after the panel.

All applicants will receive copies of the reviewer comments via email.

If you're not granted an award, talk to your program officer about next steps. For example, maybe you were close but you didn't get it. Then you might come talk to your program officer which, in this case, would be me, and ask, "Should I consider revising it in the form of a regular research grant? Could that be the right next step?" You definitely want to make contact after you receive your feedback, particularly if the reviews look promising.

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If you have any more questions, please send them via the web now.