Institute of Education Sciences

Funding Opportunities Webinar Series

Overview of Methods Training for Education Researchers and Training in Education Research Use and Practice

Webinar Transcript

June 11, 2013

U.S. Department of Education

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Overview of Methods Training for Education Researchers and Training in Education Research Use and Practice

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Meredith Larson, Ph.D.
Program Officer
National Center for Education Research

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The Methods Training for Education Researchers and Training in Education Research Use and Practice funding opportunities were established to help current education researchers maintain and upgrade their methodological skills and provide education practitioners and policymakers working on a specific program or policy with evidence from rigorous education research. During this webinar, Institute of Education Sciences (IES) staff will provide an overview of the training programs and the requirements for training projects aimed at researchers and the requirements for training projects aimed at policymakers and practitioners. IES staff will also discuss training plan development and the grant review criteria.

Hello everyone. I have Dr. Wai-Ying Chow here with me today, and she is going to be helping me address some of your questions. Every now and again, I will be pausing to see if there is anything that I need to address to the group. Thank you all for joining me this afternoon. I am very excited to be here and tell you about two of the topic areas that I oversee.

I am a Program Officer at the National Center for Education Research (NCER), and I oversee the adult education research program, the postdoctoral training program, and then the two programs that I will be talking to you about today.

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In this next hour and a half, we are going to go through a brief overview of IES and its mission and then talk about how training fits into that mission. Then we will focus specifically on the two training programs: Methods Training for Education Researchers and Training in Education Research Use and Practice. Then, I will talk a little bit about how to submit an application and what will happen after the submission.

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Some of you may have already submitted to IES or have worked with us in the past, but just to give a little bit of context, IES has the legislative mission to describe the condition of education, to identify practices that improve outcomes of students, to evaluate federal and other education programs, to provide rigorous relevant evidence upon which to ground education practice and policy, and to share this information broadly.

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Our mission is to identify what works and what doesn't, why and for whom, and improve education outcomes for all students, particularly those at risk of failure.

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You might be asking yourself, "How does training fit into this mission? It sounds like a lot of ‘do research, disseminate the research, and evaluate programs.’ Why would IES care about training?" Well, we see training as being an important part of this mission. What good is research if the people that are supposed to be conducting it don't have up-to-date, highly sophisticated tools? What good is good research if the people that need to use it don't know how to use it or aren't involved in designing the questions and participating in the research? We see this training as making sure that the research is of high quality and making sure that that research is getting to the people who need to use it and who want to use it.

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This leads us to two of the three research trainings that we are competing this year. The request for applications (RFA) that I will be talking about is called the Research Training Programs in the Education Sciences or 305B, as we refer to it. We are competing three programs this year: Predoctoral Interdisciplinary Research Training, Methods Training for Education Researchers, and Training in Education Research Use and Practice.

Previously last year, these last two topic areas were under one heading called the “Researcher and Policymaker Training Program.” We have separated this into two, so for those of you who submitted last year under Researcher and Policymaker Training Program, if you are going to resubmit—assuming that your training program is similar to what you proposed previously—you would want to choose one of these two topic areas and then note that this is actually a resubmission even though the title is changed. I am going to come back to this at the end of the presentation, but I just wanted to make sure that I mentioned that.

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Let's say you have an idea about training.

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My first questions to you would be "Well, who do you want to train and what do you want them to be able to do?"

Is the training to help education researchers maintain or improve their skills? If so, you are probably looking for a Methods Training grant.

If the training is to bring people together—practitioners, policymakers, and maybe researchers—and have them work on a topic so they can figure out how to move ahead, then you are probably interested in a Use and Practice training grant.

What you probably are thinking of next is, "How do I know what IES wants and whether the questions I have and the training I want to provide align with IES's goals and IES's vision?"

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What do we want? We want projects that are going to be targeted and relevant to the participants such that they can apply it immediately to their work. For the researchers, we want the tools and skills that they can take home to their institutions and actually apply. For practitioners and policymakers, we want them to be able to use the information for their specific jobs, for their functions, for their communities.

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What we do not want are very broad, general things that talk about methods too broadly, something that you might get from a graduate course as a general overview. We don't want that. We want something targeted.

Likewise, we don't want practitioners and policymakers to be taught about how to access research. Again, we want targeted training. We want a specific area with a specific goal that is clearly articulated.

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Let's look at a few examples and delve into the two topic areas a little bit more.

Methods Training is intended to help current education researchers maintain or upgrade their methodological skills. NCER has funded previous trainings under the Unsolicited

Grant Opportunities competition, and there were two topics covered under these: one 2-week residential program on cluster-randomized trials and one 1-week residential program on quasi-experimental designs. Both of these trainings were fairly large. However, there are other areas and formats in which we are also interested. You don't have to do these topic areas. You can come up with other things.

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For example, you could give a training to researchers about how they should work with practitioners and policymakers because sometimes it is hard for them to figure out how to interact, how to disseminate information, and how to have that conversation. Or you could have a training about value-added modeling. Or you could have a training about social networking theory. There is a range of possibilities, and here are a few examples of the different topic areas into which a Methods Training could tap.

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As for the Use and Practice training, the idea here is to get to the end user, to get to the policymaker who is figuring out how to distribute resources across a district, or to get to the teachers who have to implement a curriculum or are trying to decide what would be most useful for their particular students. We want to get in and help them. Some training programs could even suggest that, in this conversation, they need to be interacting with researchers in real time so that the researchers can hear what the practitioners need and the practitioners can ask probing questions.

You could also suggest a training program where perhaps there is something currently being used—like somebody's working with a common core and trying to implement that—and your training could be working with them to give ongoing support to practitioners and policymakers.

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In this again, as I said before, we want something targeted around a specific topic area. So you could have examples like the common core that I just mentioned. Common core in and of itself is probably very large, but you could narrow that for common core state standards in math. Or you could look at language immersion for English learners (ELs) or social behavioral things about school climate or graduation rates. You can also think about the purpose of this and your target audience. Is it to assist policymakers? Is it to assist practitioners? Is it to do one of these two things with researchers? All of these features and factors should be part of your description of a Use and Practice training.

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Now that we have talked a little bit about the *who* and the *what*, you might be asking yourself, "What format does IES want? What format is the best format to use?" Here we are looking to you. We want you to decide and for you to justify how the structure that you are proposing makes sense for your population and makes sense for the topic that you are interested in doing.

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When we think about these training programs, we really see them as professional development. As such, there should be a framework for giving this professional development to the participants. You need to be considerate of what their needs are, what skills they are bringing in, what skills they are going to develop, and how your training will be sensitive to—or build off of—those things. You want to move them ever closer to the outcomes of the training, whether that is having people that are prepared to do social network analysis in terms of research methods or having policymakers who are well aware of early childhood interventions and the implications of that.

One thing that might be helpful for you in making an argument for why your training is likely to be beneficial is to draw upon what we know from adult learning theories and professional development theories—making sure that the goals are clear and the training can be immediately applied. For example, adult learning theory suggests that lecture formats—like this webinar—are not necessarily as beneficial for adults in a learning environment. You can draw upon those theories to help justify the format that you are proposing.

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There are other considerations as well. Again, thinking about what the end goal is, is it important to build networks? Is that part of the training—getting these teams together so that they can continue to pursue research questions independent of you? Will there need to be sustained mentoring? Is this something where you give them intensive training, but then there is follow up to refine their skills?

Then, you have to think of the participants. How much time do they actually have? People at the district or state level might not have a lot of time to come for an intensive residential training, and that might affect the format—whether it is online or in person. There are a lot of questions you should consider when you are determining what you should do and then justifying why you want to do that.

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Here are some examples of possible formats. You could have a completely online course, like a MOOC (massive online open course), if you want, or you could have something more akin to the 2-week residential programs. Those are kind of the extremes: hands-on, in-person, 2-week residential programs or something that is maybe more distant or static, like an online MOOC.

Basically, the idea here is that, just as we allow education researchers in the field of education research to propose the studies and the designs that they think would answer the questions, so too are we looking to the training community to suggest topic areas and formats and participants that they feel are important to ensure that the education research is being conducted correctly—that would be the Methods Training—and being useful—that would be the Use and Practice training.

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Let's go ahead and talk about some of the details of these training programs and what that means in terms of the application itself.

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The first thing to note is that these grants will be made as cooperative agreements. What does this mean? Most of our other grants are just typical discretionary grants. The principal investigator (PI) and the project team have a lot of control over the direction after the award has been made. In the cooperative agreement, IES works with the grantees to plan and implement their activities. We are more involved. This would mean things like the grantee and IES may share information and help assist one another in coordinating efforts.

Perhaps the training program might share materials, or IES would help disseminate information. It is more of a partnership, but it is not like a contract. We are not telling you what to do. Again, you have proposed a particular training for a particular group of participants with a particular format. If the review panel believes that that is appropriate, that overall design is what you will be doing. Then, you will be working with IES to ensure that it is a successful training.

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What are some other basic characteristics? Last year, there was a maximum of the number of awards we would make under this program. This year, there is no maximum number of research methods or of Use and Practice grants. However, there is a maximum in the number of years. You can have only up to 3 years, and you can have only up to $1 million.

One of the things I really want to stress here is that so long as the objectives of the training program are significant to the field, smaller programs are as much of an interest to IES and the review panels as larger programs. If you don't need 3 years, then don't ask for 3 years. If this is something that could be done quickly or for a smaller amount of money, go ahead and propose that. Don't be shy just because you don't have a 2-week or a 1-month intensive training. However, you do want to make sure that your budget reflects the scope of your training program. Ask for as much as you need and show how that fits into what you are doing.

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Who can apply? Well, anybody with the ability to conduct training and who has the research background is eligible to apply. An institution can have more than one award and can submit more than one application. However, each application must be different. You can't have two Methods Trainings both in social network theory that target the same group of people to do very similar tasks. You want there to be a distinction between those two. That said, the same university could submit a Methods Training for social network theory, a Methods Training for how to do value-added modeling, and a Use and Practice training for principles about how to use information from value-added modeling. That would be okay, so even though there is a topic overlap with value-added modeling, the target group for the training would be different, so that would be okay.

The other thing is the PIs—they can come from a variety of disciplines and fields, but they all need to be able to provide this training. That gets into personnel—to show that they have the ability to do that.

Another thing that I really want to stress is that all key personnel must be named in the application. You can’t say, "We are going to give training in early childhood education, and we will identify the researchers who will present the research after we make the award.” You need to say, "We will provide training on early childhood education, and here is a list of the researchers that we are going to have come in and talk to state directors,” for example.

Question: *“What is sufficient research background for key personnel and the PI?”*

Answer: *“This is sensitive, I think, to the topic area and what research you are presenting. Also think about having this balanced. You can have people that are really good at value-added modeling but do not have any experience in training. You want to make sure that there is a balance. Likewise, you can have people that are very good at providing training but lack a sufficient background and expertise in early childhood education. With any research team, you want to strike that balance.*

Things like publications are helpful, especially for the people that are giving the content component, whether that is a research method or a research topic area, and they are discussing things like early childhood education or postsecondary education. Their publication record will matter. For people whose strength is really in professional development or training and providing it, they too may have publications. But there may be other materials that show their qualification and their expertise. It is hard to say what the exact criteria are. Again, it is a matter of justifying things.

As the Program Officer, you can come and set up a meeting with me, send me an e-mail, and we can discuss this. That is one of the great things about Program Officers at IES. Because we are not involved in the review process per se, we can work with the applicants pretty intensely at the front end and give you feedback about questions like "How do I discuss the background for the key personnel, and make sure that it is clear that they have the research experience?"

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Now that we have talked about who can apply, who can actually be trained? There are a couple of rules about this. All training participants for any training program must be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. Furthermore, for these training programs, the participants' work must be relevant to education in the United States.

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Just to compare and contrast, for people in a Methods Training program we want primarily people who have doctoral degrees, but it could include people who have master's degrees that are working in education research. For people in Use and Practice, again, it can be practitioners, policymakers, and/or researchers. That probably should be "and researchers with practitioners or with policymakers or with both practitioners and policymakers." If it is strictly researchers, it is probably a Methods Training grant.

For the practitioners and policymakers, they must be working in the policy or program area covered by the training. For example, if this is a training about early childhood education and you are working with state directors from the postsecondary office, that is probably not a good mix.

For the researchers in Use and Practice trainings, again, we are looking for researchers with masters' or doctoral degrees, plus experience working in the practice or policy area upon which the training will focus.

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What do we expect of the program? Well, at the end of the grant, we have a couple things that we want the training programs to be able to do. We want them to be able to provide a description of the program as it actually occurred. We want data that demonstrates that the program was able to do what it intended to do, and that includes everything from recruitment to training to the participants' value of the training. We want to know what measures you used to track the progress. And we want to have some idea of your evaluation of whether the training program was successful.

I think this all leads to number five, which is “recommendations for future training programs.” This circles back to that cooperative agreement. We are looking to learn something about providing training and about how to assist future training programs to make sure that their training programs are at least as successful as what you have accomplished. At the end of your training program, we are looking for this sort of detail and feedback.

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But you might be asking yourself "Determination of a program's success—what does that even mean?" Well, here are a couple of things. For the methods ask, “Are the participants actually able to use the methods taught? Do they apply them? Are there ways for other people to benefit from the success of the program?” Maybe you had something that worked with a relatively small group of participants. Were those materials made available to others? If so, then the program may have had a wider success than one might have seen just from looking at the numbers.

We are also interested in how much it cost. We don't need a cost/benefit analysis, just a general number: “It cost us *X* number of dollars to provide training for this many people.” Remember, this is at the end of your project. We don't need that benefit up front. You can talk about that, but that is not a decision criteria. This is just what we are going to want to know about this training program at the end.

Similarly for Use and Practice trainings, again, we are interested in knowing how much it would cost to continue to do something like this. Again, we are still interested in how nonparticipants could benefit. We are also interested in how the practitioners and policymakers are able to apply this directly to their positions and their jobs. Perhaps you may even identify other topic areas in which policymakers or practitioners might be interested or other populations that might be interested in the same training.

Question: *"Should we offer training for free, or should we charge a fee from participants?"*

Answer: *"I would hope that the budget would be large enough that you could provide the training for free. We will talk about some of the things that you can do for the participants in terms of money. We would hope that their participation in the actual event would not cost them anything."*

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We will come back to some of those issues with money and funding in a few slides.

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What needs to go into the application itself? Well, for one thing—for those of you who have submitted before to the training programs—there is a new page limit. Previously, it was 15 pages. You now have 5 additional pages, so there is a 20-page limit. In those 20 pages, you will talk about the significance of the program, the actual training plan, and then the personnel and the resources to be used. Of these sections, the Significance and the Research Training Plan will take up the lion's share of those 20 pages, but you should not neglect the Personnel and the Resources sections.

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In the Significance section, you are going to be describing the focus of the training program and its importance, not only to the participants but also the field in general, so you want to strike a nice balance there. By the end of your Significance section, your readers should be able to clearly say what the issue is, who the audience is, and why this combination is important. Ideally, in the first couple of paragraphs that should be clear, but by the end of the Significance section, your readers should be able to state that. Sometimes it is helpful at the end of a Significance section in an application to actually go ahead and have a summary paragraph that captures that.

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You want to be sure to highlight the importance to the work that the participants do in their daily lives. One of the things you may find is that there is another resource that provides a similar training. That is not necessarily a third-rail issue—you just want to talk about how yours is different to, an improvement on, or could be used in conjunction with this other training program. The difference between the two trainings will affect the significance of your proposed training.

For example, you could have the exact same training program as another group, but yours is going to be free for participants. Maybe that is significant enough to make it worth the department's funding. If you can make a case, it is worth suggesting. You may say that there is a very similar training program, but it is all done online so people don't have a chance to interact and play with the data hands-on with skilled researchers. Now, that might justify the need for another training program that would provide that in-person experience, for example.

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When you are talking about the participants, you really want to think about them as the whole person. How will they benefit from this? How will the people that they assist benefit from this? For the researchers, you want to include their backgrounds and discuss what you think they will be bringing to the table. Maybe you expect that these people will have some general idea of what a randomized control trial (RCT) is, but perhaps they don't know about the difference between a fully-nested and a partially-nested design, and they really need training on that. You have identified what they have and what they don't have, and then you can talk about why knowing that information about a fully-nested and a partially-nested design even matters. That would be building into the significance.

For a policymaker or a practitioner, you want to say what their role is, including the level at which they function. Not just whether they are a practitioner or a teacher, but are they a master teacher? Are they a new teacher? Do they coordinate with other teachers? Are you doing a train-the-trainer type thing? What are their responsibilities in their daily jobs? Again, just like we talked about with the researchers—what are they bringing to the table? What preexisting skills do they have? What background do you think they have in using research?

Of course we will want to know the number of participants you will train and why this number is appropriate. This is one of those places where the line between the Significance and Research Training Plan sections blur. You want to make sure that that hard number is apparent somewhere and it can be in the Significance, in the Research Training Plan, or both. You want to make sure that that number is somewhere.

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As I mentioned before, the training model itself can vary. You want to justify why this model will best meet the needs of the participants and how it is cost effective and how it offers others opportunities to benefit from portions of the training if you feel that that is necessary.

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Again, by the end of the Significance section, these are the types of things you should have outlined: the importance of your issue, the scope and reach of your training, and the impact it will have on the participants themselves and the field broadly. As I said before, having a summary paragraph is often very helpful. It helps to organize the arguments and better prepares readers for the Research Training Plan.

Question: *"Is it a goal to make the training program sustainable or maybe self-sustaining?"*

Answer: *"Not necessarily. You could present something that was going to be videotaped or made into an online course that could then persist for as long as there is a server to host it, which would be fine. There also can be, again, these very targeted, short things that go in and provide immediate care and that really, then, don't need to persist beyond that, going in and doing this targeted program is all that it is going to take.*

Align the amount of medicine that you are giving to the patients—don't give them more than what they need, but give them enough to solve the problem or to prepare them for the tasks that they need to do. I hope that answers that question."

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Let's move on to the Research Training Plan. There are four components to your training program, and you can align these how they make the most sense in your application, but you will want to make sure that these four points are discussed. They are: recruitment, the training activities, support to participants, and evaluation of the program. I do suggest that you provide a timeline of how these events will unfold. You can put this timeline either in the narrative or Appendix A.

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In the Recruitment section, everything needs to align to what you have already discussed in the Significance section. If you have identified the fact that you want to work with math teachers in coordinating their efforts for the Common Core State Standards in math, then your recruitment efforts should make sure that you are recruiting from venues where math instructors are likely to go.

We want research programs to really make a good effort reaching out to underrepresented minorities and to participants that may not be typical. When you are recruiting, we don't want you to go necessarily to the easiest, most obvious venue to recruit. Think about how you can use a network to reach people who may not necessarily know that training is even available. We want to avoid that Matthew Effect where the people who know about training keep getting training, so they keep getting better, and think about how we can move through the network to at least let people know that training is possible.

I want to note that the earliest start date for a training program is July 1st of next year. If you want a training program to occur, let's say during a conference that occurs in the summer, it is going to be really hard to recruit and have that training in the summer of 2014. You can coordinate your plan for recruitment and even your budget to align with that. So for that summer training, which would be held at the conference, maybe the first one isn't in 2014. Maybe the first one is in 2015, and you have spent that first year making sure that all of your materials are ready, you have done the recruitment, you have set up everything, and then your first actual training occurs in 2015. Make sure that the recruitment plan makes sense for the participants and for the timeline of when the funding would become available.

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The application process must be clear, and you should talk about how you will select participants, who is going to make those decisions, and how you are going to make sure that this process is fair and avoids the appearance of conflict of interest. You don't want it to seem like you are just training people at your institution.

If you are providing training to districts within a specific state, you can justify why having this targeted training for people within a state is appropriate and that is fine. That’s not a conflict of interest as long as the criteria are clear and the group aligns with your Significance section.

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Just a reminder, all the participants must meet the following criteria (on the slide).

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In the training plan itself, be clear and be specific about the components. This is hard to do because you need to strike that balance between so much information that people get bogged down in the details and they forget what it is that you are doing and so little or scant information that they don’t actually know what it is that you are going to do. You need to find that nice middle.

You can think about using the appendix wisely. I would suggest going back to your Significance section and looking at what you have detailed: what the skill set is that you want your participants to have; the skill set that you think they are bringing in; and then each of the things that would need to happen to take them from Point A (the skills that they have) to Point B (the skills that you want them to have and be able to apply). Then, you should outline each one of those and then align your training activities to those components.

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Here are some general considerations. This is very similar to what I just said; only on this slide, I am trying to stress that we want to make sure that the participants are able to apply it to their work. Again, for the methods and for the Use and Practice trainings, this idea of application is really of interest to us.

Another thing that is very useful in these training activities is thinking about how things could go wrong and how you would be able to adjust to that. You don't need to predict all of the possible problems that you could run into, but you might want to identify at least one or two that are possible. Maybe you thought the participants would have a certain level of background knowledge, but when they all come, it turns out that they are actually more advanced than you thought. What could you do in that circumstance?

Let's say you wanted to run the same training program over 3 years, and you found after the first one that your recruitment plan didn't seem to be working, or the materials that you had were not engaging or weren't leading to the participants feeling as though they accomplished their goals. What could you do to improve that for the next training program? You can build that into your training activity.

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Let's look a little bit more closely at the Methods Training, and then I will shift to the Use and Practice training. When you come to the training programs, again, describe the methodology you intend the participants to learn. Here it is a level of detail. If you were going to do social network analysis, you probably don't need to go into excruciating detail of what that means, but you would want to talk about the major components—what does it take to do that? Or what are the general skills that are necessary to do good value-added modeling, or to look at administrative data, or to answer questions? What does that take? What does that mean? That will help you align perhaps the different units that you would have in your training.

You will want to provide examples of the specific content that you will present to them. For example, will you be contrasting different theories about a certain method or a certain analysis? Will you be using text, articles, or software programs? You can, again, use Appendix A if you want to provide more details about some of these texts, if you are using them or software programs, so you don't have to have all the specific details about that software program in the narrative, but you should talk about the fact that you are going to have hands-on experience with the trainees using *SAS*, for example, or using *R*. You can say a little bit more in the Appendix.

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For the Use and Practice programs, you want to remind people what the policy or practice issue is and break that down into the components of that policy or the issues about that practice. For example, with postsecondary education, if you are going to talk to people about what we have learned about postsecondary education, that is huge. You would want to break it down and then align things to those different components.

You will want to talk about the specific evidence from the research you intend to present. So many things have a theoretical tradition or a research tradition which might lead to sort of a “bias”—for the lack of a better word—or “framework." Your review panel will want to know what the framework is that the participants are learning—the issue within—and using that to outline the different activities and the timing of the activities.

You should also talk about the conclusions that you believe the participants will be able to pull from the literature and how this will change a practice or affect the way that they are making policy. You should also mention any specifics like looking at specific reports or databases or software programs. For example, there might be an international survey or a national survey that is taking place and you want people to understand how to use the results from that survey or how to implement things based on it. Well, you should talk about what that survey is, what the components are, who is involved. Again, make judicious use of Appendix A.

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One suggestion we have is showing buy-in whenever possible. Consider collaborations at the earliest stages for determining the content and format. Let's say you want to provide training in Common Core State Standards in math. You should probably be talking to the practitioners right now. What do they want to know? What do they need to know? Where are they? Is there more interest from elementary school, middle school, or secondary school? Use this as part of the planning process.

You can also think about other stages of the training. Maybe you already know, but then during the actual training itself, you want to have a time where the practitioners are leading a component or when the policymakers are coming in and giving a presentation or coming in to do a hands-on workshop. You can talk about those sorts of collaborations. To the extent possible, if you are going to be working with the practitioners, policymakers, or researchers, if you have letters of agreement or letters of interest from those constituents at the time of application or during the training program, put them in the application in Appendix C. It is really good to show that your envisioned participants would actually want to do this and that they might even be helping you to plan it or to execute it.

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Generally, people lack sufficient details in the applications. Here are a few things it might be good to make sure that you have included—at least in narrative form. You can use tables in your narrative if you want. You want to talk about how long the sessions will be. How many hours or days are you going to spend looking at a particular component? Who is going to do each part and how? Is it going to be sometimes lecture, sometimes workshop, sometimes peer reflection, sometimes online? Talking about how those things will work.

If portions of the training will be made available to nonparticipants, how will that be done? When? Those sorts of things should all be in the training activities, the actual, nitty-gritty nuts and bolts of what is going to happen.

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Now, you're probably asking yourself, "How do we pay for this and what can we do with money?" In the Research Training Plan, you need to talk about what sort of support the participants will be getting from the training program, but there are restrictions in the RFA of how this money can be used for the training programs. Your individual institution also probably has restrictions on the use of grant funds and in particular, federal funds. The reason we have stressed this so much for the training program is that we don't want you to propose to have this great training program where a key component is a lot of socializing and food and events that are actually going to be unallowable for federal funds—you can't use federal funds to have certain events. We don't want you to enter into this processing thinking, "Oh, we really need to have this event to make sure that the training program works," and then have us say, "You can't do that because it is not allowable." That is why we are stressing this so much with the training programs.

Slide 45

Now, for the trainings, I am going to go through Methods Training and then Use and Practice. You will see that there is a lot of overlap between these two, but I am going to treat them as separate slides. For Methods Training, the participants and their institutions can't receive financial recompense. That means that you can't pay them to do the training.

They are expected to cover their own travel costs. You can make exceptions, but you need to justify how much money you set aside to cover travel expenses for participants and then why that would be reasonable. You might say that you are going to be targeting people that might lack financial resources and that, therefore, you want to have a little bit of money put to the side just in case. You would need to make a case for that and talk about why that would be appropriate.

You can cover the lodging for the participants, but it can't exceed the federal reimbursement rate. You can find out what these are through the General Services Administration (GSA); there is a link here on the slide. We are going to come back to the GSA rates in a couple slides.

Slide 46

For the Use and Practice training, again, the individuals can't individually receive money for attending the training program; however, if you are taking an employee away from his or her position from a local, tribal, or state agency, those agencies can be reimbursed for the business hours—the working hours—of the employee that is getting the training. You can cover the travel costs for Use and Practice participants from local, tribal, or state agencies. You may cover the lodging for all of the participants if it is justified. Again, it can't exceed the federal rates.

One thing to keep in mind, with the local, tribal, state agency and other such employees is that their institutions may have restrictions or policies about the type of money and the type of assistance or support they can receive. You might want to check early on with the participants or the type of participants to see if you are likely to run into things of that nature. You might say that you are going to pay for the lodging and you are going to pay for the travel and all these great things, and then it turns out that the state says, "No, we can't allow our employees to take that; we have to pay for it."

It is good to do that homework before you write your application and that gets to this final bullet. If the participants, their institutions, or their agencies have access to travel and lodging funds, we expect that they will use them to cover travel and lodging instead of you using federal funds to do so.

Slide 47

The last thing I want to mention is how to minimize costs. This gets to the idea of how you maximize your impact and allow for the most amount of training. One of the ways to do that is to think about your costs; to do this we want you to consider your location, your travel, and when and where you hold these trainings.

For example, the GSA rates, which I mentioned a couple of slides ago, can have radically different rates, in the same city, for per diem and for housing based on the time of year. If you have an option, perhaps doing it in September would save you hundreds of thousands of dollars relative to doing it in August. You might want to look at that. Likewise, if there is a national or a highly frequented convention that all of the math teachers from elementary schools go to every March, well then maybe align your training so that it happens in the same place either at the same time or right before or right after so you are leveraging something that they are already likely to be doing. That would help to minimize travel costs and it might actually be better for them because they are already there. It already folds into something that they would be doing. In your description of how you would provide support and how you would organize the training activities, think about how you can leverage some of those things that might be going on in the context anyway.

Slide 48

Last, but not least, as far as our word of warning with money, you can't use federal funds for food and refreshments in general. You can't use training grant funds from this program to pay for food. Occasionally you can argue that a working lunch is necessary. You can also think about travel-related things that might come out of a per diem; that might also be allowable. Generally, meals held outside of formal training hours are not allowable. You can't use federal funds for them.

Slide 49

The fourth component of the training program is evaluating the program. There are some basic measures that we think you should all necessarily be able to do. Did you recruit the intended type of participants? Did they stay long enough to benefit from the training? After following up with them, did you find information or data that would suggest that they actually found it useful and that they have been able to apply it to their jobs? As I said before, if you plan on repeating this training over the course of the grant, you can talk about how you will use this to refine your delivery—whether that is to refine your recruitment practices, to refine things to make sure that they stay long enough, or other ways of refining things like getting additional experts or having different materials.

Slide 50

However, you can also propose your own measures that you think would be signs of the program's success. Let's say you were doing a training for teachers about how to engage ELs in reading—maybe in an immersion classroom. Then you find out that one of the things you think is valuable is whether those teachers feel more confident about working with EL students. That is not necessarily about recruiting; that is not necessarily about applying a skill; that is something different. That is about the teachers and their feelings of efficacy or how they feel about their skill set. If you feel that that is important for the practitioner or for the field, then you can have a measure of that for your program's success.

Again, as I mentioned quite a few slides ago, we would like to know the cost per participant. How much would it cost to start this program over from scratch, or how much would it cost to continue the same program with a different set? The reason I bring up those two examples is that you could imagine for some trainings that the first training and preparing for it could be very labor intensive because you might have to make a lot of materials and videos. After that initial investment, you can actually train a lot of people fairly quickly. Other programs may not have that distinction and may be consistent regarding how much it would cost. But that is another way to evaluate the program.

In your Research Training Plan, you don't need to say exactly how you are going to do all those things, but you want to talk about the fact that you are going to do it, when you will do it, and the questions that you would try to answer about the cost per participant as it relates to the training program design.

Slide 51

We did Significance; we did the Research Training Plan. Let's move on to the Personnel section. As I mentioned before, you must identify all key personnel on the teams at the time of application. It could be that there is only person doing all the training or you could have a much more complex model where you have co-PI, consultants, and other trainers. We want to know at the time of application who they are. Then you want to align them and their expertise to the particular content or focus of the training program.

Here is a list of some of the information you would want to include—if not in the Personnel section explicitly you could use the appendix or other parts of the application that reinforce these things—like the percent of time. The review panels will be looking to see if the appropriate amount of people is dedicated to the program for the appropriate amount of time. As I mentioned before, you want to make sure that you have all of your bases covered—that you have people that are content experts and are training experts, people that can do each of those things. Maybe you have somebody who will be a group facilitator because that is his or her expertise. Maybe you have a content expert. All these people can actually be the same person, or they can be different people, but you want to make sure that there is somebody that can provide the training both in terms of the content and in terms of the professional development component itself.

Slide 52

I think we have gone through this before. You can't propose to hire people afterwards. They must be identified in the application.

Slide 53

For the Resources section, you will want to describe where the training will take place and who will be conducting the training. If you are going to do it onsite, what sort of support is available to you? What sort of meeting spaces or facilities are available to you? This might be hard if you are suggesting, or if you had a model where, you would be giving the training at that national conference that the elementary math teachers I mentioned would attend. It might be hard for you to predict exactly what sort of technical resource would be available. You could state that "We would be working here, but we would have a lot of resources at our institution for the recruitment, the material generation, and for the dissemination of that information; and we have experience setting up logistics at hotels," or things along those lines. You can talk about those sorts of institutional supports for resources.

Slide 54

What else goes in the application? There are those four parts for the Research Narrative—the Significance, the Research Training Plan, the Personnel, and the Resources. That is the heart of your application, but it is not the entirety of it. You still have Appendix A, which I have mentioned a couple times; Appendix C, which I mentioned at least once; and then the Budget Form and the Budget Narrative.

Slide 55

If you submitted last year and you are resubmitting again with the same general topic, you must respond to the reviewer comments using no more than three pages in Appendix A. In Appendix A, you can also include any figures, charts, tables, and supplemental training program materials. However, no actual narrative should be in the Appendix A. If it looks like you were just trying to use extra space to have a few paragraphs, it will be removed. Appendix A is not the appropriate place to put that. It should be in the Research Narrative.

Slide 56

Appendix C will contain all the letters of agreement from the research and training partners. If you have people that are coming in to provide content expertise, you will want letters from them saying, "Indeed, I will assist." Likewise, if you were working with a professional development organization to help disseminate information for recruitment, it would be useful to have a letter from that professional organization saying that they are aware of this and are willing to help.

One thing to keep in mind: we have it here for Appendix C, but this is just kind of good in general—when you put something into your application, you want to make sure that it is going to be legible if it is printed off, in black and white, double-sided. So you don't want to shrink the letters. You don't want to rely too heavily on color coding because you should assume that this is going to be printed off double-sided, black and white. It doesn't mean that you can't use those things, but just make sure that it reproduces well.

Slide 57

Remember that the maximum award is $1 million, but the actual size of the award should depend on the number of participants, the type of training, and the number of content experts that are necessary.

Slide 58

You will provide both the Budget Form—called the SF 424—and Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative should reflect the information on that SF 424.

If you have an office of sponsored projects, they should really know about this, but I am going to tell you so that you can pass this along. Any expense that is going directly to the trainees will go into a different section than costs that are going to the program or the trainers. There is a section in the SF 424 called Section E. In Section E, if you are going to provide lodging or research support for the participants once they have been in the program, that is where those funds should be recorded. The trainers' participation support like their travel all occurs elsewhere in that SF 424. This may have implications for how the indirect costs (IDCs) are calculated.

It is worth mentioning to whoever is putting together the budget might want to make sure they are aware of what is going to the participants, what is going to the nonparticipants, and that for this federally-funded training program the IDC rate is capped at eight percent. There are even some things, depending on your institution's IDC agreement that might also be excluded from the calculation of IDCs. Again, I am betting many of you might not be very clear on what I mean by IDC, Section E, and SF 424. Your office of sponsored projects should be aware of many of these things, but you would want to point out to them that this is relevant.

Slide 59

Here are the dates for which to watch. The application package has been posted. It is available to you as we speak. The applications are due at 4:30:00 p.m. on September 4. As I have mentioned before, the early start date is July 1, and the latest start date is September 1.

Slide 60

Now, the letters of intent (LOIs) were due last Thursday, June 6. If you have not submitted an LOI, that's okay. You do not have to submit an LOI in order to apply. However, if you do want to apply, please send a short summary—just maybe one or two paragraphs—to the Program Officer, me, so that I can share it with the Standards & Review Office to use to figure out how many reviewers they need to recruit. If you missed that deadline, go ahead and reach out to me. I will help to process that for you.

Slide 61

There are three things you need to get started. You need RFA 84.305B, you will need the Application Submission Guide, and you will need an application package.

Slide 62

There was an update to the RFA. The most recent version is the May 9 version. If you downloaded it before May 9, you should go back and download the new one. There were just a few minor changes, but you might as well all be using the same version. Here is a link to that.

Slide 63

To find the appropriate application package, you need to go to www.grants.gov.

Slide 64

I believe this is what it looks like, unless they have redesigned their website again. This should be the portal that you see. You would go in and search for the right application package. You want to make sure that you are looking at CFDA 84.305, and then choose 305B.

Slide 65

Just as a quick recap, here are the components of your application. Each application should have a 1-page abstract. On that abstract, you will want to identify the topic area under which you are applying (Methods Training or Use and Practice training) and a short description of the training program. I strongly encourage you to think of it in very structured form, like having separate subheadings for participants, topic area, training activities, and then sentences under each of those. You can play around with that.

The Program Narrative is 20 pages, single-spaced. There is information in the RFA about the size of the type and the font and things along those lines.

There is no restriction on the bibliography length.

You will need a biographical sketch for each of the key personnel, and those sketches can be up to four pages long.

There is no page limit for the Budget Narrative, so take up as much as you need to explain the costs. You can divide that up either by years (for example, “in year one these are the things that we will need to pay for”) or you can break it out by topic areas (for example, “this is the amount of money that we are going to use for materials, and this is the amount we are going to use for personnel across the four years”).

The page limit for Appendix A is 20 pages. Appendix C, where those letters go, has no page limit.

Slide 66

I guess the last couple things I want to mention here are about how to interact with me because I am the Program Officer. Before you contact me, make sure that you have the RFA and have read it. I don't expect that you have it as memorized as I do, but just know the general places so that we can refer back and forth to it. Call or e-mail me as early as you can.

I can look at drafts and sections of proposals. Again, I would want to coordinate with you on that to make sure that there is enough time for me to provide feedback that is going to be useful for you.

Slide 67

Here are a couple of things to look for and to keep in mind (on the slide). I believe we have gone through each of these. The last three—content, submission and processing, and due dates—are all at the very end of the RFA. If you flip to the end, it is on the last few pages.

Slide 68

A couple of other things are just general writing tips that we mention in pretty much all of our webinars about applications, but they are definitely true for the training programs. Be sure to write clearly and concisely to address the points in the RFA and to organize information in a logical sequence. Logical sequence does not always mean exactly how it is outlined in the RFA. You can move things around. I still encourage you to label things clearly and to use page numbers. The reviewers will be flipping back and forth and referring to graphs and referring to this and that. Your labeling can help make that process a lot easier. Do keep your audience in mind. You don't want them to be hunting through your application to find information or to make a case for why they believe that your training program would be worth the investment.

Slide 69

I will go through a couple more slides and then I am going to catch up on some questions.

Slide 70

What happens after you submit your application? It goes under a review for compliance and responsiveness. If you check in the RFA under Section E, Ensuring Responsiveness, that will help you to make sure you have hit every single thing that you need to address. If the application is compliant, it is assigned to the review panel. Then two or three members will do the primary review. They will score things, things will be rank-ordered, and the most competitive applications will be reviewed by the full panel at the panel meeting.

Slide 71

All applications will receive e-mail notification of the status of their application. It is a new system that they have set up, and it appears to be working quite well for people. You will get notification after the review process is complete, and you will receive copies of the reviewer comments. If you are not granted an award the first time, I hope that you will come back. You should come back even if the exact name of that topic area isn't being competed. You can still reach out to me, and I can tell you what other opportunities might be of interest to you. So it is always worth talking to the Program Officer.

Slide 72

Here is my contact information (on the slide). I am going to take a few minutes and catch up with some of the questions. We have about 10 more minutes for questions and comments, so go ahead and take a second. We have a question about the evaluation of training programs, and this is a good question.

Question: *"Does evaluation of the training program have to be carried out by an independent evaluation firm, or can the evaluator be part of the grantee or affiliated with the grantee?"*

Answer: *"That is a very good question. It does not need to be carried out by an independent evaluation firm. For those of you that are familiar with our 84.305A Education Research Grants program, you might have an independent evaluator if you were looking at the effectiveness of evaluating an intervention or evaluating a professional development. You can think of this as more like what might happen under a development grant where you are piloting it and getting that feedback. So, it does not need to be so rigorous. You are not going to be randomly assigning people. You don't need to have somebody else come in and evaluate you.*

If you want to, you have the budget for it, and you think that that information is necessary or will build the significance of your training program, by all means you can. It is not an expectation that you are going to have an outside evaluator."

Question: *"If your participants are teachers, where do you draw the line between Methods Training for Education Researchers* (305B) *and Effective Teachers and Effective Teaching topic areas?"*

Answer: *"This is kind of an interesting question. First, I think you mean Use and Practice training, seeing as how it for teachers and not researchers. I can see why there may be a blur between an 84.305A grant for Effective Teachers and Effective Teaching and a training grant, but one crucial difference to keep in mind is that in these trainings you're not building or testing a theory that says what good training is for teachers, and you are not evaluating whether this is really affecting student outcomes. What you are doing is giving an intervention. You are giving training.*

Research Use and Practice was not envisioned to provide training to teachers to improve their instruction. Training teachers (as part of a research study) would more appropriately fit under the Effective Teachers and Effective Teaching topic (84.305A).

Research Use and Practice is to provide training to decision-makers about programs and policies being implemented at the state, district, and school level.

For example, if a district wanted to adopt a new algebra curriculum, Research Use and Practice could support training folks involved in choosing a curriculum (e.g., district, school leaders, lead teachers) on which approaches to teaching algebra lead to student learning or ways to get high implementation when introducing a new curriculum. Training for teachers to implement the actual program would be up to the district unless it was part of a study (e.g., efficacy study of the curriculum) when it could be supported under Effective Teachers.

I can see the blending here, but when in doubt, reach out to me for 84.305B and to Wai-Ying Chow, who is sitting next to me. Her topic area is the Effective Teachers and Effective Teaching. We would both be more than happy to help you decide between the appropriate RFAs. Who knows, you might actually have an application for both, depending on your capacity and what it is you hope to achieve."

Question: *"How much of the grant can be subcontracted to other parties?"*

Answer: *"To the best of my knowledge, there is no cap on how much you can subcontract. I say this with hesitation because there might be some regulation of which I am just not aware. What I can tell you is that the review panel looks at subcontracts, and they want there to be a balance to them. They don't want it to seem as though the people that are putting in the application do not have any of the expertise, for example that they don't have the ability to provide good training and they don't have the ability to provide the actual research content. They want the primary to have competency in at least one of those two areas, but they understand that it is very hard for one institution to house all the expertise across all the potential areas.*

This might be especially true for a Use and Practice training where you have a firm that has provided a lot of training, but doesn't necessarily conduct research in early childhood education or in postsecondary education. They need to subcontract out or have a lot of consultants who have that area of expertise, so that is fine.

You can subcontract as much as you need to, but you don't want it to seem like it is just one giant subcontract. It's about striking a balance. Again, to the best of my knowledge, there is not a regulation that sets a maximum for the amount that you can subcontract."

Well with that, I hope that this has been helpful. If you have any other questions, please send me an e-mail, and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you.

This concludes today's webinar, “Overview of Methods Training for Education Researchers and Training in Education Research Use and Practice,” Topics 2 and 3, under 84.305B, part of the Funding Opportunities webinar series. Copies of the PowerPoint presentation and a transcript from today's webinar will be available on the IES website shortly.

Thank you and have a wonderful day.