

NCSER Webinar
IES Basic Overview of Research Grants

Kim Sprague:

Hello, this is Kim Sprague from the National Center for Special Education Research at the Institute of Education Sciences. We're about to start our webinar on the basic overview of funding opportunities at IES.

Katie Taylor:

I'm Katie Taylor, and I am a program officer at the National Center for Special Education Research, and I am joined by Erin Higgins, who is a program officer at the National Center for Education Research. In today's webinar, we will provide a basic overview of the funding opportunities at IES.

Before we talk about the particular funding opportunities, I just want to provide a little bit of background about IES. IES is the independent research arm of the U.S. Department of Education. The overall mission of IES is to describe the condition and progress of education in the U.S., to identify education practices that improve academic achievement and access to education opportunities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs. The work of the research centers falls under the second bullet here.

IES is comprised of a National Board of Education Sciences; a Standards and Review Office, which oversees the peer review process; and four centers. The grant programs that we will be discussing today are housed within the National Center for Education Research, referred to as NCER, and the National Center for Special Education, or NCSER. You'll notice here that the research centers are separate from the Standards and Review Office, meaning that we are not involved in the peer-review process. So, this allows us, as program officers, to work closely with you on your applications.

The research centers have a similar mission to support rigorous research that addresses the nation's most pressing education needs. The differences between the two centers are that NCER supports research focused on students in pre-kindergarten through adult learners, whereas NCSER supports research on children from birth through grade 12. And NCSER also has a focus on students with disabilities.

In general, the objective of the research grant programs is to improve research outcomes for all students, particularly those who are at risk for school failure. And our grant programs do this by identifying what works for improving education outcome, what doesn't work, and why (i.e., understanding the processes that underlie the effectiveness of education interventions, or the variation, and their effectiveness).

As I mentioned, IES funds research to improve the quality of education for all students. And as such, research must address student education outcomes. These outcomes include academic outcomes that reflect students' learning and achievement in the core academic content areas, or students' successful progression through the education system. Student education outcomes also include the social and behavioral competencies that support success in school and afterwards.

Both centers require that research address student education outcomes. I'll just note here, and I'll talk a little bit more about this later in the webinar, that in 2017, applications to the Special Education Research grants program (CFDA # 84.324A) must focus on teachers and/or other instructional personnel. So, for 2017, applications must include student education outcomes, but they must also include teacher and/or other instructional personnel outcomes. I'll talk more specifically about this focus later in the webinar.

Now, I'm going to turn it over to Erin to discuss how to identify our funding opportunities.

Erin Higgins:

Thanks, Katie. Before we get into the specifics of each of our grant competitions for this year, I wanted to give you a brief overview of where you can find information and get more details. The first place you can go is to our website, and then in particular, to the funding page, which is displayed here on the slide. I'll give you a few screenshots of that website shortly. It's been redesigned recently to be easier to navigate, so hopefully, you'll be able to find things pretty quickly and easily. All of the funding information we will go over today is available on our site. And if you have not done so already, an additional way to get information is actually to sign up for our Newsflash. You can do that through our website, and I'll show you how to do that as well, in a few minutes. Another place where you can go to find some information about funding opportunities is through the Federal Register. We post that before our request for applications goes up, so that you have a general sense of what programs we are going to be competing for an upcoming year. But do note that, in order to really understand the requirements of a competition, and to understand how to apply and submit your application, you need to have the request for application, which, again, is available at our website. The federal register information is not sufficient in order to apply. These requests for applications are on our funding page. I'll show you these screenshots so that you can find them easily and download them. And then, finally, another great resource for you is our program officers -- people like Katie and me. We work with applicants throughout this entire process, up until the application deadline, to answer questions about the request for application, to hear your ideas, and provide you with some feedback. As we already mentioned, we have an office within IES called the Standards and Review office that organizes the review process and recruits reviewers. That frees us up in order to work very closely with applicants, as little or as much as you wish, throughout this whole process, up until the application deadline. As you hear more information about the competitions today, note those that are interesting to you, and then go and download the request for applications. There is contact information for the specific program officers within those documents, and also on the topic pages for a particular competition.

Here is a screenshot of what our website currently looks like. What you're seeing at the top is the drop down from the menu tab. That will give you this blue column on the left. What I want to show you right now is this news and events part of our website. The left drop down gives you the news and events option, and within that, there are a couple different things you can click on, one being the Newsflash.

If you click on the Newsflash link, it takes you to this page, where you can put your email and then subscribe to our Newsflash. As I mentioned, this is a great way to find out more information about IES happenings, so it's not just funding opportunities. Any time there's a

report that's released, or announcements about grants that we are funding from a prior fiscal year, we send out newsflashes. And you can choose, through this form, whether you want everything, or whether you just want a subset of information from a particular center. If you want funding opportunities only, there is a place to select that. I would encourage you to just allow for everything to come in. We don't send these out all that often, so it's not like you'd be filling up your inbox every single day with tons of newsflashes. We really try to pick and choose the really critical information that we think a broad group of our stakeholders would be interested in, and I think there will be some interesting reports that you could benefit from, beyond just hearing about funding opportunities.

Okay, so back to our home page. Again, if you hover over that menu, another option for you is funding opportunities. And this is where you can find the specific information about a competition that I was talking about earlier. In particular, these are the requests for applications that provide you with the information on how to apply and the requirements for a particular competition. So, if you hover over funding opportunities, you'll see that one option to click is the funding opportunities page. Another one is the webinar page, which gives you more information about other webinars that we have available besides this one. And then, a third option is the search funded research grants and contracts option, and I'll talk a little bit more about this later. But that is a great resource for you to see what we've already funded through all of our competitions, and that can give you a really nice sense of whether the idea you have could generally fit within the kind of competition you're interested in.

Our funding opportunities page -- this is what the top of it looks like--talks a little bit about how to apply for an IES grant. It gives you the link to grants.gov, there at the bottom of that list. That's something important that we'll talk about later. That's where you submit your application.

If you scroll down on that page, you'll see that we list out all of the research programs and research training programs that we are competing for the 2017 fiscal year. In the future, this would get updated with the next fiscal year cycle after the 2017 fiscal year competition is closed. This is the page that you should always have bookmarked, and you can continue to come back to, knowing that you'll have the most up to date information about our funding options.

Now that you're on this funding page, you might be wondering, "How do I even find the appropriate grant programs for me?" The first thing you should do is read the request for applications for a particular program. That provides you with all the information you need on how to apply, as well as the specific requirements, and also recommendations for applicants that are useful, when preparing your project narrative. Secondly, you should review these requirements in depth to make sure that you can meet them with the ideas that you have. And then, lastly, as I already mentioned briefly when showing you the funding opportunities tab on our website, you should look at abstracts of projects that we've funded previously, under a topic or a program that you're interested in. When you do this, do keep in mind that requirements can change from year to year. So, a project that was funded, for example, in 2011, might not have all the components that are required now for a 2017 application to the same topic. So, use these as a general tool to get a sense of whether you would fit under a particular competition, but always defer to the current request for applications when crafting your narrative and ensuring that you meet the requirements and recommendations for that particular program.

I'm going to turn it back to Katie to talk to you about some of the specific funding opportunities that we have available.

Katie Taylor:

I'll start by talking about the primary grant programs within NCER and NCSER. NCER's primary grant program is the Education Research grant, 305A, and NCSER's is the Special Education Research Grant, 324A. For both of these grants, you need to apply under one research topic, which identifies the field that you'll be working in, and also one research goal, which identifies the type of work that you'll be doing. We use this topic and goal structure to divide the research process into stages by fields. Individually, the topics and goals help to focus the work of researchers, and together, they're intended to cover the range of research activities that are necessary to address our nation's education problems.

Before I talk about the specific research topics, I just want to say a little bit more about the special focus for the Special Education Research grants in 2017. In 2017, applications to this grant, 324A, must focus specifically on teachers and/or other instructional personnel responsible for educating students with or at risk for disabilities. This focus applies to this particular competition only. We chose to focus this particular competition due to a limited budget in 2017 and also, a critical need for additional research on these professionals. This need was identified through public comments, and also, technical working groups with practitioners and researchers who were charged with identifying critical education problems and issues on which high quality research is needed. The Special Education Research grants program will continue to use a topic and a goal structure, and we will do this to encourage a broad range of research on these professionals.

These are the 2017 research topics for NCER and NCSER. There are some similarities among the topics, and some are specific to each center. There is more information about these topics in the RFAs, including their purpose, requirements, and also, considerations and research gaps under each topic.

In addition to the research topics in the previous table, NCER has also introduced a new set of special topics in 2017. These topics will provide additional encouragement for research in under-studied areas that appear to be promising for improving students' education outcomes, and that are of interest to policymakers and practitioners. In 2017, these topics include arts and education, career and technical education, and systemic approaches to educating highly mobile students. And again, you can find more information about these special topics in the RFA for 305A.

Now I'm going to discuss the research goals. In addition to identifying one research topic, you must also identify one research goal. The five research goals, which are the same across the centers, are: Goal 1 Exploration, Goal 2 Development and Innovation, Goal 3, Efficacy and Replication, Goal 4, Effectiveness, and Goal 5, Measurement. The research goals are designed to expand the range from basic research, with practical implications, to applied research, including the development of education intervention and assessments, and also, the evaluation of these education interventions.

For each of these goals the RFA describes the purpose and also the requirements and recommendations for a strong application. The requirements for each goal are the minimum necessary for an application to be sent forward for peer review. So, definitely pay close attention to the requirements, but we also strongly encourage you to incorporate the recommendations into your project narrative. These will improve the quality of your application, and these are also things that we have asked the peer reviewers to pay attention to.

The purpose of Exploration projects is to explore associations between malleable factors and outcomes, and/or identify factors in conditions that may mediate or moderate relations between these malleable factors and outcomes. Malleable factors are things that can be changed by the education system to improve your outcomes and interest. Just a note: I'm going to talk generally about "outcomes," but keep in mind that for 305A, for NCER, this means student education outcomes and, in 2017 for 324A, this means teacher and/or other instructional personnel outcomes and student education outcomes. The Exploration goal is not designed to support work to develop an intervention or to test the causal impact of an intervention. These projects are intended to build and inform theoretical foundations to support the development or evaluation of interventions or assessment frameworks. For this goal, you can propose a variety of methodological approaches, including secondary data analysis, primary data collection, and/or meta analyses. Just keep in mind that the type of data collection that you propose will have implications for the duration and the award, which I'll talk about in a few minutes.

Development and Innovation projects are designed to develop an innovative intervention or improve an existing education intervention. These projects will result in a fully developed version of the proposed intervention, data demonstrating its feasibility in authentic education setting, a fidelity of implementation measure, and also pilot data regarding the intervention's promise for improving outcomes. We will not accept applications under this goal that propose only minor development activities, and are mainly focused on testing the impact of an intervention. Development projects should include iterative development of the intervention, and they should culminate in a pilot study that can use a variety of different research designs. To make sure that the focus is on development, there is a maximum of 35 percent of project funds that can be used on the pilot study.

The Efficacy and Replication goal supports four different types of projects: (1) efficacy studies to test whether or not a fully developed intervention is efficacious, under routine or ideal conditions, (2) replication studies to generate additional evidence for an efficacious intervention by either directly replicating the intervention or varying the original conditions under which it was tested, (3) efficacy follow up studies, which test the longer term impacts of an intervention that has been shown to have beneficial impacts in a previous or ongoing efficacy study, and lastly (4) retrospective studies which analyze historical secondary data to test an intervention implemented in the past. These projects will result in data regarding the impact of an intervention, and also information about what is needed to implement the intervention under routine practice. We do not require confirmatory mediator analyses for these projects, but we do recommend exploratory ones. And also, keep in mind that, for efficacy projects, it's important to include a plan to ensure the objectivity of the research, which would involve reducing the

appearance of conflicts of interest for the developers and the evaluators, if they are involved as personnel.

Effectiveness studies support the independent evaluation of fully developed education interventions with prior evidence of efficacy to determine whether they produce a beneficial impact when they're implemented by the end user under routine conditions in authentic education settings. Routine conditions means the normal day -to-day activities of an authentic education setting. This goal will also support effectiveness follow up studies, but not retrospective studies. And these studies differ from the efficacy and replication studies in several ways. First, the intervention must already have been found to have beneficial impacts by at least one prior efficacy study. Second, the intervention must be implemented under routine conditions. Third, the research team involved in the evaluation must be independent of the intervention. And fourth, the award duration is longer and the cost maximums are higher for effectiveness studies.

The last goal is Goal 5 Measurement. This goal supports two types of projects: (1) development or refinement projects, which seek to develop a new assessment, or refine an existing assessment; or (2) validation projects, which validate an existing assessment for specific purposes, contexts, or population. These projects must link the assessment to student education outcomes, if you're applying for 305A, and if you're applying for 324A, it must link to teacher and/or other instructional personnel outcomes as well as student education outcomes.

This applies to all of the funding opportunities that we're going to talk about today - please read the full RFA very carefully. There may be changes from the previous year, and we try to highlight these changes within the RFA. So, you can pay special attention to that section. The specific section for the 305A and the 324A is shown on the slide here. But, read the entire RFA carefully – we can't emphasize that enough!

This table shows the duration and award maximums for 305A and 324A. You'll notice that the amounts and the duration differ, depending on the type of work that you plan to do within a goal. So, pay close attention to this in the RFA and also when you submit your application. And I'll also note that for the Special Education Research grants, 324A, the maximum amount of funding that may be requested under each research goal, is reduced from recent years.

This date shows important dates and deadlines. Letters of intent were due May 5. If you missed the deadline to submit a letter of intent and you intend to apply, then we encourage you to let your program officer know that you intend to apply and send them a synopsis of your proposed project. Applications should be submitted electronically via Grants.gov no later than 4:30:00pm, Washington, DC time, on August 4, 2016. Submit early! And, make sure to check your submitted application to ensure all of the components are uploaded and accurate (e.g., all appendices are included and the overall budget does not exceed what is allowed). This is particularly important if you are not the individual uploading the application (e.g., your institution's sponsored research office uploads proposals).

Now, I'm going to talk about the research training grant programs. NCSER and NCER fund several types of training programs. These programs aim to prepare individuals to conduct rigorous research that advances the field and addresses issues that are important to policymakers

and practitioners. In 2017, NCER will be funding applications for training under three different topics. The Pathways Training program funds training programs for upper level undergraduate students, recent graduates, and/or master students at minority serving institutions, as well as institutions of higher education that partner with minority serving institutions. So, the program places a special emphasis on recruiting students from underrepresented groups. The Postdoctoral Training program funds programs to prepare post-docs to conduct high quality, independent education research. And the Methods Training program intends to support training of current education researchers to maintain and upgrade their methodological skills - these trainings should respond to the ongoing development and adaptation of methods concerning the design of education studies, data analysis, and also practical interpretation of results. And in 2017, NCSER will be accepting applications for the research training program under one topic only - the Early Career Development and Mentoring topic. This topic provides support for a research plan, and also a career development plan that includes training under the guidance of experienced mentors. To be eligible for this grant, early career researchers who will be the principal investigators must be within three years of receiving their Ph.D., or completing a post-doc when they apply. And just a reminder here that the 2017 teacher focus of the Special Education Research grant that I mentioned previously does not apply to these Early Career grants.

These are the award parameters for the research training grants. And you'll notice here that the different topics within each of these training grants have different duration maximums and maximum awards. So, pay close attention to that in the RFA.

Here are some important dates for the training grants program. The date to submit the letter of intent has passed; however, if you missed the deadline but you still intend to apply, then we encourage you to contact your program officer, let them know that you're intending to apply, and also send them a synopsis of your proposed project to make sure it fits with the competition. And if you already submitted a letter of intent, we will respond to these, and acknowledge receipt of the letter. We'll give you suggestions about the project, and also some links for resources, webinars, and submitting your application. And now, I'll just reiterate that applications are due August 4th, 2016, at 4:30 p.m. sharp, D.C. time.

Now, I'm going to talk about the Low-Cost Short-Duration Evaluations. In 2017, both NCER and NCSER will compete this program. These grants are designed to support rigorous evaluations of education interventions that a state or local agency expects to produce improved education outcomes for students within a short period of time. NCER's Low-Cost program, 305L, will support evaluations of interventions for students in pre-kindergarten through adult learners, whereas NCSER's program, 324L, will focus on infants, toddlers, children, and youths with or at risk for a disability. These projects will be carried out by a partnership between a research institution and a state or local education agency. For NCSER, that agency partner can also be a non-education agency that manages early intervention services.

The Low-Cost Short-Duration Evaluations must rely on administrative data or other sources of secondary data to analyze the impact of the intervention. Evaluations should use randomized controlled trials or a regression discontinuity design to determine the impact of these

interventions on student education outcomes. And for NCSER's Low-Cost program, you can also use single-case experimental designs to analyze the impact.

Here are the award parameters for these grants. These grants have to be conducted within a two-year period of time, for no more than \$250,000. The funds must be used solely for the evaluation. So, the funds can't be used to support implementation of the intervention. These costs are expected to be covered by the state or local agency partner.

For the Low-Cost program, the same rules apply for the letter of intent. If you missed a deadline, let your program officer know. And these applications are also due August 4th, 2016. Okay. I'm going to turn it back over to Erin to talk about the statistical and research methodology of grants.

Erin Higgins:

I'm going to talk about the last few grant programs that we're offering through the National Center for Education Research, NCER. This next one is the 305D, the Statistical and Research Methodology in Education program. This funds projects intended to expand and improve the methodological and statistical tools available for education researchers. The idea is that these tools will be used to improve the design of research studies, analysis of research data, and interpretation of research finding. We're offering two topics this year, the regular grant topic, and the early career topic. The early career is intended for researchers who've completed their doctorate within the last five years. The main differences between these two topics are that the early career grants topic has some additional requirements regarding personnel and the maximum project duration and maximum award amounts differ. But otherwise, the purpose is the same, and in general, the rest of the requirements are the same.

The next program I'll talk about is the 305H Partnerships and Collaborations Focused on Problems of Practice and Policy program. The idea here is that research activities should be carried out by a partnership between a research institution and a state or local education agency. There are two topics under this program. The first is the researcher-practitioner partnerships in education research topic, where the goal is to carry out initial research on an education issue of high priority for that particular education agency that has important implications for student outcomes. The end of the project should result in the partnership being well-established, a description of the education issue that was addressed, findings from any initial research and hopefully a plan to carry out the future research that's of interest to both parties through continued collaboration. The goal of this grant is really about partnership building. The next topic is the evaluation of state and local education programs and policies topic where the goal is to evaluate fully developed programs and policies implemented by education agencies to determine if they produce a beneficial impact on student outcomes. Again, the key thing for both of these topics is that these research activities are carried out in a joint partnership between the research institutions and a state or local education agency.

The next program I'll talk about is our research networks program. Within this program this year, we're offering two topics. They are: Exploring Science Teaching in Elementary School Classrooms and Scalable Strategies to Support College Completion. Broadly, this program is intended to focus resources and attention on high priority education problems or issues and to

create a structure for collaborative sharing of ideas, building new knowledge, and strengthening research and dissemination capacity. In order to do all of those things there are multiple roles that an applicant could take on in this network. One is the research team role, where you would carry out your own individual research project and participate in the collaborative activities around dissemination and potentially even research. The second role is the network lead role, where you would coordinate the network's collaborative activities and conduct research that compliments the research team. You can apply to one of these roles or both of them. But a particular set of applicants cannot apply -- cannot have multiple applications to the same role and same topics. In other words, you can't be the PI on two different research team applications to the science teaching networks competition, for example.

Each of these topics is highlighting an issue identified as a critical need. The science teaching network is intended to support up to four research teams to conduct research on the science teaching actions associated with improved education outcomes for early elementary school students with a special focus on students from low-income or underrepresented groups. Also, there will be up to one network lead whose role is to facilitate collaboration, but also to conduct some complimentary research in the area. In particular, the network lead might convene members for meetings and ensure that the network functions smoothly and accomplishes its goal. The ideal network lead will respect different perspectives, encourage collaboration and foster innovation.

The college completion network intends to fund up to three research teams to join other teams funded in the 2016 competition to evaluate the impact and determine costs of interventions designed to support increased degree attainment among students attending open and broad-access institutions. There will be up to one network lead funded, similar to the other topic, who is going to play the critical role of convening members for meetings, supporting the smooth function of the network and ensuring that the network is promoting these different perspectives, collaboration and then fostering innovation. In this topic, researchers may propose--for the research team role--to study interventions that are either fully developed or an intervention that does require some development as long as an efficacy study can still start no later than the beginning of the third year of the award. More details on this are in the request for application. So, if this sounds of interest, I encourage you to look at that document.

Here are the award parameters for the programs I just went over. We'll go back now to 305D, the statistics and methodology program and 305H, the partnerships and collaborations program. As you see here on your screen, there are different budget and duration maximums for the topics within those programs. These differ a lot based on the topic you choose, so make sure that you pay very close attention in the RFA to these maximums. That's true across all of these competitions, but in particular here, there's a lot of difference between the different topics in particular programs.

Within the network program, all of the different topics and roles are for a maximum duration of five years, but the award amount maximums do differ by the role that you choose to be, whether that's the research team role or the network lead role.

And as Katie's already mentioned, we have these letter of intent deadlines that have already passed, but like all of our other programs, if you intend to apply, please reach out to the program officer. Write a description of the project so the program officer has a sense of what you plan to do, and that starts a conversation around whether this is a good fit for the work that you intend to do. And then of course you can ask specific questions related to your ideas in your correspondence with that program officer. Like everything else we've gone over so far, the deadline is August 4, 2016 at 4:30 and 00 seconds, Washington, D.C. time. That completes our discussion of the specifics of the programs that we're offering this year.

I'm going to spend the rest of the webinar going over a little bit more about the application submission process. I'm going to be very high level about it and then I'll talk about what happens after the application is submitted very briefly in terms of what the peer review process looks like, and then how you get notified of what happens to your application down the road. I'll note that we have two webinars being offered on the IES application process, which will go into depth on how to submit the application. Those are Wednesday, June 8 from 1-2:30 pm Eastern Time, and Thursday, July 14 from 11-12:30 pm Eastern Time. If you are the person submitting the application or if your institution is going to be submitting an application for the first time or even, you know, for the 27th time, it's probably good to get a refresher on this. There's a lot of details around how to use the grant system and complete the application package and this webinar provides you with a little more of that than we'll cover here. First, to find an application package you need to go to the grants.gov website, it's not available on our IES website.

The grants.gov website looks like this. In the back of the request for applications for the program that you are applying to, there is a lot of detailed information about how to find a package on grants.gov, and then how to fill it out and the kinds of information that go in each section. Again, we're not going over that today. If you have questions about it, please plan on attending one of these other webinars. Program officers typically aren't going to be your best first resource when it comes to issues with grants.gov, so I encourage you if you run into any technical problems to first talk to the grants.gov help desk.

In addition to the application package, as we've already been saying over and over again, you really need to have the request for applications downloaded on your computer and you need to read through everything that's relevant for the particular topic, and in the case of our standing Education Research Grants and Special Education Research Grants programs, the goal that you plan to apply to. Make sure that you've read through that request for applications. Like I also just mentioned, the RFA provides a lot of information at the end of the document about how to submit your application through grants.gov.

Once you've successfully submitted your application by 4:30 and 00 seconds p.m., Washington, D.C. time on the application due date, your application will then be put into our queue and it will go through the peer review process. The first thing that happens is that your application is reviewed for compliance and responsiveness to the RFA. Compliance would be things like you've adhered to the number of pages for the narrative. Each program has a maximum number of pages that you can use for your project narrative. If you go over it, that would be considered being not compliant to that particular requirement. Compliance also includes other things, like you've used the appendices appropriately. Responsiveness would be that you are attentive to the

requirements for the specific topic that you choose within a particular competition, and again, in the case of our 305A and 324A competitions, that you've been responsive to the requirements for the particular goal that you select for your application. It's really critical that you meet those minimum requirements so that your application is deemed to be both responsive and compliant. Once applications are screened for that, they are assigned to a review panel. Two or three panel members are named primary reviewers for a particular application, and they have the content and methodological expertise necessary to look at your application and write a thorough review. Once they complete that review, the most competitive applications are then reviewed by the full panel and discussed. Scientific merit scores are given to those applications discussed by the full panel. From there, we make funding decisions, and then we contact all of the applicants. We give them the statements from the reviewers. The primary reviewers will write reviews that you can then have access to and use so that if you did not receive funding, you can potentially resubmit your application and use those reviews to make some key changes.

In order to find information about the reviewer summary statements, et cetera, when the time comes, you'll receive email notifications from our applicant notification system on the status of the award and that you can download your reviewer summary statements. If you are not granted the award the first time, please reach out to the program officer for the topic you're applying to. He or she is happy to talk to you about your reviews and strategies for addressing those through a resubmission.

Here are some other things to keep in mind as you write your application. We have this great set of resources on our website. Our Resources for researchers page is where you can find not only the links to the webinar series, but also methodological resources. It includes some resources for new tools and data sets that are available that you could incorporate into your research. The website also has information -- more information than what I went over here--on the peer review process as well as tools to look at what IES has funded in the past, which is really helpful when it comes to figuring out what kind of work makes sense under a particular topic or goal. As I've already mentioned, there are many other webinars that you should be thinking about participating in. The application process overview is one, but we also have some webinars that are specific to particular programs, for example, the networks has a webinar coming up that goes into depth into that particular competition. Visit our website to see if there are any webinars that would be of interest to you.

Here's that resources for researchers' page. There's a screenshot there showing you all the great information that you can find from our site. Again, because of the newly designed website, hopefully it's much easier to navigate than it might have been before, and you can find this information pretty quickly.

Here are a few reminders to leave you with. Read this request for applications for the competition that you're interested in applying to. We can't emphasize that enough. Then if you have questions after you have read it, please reach out and ask us. Look at the abstracts of funded projects as we've also already mentioned to get a sense of the kinds of things that tend to come in under the particular competitions that we're offering, and then take part in these webinars. Here's the link to that if you forget where it is. And then finally, discuss your research idea with a program officer. We're happy to talk to you. We're happy to answer short

questions through email. We're also happy to set up longer calls to really hear what it is that you're proposing and respond to it and ask our own questions to get more information so that we can help you decide if it's a good fit for the work that you're trying to do.

If time allows, program officers are willing to review application materials and give you feedback that way, too. Please call or email us early in the process, read the RFA, and we can help in many ways. Don't be afraid to ask us. I'll leave you, then, with our email and with the funding page. But I would say if you have a question that's very specific to your idea, the first place you should really go is to the program officer listed for that topic. But Katie and I are happy to help point you in the right direction if you're not sure where that would be. I'll stop there and then I know we probably have some questions. So, we'll try to answer those for you.

Q&A:

Erin Higgins:

We have one question about how one becomes a reviewer for IES. Katie and I are not part of the Standards and Review Office. But if you send one of us your CV, we are happy to forward it on to the Standards and Review Office. And that goes to all of you on this call. If you're interested in becoming a reviewer, you could send it to us or send it to the program officer you've been working with or you will be working with and just say "Hey, this is something I'm interested in." And then we have a process here where we just forward that information. The Standards and Review Office will review the CVs and decide what kind of expertise they need for a particular panel.

Katie Taylor:

We also got a question about how to decide between different topic areas. So, if your project could span multiple topic areas, how do you choose one topic? The RFA can provide some guidance on this because there are some considerations and requirements for each of the different topic areas. But this is also something that you can discuss with the program officers. If you send a synopsis or if you schedule a call then we can make recommendations about topics.

Erin Higgins:

There's also a question about the new system for submitting researcher CVs and resumes, ScienCV, and about the timing of the availability. I believe the bio sketch template should be up on the site that is listed in the back of the RFA by early June. Check back then. If you still have trouble finding it, send the program officer that you plan to work with or are working with an email and inquire and hopefully we'll have updated information for you at that point. But early June was the goal, I think, for getting the template out there on that site.

There's a question about what the definition of a minority-serving institution is for the training program through the NCER training competition. In terms of that, I would encourage you to go to the RFA, if that's something that you're interested in, and read the definition there. It's a very technical definition that should help you understand whether or not your institution would be appropriate for that competition.

Katie Taylor:

There's also a question about the links for faculty and researchers. This is in the "for researchers" section on the website. So, if you click the menu, it will provide a drop down list of options, one being, "for researchers." That's where you can see the different links and resources.

Erin Higgins:

Okay. I see a question about looking at past funded projects. If you're applying to a special topic where should you look? So, the arts and education, career and technical education, and homeless and highly mobile student special topics have not been competed before, that's correct. But I think that you can still use that project database to get a sense of what people do in a particular research goal. So, you can actually search in that database by goal rather than by topic. And so, if you're interested in applying to, let's say, the arts and education topic and the exploration goal, I would encourage you to just look at the exploration goal and keep topics blank so that you get a number of different types of projects across topic areas but it gives you still a general sense, hopefully, of the kinds of things that come in under the exploration goal. And then I would encourage you to talk to the program officer for the topic you're interested in to get a good sense of the topic and some of these other considerations.

Katie Taylor:

So, there's also a question about whether an ongoing research agenda can receive multiple grants over many years as it moves from exploratory to efficacy. A research team can receive multiple grants through IES. And the idea is for researchers who start off with an Exploration grant to be able to move to Development and Innovation grant. Once they're aware of the intervention targets, then you can apply to develop and test an intervention that address those targets. There is also room for flexibility when moving from goal to goal (e.g., you don't necessarily have to move from Goal 1 to Goal 2; you could move from a Goal 1 to a Goal 5).

Erin Higgins:

I see a question on whether there is room for research that looks at teacher training and teaching of English? I'm assuming as a second language. So, we have an English learners topic within the National Center for Education Research education research grants program. I would encourage you to look at that topic if English learners is the student group that you're focused on. And within that topic, you can propose to do work focused on instruction and teacher professional development. But you still also need to include measures of student education outcomes under that topic.

Someone is asking, "How much in advance of a deadline should we contact a program officer with a draft proposal if we want them to read it?" I would encourage you to contact the program officer now and say, "Hey, heads up, I'd like to send you a draft. Is that okay? And do you have time to give feedback?" Each program officer sets their own deadline depending on the number of applications they tend to handle. So, I would say find out now what they're thinking in terms of their own timelines and when they'll have time available and then try to get your draft to them by that deadline.

Some of you have submitted some pretty specific questions that I think reflect some thinking about your own ideas and ways to improve your idea and making sure your idea's a good fit for

the topic and/or goal that you're applying to. And for those specific questions that we might not have addressed here, please reach out to the program officer for that particular competition or topic and they will happily provide you with the kind of feedback that I think you're looking for.

I do see a question about, "Most of the awardees appear to be institutions of higher learning. Are public school districts eligible?" We say in our request for applications (RFA) that any institution that has the capacity to conduct scientific research is eligible to apply. It just so happens that many of our grantees do come from institutions of higher education. But that is probably more a reflection of the number of applications we get from those types of institutions as opposed to others. But it doesn't mean that we only fund those groups. So, anyone who has the capacity to conduct research is eligible. You just need to make sure that you look at the personnel and resources requirements for the competition you're interested in and make sure that you're able to meet those. And if you are, then you're definitely able to apply.

Katie Taylor:

There was a question about whether applications from junior researchers or PIs who haven't been previously funded are at a disadvantage to those who have worked with IES. What I would suggest if you're a junior researcher or you haven't had previous IES funding, you should focus on building a strong team. It will be critical to ensure that you have the appropriate content and the methodological expertise on your team so that the reviewers see that it's feasible for your team to carry out the project and do high-quality work. Also keep in mind that if you are an early career researcher, you're within three years of receiving your PhD or completing a post-doc at the time of applying, then you'd be eligible for an Early Career grant, which may be a good place to start.

Kim Sprague:

Okay, so, I think we're going to go ahead and end the webinar. If you have additional questions that we didn't answer, again, feel free to email us or email the program officer for the competition that you're interested in applying to.

Thanks for listening!

[end of transcript]