



Institute of Education Sciences Research Funding Opportunities Webinar Series

Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in
Education Research

Webinar Transcript

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U.S. Department of Education

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**IES Research Funding Opportunities Webinar Series
Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research
(Topic 1 under 84.305H)**

**U.S. Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences**

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**Transcript
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Slide 1

Good afternoon everyone. I am Allen Ruby, and I am joined by Amanda Hoffman, who will also be here to answer questions specifically aimed at special education research. Today, we are going to talk about the Research-Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research. This is topic one of a new IES Request for Applications, 84.305H, which is titled, “Partnerships and Collaborations Focused on Problems of Practice and Policy.”

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For the talk today, we will give a quick overview of IES and its mission; then an overview of the new partnership topic—its purpose, its requirements; the main part of your application (the project narrative) and some other important sections of the application—and then a little information on preparing and submitting your application.

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The legislative mission of IES is to describe the condition and progress of education in the United States, to identify education practices that improve student academic achievement and access to education opportunities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

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IES has a Director (John Easton), appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate; and a board to advise the Director, also appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Under the Director are four centers. There is the National Center for Education Evaluation, which does large contracted-out evaluation studies—usually randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and regression-discontinuity designs (RDDs); and there is the National Center for Education Statistics—you may be familiar with the data they collect, the surveys they do, and the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems program they run. Then, there are the two grant-making centers: the National Center for Education Research and the National Center for Special Education Research. The former is where the grant program we are talking about today is located. Those centers contain the Program Officers you can talk with about your research ideas and grant opportunities.

The Program Officers are not involved in the peer review process. There is a separate office, known as the Standards & Review Office, which belongs to the Office of the Director. This Office handles the peer review process, picking the reviewers and coordinating the reviews themselves, which allows our Program Officers to work more closely with you.

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The purpose of the grant programs is to answer four questions. What works to improve student education outcomes so we can more widely disseminate those types of practices, programs, and policies? Which of these are not working so we can stop disseminating them? What works for whom and where? Not every intervention works for everyone, so we want to know with whom it should be used or in what types of settings it should be used. Why does something work? That is so we can better understand how to improve education and build on that understanding.

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The Director sets the Institute's priorities, which are also approved by the Board. Partnerships have become of growing importance in these priorities. You can see here (on slide) the two ways the priorities address partnerships. First, IES focuses research on the issues that most concern policymakers and practitioners. Second, IES helps researchers communicate their findings in useful ways. Policymakers and practitioners are to have a strong role through these partnerships in setting the research agenda—and there is to be constant communication between the researchers and the practitioners on what is being found and what further research should be done.

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Research partnerships were always possible under the Institute's two primary grant programs, the Education Research Grants program and the Special Education Research Grants programs. In 2009, IES started requiring partnerships under a new grant program, the Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies. In 2012, the Institute began a program to foster research partnerships known as the Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research. This year, IES has fused together two partnership programs, the State/Local Evaluation and Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships, and added a new topic, Continuous Improvement Research in Education to create the new request for applications (RFA). The slide shows the names of the three topics, and today we will focus on the first topic, Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships.

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Let's move into topic number one, Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research. The purpose of this topic is to promote joint research by research institutions and state and local education agencies. The focus of work supported under this topic should be on education issues of high importance to the education agency that will directly contribute to their program and policy decisionmaking. This topic provides an opportunity to both develop the partnership through joint initial research as well as to develop a longer term research plan. It is intended to foster longer term research partnerships that are to continue on after the grant.

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Very broadly, the purposes of these grants and the partnerships that are formed or supported through them are 1) to propose research on an education issue of high importance for improving student achievements that is of high priority to the education agency; 2) to carry out some initial research regarding that education issue; and then 3) to develop a plan for further research on the issue. That further research may take many different forms. It may be a deeper examination of the type of research initially done. It may lead to proposing the development of a new program or a policy, or it may lead to evaluating an existing program or policy.

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This slide addresses what is expected from a partnership that has received a grant. First is a description of the partnership as you develop it over the grant; second is a description of the education issue being addressed by the partners; third is a discussion of the results from the completed initial research and then a plan for the future research, along with recommendations for how the partnership could be maintained over the longer term after the initial grant ends and perhaps some lessons learned from

developing the partnership that could be used by others in forming such partnerships. I mentioned these partnerships could always have been done, but trying to help people develop these partnerships is fairly new for IES, so we are trying to draw from this work—not only the research being done but the strategies leading to successful formation of the partnership, in the hope that the knowledge will be of use to others as well.

We are going to move on now to some of the specific requirements for the work.

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IES's focus is on research that improves the quality of education for all students. Therefore, all our research must address the education outcomes of students. These student outcomes can be grouped under academic outcomes as well as social and behavioral outcomes that support student success in school.

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These academic outcomes and social behavioral outcomes are for students from prekindergarten through postsecondary and adult education. These outcomes are for typically-developing students, as well as students with, or at risk for, disabilities. If you are going to work with students with, or at risk for, disabilities, take a look at the website posted here (on the slide), because there are specific requirements for how IES defines at-risk.

Because you can choose to focus on typically developing students or students with/at-risk of disabilities makes this grant program different than our Education Research Grants programs (84.305A). Under 84.305A your focus must be on typically developing students. You can look at students with disabilities as a subpopulation, but your overall population should be typically developing. Here, under this grant program, (84.305H), if you want to focus solely on students with disabilities or at risk for disabilities, that is fine, and you can make a submission focused on that population. However, unlike the Special Education Research Grants program (84.324A) you cannot focus on children from birth to age 3. You must start with students in prekindergarten (age 3 or above).

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Let's look at some of the outcomes of interest that you would want to address by the age/grade the students are in. If you are looking at a prekindergarten group, the required outcomes are primarily those that would be considered school readiness such as pre-reading, pre-language, vocabulary, early math and science, and the social and behavioral competencies to actually engage in school. From kindergarten to grade 12, there are really two categories of student outcomes. One is what we might call learning

outcomes in the major academic subjects of reading, writing, math, and science such as standardized test scores and grades. The second is progress in the education system, such as completing a course, completing a grade, being retained, graduating from high school, or dropping out. Both include the social skills and behaviors that support this type of learning and progress.

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For postsecondary education (defined as baccalaureate and sub-baccalaureate) the outcomes are access to, persistence in, progression through, and completion of the education program (often degree or certificate programs). For students in developmental (remedial) education programs, you may also examine the additional outcomes of achievement in reading, writing, English language proficiency, and mathematics. Adult education students (who are 16 years or above and outside the K-12 system) are expected to be in such programs as adult basic education, adult secondary education, adult ESL (English as a second language), and GED (general educational development) preparation. For adult education students, the acceptable outcomes are student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics; as well as access to, persistence in, progression through, and completion of the adult education program.

Question: “How specific or broad can the outcomes be; for example, is it okay to target one skill area like biology scores in high school?”

Answer: “Yes, science is covered under both prekindergarten and K through 12. If you want to look specifically at one subject within science, such as biology, that would be acceptable. You could go further and address one topic within biology as well. But remember the outcomes are to be of high importance to the education agency. So, while you may want to use researcher-developed outcomes for specific topics to better understand exactly what students have learned, you will also want to use education agency outcomes (such as standardized test scores, end of course exams, exit exams, grades, and/or course passage).”

Question: “Would transition-related skills such as employability skills and self-determination skills qualify as outcomes?”

Answer: “I would say those would be acceptable secondary outcomes. You are still going to want to at least look at either the academic outcomes or the skills that support the academic outcomes as your primary outcomes. Then, you can use transitioning out of school into the labor market as an additional outcome. In short, to be truly responsive, you are going to have to include the academic and/or academic-supporting behavioral outcomes.”

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So, another specific requirement is that your application must be from a partnership. It can be a brand new partnership or it can be from a long-existing partnership, or something in between. It is a partnership between a research institution and a state or local educational agency. You must have a principal investigator (PI) from both of those institutions on your grant application. Your PI from the research institution must have the ability to carry out the research being done. The PI from the education agency must have decisionmaking authority over the education issue you are looking at in that agency. That means if you have a school and its principal involved in your study, that principal may have decisionmaking authority in that school, but he or she is unlikely to have decisionmaking authority for the whole agency. You would want to bring in a partner from the education agency as well and *that* person would be your PI to make sure that you meet this requirement.

Now, in point of fact, while you have two PIs, an application must come from one of the institutions. One institution will be the prime and will administer the grant, and the other will be the secondary institution. The institution that is the prime will have the PI and the person from the other institution will be called the “Co-PI,” even though both can have shared responsibilities and have shared credit for the work. IES has no preference for which is the prime institution. That should really be a decision between the education agency and the research institution—to determine who is most qualified, who has a history of running grants, and who would be better at administering the grant.

There is one major change from last year. Last year there was a restriction that any institution, be it a research institution or education agency, could only be on one grant application. That has been dropped for this year. That means your institution can be on multiple grants, with the same or with different partners to this grant program.

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The definition of a “research institution” is broad. To be eligible to be the research institution partner, you have to show that the institution has the ability to do this type of research.

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The education agencies include state education agencies, and these may include departments, boards, and commissions. Those are all eligible, as long as they are overseeing some aspect of education—early learning, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, higher education, or adult education. Also included are education agencies located in the U.S. territories and tribal education agencies.

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Education agencies also include local education agencies, primarily the public school districts. In some states, not all, there are community college districts, which are districts that tax or run the community colleges in them, and those are eligible.

There are also state and city postsecondary systems. Some states have a higher education agency that oversees their postsecondary system. For example, Texas has a Texas Higher Education Board. If you wanted to do work in postsecondary, you would have to bring in the state postsecondary system institution that oversees the postsecondary system in that state as a partner. However, if you are working in a postsecondary system, a city postsecondary system for example, for which there really is no city education agency overseeing the city system, and the state education agency is not managing that postsecondary system, then you can argue that the city system, or state system in some cases, does not have a corresponding education agency. In such cases, the postsecondary systems itself can come in as the education agency. So something you may want to talk to us about and justify in your application is who is coming in as the partner.

One other key point regarding postsecondary institutions is that a postsecondary system cannot study itself. If the postsecondary system applies as the education agency partner, the research institution must come from outside the postsecondary system. Similarly, if the postsecondary system (or any part of it) applies as the research institution, the education agency partner must come from outside that postsecondary system.

Education agencies do not include nonpublic organizations that oversee or administer schools, such as education management organizations or charter management organizations. Those groups can be partners, but you must include the public state or district agency that oversees the schools that are involved. I will also note that there are some very small local education agencies, in some cases even having one school. Those can apply as a partner, but the peer reviewers may consider that work less significant than projects involving multiple schools.

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One research institution and one state or local education agency is the minimum requirement for a partnership. You are also encouraged to include additional partners if they will increase the quality of the research. You will want to show that additional partners have similar interests. The purpose here is to show there is a reason for multiple organizations to be involved. For example, several education agencies may face a similar problem or agencies located in a region, especially small districts, may share common interests so it may make more sense to have a group of them come in together. Having multiple education agencies may also increase the significance of the proposed work.

Non-education state and local agencies may be partners, as long as the education agency is also a partner. If you are looking at a specific population, let's say you wanted to look at foster children, you would have your education agency, but you also might want to have your social service agency that works with foster children. If you are looking at students in the justice system and how they receive education, you have to have the education agency involved, but you may also want the juvenile justice system as a partner as well, because of their responsibilities for these students.

You can also include more than one research institution. Again, the point is to argue that they have shared interests and will make unique contributions to the work. You may include many other types of non-research organizations if you think they will improve the research, such as issue-oriented or stakeholder groups that you think will make a contribution to the partnership.

The one type of partnership that I would not recommend is the inclusion of multiple education agencies whose only similarity is that they have worked with the same research institution rather than they share a common education issue or problem.

Question: *"Is it okay to have multiple PIs from one institution?"*

Answer: *"Yes, that is perfectly fine, but one of them is going to have to be identified as the PI/project director, and the others will be listed as Co-PIs. We do need one person, the PI, who has the overall responsibility for overseeing the grants and is the primary point of contact with IES."*

Question: *"If you include more than one education agency, should you have a PI from each one?"*

Answer: *"Yes, if they are going to be a partner. Any partner should provide a Co-PI. For example, the foster children—if both the education agency and the social services agency are making large contributions to these children's education, you would probably want both of them to have a PI. If, on the other hand, there is a small role being played by an additional agency but you would like them to take part, and they are concerned about how much time they would have to contribute as a Co-PI you could have them provide a co-investigator."*

Question: *Somebody noted that their state does not provide public prekindergarten.*

Answer: *"I am going to ask you to e-mail a more detailed question. If you don't have a public prekindergarten agency, your state might have an office of early learning in the governor's office or a public early learning council, which would be fine partners. If you*

have no public organization, it is going to be difficult to find a match, and that is something we would have to talk with you about.”

Question: *“Can the lead PI be one of the partners who is not with the research institution or the local education agency (LEA) as long as these are Co-PIs?”*

Answer: *“The purpose of this work is to lead to both changes in policies and practice in the education agency and support an ongoing research partnership. So if the research institution and the education agency aren’t leading the work, but a third agency/organization is, I would like to know more before making a recommendation.”*

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Let’s move on now to the heart of your application. This is what we call the “Project Narrative.” It has four sections. You can use up to 25 pages to describe the work you are going to do. This is the section on which the peer reviewers focus most of their attention. First, there is a Significance section, which has two purposes: a) to explain the strength of your proposed partnership, and b) to explain the importance of the education issue on which your partnership will do research. Second, there is a Partnership and Research Plan, and, again, this has two parts: a) how you are going to develop the partnership over time; and b) what the research you are going to carry out is and how it will then contribute to a future research plan and longer term partnership. Third, there is a Personnel section to describe how you have the people with the expertise needed to do all the types of work you are proposing. Finally, there is a Resources section to describe your access and the institutional resources and relevant data sources that you will need to actually carry out the research.

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Let’s go through these sections one by one. As I mentioned, you are going to have to address two issues in the Significance section: the strength of the partnership and its importance; and the research aims of the project, including the importance of the education issue.

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You will want to describe the partners: the research institution and the education agency; other members of the partnership, their common interests and how they complement one another in the proposed work; and how everyone will contribute to the work and benefit from the partnership. Don’t assume that reviewers will know your partners by name. You will want to give some details on the research institution and the education agency, the past work they have done with education issues, the past work the research institution

has done working with state and local education agencies, and some information on the state and the local agency—e.g., data on its size, demographics, and policies.

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Let's talk about the stage of the partnership—a brand new partnership or a very mature partnership. Don't hedge here. It may seem easier for a mature partnership to argue for funding because reviewers will have more confidence that the partnership will continue to work together. On the other hand, some reviewers may say, "Well you have got a mature partnership, why do you need some funding to do a partnership grant? Why aren't you going on to a further grant that already assumes a partnership is in place?" Early partnerships may be very important for districts that don't have access to research or have not had access to strong research organizations in the past. Just clearly set out the stage of your partnership—how it was formed and what kind of evidence you show that you can work together (for an early partnership the evidence is mainly that you have a shared interest in the work to be done and have discussed how to do it). Note the research and decisionmaking infrastructure in place (e.g., holding regular meetings between the researchers and the agency personnel) and what are you going to put in place to make sure the partnership continues?

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Now if an education agency already has a partnership in place with another research institution, you will want to note that partnership and describe how your partnership will not be repetitive of the existing one. You'll want to be clear that the partnership you are proposing has a different purpose or focus than any already existing ones.

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You may want to consider some longer term possibilities. Now this is very speculative. You are just starting a new partnership project. Longer term joint research is a couple of years away and you want to do your proposed shorter term research to see how useful it is and how well you work together. As one of the purposes of these grants is to foster long-term partnerships, you may want to identify some structures you are going to try to put in place during this grant that will lead to future research of new issues—or even deeper research in the same issue—how you are going to go about developing these research agendas and plans for future work, and how you will obtain funding for future work.

A key issue regarding partnerships is what happens when leadership changes. Turnover can be high at state and local education agencies and can also occur at research institutions. So your partnership infrastructure should include not only leaders of both institutions but also the folks serving under them. Building these links is important to the continuation of the work in case of leadership changes.

A secondary issue is whether this partnership will improve the agency's capacity. There is a broad continuum of this type of work depending on the agency's capacity. For agencies that have a strong institutional research office, it might include doing some training—professional development for the agency's people to increase their ability to do research. For agencies that are small, it may be to help the agency consider research results when they are making decisions.

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Moving on now to the research aims, you want to discuss why this is an important education issue to research. First, of course, you have to describe the education issue in detail and show how it is linked to specific student outcomes—the ones we talked about earlier. You can make those links theoretically, and if there is empirical research showing such links, you can certainly cite these as well. You want to justify the importance of this education issue to the state/local agency. This may include agency work on this issue or perhaps newspaper articles on this issue. You want to show that the agency accepts that this is an issue of high importance. It is not just an issue of interest to the researcher who has then gone to an agency and said, “Hey, how would you like to get a joint grant, and we will do research on this issue that is primarily of interest to me, and you may learn something from it as well?” You also want to show how the work you are doing could provide knowledge that is useful to the agency's practice. So if the agency has specific decisions it needs to make in the future on this issue, setting out those decisions and showing how research might contribute to those decisions would make a much stronger application.

You have to link the education issue to student outcomes. Just to give you an example, bus transportation of students is very important to most districts, in part because it is expensive. Just looking at transportation by itself obviously doesn't link that well with student outcomes, but you could link it to student outcomes. There is work on later schedules for high school students to allow them to sleep later. Perhaps, we may be in large rural district where the price of gasoline has led the district to want to use a 4-day school week, and, therefore, we may look at the implications of that on students' academic outcomes. Making that link upfront and showing it is an important link to student achievement is key for your application.

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While not of primary importance, it never hurts to show that the education issue is not only important to this education agency but it is generalizable to other education agencies—agencies that may not be involved in the partnership—or important to the field of education research. So this work may not only help the education agency but it may also be useful to many agencies or contribute to a field of research.

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Let's move from the Significance section to the Partnership and Research Plan.

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In this section, you are going to discuss how the partnership will be established (or if it is already established, how it will be maintained); how the initial research you are going to do will be conducted; how a plan for future research will be developed; how the project's progress will be tracked; and how the project's success will be determined. I want to note two major changes from last year's competition. Last year, you were required to propose an analysis of the education agency's administrative data. That is no longer required. The type of research you can do is much more open-ended this year. Secondly, last year you were required to prepare an application to IES for a future grant; that is not required anymore. Now, you need a plan for carrying out future research. This year, though, we did add this last point about tracking your progress and determining your success.

If you are already coming in with a really clear research plan—a full research plan, you know exactly the analyses you want to do, you know the data are available to do them, you know you can do a survey on the school and the students or the teachers, and you really know what you are doing—you shouldn't be coming in for this grant program. This is really a preplanning program for future research. If you know what you want to do, you should really come in under our Education Research Grants program and say, "Here's the work I want to do." It may be exploratory research. It may be development or an evaluation, but you are ready to go. That is something to discuss with the Program Officers—determining why you need this grant to do some planning for future research to be done.

The partnership plan is how you are going to develop or further develop the partnership. This is supposed to take place around the research being done. IES is not looking to support more general partnership building. We are not talking about team-building exercises or getting-to-know-you activities.

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You are to build the partnership while doing the research—around discussions of the research agenda or how to carry out the work in the schools and what should be done.

You should discuss how the partnership is going to be deepened over the course of the project. How is the work going to be carried out and carried forward over time, and how will this then lead to building the capacity out of the partnership and the education agencies, and, hopefully, lead to a longer term collaboration? This should differ if you are a new or mature partnership. If you are a new partnership, you will probably spend a lot more time setting up the research questions, getting a joint understanding of the research issue of what research is, and what can be accomplished through it. While under a mature partnership, there is probably more of a shared vocabulary and you may be able to jump into the research a bit sooner.

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One of the requirements is that you actually carry out some initial research on the education issue. This type of research might be intended to support future research, so it may be issues such as the availability and quality of data, doing some field work to see what is actually going on in the schools that future research might address, seeing how broad the issue you are looking at is and how troublesome it is to the field, and finding the specifics that are causing concerns out in the field that a future larger research plan might address.

The work can be very exploratory, if there is not very much known about the issue. Or, conversely, it may be focused on some specific practices already being used, but not enough is known about them to actually go on and do a full-scale study. For example, there are many school districts now receiving their first influx of immigrant families, and districts may want to do some very exploratory work to see how many immigrants they have, where they are located in our schools, how teachers are addressing them, and how the parents are responding to the education being provided. All this would then lead to a much broader question of, “Do we need to develop some specific approaches or interventions to help these students and support the teachers and their parents?”

On the other hand, you might have a district with a longer history of immigrant children that has developed multiple programs, but over time has lost its understanding of how many programs it has, if they are working, and where they are located. You may actually want to go out and survey programs and set up a full evaluation of these programs. You don't yet have enough knowledge of them or who's involved to do the evaluation and this project can provide the information necessary for a future evaluation to see how well the district is educating these children.

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The types of research that can be done are very broad. You can do primary data collection and analysis. If the district has good secondary data, or you want to see if the district has good secondary data, you can look solely at secondary data analysis. You can also do a combination of both. You will want to discuss what your research design is and what its strengths and weaknesses are. Again, this is not going to be to the level of detail for a full research project, but there should be enough here so the peer reviewers can decide whether you can accomplish the work—that you can answer your research question through this work. So you want to discuss the population and sample. At what level are you looking—are you looking at a student level, classroom/school level, or multiple levels? What kind of measures are you going to be looking at and what is your analysis plan?

It can be solely quantitative. It can be mixed methods where you are using quantitative and qualitative work. If you want to focus solely on qualitative work, we would say, though, you are probably more likely to get funded if the qualitative work can be quantified and analyzed to some extent, and that the qualitative work is looking at a large enough sample to be considered representative across the education agency. Focusing on let's say a small study of three or four teachers probably will not be considered acceptable by the peer review panel.

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Again, IES is not expecting a fully detailed research plan, but there should be enough there for the peer reviewers to understand that this is going to address the education issue and the research questions surrounding it, that useful information will come out of this work that the education agency can make use of, and that you can build off this research in future work.

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You will want to also discuss the process you will be using for developing the future research plan—how the partnership will work together on developing this. Obviously you don't know the future research plan until you do the initial research, although you may have some idea which way it will go. You may be far enough along to say, "If it turns out this is happening, our future research plan would be an evaluation." But if you are not at that point you can talk more about the process—how the partnership intends to plan its future research agenda, obtain the commitments from everyone that would need to be involved in the process, and how the initial research is necessary for the future research.

If you have an idea of what your future research might be, you might want to build backwards and say, “In the long term, what I am trying to do here is develop an intervention that will keep foster kids, who get moved around a lot to different families, from being moved to different schools. My long-term goal is to find a way so that they stay in the same school.” Then you can describe your initial research in this project and how it will set you up to develop an intervention to keep students at their school. You may want to think a little bit backwards to justify how your initial research will be important to future research.

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Finally, we ask that you talk a bit about how you are going to track the partnership’s progress and determine its success. You may see upfront that you have some potential research weaknesses in the partnership. It may be that you are a new partnership so you don’t fully trust each other yet. You may need to set up some additional meetings early on, and then you can space them out over the future. You should have a timeline where you can track how you are going along. Then, if the timeline is not working, it may be because it was a bad timeline and you just need to juggle it, or it may be because you are not working that well together. Then you need some sort of system to help keep the partnership going, because you only have a 2-year grant here. You really can’t lose a lot of time with the partnership not working and then hope to complete the project. So, you will want to do a little check asking yourselves, “Are we building the partnership? Are we doing the initial research that is of use? Are we planning for the future research? How are we making progress along all three of these lines?”

Certainly, you should feel welcome to include any indicators of the quality of the research and say, “Well here’s how we intend to keep track.” IES doesn’t have a very strong rubric to give you and say, “Here, use this to track your partnership.” In some sense we are asking you to come up with a rubric in hopes of identifying useful indicators that we can then transfer to other folks who can use them in their work as well.

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That completes the two major sections of the Project Narrative. Let’s go on to the Personnel and Resources sections.

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In Personnel, you should think about all the work you are promising to do. In the Personnel section you want to identify each person and their expertise or experience in doing that work. When the reviewer reads the research plan, s/he can go to the Personnel section and say, “Okay, this person has the expertise to do this part of the research plan. That person has the expertise to do that part of the research plan.” What

you are not trying to do is list out, “So and so has won 30 different grants from organizations and has published a hundred papers.” What you want to say is “So and so is experienced and an expert in survey methodology as shown by these three grants and these six papers, and they will be in charge of the survey we are going to do, and they are on the grant for 10 percent of their time a year, which is enough time to oversee the survey.” It is a very focused section where you are saying, “There is work to be done. Here is who can do it. Here is why they can do it. They have enough time to do it.”

I previously mentioned the role of the PIs and how the PI from the research institution must have the skills to carry out the research, and the PI from the education agency must have decisionmaking authority for the issue being examined. You can have additional Co-PIs from the either the research institution or the education agency, maybe, an expert in some other aspect of the work to be done—a substantive expert or a methodological person.

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Sometimes high-level researchers or high-level people in the agencies who have very high salaries are interested in the work and want to take part, but don't want to take funds away from more junior people. Or sometimes education agency personnel are not allowed to receive outside funding. In both cases, these personnel can contribute time to the project without receiving grant funds. This is not a requirement and if someone wants to donate time, they should list this in both the Personnel section and in the Budget section to show that they are going to contribute some additional time; that way the peer reviewers know they are making a greater contribution to the project than is reflected by how much funding they are receiving. It is helpful to have a letter of agreement from these people and their supervisor stating that they are willing to contribute the time to the project.

One other thing we do ask for is at least one key person who is on the project for enough time to make sure things are going smoothly and on track. It may be a project director or it may a lower level person, but somebody must be there so anybody on the project can call them and say, “Hey, what's going on? I haven't heard anything for the past month. Are we actually making progress?” That person, conversely, can call people and say, “Look, you guys need to get this done in the next month for us to keep on our schedule.” Also, if anyone has experience working in this type of partnership, it is very useful to highlight this and the outcomes from the partnership work they have done.

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The Resources section is used to show that the institutions involved in the partnership can actually carry out the work and will contribute to the partnership; one point of this is the management structure. Again, you have at least two organizations. In some cases you will have multiple organizations, so how are they going to manage the work and keep it going on time? If there are going to be individual schools taking part, we have found in the past that some districts may say, “Yes, we want to do this research in our schools,” but the principal says, “No, I don’t have time to do this so I am not going to support it.” So, it is a much stronger application, if your research is going to take a part in the schools, for the principal to include a letter of agreement saying, “Yes, we are very excited by this research. We are certainly open to having our teachers interviewed,” or “We are open to having our students take a survey,” or something of that nature.

If secondary data is going to be analyzed, you want to make sure the organization that has the control of that data is willing to provide the data. This is important for administrative data in many places where there is a very detailed process to get the data. Now I know some states won’t give a letter saying, “You can use our administrative data” until after you get the grant, but you should at least have a letter that says, “The state sees this as useful research. If the grant is funded we will release the data within some specified period.” If school staff are to be heavily involved, taking part in surveys, observations, or logs, it is important to have some discussion of how their cooperation will be obtained, how much they know about this project, and how interested they seem to be in this project. The need for this stems from past experience where delays occurred when staff were suddenly told, “You are going to have somebody in your classroom on a regular basis,” and they didn’t know about it and they may not be as cooperative until they learn what the purpose of the work is.

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This is a new section added to the RFA. All applications go through a screening process, part of that is known as “responsiveness screening,” in which the substantive issues you are supposed to address in the RFA are checked. If you are not addressing them, your application may not be accepted for review. So, we created a new section that says, “For our four sections we discussed in the research narrative, make sure you include these points,” because if you don’t, it is possible your application will be considered non-responsive and will be not accepted. We have talked about these already—Significance, the Partnership and Research Plan, Personnel, and Resources. I won’t go over these as you can review them on your own.

Also, I will note that for this grant the maximum award is for 2 years and \$400,000. That doesn't mean you have to ask for the maximum. We would suggest that you have a good justification for the amount of money and time you are asking. If you ask for more than 2 years, or you ask for more than \$400,000, your application will not be accepted for peer review because you have gone over the limit.

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Now there are other sections of the application I just want to quickly touch upon so that you are aware of them—the appendices, the budget, and the budget narrative.

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Appendix A has a page limit of 15. This is an important Appendix if you are resubmitting an application from last year. You can use up to three pages to discuss how you responded to review comments. This is critical. There is often at least one of the reviewers from last year reviewing your application this year, and you can imagine that if you don't respond they will not be happy; so it is important to use this space. If you are arguing that you have changed the application so much you shouldn't be judged on last year's reviews, you may use the three pages to make that argument as well. In addition, you can include any figures, charts, or tables that supplement the Project Narrative. You can't put text in Appendix A, but you can use figures and charts and tables to give yourself additional room. If you are going to use any measures in your research—tests or surveys or protocols—you can include them in Appendix A as well. Pretty much anything else is going to be removed before the peer reviewers see it.

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Appendix B has a 10-page limit. If you want to look at a specific intervention or assessment in the district or the state, you can include examples of that intervention or assessment, curriculum materials, screenshots, or assessments, and anything else to show what you will be studying. The difference between this Appendix B and Appendix A is that Appendix A contains the measures you are using in your research. Appendix B contains the measures or materials being used that you are going to actually study in your research.

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Appendix C, which has no page limits, contains your letters of agreement. You have to have letters of agreement from all your research partners. Anyone contributing a PI or taking part in the partnership should have a letter clearly stating their role in the partnership and their commitment to the partnership. What are they bringing to the partnership? If there is going to be relief-time for a superintendent or for an associated commissioner, the agency's letters should say that, or if it is going to be part of their

regular duties to take part in this project, they should say that. If you have consultants, schools, or holders of data, they should also be providing letters.

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As we mentioned, the maximum award is \$400,000, and the maximum length of your project is 2 years. Again, you want to justify the budget you are asking for on the scope of your project. It certainly can come in for much less than \$400,000. You will include a detailed budget and a budget narrative that links the activities and personnel from the Project Narrative to the funds requested. It is important to use the Project Narrative to explain where the funds are going and why.

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Some important dates to stress—the deadline is September 4, at 4:30 p.m., Washington DC time. It says 4:30 p.m. and zero seconds, and that is actually quite important. When you submit your application on Grants.gov, there is a timestamp. The computer timestamps the time the application is completely uploaded. If it is after 4:30 p.m. and zero seconds it will be considered late. Late applications are not accepted for peer review, unless there was a problem with Grants.gov. That does not include Grants.gov being very slow on September 4, because many people are trying to apply. We really recommend that you try to apply at least 3 days early. Check for errors as well, because sometimes an error will occur and it will take a day or two for the e-mail to get back to you. Applying early gives you time to rectify the error and make an error-free submission.

I have two points about letters of intent (LOI). One, they are not required. If you are not ready to submit a letter, hold off. You can actually send an e-mail to the Program Officer and say, “I am interested in submitting to this, here is my idea, do you think it fits?” We use letters for two purposes. The Program Officers review them and then send you feedback saying, “This seems to fit,” or “You may have to make some modifications,” or “There may be another grant program that fits better.” The Standards & Review Office uses them to get an estimate of how many applications will be submitted and the topic areas; that helps them in planning and choosing peer reviewers.

Don’t spend too much time on a LOI. Certainly, if you have an idea, spell it out in a paragraph or two. If you don’t know all your partners just put in some of your basic partners. It asks you for a budget; give a best guess; don’t spend a lot of time trying to determine your actual budget. The letters of intent are only seen by us. They are not used by the peer reviewers. They are not used in your review. All the information is superseded by your application, so there is no problem if you have changed your idea a little bit or a lot during the time between the submission of your LOI and your full application.

On June 6, the application package will be posted on Grants.gov. Your project can start any time between July 1, 2014, and September 1, 2014. Think about your best start date. July 1 sometimes isn't the best start date. You may say, "Oh, nobody's going to be around in July." The principals and the teachers are coming back to the schools in August, it might be better to start in August when we want to do this work, and then have it end a month later than if we had started on July 1.

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The RFA is on the IES funding website. You can submit your LOI to the IES review website. The Application Submission Guide walks you through the application process and goes through all the paperwork. That is also on the IES funding website. The actual application package is on Grants.gov. It shows you here (on the slide) how you can find it. I am listed as a Program Officer, and I left off, mistakenly, Amanda Hoffman, but you can just use this address for her, amanda.hoffman@ed.gov.

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Question: "What happens when your application comes in?"

Answer: "It goes through a compliance screening for formatting. You will see in the RFA there are formatting requirements such as 25 pages. If you sent in a 27-page application, they'll chop off 2 pages. If you try to use a smaller font size, they may reject the application."

Then there is this responsiveness screening I mentioned earlier, where the Standards & Review Office looks at the actual program requirements. If your application meets the requirements it is then accepted and assigned to a review panel. You will have two to three reviewers. One will know the substantive issues you are discussing, and the other will know more about the methods you propose to use. If those two reviews score high enough, then your application goes to the full panel for discussion and review. The panel is a mixture of persons some of whom will know your topic and/or your methods and others who will be more generalists regarding your proposed work. So you have to write for both generalists and specialists to satisfy both of them.

The panel will then score each of the four sections of the narrative, and you will get an overall score as well.

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You will receive an e-mail notification that your reviews have been posted on the IES Applicant Notification System. The latest date for notification will be July 1, 2014, but we are hoping it may be earlier with this new notification system. A larger percent of awards

we make are to resubmissions rather than to initial applications, so if you don't get an award, we would suggest that you talk to the Program Officer, discuss with them how it was received by the peer reviewers and what changes might be made, and then resubmit if it seems likely that you can do a better job the second time, or third time in fact. We don't have a restriction on the number of resubmissions.

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For more information, please go to our website or contact me.

Question: *“Could I provide sample research aims of previously funded projects?”*

Answer: *“My constraint there is we competed this program for the first time last year. We have not publically announced the awards made. We plan to make those announcements by July 1st, so at that time I could provide you with the PIs to contact—who might be happy to discuss with you their sample aim. At this point I can't release information from past applications. If you go to <http://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/index.asp>, you can search by grant program (in this case Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships) to identify grants that were made last year.”*

Question: *“Is the charter school system an appropriate LEA?”*

Answer: *“Now I am not quite sure what you mean by a “charter school system,” and that is probably going to depend on how it is organized in your state. In many of the states with which I am familiar, the charter schools are organized under a state office of charter schools, or under the Department of Education, within which there is an office of charter schools. That office would be an acceptable partner. If you are in a large district and that district had an office of charter schools, that office would also be an acceptable partner along with a separate charter school or nonpublic organization that oversaw the charter schools.”*

If you don't have questions now but something comes to you over the next few months, please e-mail me.

This concludes today's webinar “Overview of Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research,” part of the Research 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.