

## Application Submission Process Webinar

Emily Doolittle:

Hi, everybody. My name is Emily Doolittle. I'm a program officer in the National Center for Education Research, and today we are talking about the application submission process. I have Erin Higgins here with me, a fellow program officer. She will be fielding any questions you submit via the chat function, and she'll share those with me if I need to answer those for the benefit of the entire group. And I do encourage you to please submit your questions as they come up, and I'll do my best to answer them. Anything questions that we don't get to during the slide presentation, we'll make sure to save to answer at the very end of the session today.

Today we are going to talk about how you submit a grant electronically using Grants.gov.

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Today we're going to talk about how you find the materials you need to submit your application, as well as different aspects of using Grants.gov. I'll also cover information about the content of your application, things that are important to know about formatting the application, and then at the very end, we'll go over some program-specific information.

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This year, we are competing a number of programs through our FY 2015 funding opportunity competitions. The application submission procedures that I'll go over today are relevant to the Education Research Program, which is identified by the CFDA number 84.305A, and the Special Education Research Program, which has a different CFDA number, 84.324A.

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We also have some other programs that are being competed through the National Center for Education Research. We have an Education Research and Development Centers competition. That number is 84.305C. And that has three specific topic areas that are being competed this year: Knowledge Utilization, Standards in Schools, and Virtual Learning. We also have a competition focused on Statistical and Research Methodology in Education. That's 84.305D. And then, finally, the Partnerships and Collaborations Focused on Problems of Practice or Policy, 84.305H.

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There are also training programs that we are competing this year as well. The first is the Research Training Program in the Education Sciences, 84.305B. And then, finally, there's also a special education training program, the Early Career Development and

Mentoring, which is 84.324B. Those are the FY 2015 competitions that we are competing this year.

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I did want to point out to you that there is currently a funding opportunity available that is relevant to fiscal year 2014 funding opportunities, and this is the National Research and Development Center for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth. This is a special competition. It has a separate application deadline. Keep in mind when we're talking about using Grants.gov and finding application packages, that there is this one unique special competition related to FY '14 funding. It has the same CFDA number as our other centers competition, 84.305C. Just make sure if you are applying to one of our R&D center competitions, that you are accessing the correct application package. I'll show you that when we get into the details of working with Grants.gov.

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Today, the first topic we are going to cover is, how do you find the materials you need to submit your application?

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To start, you're going to need to locate two things. First, you need the Request for Applications for the competition you're applying to. And this Request for Applications will include all the important requirements you need to know about for your application, specific information about writing your Project Narrative -- the content of your application, what the research is that you'll be doing -- and then, finally, the Request for Applications also includes information about submitting applications through Grants.gov. The second thing you need to start is the application package for the competition you're applying to.

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The RFA, or the Request for Applications, for all the current competitions can be found at two locations. The first location is the ies.ed.gov funding page, and the second location where you can also find the application instructions is on Grants.gov. When we get to Grants.gov and look at how you locate the application package itself, I will show you where you can also find the instructions, which are contained in the RFA.

[Slide 10]

This is a screenshot of the IES website. What you'll want to do when you go to the website is click on the funding opportunities tab, which you see at the upper right of your screen. It's circled in red.

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When you're on the IES website, we also strongly encourage you to sign up for the IES NewsFlash.

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The next slide shows you a screenshot where you can locate the NewsFlash. It's under News and Events. The NewsFlash is an email alert system that we use to share information on a variety of things that are available through IES, one of which is information about current funding opportunities. If you're not yet signed up for this NewsFlash, I really encourage you to do so. It's a great way to keep informed about things happening at IES.

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All right, back to the funding opportunities page on the IES website. Here we list out for you different steps you need to follow to apply for IES grants. And Step Three is "download the appropriate request for applications."

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Now I want to give you some information about important deadlines that are coming up. For this special FY '14 competition, Gifted and Talented, please keep in mind that if you are interested in applying to this particular funding opportunity, this has an earlier deadline than all of our other competitions. Applications for the R&D Center for Gifted and Talented Children and Youth are due July 22nd this year.

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All of the FY '15 competition applications are due about -- well, less than a month later -- but due in early August, August 7, 2014. The August 7 deadline applies to all of the programs that are competing grants through the National Center for Education Research, and the competitions through the National Center for Special Education Research.

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Now we're going to talk about how you find those application packages that you'll need to submit an application. As of right now, all of the FY 2015 application packages and that special FY '14 application package are available on Grants.gov, along with the Request for Applications that provide the instructions.

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Here is a screenshot of Grants.gov, and what I'm going to show you right now is what we feel is one of the easier ways to locate the packages that you'll need for your application.

You should go to the Search Grants tab, which is at the upper left of your screen, circled in red.

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When you click on the Search Grants tab, the easiest way to search is by the CFDA number. All education research competitions -- everything that's being offered through the National Center for Education Research -- uses the numeric CFDA number of 84.305. If you're looking at special education research competitions, you'll want to use a different CFDA number, which is 84.324.

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So back to the Grants.gov search, at the top upper-left corner, you see circled in red the field where you can type in the CFDA number.

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Keep in mind that when you enter the CFDA number, this search will give you more than one application package. I'm going to show you the list. You just want to type in the numbers of the CFDA number, like 84.305; don't put the letter associated with your competition yet. The search won't work for you that way. We're going to show you a search where we've entered the CFDA number for all NCER competitions -- 84.305.

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And that search -- you see at the upper left, we've circled in red the CFDA number we entered. And you'll see here that it gives you six different sets of funding opportunities. Once you get this list, now you need to make sure you get to the package and the instructions that are relevant to the competition you're applying to. here, let's say, for example, you want to apply to the Education Research Program, which is 84.305A. That's the last one on the list. At this point you want to double-check things, like the opportunities title and the CFDA number, to make sure that you are accessing the right set of instructions and package for your application.

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Here, we've entered -- or we've accessed the package and instructions that are relevant to the Partnerships and Collaborations Focused on Problems of Practice or Policy, which is CFDA number 84.305H. You can see that listed at the top. And we are going to go to the tab that will get us to the application package. It's sort of in the middle of the screen.

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When you're on that page, check things like the title of the program, the CFDA number, just to double-check that you have the right package and the right set of instructions.

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Once you click on the tab for the application package, you'll get this screen, and down there sort of towards the bottom right, you see a tab you can click that says "Download." That will take you to the page where you can access the instructions and the package.

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That brings you to this screen. Notice on the screen that Grants.gov asks you to enter your email address. I recommend you do this, because you will receive alerts from Grants.gov if anything about the funding opportunity has changed. I think it's worthwhile to enter your email here. You can certainly opt out of that, but I think just as a good safeguard, just in case any new information becomes available, or anything's updated with respect to the package or the instructions, you will be alerted to that.

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On the next page, this is where you get the package and the instructions I've talked about. Number One, Download Application Instruction. We've got that circled in red. That will pull up the request for applications for the competition you're applying to. The second one, Download Application Package -- and that's what we're going to focus on here today -- that will pull up the package that you need for your application submission.

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So we click on Application Package and it pulls it up for you. Here's another good opportunity to double-check you have the right information. Again, this is for an application to our Partnerships Program, 84.305H. Here you'll notice -- you'll want to pay attention to the -- both the title and the competition ID, which is 84-305H. you know you're in the right place; it says 2015, this is for the FY 2015 competition. You can also do things like check the opportunity close date, which is August 7, 2014. You know you've got the right package if you're submitting to this particular competition. And then there's also agency contact information there if you need to reach out to somebody at IES.

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What you'll see here in the package are a set of forms that you need to complete for your application. Notice that many of these are mandatory. By mandatory here, it means it's mandatory for Grants.gov. If you're submitting an application through Grants.gov, you're going to need to access each of these mandatory forms that are listed and complete them fully. Otherwise your application will be rejected by Grants.gov. Later on today in the presentation, I'll point out to you in addition some optional forms that are only completed if needed. We'll talk more about those later. For right now, we're going to talk about the mandatory forms.

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Before we get to the forms, though, I do want to go over a few more things about Grants.gov that are really important for you application submission.

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First and foremost, registering on Grants.gov. This is a very critical, critical step. Please start this process early. Bear in mind that your institution needs to be registered on Grants.gov. You do not need to register as an individual on Grants.gov. Double-check, and make sure that your institution is already registered. If you need to get your institution registered on Grants.gov, please keep in mind that it can take five or more business days to complete this registration. Grants.gov recommends that you allow up to four weeks for this registration to be completed. Please, please, please get on top of that if you haven't already done so.

If you're already registered on Grants.gov as an institution, you need to update that registration every year, and that can take up to three days to complete, please take care of these registration steps early to avoid problems later. A common hang-up for folks submitting applications through Grants.gov is discovering that their registration is not complete. Make sure that these things are taken care of early, that you don't end up getting into a situation where your application might be submitted late.

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In addition to being registered on Grants.gov, please pay attention to the different software requirements that are necessary for submitting an application. You will need Adobe software, both to read and fill out the application forms in the package, and to convert your Word or Excel, or other kinds of documents to PDF documents. That's the only kind of document that can be included in the application package. You're going to need at least Adobe Reader 10.1.14 to do this. Luckily, Grants.gov has a great place you can go to, to make sure you have the appropriate software, the most recent version, and you can also download a version you might need via the Grants.gov website. We've included that link here. You should check that out if you're unsure about what version of Adobe you have.

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Applications to IES must be submitted electronically using Grants.gov. This is an important thing to keep in mind. You cannot email a copy of your application to one of us. This is not considered to be an official application. It will not be sent forward for peer review.

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Also, in terms of a Grants.gov submission, a few different things are important to keep in mind. When you submit your application, Grants.gov will provide a date and timestamp to your application. IES requires that your application is fully uploaded and submitted, and date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30 and zero seconds, p.m., Washington D.C. time, on the application deadline date. Late applications will not be considered by IES. We have a very, very rigid time requirement for your application submission. If your application is submitted, and it has a timestamp of 4:30 and one second p.m. on August 7th, IES will consider that application to be late, and it will not be reviewed.

This deadline is really important. The seconds count. The things I said earlier about being registered are really, really critical. You don't want to get to a point where you're submitting at 4:00pm on August 7th, only to discover that your registration is not complete. That will make your application late, and it won't get reviewed. You need to really pay attention to the time when submitting your application. And as a reminder, if you're submitting to the Gifted and Talented competition, the special FY '14 competition, those applications have to come in by 4:30 and zero seconds, p.m., Washington D.C. time, on July 22nd.

It looks like we have a question that's come in from one of the participants. "Hi, I'm just wondering about the Office of Special Projects rule. Is this something the university's Office of Special Projects officer will do on the grant applicant's behalf, or is this something the applicant is also expected to do?" in terms of -- and I'm assuming you're referring to registration and submission. That's a good question. Typically this is something that your Special Projects Office will do. I think most institutions have an internal deadline where they ask that they -- that principal investigators for a research application submission get that to their Special Projects Office maybe one to two weeks in advance of this deadline that I'm talking about. And there is typically one login per institution through Grants.gov via that registration that I talked about. Multiple people might have access to that registration login, but it is typically the Sponsored Projects Office that will take care of the submission for you.

So there are two things to keep in mind there. Make sure you communicate with your Sponsored Projects Office about what time they want the application from you, and then make sure that they're aware of these registration requirements and this time deadline. Very, very important.

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If you try to submit an application in a paper format to IES, it won't be accepted unless you qualify for one of two exceptions or exemptions: inability to access the Internet, or lack of capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system.

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If you think that that is something that you qualify for in terms of an exemption, keep in mind that you have to submit a written statement to IES no later than two weeks before the application deadline, demonstrating that you qualify for these exemptions. Most people can submit through Grants.gov. I think this is an unusual situation, but just something to keep in mind.

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Now, if you have any problems working with Grants.gov -- if you have some technical problems, you're not able to access the forms, your version of Adobe doesn't seem to be right; lots of different things could be happening, you might be having trouble with registration -- please contact the Grants.gov Support Desk. We have their 800 number listed here. You can also email them, and then there's a general place on the website where you can submit requests for help, as well. When you contact them, they will give you a Support Desk case number. It's very important that you keep a record of this number. And once you have the number and you've talked to Grants.gov, I encourage you to also reach out to the relevant program officer, and tell the program officer here at IES what's going on, and what technical problems you're experiencing.

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This is important, because sometimes people get slowed down in terms of submitting their application. Sometimes these problems will make your application late. We will accept your application past the deadline only if IES can confirm that you had a technical problem with the Grants.gov system, like you know, the website goes down. It's got to be a problem with the Grants.gov system, not that you were unaware of a certain requirement, or you forgot to fill out a form, or you left an item on a form blank. If you're having problems at Grants.gov, and it's going to make your application late, make sure you have a case number and make sure you reach out to a program officer, because that would be the only way we would accept a late application. I will just tell you, though, that this rarely happens, and we don't often accept late applications. Really, everything that we're going to cover now about working on Grants.gov and the forms is really important, because I'm going to try to help you to understand all the things you -- all the kinds of problems you can avoid that may cause delays or problems with your submission.

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Once you submit your application using Grants.gov, the second you hit upload, Grants.gov will send you an email letting you know that they're aware that you're trying to submit an application. And when you get that email, it will contain a Grants.gov tracking number. And I've given you an example of the number here. It starts with the word "GRANT" and then a series of numbers. I strongly encourage you, once you begin that submission process, use the Grants.gov Track My Application link to make sure your submission is going to be on time and valid.

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And here's a screenshot of Grants.gov showing you where to find the Track My Application link. It's under the tab for Applicants.

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And that's what the page looks like. And you would enter that tracking number in the field there in the middle of the screen.

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Now, in addition to tracking your application using the Track My Application link, and your tracking number from Grants.gov, please also keep in mind that you're going to receive a series of emails confirming receipt of the application. The first three emails come from Grants.gov directly, and a final and fourth email will come from the U.S. Department of Education, IES. The first email is the one I mentioned to you. The very second Grants.gov sees that you're trying to upload an application, you'll get the first email that gives you the tracking number.

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And so, that's the first one that you'll see there. It confirms that you are attempting to upload an application. The second email is really important. Please keep a lookout for this one. The second email's going to tell you that your application is either successfully validated by Grants.gov -- that's what you want to hear -- or you'll get an email that tells you your application has been rejected with errors. Please be on the lookout for this email telling you that your application was successfully validated. Third, you'll get an email that says the Department of Education has retrieved your application from Grants.gov.

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And then, finally, you'll get a final and fourth email that comes from the U.S. Department of Education, and it will assign what we call a PR/Award number to your application. And I've given you two examples here of what that number looks like. For applications to NCER competitions, it will start with the letter R, and it has the numbers 305 -- that's the CFDA number that we've talked about already -- and then it'll have a letter, like A or B, depending on which particular competition you're applying to. It'll have the number 15, telling you it's for the FY '15 competition, and then the final four digits are unique to your application. Similarly for applications to the Special Education Research programs, they're very similar, except they have the numbers 324.

At this point, once you're assigned the PR/Award number by the Department, that's how you track your application from this point forward. At this point, the Grants.gov tracking number won't work. If you login to Grants.gov to find this application, it'll come up with

no results. I've had people panic at this point, but it just means that the application's been taken from Grants.gov and moved over to the Department. This is a good email to get; you've been successful, the application was uploaded and validated, and got to the Department.

However, if your application is late, and this is based on the timestamp that Grants.gov gives it, this email will tell you that it's late, and it will tell you that your application will not be given further consideration. even if you get it uploaded and validated and the Department gets your application, if it came in after 4:30 and zero seconds, p.m. on the deadline date, it's late, and it's not going to get reviewed.

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All right, I'm just going to check with Erin, do we have any questions thus far about Grants.gov? Okay. Now we're going to turn our focus to the content of your application.

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There are two sets of things. First, there are a series of forms that you'll need to complete, and then there are several PDF file attachments that you'll have to include that get attached to the forms. We're going to talk about all the Research and Related, R&R forms, and the assurances that you'll need to complete, and then all of these file attachments we're going to go over: the project summary abstract, the Project Narrative, there are several appendices that can be included, a bibliography; you're going to be asked to include a human subjects narrative; there's a narrative budget justification; and then, finally, bio sketches for key personnel, and information about current and pending funding support for those key personnel.

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All right, first, the R&R forms in the application package. The first thing you're going to notice when you're in the package looking at these forms is that some of the fields are highlighted in yellow and outlined in red. These are required fields that you must fill out. When you get into the application package, I recommend that you complete the SF 424 cover sheet first, because it will prepopulate other forms, and when you're in the package, please make use of the "check package for errors" button. This will be your friend as you're filling out the application package.

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So if we go to the next screen, this -- we're back to our application package. There are the mandatory forms that we're going to talk about, and we've circled in red the "check package for errors" button. This is something you'll want to use as you're working on the application.

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So, when you are in the package -- actually, could you go back one, Erin?

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When you click on the mandatory forms, like the SF 424 (R&R) form, that's the first one in the list, when you click on that link, it takes you, then, to the cover sheet that you need to fill out.

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And here you see the things that are highlighted in yellow, they've got red around them. All the things in yellow that are circled in red, you're going to need to complete in order to make sure the application is not rejected with errors, but I did want to draw your attention to one item that is not required by Grants.gov, but it is required by IES, and that is Item 4b, the agency routing identifier.

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We use this number for two -- actually, several reasons -- but the first and foremost is to screen applications when they come in for responsiveness to requirements of the competition. And the second reason we use the routing identifier is to make sure that we assign applications to the appropriate scientific peer review panel. I strongly encourage you to fill in Item 4b, because otherwise you run the risk of your application being rejected by IES as non-responsive. Make sure you've got the right codes in item 4b to route your application appropriately for screening for responsiveness to competition requirements, and to make sure it gets routed to the right peer review panel.

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You're going to find the right codes in the request for applications, and I've included them here. For the Education Research Programs, for training, the R&D Centers, the Statistics and Research Methods Competition, and our Partnerships Program, you see the codes that need to be included in Item 4b to make sure they get routed appropriately.

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For our Education Research Grants program, which is CFDA 305A, there you have two sets of codes that need to be used. Applications to that program need to be submitted to a particular topic and to a particular goal. For example, you might be submitting to the Cognition and Student Learning topic as a Development and Innovation project. In that case, you would include NCER-CASL and Development in Item 4b.

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Same for the Special Education Research Grants, 324A. This program also asks for topics and goals -- one topic, one goal for a single application. I didn't include in the webinar slides a code for the Special Education Training Competition because there aren't separate topics within this competition. If you're submitting an application to 324B, you don't need to include anything in Item 4b as a code.

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If you have any questions about what you should put into Item 4b, the request for applications will give you the information you need. Please refer to the RFA if you're unsure. It looks like maybe we have a question that's come in?

Erin Higgins:  
[inaudible]

Emily Doolittle:

Oh, okay. This is a good question. Somebody's asking, "Can the forms be filled out ahead of time, like before you submit the full application, or do you -- and do you submit all parts at once?" that's an excellent question. You can download the application package and fill out all these forms right now and save them on your own computer at home, because yes, indeed, you do need to submit all the forms, all at once, as a full package. You can start filling out forms now, save them on your computer, and be working on it, but keep in mind you won't be able to upload all of these parts, the full application, unless your registration is complete. Make sure that that's in place once you submit everything. But you submit it all at once as one full package. You don't submit the forms individually.

All right, this is the other Project Information form. It's a separate form in the package. This one's really important, because this is where you include most of your attachments, things like the Project Narrative, which is the information reviewers are reading to figure out what it is you're proposing to do.

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All right, what I'm going to do now is just go over a couple things about PDF files, because now we're going to get into the attachments. There are several things you need to make sure you do with your PDF files to make sure that this is going to work for Grants.gov, and allow Grants.gov to validate your application. You want to make sure, first of all, that all your PDF files are in a read-only, non-modifiable format, and you also want to make sure that each of those files is an individual file, meaning Grants.gov won't accept things like PDF portfolio files, or PDF files that are in a fillable format. Double check that you've got this read-only, non-modifiable format, and that it's an individual file. Don't try to attach a password protected file; that will get your application rejected by Grants.gov. Also make sure that each file attachment has a unique name. If you include two file attachments that have the exact same name, that will get your application rejected by Grants.gov.

Also, the file names can't be more than 50 characters, and you can't use any special characters, things like a percentage sign or the pound sign. You can't have blank spaces in your file, you can't use periods or accent marks, but you can use underscores to indicate word separation, that's all right, as well. Double check how you're saving the file attachments or that can cause you problems in Grants.gov.

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All right, all the file attachments that we're going to cover now have specific formatting requirements. We're going to talk about those a bit later in the webinar presentation, but please bear in mind that they do have specific formatting requirements, and make sure that you attach the file to the appropriate form in the application package.

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The first file attachment is the Project Summary/Abstract. This is an important one. It is limited to one page, single spaced. It goes at Item Number Seven on the Other Product Information Form. Please make sure that the information in the abstract matches the codes that I talked about for Item 4b on the cover sheet. Again, to go back to our example, an application to Cognition and Student Learning to do development work, make sure your abstract states that, and make sure the codes at Item 4b match that information in the abstract.

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The Project Narrative, there are different page limits for the Project Narrative depending on the competition you're applying to. Please consult the RFA to check out page limits for the Project Narrative. The Project Narrative is attached at Item Number Eight on the Other Project Information Form.

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The Project Narrative has four, sometimes five sections. Make sure to look at the RFA for information about this, but all Project Narratives will include a Significance section that articulates theoretically and empirically and practically why it's important to do the research that you're proposing, a section that describes your Research Plan, a section that describes Personnel for your project, and finally, a section that describes Resources. Please read the RFA for information about each of these sections. You'll go to Part Two of these RFAs to look at topic requirements; and then Part Three, which is unique to 305A, Education Research, and 324A, Special Education Research, describes requirements for goals.

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Please make sure that you number the pages of the Project Narratives. It's going to make it a lot easier for reviewers when they're reading this. You can use footnotes, but I recommend you use them very sparingly, or not at all. Excessive use of footnotes might get you booted out by IES as non-responsive. Consult the relevant RFA for more information about the content of the Project Narrative.

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All right, moving on. I'm going to talk now about the appendices that you include in your application. Appendix A is required if you are revising and resubmitting an application to IES. Appendix A is limited to three pages, single spaced. If you're resubmitting an application that was submitted to a competition in a prior year that got feedback from reviewers, you are required to include the three-page response of the reviewers, and it goes in the same PDF attachment as your Project Narrative. You have -- let's say if you're applying to 305A, that's a 25-page Project Narrative, you will include Appendix A as an additional three pages of that PDF file.

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The next appendix that you can include -- this is your choice, it's optional -- is Appendix B. Appendix B is limited to 15 pages, single spaced. It is also included in that same PDF file attachment that has your Project Narrative and Appendix A (if included).

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Appendix B is used for material that can supplement your Project Narrative. If you want to include a figure that shows the theory of change for your research, or if you want to include a chart that describes the timeline for the research you are going to be doing, if you want to include some examples of measures that you will be using in your research, all those things can be put in Appendix B. Please make sure that this material is truly supplementary. Don't include a lot of narrative text in Appendix B, and again, this goes in the same PDF file as your Project Narrative, and after Appendix A, if you're resubmitting an application.

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Appendix C is limited to 10 pages, single spaced. It goes in that same PDF file right after Appendix B.

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Appendix C is where you can include examples of the curriculum that you are studying, screenshots of computer programs that you are developing. Let's say you are submitting a measurement application, you can include examples of test items that you might develop as part of your work. Basically Appendix C is where you can include any

examples of materials that are part of the intervention or assessment that you are studying.

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Appendix D is an important appendix for IES applications. It does not have a page limit. It goes in the same PDF file attachment following Appendix C.

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Appendix D is where you include all letters of agreement from research partners. These could be letters from schools that agree to participate in the efficacy study you're planning to do. These could be letters from important consultants who are going to provide critical expertise for your research project. Make sure that these letters convey that the partners understand what is going to be required of them if you get this grant awarded to do this research.

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A couple important points about Appendix D. Please don't reduce the size of letters from these partners, because it is hard to read if you reduce the size of the letters. But, when you scan a document like a letter of agreement from a school partner, this will make your application package larger, and very large application packages might take longer to upload via Grants.gov. If you have a lot of school letters, and you have a very large application package, make sure you start uploading this well in advance of the 4:30:00 p.m. deadline, or this could cause your application to come in late.

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And then a final appendix that probably only a handful of you might be including in your application is Appendix E. This is a requirement only for people submitting applications to 305A or 324A that come in under the Efficacy and Replication Goal or the Effectiveness Goal. Appendix E is limited to five pages, single spaced. It goes in the same PDF file attachment that had your Project Narrative, and Appendix A, B, C and D if included.

[Slide 69]

And again, remember that this is only required for the Efficacy and Replication Goal or the Effectiveness Goal under 305A or 324A. The content of Appendix E is your data sharing plan.

[Slide 70]

Erin Higgins:  
[inaudible]

Emily Doolittle:

Okay. we have a question that came in about appendices.

Erin Higgins:

[inaudible]

Emily Doolittle:

Ah, okay. The question is, "If there are measures you are using, like a survey or an interview protocol that you've already developed as a researcher, could you include those as part of Appendix C?" It depends. For example, if you are doing a Goal One Exploration study, and you are going to use survey items that you have already used in other research you have done, you could put that in Appendix B.

Now, if it is a survey you are going to develop -- yeah. Appendix C is for things, examples of things you are going to develop through, let's say, like a development application or a measurement application. Check the RFA for more information about the appendices, and if in doubt, consult with the relevant program officer, just to double check, but typically something like a measure you have already developed that you are going to use as part of the research activities of your study, that would actually go in Appendix B.

Yeah. my understanding of this question is, it's a survey you have developed, you have used it in your research currently, and you are going to use it for this research you are proposing, that would actually go in Appendix B.

Okay, now we are to the bibliography and references cited. This does not have a page limit. We recommend that you use the APA Style of references. This is to ensure everybody has equal space in their application to describe their work. Your bibliography will go at Item Number Nine on the Other Project Information form. And do make sure you include complete citations. Reviewers will scrutinize things like that.

[Slide 71]

The Human Subjects Narrative also does not have a page limit. It is attached at Number 12, called Other Attachments on the Other Project Information form. You will need to include either an Exempt Research Narrative or a Non-Exempt Research Narrative.

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You can find information about the things to include in your Human Subjects Narrative on the Department's website.

[Slide 72]

So the six exemptions that would mean you would qualify for Exempt Human Subjects clearance are described on the Department's website. I have the link here. Make sure that this narrative -- if you are saying that your research is exempt, make sure you include adequate information about the involvement of human subjects so the Department can determine if those exemptions are indeed appropriate.

[Slide 73]

And then for the Non-Exempt Narrative, make sure you are including all the information that describes how you are going to protect your human subjects. Reviewers will read this information in the Human Subjects Narrative. It becomes really important, though, later on if you are awarded a grant, and then we need to work with you to make sure that all the appropriate protections are in place for the research that you will be doing.

[Slide 74]

All right, moving right along. Here is the budget form. The budget form in the application package can cause some heartache, we are going to talk about things to avoid. A few things I want to point out about the form, things like -- at the top, like the organizational DUNS number, that is one of those things that will get prepopulated if you fill out the cover sheet first. Make sure that you note whether this is the project budget or the sub-award budget. We'll talk about subaward budgets a little bit later.

Enter the appropriate start and end dates for your project here. Notice we're in Budget Period Number One. I don't think I included a screenshot of this, but when you get to the last page of the budget form, there is a tab at the top that you have to click that will take you to the next budget period. Make sure you only fill out the number of budget periods that are appropriate for the particular project you are proposing. There are restrictions depending on the competition, depending on the research goal in 305A, 324A, that tell you how many budget periods you are allowed. Also, this is important: don't click "Next Budget Period," and then include a blank budget period at the end. That will also cause problems in Grants.gov, and might lead your application to be rejected. Really double check to make sure that you have completed fully the number of budget periods that you are actually requesting funding for.

[Slide 75]

Now I am going to talk about two very common mistakes that are made on the budget forms that we see.

[Slide 76]

The first is Section E of the budget form, which is where you would enter information about participant/trainee support costs. This section of the budget form is only to be used for applications to our training grant programs. If you're submitting to 305B or 324B you would fill out Section E. Otherwise, please leave this section of the form blank.

[Slide 77]

[Slide 78]

The other thing that you should really pay close attention to is information about level of effort for senior key personnel in the budget form. Here you see that you can fill in calendar month, academic month, summer month; IES would really like it if you told us how many calendar months a key person is working on the project. If you don't do that, that is okay. Then you want to fill out academic months and summer months, but basically -- let me move to the next screen.

[Slide 79]

Just make sure that you have accurately filled in that level of effort. Again, calendar months are preferred, but if you really want to break it down by academic and summer that is okay too. Do either one, but make sure you have filled out that information accurately.

[Slide 80]

All right, moving on. The narrative budget justification, this is another PDF file attachment that you are going to need to prepare. It does not have a page limit. You need to create a single document that provides the budget justification for all the years of your project. This one budget justification should describe how you are going to spend the money over the full award period. Let's say it's a three-year project, you want to make sure that narrative describes spending over the three years. You attach the justification, though, to Section K of the first budget period in the form.

[Slide 81]

And there, that is a screenshot showing you where that attachment would be included. Oh, actually, can you go back, Erin?

[Slide 80]

[Slide 81]

That screenshot also shows you the tab you can click to take you to the next budget period.

[Slide 82]

The narrative budget justification is nice, because it doesn't have a page limit. I encourage you to provide lots of detail about how you are planning to spend money on this project. It will help reviewers understand whether you have adequately budgeted to

do the work you are proposing to do. If you are recommended for an award, IES will decide whether the costs that you have included are reasonable. Make sure that the narrative aligns with the budget as submitted, and make sure you are telling us about spending within a given year by category, or you can talk about all the spending, let's say, in a particular category, like key personnel, year by year; you can organize this in any way you like, just make sure you are telling us about spending over the entire grant period.

[Slide 83]

A couple other things to think about in the budget justification. Make sure it is clear that the justification describes how costs are allocated. Let's say, for example, if you do include a sub-award, make sure it is clear that any costs included in the sub-award aren't duplicates of costs that were already in the main award. For example, if somebody at the sub-award site is going to be traveling to the primary institution twice a year to have a working group meeting, make sure you don't include those travel costs in the project budget and the sub-award budget.

[Slide 84]

Also, it is very helpful -- actually, can you go back?

[Slide 83]

-- if you -- I talked about the time commitments that you would fill in on the budget form, either the calendar month or academic and summer months. It would be really helpful if you include time commitments expressed as a calendar year percent effort, and also fully describe how the PI and the other key personnel are going to be spending their time.

Also, if you are doing any kind of cost sharing, like donating personnel time or lab space, describe that in the narrative budget justification. IES does not require any cost sharing, but if you are including that, make sure the narrative describes that.

[Slide 84]

All right. Any questions? We're good? All right. The indirect cost rate. You will include the indirect cost rate you're using in your project in the budget form, and you should also describe that indirect cost rate in your narrative budget justification. You need to use your institution's negotiated federal indirect cost rate.

IES reminds you that we would like it if you used the off-campus indirect cost rate when it's appropriate. You need to look at the terms that are in your institution's negotiated agreement to decide if the off-campus rate is appropriate. Different institutions have different negotiated agreements. Apply the off-campus rate if it is appropriate, given the terms of your agreement that are in place. Also make sure that you aren't putting things

as direct costs in your budget that are really covered by your indirect cost rate. Make sure that you are paying attention to those details.

Also keep in mind that you need to have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement in place at the time of an award in order to claim indirect costs. If you are applying right now and you do not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement that is okay. What you should do is check with folks here at the Department of Education. There is information in the RFA about how to contact them. They can help you decide the kind of estimated rate that you should include in your application, but if you are lucky enough to be awarded a grant, you will have to have a negotiated rate in place in order to claim indirect costs.

[Slide 85]

All right, now we're going to talk a little bit about the sub-award budget. If the project -- if the application you're submitting includes any sub-awards, please keep in mind that you use a separate form to include that sub-award budget information. It's called the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment Form, and this is one of the optional forms in the application package. You are going to use this form to both extract and attach a budget form for each institution that holds a sub-award on the grant.

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So if, Erin, you could go to the next page. This is a screenshot of that form. The big button at the top says, "Click here to extract the R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment." You click that button, and up will pop the budget form like the one we just talked about.

[Slide 87]

No, actually I don't have a screenshot of that.

[Slide 86]

So when you -- when that form is extracted, make sure you click the sub-award tab to indicate it's a sub-award. And now this is really important. Remember what I talked about in terms of file names. Make sure you give this sub-award budget a unique file name that adheres to all Grants.gov rules about appropriate file names, and then you attach it to the form. You can include up to 10 sub-award attachments on this form for your project.

The sub-award form can be one of the biggest hang-ups for applicants. If you try to attach something here that is not a PDF budget form that you extracted from this form, it's going to cause your application to be rejected. If you're including sub-awards, make sure you take some time to really understand how the sub-awards budgets are to be included, and make sure you've got the right information there. I've seen people attach Word files, or even other PDF files here, and it caused their application to be rejected

with errors by Grants.gov. Do not let the sub-award be the hang up in terms of you getting your application in successfully.

[Slide 87]

Are we good on questions? All right, moving on, Biographical Sketches of Key Personnel. For each key person on your project, you need to submit a biographical sketch, and for each person it's a single PDF file. Make sure that the sketch is only four pages long; there is a page limit. And it gets attached at the "Attach Biographical Sketch" field of another form that we're going to look at, the Research & Related Senior Key/Person Profile (Expanded) form.

[Slide 88]

You can see that here. This is one of the -- I'm actually not sure -- I think this top field, the project director/principal investigator, is one that will prepopulate from the SF 424 Form, and you see sort of here in the middle of that page, "Attach Biographical Sketch." That's where you would add the four-page, abbreviated CV. We get this question a lot: How does IES want that formatted? It's really up to you how you format the four-page bio sketch, but keep in mind that the reviewers are going to look at this to see what your expertise is to do this work. Make sure to use these four pages wisely and include only relevant publications and really highlight your relevant expertise for this particular grant application.

[Slide 89]

You will also need to include a list of current and pending support for each key person. It's limited to one page, single spaced, and it goes on the same form in the field right below where you put your bio sketch. It goes at "Attach Current and Pending Support."

[Slide 90]

And you can see we circled that field as well. You'll notice that's not a required field for Grants.gov, but that is something that IES wants to see.

[Slide 91]

All right, other mandatory forms. There's a Project/Performance Site Location Form. You can include up to eight additional physical locations where research is taking place. You would list your sub-award sites here, sometimes people list school districts where they're working on this form -- and we'll look at that form in a second. And then there are two forms that refer to different assurances you need to submit as part as your application.

[Slide 92]

This is the Project/Performance Site Location Form. This, again, I believe this is one that prepopulates if you filled out the SF 424 first, and then you can list up to eight additional sites. This will ask for things like the congressional district of the performance site. You don't necessarily need to put a DUNS number here -- you can see that at the very top. The DUNS number field for the primary site is not highlighted in yellow or circled in red, I've gotten this question before, like if people want to list a school district here as one of the partners, they've been concerned about whether they have the right DUNS number for the school district. You don't need that information.

[Slide 93]

All right, this is the Assurances Form for Non-construction Programs.

[Slide 94]

And then finally, the Combined Assurance Form. I'm not going to talk about these in great detail, but there is full information about how to complete these forms within each RFA.

[Slide 95]

All right. If we don't have any questions about the PDF files, I'll talk a little bit now about the formatting requirements for those files.

[Slide 96]

This applies to all the files we just described, the project abstract, the narrative, the appendices, the bio sketches; all those file attachments that we just went over. We define a page as eight and a half by 11 inches, one side only, one inch margins of the top, bottom, and both sides; you know, standard formatting, essentially, for these electronic documents.

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You want to pay attention to things like the type size, font size; usually a 12-point Times New Roman font is just fine. You might just want to make sure that you're following these rules about characters per inch and lines of type within a vertical inch, and do keep in mind that these are single-spaced pages.

[Slide 98]

Now, if you are including any kind of graphs, diagrams, tables or charts -- either within your Project Narrative, or back there in Appendix B or C -- I would encourage you to just make sure that if you are using color, make sure that it reproduces well if it's printed in black and white. Sometimes people will use lots of colors in their charts, which is really nice, but then you lose some of that information if people are -- like reviewers are

printing applications out to read them. In general, all the type size requirements apply to these things, but you know, a legend and a figure can be in a slightly smaller type size, but always remember you have people reading these applications, reviewers who are reading a lot of applications and they really want to understand what you are doing -- don't make it hard for them.

[Slide 99]

Some reminders now about page limits -- and these page limit reminders are important, because if you submit something that exceeds the page limit, IES will remove any material after the page limit. So, if you submit a project summary abstract that's more than a page, we'll remove the second page. The Project Narrative, check out the relevant RFA to see what the Project Narrative page limits are. Appendix A for resubmissions is three pages. Appendix B, 15 pages; Appendix C, 10 pages; Appendix D, five pages; the bio sketch, each one is four pages, and then the list of current and pending support is one page.

[Slide 100]

And as a reminder, Appendix D, where you have your letters of agreement, we do not have a page limit there. Bibliography, no page limit; same for the Human Subjects Narrative, and your narrative budget justification.

[Slide 101]

All right. It doesn't look like we have any questions about those formatting issues. I'll take this time now just to go over some general program information.

[Slide 102]

We set very few eligibility requirements for applications to IES. All we say in the RFAs is that you must have the ability and capacity to conduct scientifically valid research. The reviewers are really going to decide whether you're indeed eligible and are submitting a good idea that can actually be executed. Finally cost sharing or matching is not a requirement for IES, but if you are including any kind of cost sharing things, like donated lab space, or donating your time, just make sure you describe that in your narrative budget justification.

[Slide 103]

Awards depend on many things. First and foremost, availability of funds. Secondly, though, and very important for IES, awards are made based upon peer reviewer feedback. So, it's all about the quality of your application. And then, finally, awards depend on the scope of the project you're proposing. Different goals have different goal maximums in 305A and 324A. Topics differ in terms of the funding levels. Pay attention to

information in the RFAs to understand how awards are made, and what they depend upon.

[Slide 104]

But very importantly -- and this is a screening requirement for IES -- different types of projects do have maximum dollar amounts. Please, please, please look at the Request for Applications for the competition you're applying to, to determine what the maximum dollar amount is that you can request. If you request more than that maximum dollar amount, your application will not get reviewed.

[Slide 105]

All right, and now we're on to final reminders.

[Slide 106]

In the back of each RFA there is a check list. Please use this checklist to make sure you've included all the relevant information that's required of you. You can use the check list to make sure you filled out every form that IES wants, and that Grants.gov requires. You can use the checklist to make sure you've got all the PDF files attached to the right form, and to make sure you've completed the certifications and assurances that you need to do.

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Finally, I do encourage you to use the "Check Package for Errors" button on the application package. As I've learned over time, it's not going to catch everything, but it's a good first step. Do use that check list to make sure you have all the required elements, at least from Grants.gov's perspective. And then finally, here, please make sure you get the application in on time. Things that come in a few seconds past the deadline will not be reviewed, and that's really sad after you've spent a lot of time working on an application to have it booted out because it came in five seconds late. Don't let that happen to you. And keep in mind that all of our FY 2015 competitions are due on August 7 by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, D.C. time. For those of you on the West Coast, or in other time zones; make sure you're attending to what time it is in Washington, D.C. And then, finally, if you are applying to that special FY '14 Gifted and Talented Program, those applications are due earlier, July 22, also by 4:30:00pm Washington DC time. And once you have begun the upload process on Grants.gov, use the "Track My Application" link, and please pay attention to email. You will get four emails. Look at the date/time stamp, and make sure that your application was validated by Grants.gov.

[Slide 108]

All right, some other reminders. Please remember to register early. If you're not already registered right now, go start the process today, because there are multiple steps. You can

find out more about those steps for registration both on the Grants.gov website, and we also provide detailed information in each RFA. When you're looking at the RFA, please review all of the application submission information that's included. We have a part that describes the Project Narrative, and the formatting requirements, and all of the attachments that you need to include, and then we have another part that describes all the different steps that you need to go through at Grants.gov to register and fill out forms, et cetera. And as a reminder, you can get the RFA on the IES funding page; it's also included in Grants.gov with the application package. And then finally, make sure you've got the right package for your competition and deadline.

[Slide 109]

Also, and I know this is hard, but it is really helpful to you if you can try to submit your application a little bit early. When you get close to the 4:30:00 deadline on the due date, Grants.gov might slow down a bit, because there will be a lot of people trying to submit applications. Don't get caught in a situation where it's taking a while to upload and you're very close to that time deadline.

Also, you might submit your application -- let's say you start submitting at 3:30 p.m. on August 7, you get an email 15 minutes later from Grants.gov saying there was an error in your application, and it was rejected, you may not have enough time to figure out where the error is, correct it, and start submitting again. Please give yourself some time, and then verify that everything is okay with the "Track My Application" link.

[Slide 110]

And then, last but not least, we, as program officers at IES, are here to help you as much as we can. We can help you most with substantive requirements for your applications; making sure you're in the right place, you've got the right topic, you understand the requirements, and so on. We will try to help with completing forms in the application package when we can, and if we can't, we'll send you to Grants.gov.

[Slide 111]

And then, I believe that is it. Those are the two websites that are going to be most helpful to you, the funding page at IES, and then Grants.gov. And then, I think I might have a couple questions that came in during the webinar that I'll cover now.

Erin Higgins:  
[inaudible]

Emily Doolittle:

Okay, this is a good question. I had mentioned that there are maximum award amounts for the total project that you need to adhere to when you're submitting an application. And one question was, does IES set requirements for how that money is distributed over the project years? And the answer is no. As an example, if you're submitting an application to develop a new intervention through our 305A or 324A program, the total

award amount is no more than \$1.5 million. You can distribute that \$1.5 million in whatever way makes the most sense, given your project requirements. So, it doesn't have to be like a half million each year, it could be distributed in different ways.

Oh, but Erin is reminding me of a very important exception. If you're submitting to the Special FY '14 Gifted and Talented Program, there is a requirement that you can only request a million dollars per year -- up to a million dollars per year, that's total funding per year for that particular competition. But you can -- please, I do encourage you, go to those RFAs, they include all this information, just double-check these things as well.

And then we have a question here. "We submitted a letter of intent. When should we expect to hear from the program officer to get feedback?" Very soon. We will -- we are processing those now, and reading them over, and you should start seeing responses from us within the next week, I would say, but I did want to remind all of you on the webinar that the deadline for the letter of intent was June 5; a little -- almost a week ago. That is not a rigid deadline in the way that our application deadline is. The window on that website for LOI submission is still open if you didn't get one in yet. If you missed the letter of intent deadline, and you would still like to submit one, please go ahead and do so online. I believe that the PRIMO website will be open up through the end of the day tomorrow, which is Thursday, June 12, for LOI submission.

All right, I am going to check to see if we have any more questions coming in; it looks like we don't. Thank you very much for participating in today's webinar, and feel free to reach out to me or Erin if you have any additional questions. These slides will be available to access later, if needed, and that's it for us today. Thanks.

[end transcript]