

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

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OVERVIEW OF IES EDUCATION RESEARCH  
TRAINING GRANTS

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WEBINAR

WITH

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**Slide One:**

DR. ALBRO: I want to say welcome to you all. This is the overview of IES Education Research Training Grants. I'm the Assistant Commissioner for the Teaching and Learning Division for the National Center for Education Research. And today I'm going to talk with you about the National Center for Education Research's program as well as the training program offered under the National Center for Special Education Research.

For those of you who haven't been on a webinar before, the way this works is I am going to walk through the slides that all of you should have in front of you. If you have a question that you would like me to answer, you're going to type in a question through the Q&A box. I will pause at points throughout my presentation and try to do my best to answer your questions. And if you have concerns, we have technical support staff here who will help you. So you go ahead and use the Q&A button for that as well.

**Slide Two:**

So, let's get started. What I'd like to do today is I want to

walk you through the Institute of Education Sciences (Institute), give you a little bit of history about who we are and what we do. I'm going to spend a little bit of time talking about our research grant programs.

It's important for those of you interested in preparing training grant programs to understand our research grant programs. The intent of the postdoctoral training program is to prepare individuals who are ready to submit grant applications to our research grant programs.

Then I'll spend probably the majority of the time focusing on the requirements of the training grant application and programs and I'll talk a little bit about the details of putting an application together and the review process.

**Slides Three and Four:**

So, first, for those of you who don't know about the Institute of Education Sciences, we are the research arm of the United States Department of Education and we have a mission that was given to us in our authorizing legislation. First, we are required to describe the condition and progress of education in the United States. For those of you familiar

with the work of the Institute, much of what the National Center for Education Statistics does accomplishes that goal. For the National Assessment of Education Progress data that were released recently, it's carried out and completed by our offices here.

We are also required to identify education processes that improve academic achievement and access to education opportunities. Most of the work that we do within both of the research centers accomplishes this mission. So, through our research endeavors we are working to identify practices that help students succeed in school.

And finally, we are also expected to evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs. This is primarily the function of the National Center for Education Evaluation, but some of the work that the research centers support also accomplishes that goal.

**Slide Five:**

Over the long term, the Institute intends to support a body of work that has allowed us to develop or identify programs, practices, policies, and approaches that enhance academic achievement. We also hope that the research that we've

supported allows us to identify what does not work and thereby encourages innovation and further research. And finally, we also intend to support research that allows us to explain variations in the effectiveness of education programs, practices, policies, and approaches.

For those of you who do research now, you know well that an intervention that may work well with one population may not in fact transfer directly or smoothly to another population, and we're interested in supporting research that looks at those questions as well.

**Slide Six:**

What are our current research grant programs? Again, I want to remind everyone that I'm going to talk a little bit about our current research grant programs because our training grants are designed to prepare fellows to prepare applications to these research grant programs. Competitive applications to the training grant program will describe how fellows will be trained to prepare these sorts of proposals.

**Slide Seven:**

So as you can see here, we have five general types of

programs that we offer across both centers. Our major research grant program is simply called The Education Research Grant Program or The Special Education Research Grant Program. I think it may actually have a different title, but they're both the main RFAs. They're the ones that are 90 pages that have lots of information about topics and research goals.

The one we're going to talk mostly about today is our postdoctoral research training program. Although last year and the year before we competed a predoctoral research training program, for fiscal 2010 we are not competing the predoctoral program. We also have RFAs in the area of National Research and Development centers. These are large grants typically that bring together multiple teams of researchers to address a particular problem. We also have a program in statistical and research methodology in education. And finally, we have a program focused on supporting researchers to evaluate state and local education programs and policies.

**Slide Eight:**

So here are the official titles of the two postdoctoral

research training programs. There is the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Education and Sciences and the Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education. The CFDA numbers in the parentheses in front of you are the grant numbers: the CFDA numbers are what you would look for on grants.gov.

**Slide Nine:**

What's the goal? The reason that we have the postdoctoral training programs is to provide training to postdoctoral fellows or to individuals post-Ph.D. so that they can gain the knowledge and skills that are necessary to conduct the types of research that the institute funds. This is a relatively broad goal and the way that it is manifested in individual training programs will vary tremendously.

It will depend upon the strength of the faculty who are putting together the training program and it will depend upon the kinds of fellows that you are seeking to recruit. When you're thinking about your training program though, you really want to put it into the context of the research goals and the topics that are described in either the education research RFA or the special education research

RFA.

**Slide Ten:**

So what are our research goals? For those of you who are familiar with our research goals, we have five. Goal 1 is called our exploration (or identification) goal and the purpose here is to complete research designed to explore programs, practices, and malleable factors associated with better student outcomes. Methodological approaches that are appropriate under this goal include secondary data analysis of pre-existing datasets, and primary data collection where you're trying to determine the association between a set of perhaps instructional variables or teacher variables that are related to student outcomes. You could also propose to do some form of meta-analytical work where you're looking at the literature to see if there are patterns of practices, policies, and programs that have already been evaluated that suggest that you want to create a new intervention that looks a little bit different from what's already out there.

Goal 2 is our development goal, and the bulk of the research that IES has funded to date actually sits in the development category. Under development, researchers are encouraged to either propose to develop new interventions or

to refine existing interventions for a different population of learners, for a different content area. I'm sure you can think of other ways in which one could do this.

In Goal 2, researchers should be prepared to carry out appropriate curriculum development, to have the sophistication necessary to do item development if, say, it's a math curriculum. Researchers should also know how to complete feasibility and usability studies. So that's a skill that a postdoctoral fellow could be trained on. Under Goal 2, researchers are expected to complete a pilot study, doing perhaps some pre/post tests where you're looking at change of individuals from before they experience intervention until after.

In Goal 3, researchers are asked to evaluate the efficacy of a fully developed intervention. Individuals who would be prepared to write Goal 3 applications should have experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating randomized clinical trials; randomized field trials; and experimental studies carried out in the context of a school setting.

For our Goal 4, which is to evaluate the impact of interventions implemented at scale, similar skill sets are

required as in Goal 3 (again, having the methodological knowledge to carry out a sophisticated randomized clinical trial or randomized field trial). In addition, under Goal 3, if you're interested in putting in for the special education postdoctoral fellowship, under special education, there is the discussion of the use of single-case design, and that would be another methodological skill that research fellows could be trained to use.

And finally, we support research to develop and validate measurement tools. Again, this might be a skill set an individual might come to you, a postdoc, who has a lot of skill with implementing RCTs in the context of schools and school settings but is interested in learning how to create good measures that are reliable and valid. And one could propose a postdoctoral program that would do that.

**Slides Eleven and Twelve:**

The topics in both the education research grant program and the special education research grant program cover the major academic content areas. So, we have reading and writing in both, mathematics and science education, both in the NCER and NCSEER.

We have a program focused on cognition and student learning in both programs, where we are encouraging cognitive scientists to bring what they know about learning into the context of an education setting.

We have programs focused on social and behavioral context to support academic learning, both for typically and atypically developing students.

We're interested in supporting research around teacher quality. Another type of postdoctoral program could propose to take individuals who have been trained in doing research around reading and writing or math and science but do not have a lot of experience in thinking about how to prepare and evaluate professional developmental programs. That would be another possibility to think about in terms of a postdoc program.

We also have programs focused on leadership. So, what do principals need to know? How do we train principals? How do we figure out who good principals would be? What can we do to support principals in the context of school?

We also have a big program on policy, finance, and systems again across those settings. Often, the research we fund here comes from sociologists of education or

economists of education who are interested in looking at things like teacher incentives, for example, and how teacher incentives can influence teacher behavior and student outcomes; sociologists interested in looking at organizational systems and how schools are organized. That would be another set of questions appropriate there.

We also have topics across both programs that are specific. The early childhood program goes across both education research and special education research. So, we have early childhood programs in both of our two centers. The postsecondary education program is unique to the National Center for Education Research, but the National Center for Special Education Research has a program looking at transition to the workplace—or how do we support special education students as they move out of the secondary school system.

I have a question here, which says, "Can proposals cover more than one of these topics?" You can absolutely be putting together a training program where students could have the opportunity to learn more than one of these topics or to learn about more than one of these topics or more than one of those methodological skills that I talked

about earlier. I would encourage you to try to make the program coherent, but you want to really build on the strengths of the faculty members that you have at your institution.

**Slides Thirteen and Fourteen:**

In special education, as you'll see, these programs should look quite similar to those in the National Center for Education Research. I do want to draw your attention to two additional programs that are unique to the Special Education Center.

One is this topic called related services. Also you may be interested in doing autism research or have strength in that area, you also can prepare proposals focused on autism.

That sort of gives you all a general lay of the land, and the reason I wanted to open with that is to let you know that the postdoctoral programs that the Institute wants to support are designed to train fellows to be ready to put in applications to these programs.

**Slide Fifteen:**

What do you need to have in place in order to prepare a competitive postdoctoral training program?

**Slide Sixteen:**

First, please note that eligible applicants are academic institutions in the United States and its territories that grant doctoral degrees in a field relevant to education. Please note that our postdoctoral training grant programs are not designed to provide direct funds to support individuals who are interested in postdoctoral support: they're grants to institutions to establish training programs.

We also have a restriction that the only eligible applicants, the primary applicant, must be an academic institution that grants doctoral degrees in fields that are relevant to education. Those degrees do not need to be education, per se. They could be psychology or sociology or economics, public health, or relevant to medical areas—mental health perhaps. So you just need to build an argument in your application that the doctoral degrees are relevant.

However, if you are not at an academic institution, then you would need to build a partnering relationship with an academic institution to house the

fellows. It is certainly possible that research institutions could form a partnership and provide a field site or a place where postdoctoral fellows could receive training in, say, carrying out RCTs. But it is the academic institution that needs to be the applicant of record.

Please note also that there is an expectation that the training director or training directors must be must be either principal or co-principal investigator on one or more education research grants currently supported by the Institute or by other sources. The reason for this is that when you bring on a postdoc into your program, there needs to be evidence that there are active, ongoing research projects that these fellows can then participate in to receive the research training that they need in order to be ready to go out and write their own grants. So there needs to be documentation that you as the training director as well as affiliated faculty have education research grants.

**Slide Seventeen:**

When you are putting together your training plan narrative, the narrative—which is 15 pages single-spaced—must include four sections. The first section is significance. The second

is a description of the research training fellowship plan. The third is personnel. And the fourth is resources. I'm going to talk about the content that goes into each of these generally.

So I have a question here that says, "Even though the applicant of record must be in an institute of higher education, can the training director be from a partner nonprofit, assuming that person is a PI or co-PI on an existing grant?" I think that that is something that you would probably need to discuss with your institute of higher education because...I'm just trying to think how that would work because essentially you would then be indicated as in their hire, in their employ, if you're the training director. I would encourage that you talk specifically with the program officer for either NCER or NCSEER about the particular situation here.

Typically, the training director is a faculty member at one of the academic institutions. At least, historically that has been true.

I have my two colleagues here, Celia Rosenquist and Ed Metz: they are the program officers and I'm looking at them for guidance. We would be glad to talk with you more

about particular ways to accommodate your situation or to frame your role.

**Slides Eighteen and Nineteen:**

Under significance, you have two tasks. The first is to describe for your reviewers the potential contribution of the proposed postdoctoral research training program for training postdoctoral fellows to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct the type of research IES funds. You should not be putting together a plan that proposes to train fellows on everything that IES funds. Successful proposals tend to be somewhat narrower in focus.

They will say that we know that IES supports this type of work. And again, please spend time on our website in our RFAs. See what kinds of projects we've funded in the past to maybe identify places where we've not funded as much work, which might suggest there's a real need to support additional work in this area, and build an argument that your institution and the faculty that you have and the research grants you are currently running would allow you to provide fellows with training in the requisite areas.

The other part of this, which should follow from

your original argument in the first section, is to also clearly identify and describe the topical and methodological focus of the postdoctoral training to be provided. I did a quick discussion of the research topics that we consider under our research grants as well as a discussion of our research goals. You should be explicit. Help the reviewers understand what kinds of skills your postdoctoral fellows will be acquiring as they move through this training program.

Just to reiterate, programs are not expected to provide training on all topics and/or all methodologies. So, build a program that really capitalizes on the strengths that you have and you can think about the kinds of students or the kinds of fellows that you would want to bring to your institution so that you could have a set of postdocs who have skills that maybe you don't have or you have an ability to train them in areas that they are not yet trained in.

**Slides Twenty, Twenty-One, Twenty-Two, and Twenty-Three:**

In the research training fellowship plan, you should describe the research training activities. What are your fellows going to do? What projects are they going to be participating on, and how are they going to master these projects?

Say, for example, you want to provide an opportunity for fellows to learn how to do good feasibility and implementation work, say, some good design work. How are you going to provide the fellows with the opportunity to do that? While you clearly want to state that the students are going to have an opportunity to work on these research projects that currently exist, you should also talk about what kind of support they're going to receive in the training program. It's relatively unspecified here because it's really going to depend upon what strengths your faculty brings to this proposal.

You're also expected to describe how you plan to recruit postdoctoral fellows. I'm going to discuss here the eligibility requirements of the fellows as well. In the research training activity section, to repeat what I just said, describe how your fellows will gain the breadth of skills and understanding necessary to conduct rigorous applied research in education. Again, it can be for Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4, or Goal 5: it does not need to be all of those.

And then the second part that is important to reiterate is that you should spend time describing how the

fellows will develop the capacity to independently carry out such research, including applying for grant funding and submitting results for publication in peer review journals. Will you have a structure in place, for example, where you could have postdoctoral fellows prepare grant applications that faculty could review and provide feedback to? Is there already a brown bag lunch activity in place at your institution which supports that kind of peer review internal to your institution?

How are you going to help fellows prepare results so that they can get them out for publication in peer review journals? And how soon are you going to start to work with them to do that? If your postdoc is only there for 2 years, you don't want them submitting results for publication at the end of their second year. You're not then able to provide them with support in that process.

In your plan, please describe how you're going to recruit fellows. Again, I think it's a good idea for you to think about what kinds of skills fellows might bring that would be complementary to the kinds of skills that you plan to train them on when they come to join your program.

We also ask that the applications include a

discussion of how they plan to reach out to encourage applications from members of unrepresented minority groups.

You also should be aware of what the requirements are for the fellows. The Institute of Education Sciences is only allowed to support fellows who are either citizens or permanent residents of the United States. The fellows must have received their PhD prior to the beginning of training, and if you are interested in bringing on someone who is your predoctoral advisee to continue working with that faculty member as a postdoc, you must receive special permission from the Institute in order to do that.

I have a question here that says, "Can this grant be done as a joint venture between an educational institution and a for-profit organization, or is it only open to educational institutions?" I think it could certainly be done as something of a joint venture. However, the educational institution would need to come in as the eligible applicant and the for-profit organization could function as a subcontract or a subaward to the main grantee. And again, I would recommend that you talk in more detail with the program officer.

**Slide Twenty-Four:**

In the personnel section, again, this is within the 15-page research narrative. You should have a section devoted to personnel. You should specify what the role of the training director and/or PI of this grant will be as well as the roles that other key personnel are going to play: are they simply going to serve as possible faculty mentors for the postdoc? Are they going to have particular, say, training roles in terms of helping provide feedback in terms of writing or preparing grants? You need to elaborate what those expectations are in the personnel section.

You should also spend time in the personnel section elaborating how the research expertise of the key personnel reflects the content and methodological practices of the Institute that your fellows will be trained in. It doesn't have to be everything this Institute funds, of course. But again, how does the faculty's research reflect the kind of work that IES funds and that would then provide training for the fellows so that they can be prepared to put in competitive applications.

It's also important that the training director's time commitment to the program be clearly stated in the

narrative as well.

**Slide Twenty-five:**

In the resource section, you need to describe what resources are available at the participating institution. So, it's important for postdocs to say, "Do you have a commitment from your institution to give postdoctoral fellows their own office? Their own computer? Perhaps access to a laboratory if they need to do laboratory work? What are the resources to support postdoctoral fellows at your institution?"

In addition, the resources should include a description of any types of field settings, schools, software, development, laboratories, maybe a not-for-profit research agency, or an assessment development home, with which the training director or the PI has a relationship that could support fellows' research projects.

**Slide Twenty-six:**

Please note that in appendix A you are expected to include letters of agreement from any of these field settings where folks might be placed. You are also expected to have a letter of agreement from your university or your department which

specifies what resources are available for postdoctoral fellows—things like space and technology.

**Slide Twenty-seven:**

As well as a 15-page research narrative, you are also expected to include appendix A. In appendix A, you are required to include, as I said, a letter of support from the participating home institutions or from the universities or whatever the appropriate level is for your post doctoral program. You should also include a summary table of the ongoing research or ongoing education research projects that are conducted by PIs and other faculty in the proposed training program.

In the summary table, you should include the name of the fellow's primary postdoctoral mentor. I want to put a caveat here: this is actually referring to applicants who are putting in who already have a postdoctoral training fellowship and they're proposing to put in for additional funding. So the summary table for all applicants should be similar to this, but it's going to be, of course, thinking forward as to what projects postdocs could work on, as opposed to projects that postdocs have already worked on.

So we need to know who the mentors might be, who are the faculty members, what are the research projects that could be carried out. In this case, if you have postdocs who come through your program, what projects were completed or are currently being completed while the postdocs have support under that prior award?

You also want to be really clear about what topics are the projects addressing and what are the methodological foci or the methodological frameworks used for each of the projects. Again, if you are a current recipient of a postdoctoral award, you need to include a list of what are the publications of your current or former postdocs and where have you placed your former postdoctoral fellows? Where have they gone?

**Slide Twenty-eight:**

In addition, appendix A may also include up to three pages of responses to review comments if the application is a resubmission.

If you are a current or past IES postdoctoral training grantee, you must include information in appendix A that describes the research activities and publications of

current and prior fellows.

**Slide Twenty-nine:**

Some other caveats for folks out there who are current postdoctoral grantees seeking new funding: please note that new applications for new postdoctoral funding may not overlap with existing postdoctoral funding. And applications seeking new funding must include that summary table in appendix A. The critical piece is to ensure that there's no overlap in funding.

**Slide Thirty:**

Another thing that I often get questions about—and I think it's important for us to mention—is that multiple postdoctoral training program awards may be held at a single university. However, they must be clearly distinct. So, you really want to make sure that you have different groups of faculty who are responsible for the different training programs.

Generally, we're not interested in seeing proposals from the same group of faculty for another postdoctoral training program unless that program is coming

to an end. But if you're at a large research university, it's quite possible that you might hold multiple postdoctoral training programs, but you, the university and the faculty members, will need to be very careful about delineating how each faculty and each faculty's projects are separate and distinct so that we have the programs providing separate funding.

Another way to ensure that that happens is to make sure that the training programs each have unique areas of research emphasis. So if one program is working on preparing fellows to carry out good efficacy studies and providing them with strong and rigorous training on how to carry out good RCTs, another training program could be focused on developing fellows to do work in the area of measurement. Those are sort of separate and distinct components and are less overlapping than two efficacy studies.

**Slide Thirty-one:**

What about the money? The postdoctoral program awards provide stipend support of up to \$50,000 per year per fellow. You can request fringe benefit support up to \$10,500 per year from

the Institute. You may also request funds to support fellow research and travel. So if you want to provide a small start-up fund for postdoctoral fellows so they could do some of their own independent research during the two years that they are at your university, you can do that as well.

The maximum amount of the award is \$655,000 over the course of 5 years. Indirect cost is limited to 8 percent on allowed cost.

I want to make it clear, too, that the number of fellows you can support is limited to eight fellow semesters. You can basically support two fellows each for 4 years. You could do any combination of it. So you have eight semesters of support that you can provide distributed over 5 years. Typically, the first year of a program you may not have a fellow whom you're ready to place right away, so that first year becomes devoted to recruiting fellows to take part in your program.

Regarding that 8-fellow-years requirement, does it need to be full years or could we propose three fellows for 2 years, 8 months each? I think that it says that it has to be eight semesters worth of an award.

DR. METZ: We'll follow up on that question.

DR. ALBRO: Yes. So, Dr. Metz thinks you should follow up perhaps with him or with Celia Rosenquist here and we can get a detailed answer for you on that one.

**Slide Thirty-two:**

If you all are interested in knowing what the current program looks like, at the moment we have 17 NCER postdoctoral programs that are active. We have five NCSEER postdoctoral programs that are active. There are a total of 13 predoctoral programs right now. Our fiscal 2009 awards have not yet been announced, but there will be more. And these training programs are located at 26 universities across the country.

So this is a program we're pretty proud of. There's been a lot of growth in it, but there's clearly room for additional growth and we certainly hope that we will get lots of applications.

**Slide Thirty-three:**

I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the things you need to know in terms of preparing and submitting an application.

**Slide Thirty-four:**

The first thing to know is that in order to put in an application to IES, there are three documents that you must have in order to be prepared and I actually think for the training grants I might say that there are at least four. The first thing you need is the request for applications for the training program to which you are applying. So the CFDA numbers for those are either 84.305B for the National Center for Education Research or 84.324B for the Special Education training program.

I would also recommend that you download the big education research RFA or the big special education research RFA if you're not already familiar with it. I think it's very important for you to be able to frame the work that you do in light of our big RFAs.

I did also want to note that the postdoctoral program can also include training to students so that they would be competitive for the statistics and research methodology request for applications program. So, if you have a methodological track at your university and you'd like to train students to do some research around education methods, that is also something to consider. You want the RFA which

describes the training grant program and the RFA that describes the research program that you're trying to prepare students or fellows to submit to.

You should also download the IES grants.gov application submission guide. That is located on the same page as our RFAs on the IES.ed.gov funding website. And you want to look at that because that tells you what information goes where, what are the page limits for things like curriculum vitae, what are the restrictions in terms of fonts and margin sizes, and it gives you guidance in terms of how to fill out the grants.gov forms.

And last but not least, you need to download the application package from grants.gov. With that application package, you need to be very careful that you get the right one because we have multiple competitions that are currently open. I think there might be 10 application packages that are currently up there. So make sure that you have one that matches both the center and the topic that you're applying for.

You want to make sure you have the training application package. If you don't get the right one, it may be returned to you without review and you don't want that to

happen.

**Slides Thirty-five and Thirty-six:**

So, where do you find them? Here's where the information is. The RFAs and the IES grants.gov application submission guide are found on the website that's on the slide in front of you. That's the direct link to the RFAs. If you just go up through funding and do not include the information after the backslash, that takes you directly to our funding page and there's additional information there as well.

Here are the direct links to the training RFAs. Again, I know that you all have these on your computers. If you click on those links, they should be live and they should take you to the appropriate documents.

Note that the due date is June 25, 2009. Applications must be received by 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC time. I want to encourage everyone to submit at least a week early. Again, if applications are received late (and late can mean that the grants.gov computer says 4:30 p.m. and 5 seconds) that will be considered late and again it will be returned to you without review. It's certainly not something that you want to have happen after you've put in all the work to prepare an application.

There is also only one due date. For those of you who are applying to our regular education research grant programs, we have two due dates for those. However, for the training grants we are only accepting applications at the June 25th deadline. So, if you are prepared and want to put in a program that would start in fiscal year 2010, starting as early as next March, you need to submit your application for June 25th because the next deadline will not be for at least another year after that.

**Slide Thirty-seven:**

Here's our website. For those of you who have not been to our website, here's what it looks like. The boxes in red show you how to get to the funding opportunities page. I also have the Newsflash button circled around there. For those of you who are not signed up for the Newsflash, that's a great way to get announcements about when RFAs are released, when new awards are announced, and when new publications are released by the various centers. So, I would encourage you to sign up for that if you are not already signed up.

**Slides Thirty-eight and Thirty-nine:**

The application packages are currently available on grants.gov. Again, if you're ready to go, you can download that information from the grants.gov website now.

**Slide Forty:**

What about formats? What are the page link requirements? You're expected to include a single page abstract.

As a training program narrative, it is to be no longer than 15 pages, single-spaced. Again, this is shorter than our regular research grant projects in part because we're not expecting you to explain quite as much information. There is no page limit for the bibliography. Each biographical sketch, however, is limited to four pages, plus you have an additional fifth page upon which you can list current and pending support. Please make sure you include that fifth page of current and pending support. This is particularly important for the training grant programs because one of the criteria that reviewers will use to evaluate the potential strength of your program is what is the research, what kind of research activities are going on at that institution that postdocs could then participate in. So that fifth page of that biographical sketch is another

place where you can include information about current and pending research outside of the appendix A summary table.

There's no limit for your budget justification, and appendix A is limited to 10 pages.

**Slide Forty-one:** I want to remind you all—for those of you who have not worked with IES in the past—that we the program officers are here to provide you with help. We have a staff of 15 to 17 program officers across the two centers. All of us are doctoral-level folks. We've all sort of been out there in the trenches doing our own research, being students, and we are here to provide you with assistance.

Call us. Email us. If we get done with the webinar and you're excited and you've not talked to us, Ed Metz or Celia Rosenquist, I would encourage you to email them so that they know you're interested and they can work with you. They can talk with you about ideas. They can review draft proposals. And they can provide feedback. The review process is handled by a separate office. So, we have the luxury of working with you all as you prepare these proposals.

Please don't be afraid. We're always happy to

hear from applicants. I will also say that if you don't hear back from us within a week of having the email, just go ahead and resend that email. Particularly right now, we're pretty swamped. We've just gotten the letters of intent across all of our competitions. So, please just do be persistent because we will be in touch with you as soon as we can.

**Slide Forty-two:**

I want to remind everyone that you want to be kind to your reviewers. So, when you're reading your RFAs, please do read them carefully. Read the instructions carefully. Make sure that you meet the requirements for eligible applicants.

Make sure that you meet any requirements under the special requirements (for example, the requirement that fellows be citizens or permanent residents of the United States).

Make sure that you have the right content in the right location. Do not put narrative content in the appendix; that content will be removed.

Make sure again that you pay attention to submission and processing steps. For those of you who have not worked with grants.gov before, that requires some getting

used to. There are several steps involved. Make sure that you or your grants and programs office are familiar with what you need to do in order to make sure that you are ready to submit on time.

And again, pay attention to the due date. It's June 25th, 4:30 p.m., Washington DC time.

Two questions: "Are the program officers willing to redraft proposals or comment on proposals?" Yes, they are. So you can be in touch with them. My only caveat is you need to remember that they have many other people they are also working with. If you expect someone to review a proposal and give you feedback, please make sure that they have plenty of time to do that.

There's nothing more frustrating from our point of view than getting a proposal 2 weeks before the deadline. That's often an impossible time line for us to read and review and provide feedback and then allow you time to make revisions. So I would encourage people to send drafts a month in advance. I'm looking at my colleagues here. At least a month in advance, so that's not very far away, if you want feedback.

There's a question here, "What percent of

proposals are typically funded for this RFA?" Our training grant program, the special education training grant program is relatively new. It's only been--2 years? Three years? So this may be the third competition or the second competition. We don't have numbers for the National Center for Special Education Research.

And for the National Center for Education Research, what is competed every year varies. Some years we have both the predoctoral programs and the postdoctoral programs. Other years it's only the postdoctoral programs. So, I'm afraid I don't have an answer for you.

I guess what I would say in response to that question is that--as is true across all of our other RFAs--the Institute has been in the fortunate position where we have been able to fund all of the grants that our reviewers considered to be of outstanding or excellent quality. So, it's unlikely that an application would not be funded because the institute ran out of money--what might happen at some other funding agencies.

What you really want to do is work very hard to put together a strong and competitive application and work with the program staff here and we can help you to the best

of our ability to make a strong application.

**Slide Forty-Three:**

From the reviewer's point of view, I want to remind everyone to be friendly to the reviewers. You have to remember that they're going to be reading 10, sometimes 15 proposals in the space of a couple of weeks. So, you want to do things to make it easier for them to find and locate the information in your application that they need to know about in order to adequately evaluate your proposal. Take the time to write clearly and concisely. Make sure you address all the points that are described in the RFA. Again, there should be four sections in your training plan, in your narrative. There should be a section discussing significance, one discussing the training plan, one discussing the personnel, and one discussing the resources.

Try to write a coherent narrative where things come out in a logical fashion. Use labels, and please number your pages. Sometimes people will forget to do this and I can tell you that when reviewers are trying to discuss in panel an application and they don't have a page number to refer someone to, it can get frustrating for them: you certainly don't want people's decisions being influenced by something

as small as not numbering your pages.

Again, the general rule of thumb is make it as easy as possible for the reviewers to find and understand the information presented in your application.

**Slide Forty-four:**

What happens next? So you get your application in. You meet the deadline. You've met all the formatting requirements. Then it goes into this black box and people are like, "Okay. So what do we do? What happens?"

**Slide Forty-five:** What happens now is that your proposal will move forward for the peer review process.

The first thing that will happen is that your proposal or your application will be reviewed for compliance. These are things like are there only 15 pages in the narrative, does the appendix only have 10 pages, what's the font size that's being used, is the margin appropriate, is the information in appendix A appropriate information for appendix A.

Reviewers will also look to make sure that all of the sections have been included: is there a section on significance, is there a training plan, is there a personnel

section, and is there a section describing resources. If a proposal does not have one of those four sections, it will be returned without review. So again, double-check. Make sure everything is there.

Proposals that make it through the compliance screening (and that's the vast majority of proposals: we don't return a lot without being reviewed) are then assigned to a review panel.

Then, two or three panel members conduct primary review of each application. I believe for the training panel there are at least three panel members that typically review each application. Once they do a primary review of the application, they will evaluate it on significance, training plan, personnel, and resources, and they'll give it an overall quality score.

The overall quality scores are all averaged across the two or three panel members and it is that average overall score that is then used to make decisions about which applications will be reviewed by the full panel during the panel meeting. So, only the most competitive applications are reviewed by the full panel at the panel meeting.

The full panel will then discuss the applications

and everyone at the table who hears the discussion of the application will then score it. Those scores are the scores that are then used to make funding recommendations at the institute level.

**Slide Forty-six:**

How do you find out about your application? All applicants will receive email notification as to the status of their application. Everybody receives copies of reviewer comments, and I do want to encourage you that if you aren't granted an award the first time, please do consider resubmitting and talk to your program officer. While I do believe that the funding rate is higher for the training programs than it is for our typical research grant competitions, we are not able to fund everything the first time through. If you put together an application last year or the year before and you weren't funded, I would certainly encourage you to think about resubmitting.

**Slide Forty-seven:**

I have here the two program officers. Edward Metz is the program officer for the National Center for Education

Research. Celia Rosenquist is the program officer for the National Center for Special Education Research. I am Liz Albro and I'm there for default. If you have any other questions now about the training programs, you can send them to me.

So that's all I have in terms of slides. I would be happy to entertain any questions if people have any questions.

Well, Celia, do you guys have anything else that you think we should share with them about the training programs—specific things that you've learned?

DR. METZ: Just that everybody's ideas are different and might need a different frame of reference. So feel free to contact us. We can give you our two cents.

DR. ALBRO: I guess the only other thing I would say, a question that we might receive, is, "What's the difference between the National Center for Education Research program and the National Center for Special Education Research program?" I think their requirements are almost identical. The real difference has to do with what the focus of the training is. So, if the training program is focused on preparing students to conduct research in the area of special education, you should then for sure come in under the

National Center for Special Education Research. I think that's the only distinction there.

DR. METZ: Is a letter of intent required?

DR. ALBRO: We have a question here that says, "Is a letter of intent required?" No, letters of intent are not required. So if you miss the April 27th deadline but you're still interested in putting in an application, please contact either Ed or Celia and let them know so that we can make sure our counts are accurate. But you are not required to have a letter of intent submitted.

I want to thank everyone for joining this call and I want to encourage people if they have questions to contact us directly and I know that you guys will have access to these slides and I think that's it. Thanks very much.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was concluded.)