# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## RESEARCH NETWORKS FOCUSED ON CRITICAL PROBLEMS OF POLICY AND PRACTICE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
## CFDA Number: 84.324N

| Milestone | Date | Website |
|---|---|---|
| *Letter of Intent Due* | July 13, 2017 | https://iesreview.ed.gov/ |
| *Application Package Available* | July 13, 2017 | http://www.grants.gov/ |
| ***Application Due*** | **No later than 4:30:00pm Washington DC time on September 21, 2017** | **http://www.grants.gov/** |
| *Applicants Notified* | By July 1, 2018 | https://iesreview.ed.gov/ |
| *Possible Start Dates* | July 1 to September 1, 2018 | |

**IES 2018** **U.S. Department of Education**

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# PART I: OVERVIEW AND GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

## A. INTRODUCTION

In this announcement, the Institute of Education Sciences (Institute) requests applications to form Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education (Networks). The purpose of the Networks program is to focus resources and attention on high-priority issues in special education and to create both a structure and process for researchers who are working on these issues to share ideas, build new knowledge, and strengthen their research and dissemination capacity. The ultimate objectives of the Networks program are to advance the field's understanding of an issue beyond what an individual research project or team is able to do on its own and to assist policymakers and practitioners in using this information to strengthen education policies and programs and improve student education outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities.

For FY 2018, the Institute invites proposals focused on integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), frameworks that provide multiple levels of support through coordinated, research-based practices, strategies, and structures to meet the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all learners. **The Institute is soliciting proposals that address the needs of children with or at risk for disabilities within integrated MTSS in elementary schools**.

For this competition, the MTSS Network will consist of multiple Research Teams that are working on research related to the integration of academic and behavioral tiered support systems into a single coherent MTSS framework and the high-quality implementation of this integrated framework. **Research teams must work within or use data from elementary schools**. This may include preschool or prekindergarten programs if they are a part of the K-12 school system. It may also include K-8 schools and the students they serve as long as students in all grades are under the same system and would be served under the same MTSS framework.

Each Research Team will carry out a major research project of its own and will participate in collaborative activities with other Research Teams in the network. The Research Teams will meet to discuss research plans and progress and to identify ways that they can strengthen their collective work by collaborating, sharing methodology and measures (if relevant), disseminating results, and other activities.

The Institute seeks to make one award to a Network Lead that will coordinate network activities that include, but are not limited to, planning the network meetings, coordinating leadership activities (e.g., conferences for the field, briefings to key stakeholders), and leading cross-team early career training (e.g., cross-site training or mentoring opportunities, webinars, summer workshops). Finally, the Network Lead is expected to play a lead role in communicating the network's findings, including hosting a website that describes the work of the network and makes the publications and products generated by the network available to the general public and organizing briefings for policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other key stakeholders.

For the FY 2018 competition, the Institute will consider only applications that are responsive and compliant to the requirements described in this Request for Applications (RFA) and submitted electronically via Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov) on time. Separate funding announcements are available on the Institute's website that pertain to the other research and training grant programs funded through the Institute's National Center for Special Education Research (https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/) and the National Center for Education Research (https://ies.ed.gov/ncer/). An overview of the Institute's research grant programs is available at http://ies.ed.gov/funding/overview.asp.

For this competition, all awards will be made as cooperative agreements to support the Institute's involvement in the planning and implementation of network activities.

This RFA is organized as follows: Part I sets out the general requirements for a Networks application to the Institute. Part II describes general and role-specific requirements for the MTSS Network. Part III provides general information on funding, award requirements, and the review process. Part IV describes how to prepare an application. Part V describes how to submit an application electronically using Grants.gov. You will also find a Glossary of important terms located at the end of this RFA. The first use of each term within each Part of this RFA is hyperlinked to the Glossary.

### 1. Technical Assistance for Applicants

The Institute encourages you to contact the Program Officer for this competition as you develop your application. The Institute's Program Officer can offer advice on substantive aspects of your application and answer any questions prior to submitting an application. Program Officer contact information for this competition is as follows:

- Dr. Amy Sussman (202-245-7424; Amy.Sussman@ed.gov)

The Institute asks potential applicants to submit a Letter of Intent prior to the application submission deadline. Letters of Intent are optional but strongly encouraged. If you submit a Letter of Intent, the Program Officer will contact you regarding your proposed project. Institute staff also use the information in the Letters of Intent to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer review panels and to secure a sufficient number of peer reviewers to handle the anticipated number of applications.

In addition, the Institute encourages you to sign up for the Institute's Funding Opportunities Webinars for information on its research competitions, including advice on choosing the correct research competition, grant writing, or submitting your application. For more information regarding webinar topics, dates, and the registration process, see http://ies.ed.gov/funding/webinars/index.asp.

## B. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Applications under the Networks program **must meet the requirements** set out under the subheadings below, (1) Students With or At Risk for a Disability, (2) Student Outcomes, (3) Authentic Education Settings, and (4) Dissemination, in order to be sent forward for scientific peer review.

### 1. Students With or At Risk for a Disability

All research supported under the Networks program **must** include outcomes on children with or at risk for a disability. Within MTSS, described in more depth in Part II.B.1, all children are served as part of the first, universal tier, whereas those found to be struggling (and may be at risk for disability) receive extra intervention at higher tiers. MTSS research funded under this competition must include outcomes on students with or at risk for disabilities. However, depending on the research question(s) related to MTSS, researchers may also include outcomes for students without disabilities.

For the purpose of the Institute's special education research programs, a student with a disability is defined in Public Law 108-446, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), as a child "(i) with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this title as 'emotional disturbance'), orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (ii) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services" (Part A, Sec. 602).

The Institute encourages research on students with high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities, and English learners with disabilities.

For the purpose of the Institute's special education research programs, a student at risk for a disability is identified on an individual child basis. The determination of risk may include assessments or other factors used for moving children to higher tiers in an MTSS model. Evidence of risk consisting only of general population characteristics (e.g., labeling children as "at risk for disabilities" because they are from low-income families or are English learners) is not sufficient for this purpose. In addition, you should clearly identify the disability or disability categories that the sampled children are at risk of developing.

## 2. Student Outcomes

All research supported under the Networks program **must** address (1) students in elementary school and (2) education outcomes of those students, and **must** include measures of these outcomes.

By focusing this network on integrated MTSS in *elementary schools*, the Institute intends to promote commonality among the research projects and better facilitate meaningful collaboration among the research teams (e.g., sharing research plans and data collection instruments and disseminating results). Through this network, the Institute intends to advance the field's understanding of integrated MTSS and believes that if multiple research teams are conducting research on MTSS for students in a similar age/grade range, the network will be better able to produce a set of findings with clear, coherent, and comprehensive implications for next steps in terms of research, practice, and policy.

We recognize that there is important research needed on MTSS in secondary school settings. If you are interested in conducting research in this area, we encourage you to apply to the Special Education Research Grants competition (CFDA 84.324A).

Applicants should include education outcomes of students that align with their theory of change. When possible, the Institute encourages applicants to consider assessing both proximal (more direct and immediate) and distal (more long-term) student education outcomes. The Institute recognizes that it can be difficult to assess long-term student outcomes in studies focused on systems-level approaches given the time limits of the awards. Applicants should use their theory of change to argue for the most appropriate student outcomes given these time limitations.

The Institute is most interested in student outcomes that support success in school and afterwards, including:

- For **preschool**,[1] the primary outcomes are developmental outcomes (cognitive, communicative, linguistic, social, emotional, adaptive, functional, or physical development) and school readiness (e.g., pre-reading, language, vocabulary, early science and mathematics knowledge, social and behavioral competencies that prepare young children for school).

- For **kindergarten through the end of elementary school**,[2] student outcomes include learning, achievement, and higher-order thinking in the core academic content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science measured by specific assessments (e.g., researcher-developed assessments, standardized tests, grades, end-of-course exams). A range of student social skills, attitudes, and behaviors may be important to students' education and post-school success, so important outcomes also include behaviors that support learning in academic contexts. In addition, the Institute is interested in functional outcomes that improve educational results.

## 3. Authentic Education Settings

Proposed research **must** be relevant to education in the United States and **must** address factors under the control of the U.S. education system, whether at the national, state, local and/or school level. To help

[1] For this competition, preschool-aged children refers to children aged 3-5. Preschools and their students must be part of a K-12 school system. The competition does not support research on children under age 3.
[2] K-8 schools and their students may be included if all students are under the same system and would be served by the same MTSS framework.

ensure such relevance, the Institute requires researchers to work within or with data from authentic education settings. Authentic education settings are defined as follows:

- **Authentic Preschool Settings**:
    - o Preschool or pre-kindergarten programs that are part of a K-12 school system

- **Authentic Elementary School Education Settings**:
    - o Elementary schools
    - o School systems (e.g., local education agencies or state education agencies), focused on elementary schools

## 4. Dissemination

The Institute is committed to making the results of Institute-funded research available to a wide range of audiences. The Institute has a public access policy (see http://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp) that requires all grantees to submit their peer-reviewed scholarly publications to the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and that requires grantees to share final research data from causal inference studies (i.e., efficacy and effectiveness studies) no later than the time of publication in a peer-reviewed scholarly publication.

To ensure that findings from the Networks program are shared with all interested audiences, the Institute **requires all applicants** to include a Dissemination Plan in Appendix A: Dissemination Plan of the application. **Applications that do not contain a Dissemination Plan in Appendix A will be deemed noncompliant and will not be accepted for review.** Dissemination Plans should be tailored to the audiences that may benefit from the findings and reflect the unique purposes of your research goals. The Network Lead is expected to engage in the majority of the network's joint dissemination efforts. Network Lead Dissemination Plans should include the ways in which the Lead will incorporate information from different Research Teams and coordinate the overall network dissemination effort. Research Team plans should include information about how the team will contribute to the Network's overall, larger dissemination efforts, as well as detail their own efforts.

- Identify the audiences that you expect will be most likely to benefit from your research (e.g., federal policymakers and program administrators, state policymakers and program administrators, state and local school system administrators, school administrators, teachers and other school staff, parents, students, and other education researchers).

- Discuss the different ways in which you intend to reach these audiences through the major publications, presentations, and products you expect to produce.
    - o IES-funded researchers are expected to publish their findings in scientific, peer-reviewed journals and present them at conferences attended by other researchers.
    - o IES-funded researchers are also expected to seek opportunities to publish and present in venues designed for policymakers and practitioners. For example:
        - Report findings to the education agencies and schools that provided the project with data and data-collection opportunities.
        - Publish in practitioner journals when possible.
        - Give presentations and workshops at meetings of professional associations of teachers and leaders.
        - As appropriate, engage in activities with a relevant IES-funded Research and Development (R&D) Center or Regional Educational Laboratory (REL)
            - ➢ R&D Centers: https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/RandD/; https://ies.ed.gov/ncer/RandD/
            - ➢ RELs: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/

- IES-funded researchers who create products for use in research and practice as a result of their project (such as curricula, professional development programs, measures and assessments, guides and toolkits) are expected to make these products available for research purposes or (after evaluation or validation) for general use.

- Your dissemination plan should reflect the purpose of your project's research goals and how this affects the type and use of your findings. For example, if relevant, the following may be part of your dissemination plan:
  - Findings from exploratory research may identify potentially important associations between malleable factors and student education outcomes that may be useful in pointing out potentially fruitful areas for further attention from researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.
  - Dissemination efforts from development projects may focus on letting others know about the availability of a new intervention, model, or system for more rigorous evaluation and further adaptation. Dissemination efforts from development projects may also provide useful information on the design process, how development can be accomplished in partnership with practitioners, and what types of new practices are feasible or not feasible for use by practitioners.
  - Positive findings from studies focused on the impacts of an intervention, model, or system on student outcomes could support the wider use of the intervention and the further adaptation to different conditions. Findings of no impacts from such studies are important for decisions regarding the ongoing use and wider dissemination of an intervention, model, or system, as well as further revision of the intervention, implementation, or underlying theory of change.
  - Dissemination of findings from measure development may provide the psychometric properties of the assessment and identify the specific uses and populations for which it was validated. Should a project fail to validate an assessment for a specific use and population, these findings are important to disseminate in order to support decision-making regarding their current use and further development.

See Part IV.D.3 (Appendix A: Dissemination Plan) for more information about the **required Dissemination Plan** to include in your application.

## C. APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Eligible Applicants

Applicants that have the ability and capacity to conduct scientific research are eligible to apply to the Research Team and/or Network Lead roles. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, nonprofit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities.

### 2. The Principal Investigator and Authorized Organization Representative

*The Principal Investigator*

The Principal Investigator (PI) is the individual who has the authority and responsibility for the proper conduct of the research, including the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports.

Your institution is responsible for identifying the PI on a grant application and may elect to designate more than one person to serve in this role. In so doing, your institution identifies these PIs as sharing the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the research project intellectually and logistically. All PIs will be listed on any grant award notification. However, institutions applying for funding must designate a single point of contact for the project. The role of this person is primarily for communication purposes on the scientific and related budgetary aspects of the project and should be listed as the PI. All other PIs should be listed as co-Principal Investigators.

The PI will attend one meeting each year (for up to 2 days) in Washington, DC with other Institute PIs and Institute staff. The project's budget should include this meeting. Should the PI not be able to attend the meeting, he/she may designate another person who is key personnel to attend.

*The Authorized Organization Representative*

The Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) for the applicant institution is the official who has the authority to legally commit the applicant to (1) accept federal funding and (2) execute the proposed project. When your application is submitted through Grants.gov, the AOR automatically signs the cover sheet of the application and, in doing so, assures compliance with U.S. Department of Education policy on public access to scientific publications and data as well as other policies and regulations governing research awards (see Part III.B Additional Award Requirements).

## 3. Common Applicant Questions

- *May I submit an application if I did not submit a Letter of Intent?* Yes. However, the Institute strongly encourages you to submit a Letter of Intent. If you miss the deadline for submitting a Letter of Intent, contact the Program Officer listed in Part I. Please see Part III.C.1 Submitting a Letter of Intent for more information.

- *May I submit an application to form a network on a research topic other than one identified in the RFA?* No. The Institute will consider only network proposals for research on MTSS that integrates systems of academic and behavioral support in elementary schools. However, the Institute is open to a broad range of research questions within this general topic.

- *How many Research Teams must be funded in order to form a network?* At least two Research Teams are needed in order to form a network. If only one application receives funding, the Institute will not name a Network Lead. In this case, the grantee will conduct the proposed project independently.

- *How will the Network Lead be selected?* Applications for the Network Lead role that meet the compliance and responsiveness criteria will be forwarded to scientific peer review. The Institute intends to make no more than one Network Lead award for the network. If more than one application is deemed meritorious by scientific peer review, and there are enough Research Teams to form a network, the Institute will make an award to the highest-rated application.

- *May I submit an application to be Network Lead without submitting a Research Team application?* Yes. Applicants do not need to submit an application to the Research Team role in order to submit a Network Lead application.

- *May I submit applications to perform more than one role in a network (i.e., Research Team and Network Lead)?* Yes. Research Team applicants are encouraged to apply for the Network Lead role. In this case, Research Team and Network Lead proposals will be submitted as two separate applications, each evaluated on its own merits.

- *May I submit multiple applications for the same network role?* No. For example, a PI/project team may only submit one Research Team application, even if you have ideas for studies that are substantively different from one another. Furthermore, key personnel on one proposal cannot be included as key personnel on another proposal for the same network role.

- *May I submit the same application to more than one of the Institute's grant programs?* No. You may not, for example, submit a proposal to the Special Education Research Grants program

(84.324A) that is essentially the same as a Research Team application you submit to the Networks program (84.324N).

- *May I submit an application that involves a partnership with another research organization?* Yes. Two or more research organizations can work together to fulfill any of the network roles (i.e., Research Team and/or Network Lead). However, the application must designate one Principal Investigator as the primary point of contact for the project, and that Principal Investigator's institution as having primary responsibility for budgetary compliance and reporting.

- *May I apply if I work at a for-profit developer or distributor of an intervention or assessment?* Yes. You may apply if you or your collaborators develop, distribute, or otherwise market products or services (for-profit or nonprofit) that can be used as interventions, components of interventions, or assessments in the proposed research activities. However, the involvement of the developer or distributor must not jeopardize the objectivity of the research. In cases where the developer or distributor is part of the proposed Research Team, you should discuss in the project narrative how you will ensure the objectivity of the research.

- *May I apply if I intend to copyright products (e.g., a curriculum) developed using award funds?* Yes. Products derived from Institute-funded grants may be copyrighted and used by the grantee for proprietary purposes, but the U.S. Department of Education reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such products for Federal purposes and to authorize others to do so [2 C.F.R. § 200.315(b) (2014) (http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=114a76aaaec6398e1309d731056ee2df&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5#se2.1.200_1315)].

- *May I apply to do research on non-U.S. topics or using non-U.S. data?* No. Researchers applying to the Networks competition must propose research on U.S. topics and use U.S. data.

- *May I apply if I am not located in the U.S. or if I want to collaborate with researchers located outside of the U.S.?* Yes. You may submit an application if your institution is not located in the territorial U.S. However, you must propose research on U.S. topics and use U.S. data. Also, institutions not located in the territorial U.S. (both primary grantees and sub-awardees) may not charge indirect costs.

## D. PRE-AWARD REQUIREMENTS

Applications that are being considered for funding following scientific peer review may be required to provide further information on their proposed research activities (see Part III.B) before an award is made. For example, you may be required to provide updated Letters of Agreement showing access to the authentic education settings where your work is to take place or to the secondary data sets you have proposed to analyze. You may be asked for additional detail regarding your Research Plan and Dissemination Plan (required for all applicants) or your Data Management Plan (required for applicants proposing efficacy or effectiveness research). In addition, you may be required to provide greater detail regarding your proposed work. Significant revisions to the project that arise from these information requests will have to be addressed within the original budget.

## E. READING THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Both the **Principal Investigator and Authorized Organization Representative** should read this Request for Applications to learn how to prepare an application that meets two types of criteria:

1. Criteria that are required for an application to be sent forward for scientific peer review (Requirements).

2. Criteria that make for a strong (competitive) application and are used by the scientific peer reviewers (Recommendations for a Strong Application).

## 1. Requirements

The Institute will examine all applications and determine whether they meet the following criteria. Applications that do not meet these criteria will not be sent forward for scientific peer review.

- **RESPONSIVENESS**
  - ✓ Meets **General and Network Role requirements** (see Part II).
  - ✓ Meets **Project Narrative requirements** for the selected *Network role* (see Part II).
  - ✓ Meets the **Award requirements** for the selected *Network role* (see Part II and described below).

| Network Role | Maximum Number of Awards | Maximum Grant Duration | Maximum Grant Award |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research Team | 4 | 5 years | $4,000,000 |
| Network Lead | 1 | 5 Years | $1,500,000 |

- **COMPLIANCE** (see Part IV)
  - ✓ Includes all **required content**.
  - ✓ Includes all **required appendices** (see Part IV.D).
    a. Appendix A: Dissemination Plan (all applications)
    b. Appendix F: Data Management Plan (applications with efficacy or effectiveness research only)
- **SUBMISSION** (see Parts IV and V)
  - ✓ Submit electronically via Grants.gov no later than **4:30:00 p.m.**, Washington, DC time, on September 21, 2017.
  - ✓ Use the **correct application package** downloaded from Grants.gov (see Part IV.B).
  - ✓ Include **PDF files** that are **named and saved appropriately** and that are **attached to the proper forms** in the application package (see Part IV.D and Part V).

## 2. Recommendations for a Strong Application

In Part II, the Institute provides recommendations to improve the quality of your application. The scientific peer reviewers are asked to consider these recommendations in their evaluation of your application. The Institute strongly encourages you to incorporate the recommendations into your Project Narrative and relevant appendices.

# PART II: NETWORK REQUIREMENTS

## A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NETWORK APPLICATIONS

### 1. Objectives and Requirements for All Network Members

For FY 2018, the Institute intends to fund up to four Research Teams and a Network Lead for the Networks program. The Institute expects information sharing across teams and collaboration on research and dissemination activities. Ultimately, the goal of the network is to advance the field's understanding of MTSS beyond what individual researchers may be able to do on their own and to produce a body of evidence that will lead to improvements in education policies and programs and in student outcomes.

The Networks program is based on the idea that significant advances in knowledge are more likely to occur when researchers across institutions and disciplines are working together to address a significant problem or issue. Building on the unique interests and strengths of network members (i.e., Research Teams and Network Lead), the Institute intends to create a structure and process that will facilitate the sharing of research plans, data collection instruments, and other information and ideas. Network members are expected to provide constructive feedback on each other's projects and to look for opportunities to work together on adopting common measures, where applicable. Network members are also expected to develop activities that will strengthen their collective work, including but not limited to providing leadership for the field and cross-site training or mentoring of early career individuals involved with the network's research activities. Finally, network members are expected to plan and produce joint publications, policy briefings, a synthesis of research findings across teams, and other activities to disseminate their findings. Over time, the Institute hopes that network members will build relationships that lead to new collaborations and new lines of inquiry.

To become part of a network, applicants may apply as a Research Team, Network Lead, or both.[3] To apply as a Research Team, applicants should propose a research project and to apply as the Network Lead, they should propose coordination efforts that meet the requirements of this competition. For Research Teams, applicants must describe the significance of the project they have proposed and provide a detailed description of the research methods they will use. For Network Leads, applicants must describe their plans for coordinating the teams, organizing cross-team training opportunities, and communicating findings for the network. Both types of applicants must also discuss the qualifications of the Principal Investigator (PI) and other key personnel conducting the work and provide information on resources available to support the project. The requirements are described under Part II.B Requirements for Network Roles.

At a minimum, researchers who are funded under a network are required to attend network meetings and to communicate regularly with other network members. The Institute expects that networks will hold at least two in-person meetings during the first grant year and at least one in-person meeting each year in subsequent grant years. Other meetings may take place in person or via conference calls. The network meetings will be held in Washington, DC to allow participation by Institute staff and may be coordinated with the annual PI meeting required for all Institute grantees (typically in the early winter of each year). Applicants should include the costs for traveling to and from these meetings in their project budgets and should allocate at least 2 days per meeting to cover attendance with additional time for travel if necessary.

### 2. Objectives and Requirements for the Network Lead

The Network Lead is responsible for three major sets of activities. First, the Network Lead is responsible for network administration and coordination. This includes planning at least two in-person meetings

[3] If applying for both roles, you must submit separate proposals, one for each role.

during the first year of the network and at least one annual in-person meeting thereafter. This also includes organizing the network's leadership activities for the research field and for policy and practice (e.g., briefings or presentations for key stakeholders to discuss research goals and findings and to elicit feedback that will help improve the quality and policy relevance of the network's research). Second, the Network Lead will coordinate cross-team training and mentorship activities (e.g., setting up webinars, exchanges, other cross-team training opportunities for the early career researchers in the network). Third, the Network Lead will facilitate communication of network findings. This includes developing and hosting a website that explains the network's goals and projects and that makes the network's products and publications available to the public. In addition, the Network Lead will coordinate the efforts to synthesize findings from the different studies completed by the network members. The Network Lead should also coordinate with existing dissemination structures such as the Institute's Regional Educational Laboratories.

The Network Lead will play a critical role in making sure the network functions smoothly and reaches its full potential. The Network Lead Principal Investigator (PI) should bring a record of scholarship in the area of MTSS research and should show a strong commitment to building new knowledge on this topic from different perspectives. The PI should have strong facilitation skills and experience working in teams. Finally, the PI will serve as spokesperson for the network and should be skilled in interacting with researcher, policymaker, and practitioner audiences.

Applicants who wish to be considered for Network Lead must submit an application in which they describe their plans for network administration and coordination of research (including leadership activities), cross-team training, and dissemination of network findings. Applicants must also describe their personnel qualifications and organizational resources. The Institute is open to different ideas on how to structure the Network Lead role. For example, applicants may propose one person as Network Lead PI or two people as co-PIs and may use other staff for support under either approach. Applicants should identify the names and responsibilities of the people involved and make clear how the Network Lead functions will be organized and managed. If a co-leadership model is proposed, applicants must designate a PI on the application and list other personnel as co-PIs.

### 3. General Narrative Requirements

Applications for **Research Teams must** include four sections in their project narrative: (1) Significance, (2) Research Plan, (3) Personnel, and (4) Resources.

Applications for **Network Lead must** address five topics in their project narrative: (1) a plan for network administration and coordination, including leadership activities for the field, (2) a plan for communication and dissemination of network findings, (3) a plan for coordinating training or other activities for early career researchers in the network, (4) a description of personnel qualifications, and (5) a description of organizational resources.

Requirements and recommendations for these sections of the project narrative are role specific and are described in Part II.B.

## B. REQUIREMENTS FOR NETWORK ROLES

### 1. MTSS Network Research Team Requirements

The Institute seeks to support a network of research teams to conduct research on integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in elementary schools. Integrated MTSS aims to address academic as well as social, emotional, and behavioral development of students. The MTSS framework provides multiple levels of support for all learners, and aligns resources and supports for students as well as for teachers and other school personnel who are supporting students (Batsche, 2014; Chard et al., 2008; Greenwood et al., 2011; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Utley & Obiakor, 2015). Although research frequently examines academic and behavioral systems separately, the purpose of the MTSS Network is to support research teams to investigate an integrated system of both academic and behavioral supports. For this competition, the Institute is open to a variety of different research questions and designs.

Research Teams are expected to meet regularly to discuss ways to coordinate and strengthen their collective work. The network's ultimate objective is to build a more comprehensive understanding of integrated MTSS from multiple perspectives to improve outcomes for all students, especially those with or at risk for disabilities.

#### a) Overview

MTSS has been conceptualized in a variety of ways in the literature. For the purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA), MTSS is defined as a comprehensive framework that provides academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support for all students, and provides resources and supports that teachers and other school personnel need to support these students. In this case, MTSS combines principles of academic tiered systems of support and behavioral tiered systems of support into a system-wide approach that provides coordinated research-based practices, strategies, and structures to meet students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016; Utley & Obiakor, 2015). MTSS is a prevention-oriented, data-driven, and team-based system characterized by multiple tiers of intervention, universal screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Although MTSS may vary across settings, it generally includes three tiers of increasingly intensive intervention. Typically, Tier 1 includes universal services for all students, Tier 2 includes targeted services for students that may need additional supports, and Tier 3 includes more intensive services for students who need additional and more individualized support.

There is an existing research base on tiered systems of support. The Institute has made substantial investments in research focused on these systems, including research to identify factors that support high-quality implementation; develop and evaluate universal and targeted student interventions and professional development to support teachers and school teams; develop and validate measures for screening or progress monitoring; and evaluate the impact of these systems on student outcomes. Although some of these academic and behavioral tiered support systems are widely implemented in schools, they are most often implemented independently of one another, even if both are in place at the same school. Researchers are increasingly advocating for the thoughtful integration of these tiered support systems into a single, coherent framework that is more efficient and provides optimal support to address the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students, including those with or at risk for disabilities (e.g., Hawken, Vincent, & Schumann, 2008; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016; Stewart, Benner, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Utley & Obiakor, 2015). Researchers have suggested that an integrated MTSS framework may have several advantages over separate tiered support systems, including more efficient service delivery and use of resources. An integrated system also has the potential to more seamlessly address students' interrelated academic and behavior problems and ensure that academic and behavioral supports are aligned without counteracting one another (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). An integrated MTSS model may be especially beneficial for students with or at risk for disabilities who often struggle in both the academic and behavioral realm and whose difficulties in one domain are often related to difficulties in the other (e.g., Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004).

Evaluations of integrated school-wide systems of behavioral and reading support show promising academic and behavioral outcomes for students (e.g., Algozzine et al., 2012; Ervin, Schaughency, Goodman, McGlinchey, & Matthews, 2006). Additionally, results of a meta-analysis of tiered behavioral models, tiered reading models, and integrated models suggests that integrated systems result in larger improvements in reading outcomes than independent models (Stewart et al., 2007).

Although the planning and implementation of MTSS is happening in schools across the country, there are many challenges related to the integration of academic and behavioral tiered support systems and the high-quality implementation of this integrated MTSS framework (e.g., Freeman, Miller, & Newcomer, 2015). In addition, there is limited research on what is needed to implement integrated MTSS in a way that leads to improved student outcomes. Questions remain about the key components of MTSS; the organizational and technological supports that promote high-quality implementation; the capacity of leaders, teachers, and other school personnel to effectively implement MTSS and improve student outcomes; the use of assessments for screening, progress monitoring, and decision making; the ability to assess the implementation of the whole MTSS framework; and the role of parents in the decision-making process. Rigorous research is needed on how best to integrate academic and behavioral tiered support systems into a framework that supports positive outcomes for all students, particularly students with or at risk for disabilities.

Through this funding mechanism, the Institute supports field-generated research that meets all requirements outlined in this RFA. **Research Team projects must address research on the key components of MTSS.** As a complex systems-level framework, MTSS consists of multiple interrelated components. Researchers have suggested that an integrated MTSS framework may share many of the features of other tiered support systems (e.g., research-based supports, multiple tiers of increasingly intensive supports, screening and ongoing progress monitoring, data-based problem solving; e.g., Batsche, 2014; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). However, systematic investigation is needed to unpack the key components of integrated MTSS that are essential to its success in improving student education outcomes. At a minimum, Research Teams must propose to investigate the key components of MTSS and the outcomes of students with or at risk for disability. The Institute is open to research on students with a range of different disabilities and disability severity.

The Institute also encourages applicants to consider the research issues listed below as key areas of challenge related to MTSS. The Institute's peer-review process is not designed to give preferential treatment to applications that address these issues; rather, the Institute provides these research issues as examples because they have the potential to lead to important advances in the field.

- *Supports and barriers*. Researchers have documented several factors that support the implementation and sustainability of tiered support systems. For example, previous research shows that positive school team functioning, including data-based decision making, is strongly related to the sustainability of school-wide positive behavior supports (McIntosh et al., 2013). Several challenges to implementation have also been noted. However, there is limited research on the supports and barriers to the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of an integrated MTSS framework. Research is needed to determine malleable factors at the district, community, school, family, and individual levels that support or hinder the high-quality implementation of an integrated MTSS framework.
- *Leadership skills needed to support MTSS*. Support and active involvement from district and school leadership is critical for high-quality implementation of systems-level frameworks or programs, such as MTSS (Freeman et al., 2015). Researchers have suggested ways in which school and district leaders can support implementation of tiered support systems (e.g., creating common planning time; George & Kincaid, 2008) and the knowledge and skills that leaders need to support systems-level change (e.g., understanding of the specific program components; Eagle, Dowd-Eagle, Snyder, & Hooltzman, 2015). However, empirical research is needed to determine the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that leaders need to support the adoption and high-quality

implementation of MTSS. Additionally, research is needed to understand how best to train and support leaders in building these competencies and managing this systems-level framework, and to develop and evaluate such training programs.

- *Building the capacity of school teams to implement MTSS*. MTSS is a complex systems-level framework that requires effective collaboration among a variety of school-based professionals (e.g., administrators, special education teachers, general education teachers, behavior specialists) and coordinated service delivery across multiple domains (e.g., academic, behavioral, mental health). However, these teams often lack the supports they need to function effectively and efficiently. For example, research has indicated that school-based personnel often do not receive adequate training on data-based problem solving (Datnow & Hubbard 2016; Mandinach & Gummer, 2013; Means, Chen, DeBarger & Padilla, 2011). Thus, additional research is needed to determine the best ways to build the capacity of school-based teams to implement integrated MTSS frameworks with fidelity and subsequently improve academic, social-emotional, and behavioral student outcomes, and to use this knowledge of capacity building to develop and evaluate MTSS frameworks.
- *Family engagement in MTSS*. One of the key features of integrated MTSS is its comprehensiveness. Not only is the MTSS framework designed to address students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs, but it also addresses the student supports needed from the larger system, including the role of families in supporting students' achievement (Batsche, 2014; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Research has demonstrated the value of family involvement and parent-school partnerships for the success of students (e.g., Barnard, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Miedel & Reynolds, 2000). However, additional research is needed on how to engage families at all tiers within an integrated MTSS model.
- *Behavioral assessments for screening and progress monitoring in MTSS*. A critical component of MTSS is the use of assessment data for universal screening and progress monitoring. These data help determine when a student needs to move to a more intensive tier and inform decisions about the selection, implementation, and individualization of research-based interventions for a given student. There are many academic screeners and progress monitoring measures in wide use in schools; however, reliable and valid *behavior* screeners are less widely implemented in tiered systems (Burke et al., 2012; Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Christ, 2009; Oakes, Lane, Cox, & Messenger, 2014). Research is needed on how to incorporate existing measures or to develop and validate new ones for use in existing data collection systems that are commonly used by schools.
- *Use of technology in data collection and utilization in MTSS*. As noted above, implementation of MTSS involves extensive data collection, including universal screening, monitoring the progress of students, and using the data to inform decisions on student placement and movement between tiers. Technology can streamline the process of collecting, analyzing, and using data to inform decision making among school-based teams. Such technological tools have been developed to support the implementation of academic tiered models and behavioral tiered models; however, additional research is needed on technological resources to support data collection and utilization as part of an integrated MTSS model as well as how to best support school-based teams in utilizing this technology to improve outcomes for students.

Each Research Team in the MTSS Network is expected to collaborate with the other Research Teams and the Network Lead to discuss research plans, share emerging findings, and give and receive constructive feedback. The network's specific goals are to

(i) Identify productive ways to coordinate research activities that can enhance the work of the network as a whole, which may include adopting some common data collection protocols and measures, where applicable;

(ii) Actively engage in leadership activities for the field;

(iii) Provide cross-project training activities for early career researchers across teams; and

(iv) Plan and conduct dissemination activities that are accessible and useful to policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders, including briefings or meetings with federal, state, and local officials, as well as provide input to the Network Lead for the synthesis of findings across network teams.

**b) General Requirements**

Applications under the Networks program **must** meet the requirements listed in ***Part I.B. General Requirements*****, as well as the requirements on scope listed below in order to be responsive and sent forward for scientific peer review**.

The goal of this competition is to better understand integrated MTSS at a broad (i.e., systems or policy) level. Applicants interested in pursuing funding for research focused on a single intervention or measure, even if that measure is intended to be used in MTSS, may apply for funding under the Special Education Research Grants program (324A).

**c) Narrative Requirements**

Applications for Research Teams **must meet the requirements set out under (1) Project Narrative and (2) Awards in order to be responsive and sent forward for scientific peer review**. The requirements are the minimum necessary for an application to be sent forward for scientific peer review. In order to improve the quality of your application, the Institute offers recommendations following each set of Project Narrative requirements. Applications proposing efficacy or effectiveness research as part of their proposed project **must** also include a Data Management Plan as described in **(3) Data Management Plan**.

**(1) Project Narrative**

The project narrative (recommended length: no more than 30 pages) for an application for a Research Team under the Networks competition **must** include four sections: (a) Significance, (b) Research Plan, (c) Personnel, and (d) Resources.

**a. Significance**

The purpose of the Significance section is to provide a rationale for your approach to addressing the objectives of the network. You should explain your understanding of the issues the network is meant to address, why it is important to address these issues, propose an overall plan for your Research Team's approach to the proposed research, and describe how your program of research will inform research, policy, and/or practice in MTSS.

**Requirements:** In order to be responsive and sent forward for peer review, applications **must** include a Significance section that describes the following:

(i) The specific research objectives; and

(ii) The student population(s) you intend to study.

**Recommendations for a Strong Application:** In order to address the above requirements, the Institute recommends that you do the following to provide a compelling rationale for your work.

- Describe the state of integrated academic and behavioral MTSS in the field and what is currently known and what is not known about how to implement MTSS in elementary schools. This description should demonstrate your understanding of the complexity of special education systems.
- Discuss the major research questions you intend to answer and how they will address the objectives of the MTSS network.

- Provide a theory of change or logic model relevant to your research goals.
    - Clearly describe the theory of change or logic model, even if it is preliminary, along with theoretical justifications and empirical evidence that support it. Depending on your research aims, your theory of change may be revised over the course of the project.
    - A theory of change may include a description of the components of an intervention (planned or ready to be evaluated) that will lead to changes in one or multiple underlying processes, which in turn will foster better student education outcomes directly or through intermediate outcomes (e.g., changed teacher or school-team practices, improved data for decision making, etc.). A more complete theory of change could include further details such as the sample representing the target population, level of exposure to the components of the intervention, key moderators (such as setting, context, student and their family characteristics), and the specific measures used for the outcomes.
- Describe the setting where you will conduct your research and explain why it is an appropriate selection for your research questions.
- Explain your overall vision for your research as well as the theoretical and empirical support for the approach you are taking.
- Discuss the practical importance of the proposed work and how it will lead to improvements in education outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities.

### b. Research Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe the methodology you will use to answer your research questions, including collecting and analyzing data.

**Requirements:** In order to be responsive and sent forward for peer review, applications **must** include a Research Plan that describes the following:

(i) The planned research methods; and
(ii) The planned data analyses.

**Recommendations for a Strong Application:** In order to address the above requirements, the Institute recommends that you do the following in your Research Plan section to explain and strengthen the methodological rigor of your work.

*Sample and Setting*

- Describe your sample, its size, and its relation to addressing the overall aims of the project (e.g., what population the sample represents). Include all relevant populations, such as students (including those with and without disabilities), teachers, service providers, administrators, etc. Explain the procedures you will use to select the sample and provide justification for any exclusion and inclusion criteria.
- If relevant to the research questions, demonstrate that the sample size provides sufficient power to address your research aims.
- Discuss barriers to recruitment and retention, and your plans to overcome those barriers.
- Describe the authentic education setting where your research will take place (e.g., school-level, district-level) and your rationale for choosing the setting.

*Measures:*

- Describe the key variables and measures you will be using in the study.

- If you will be using pre-existing measures, discuss their reliability and validity for the intended purpose and population.
- If you will be developing new measures or revising existing measures, provide a plan for testing the reliability and validity of these measures.
- Describe how the measures are appropriate for answering your research questions.
- Include examples of measurement items in the Project Narrative or in Appendix D.
- If extant data will be used, the data set(s) should be named and described.

- Describe the procedures for data collection.

*Research Design and Data Analysis:*

- Explain your methodological approaches to answering your research questions.
- Explain the research protocols you will use to collect your data.
- Discuss your approach to data analysis and how your approach will address your research questions or hypotheses.
- If extant data sets will be used, describe the relevant measures of interest that will be used for analyses. If applicable, note whether a restricted use license is held or if you plan to obtain one.
- If you will be developing assessments, describe your planned iterative process for developing, testing, and selecting items; procedures for scoring; procedures for determining the reliability and validity (e.g., predictive, concurrent, convergent, discriminant); and administrative procedures for conducting the assessment (including examining the feasibility of using the assessment for its intended purpose).

*Timeline:*

- Provide a timeline for each step in your project, including, where applicable, such actions as sample recruitment and selection, data collection, development process, validation activities, data analysis, and reporting.
- Timelines may be placed in either the Project Narrative or Appendix C but may be discussed only in the Project Narrative (Appendix C should not include narrative text).

### c. Personnel

The purpose of this section is to describe the relevant expertise of your Research Team, the responsibilities of each team member, and each team member's time commitments.

**Requirements:** In order to be responsive and sent forward for peer review, applications **must** include a Personnel section that

(i) Identifies and describes the qualifications of the members of the Research Team.

**Recommendations for a Strong Application:** In order to address the above requirement, the Institute recommends that you do the following in your Personnel section to demonstrate that your team possesses the appropriate training and experience and will commit sufficient time to implement the proposed research.

- Identify key personnel at the primary applicant institution, any subaward institutions, and any consultants.
- Identify and briefly describe the following for all key personnel (e.g., Principal Investigator, co-Principal Investigators, co-Investigators) on the project team: qualifications to carry out the proposed work, roles and responsibilities within the project,

percent of time and calendar months per year (academic plus summer together) to be devoted to the project, and past success at disseminating research findings in peer-reviewed scientific journals and to policymaker and practitioner audiences.

- Describe the experience and expertise among team personnel in building partnerships with schools and communities who serve students with or at risk for disabilities and their history of translating research into practice for these schools and communities.
- Identify a person on your team who will be the principal point of contact for the synthesis, and describe this person's background in the Personnel section. This person will be responsible for contributing to the Network Lead's cross-team research synthesis. Discuss the personnel time that will be available for this work.
- Discuss your team members' past experiences working in a research network, if any, and what lessons were drawn from that experience that would help the MTSS Network succeed.
- If there will be key state or local officials involved in the study, describe what roles they will play (e.g., informing research questions, providing access to schools). Include letters of agreement from key agencies or programs in Appendix E.
- Identify the management structure and procedures that will be used to keep your project on track and ensure the quality of its work. This is especially important for projects involving multiple institutions carrying out different tasks that must be coordinated and/or integrated.

### d. Resources

The purpose of this section is to describe your institutional capacity to complete a project of this size and complexity and to disseminate the results.

**Requirement:** In order to be responsive and sent forward for peer review, applications **must** include a Resources section that describes the resources to do the following:

(i) Conduct the project.

**Recommendations for a Strong Application:** In order to address the above requirement, the Institute recommends that you do the following to demonstrate that your team has both a plan for acquiring or accessing the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the completion and dissemination of the proposed project and the commitments of each partner for the implementation and success of the project.

*Resources to conduct the project:*

- Describe your institution's capacity and experience to manage a grant of this size.
- Describe your access to resources available at the primary institution and any subaward institutions.
- Describe your plan for acquiring any resources that are not currently accessible, will require significant expenditures, and are necessary for the successful completion of the project (e.g., equipment, test materials, curriculum, training materials).
- Describe your access to the schools or other authentic education settings that will be the focus of your research. Include letters of agreement from school district or other relevant officials in Appendix E. Convincing letters will convey that the organizations understand what their participation in the study will involve (e.g., access to data, participation in classroom observations, completion of student assessments, administration of teacher surveys).
- Include information about student, teacher, and school incentives, if applicable.

- Describe your access to any data sets that you will require. Include letters of agreement, data licenses, or existing Memoranda of Understanding in Appendix E to document that you will be able to access the data for your proposed use.

*Resources to disseminate the results:*

- Describe your capacity to disseminate information about the findings from your research, as described in the required Dissemination Plan in Appendix A: Dissemination Plan.
- Keep in mind that national dissemination activities, including hosting of a network website, will be coordinated by the Network Lead. In your budget, you should allocate sufficient time to participate in dissemination activities organized by the Network Lead.
    - Allocate time for the PI and other key personnel to participate in at least two in-person network meetings in the first year and at least one in-person network meeting each year thereafter. For budgeting purposes, assume the meetings will take place in Washington, D.C. and last 2 days.
    - Allocate funds for the PI and other key personnel to attend at least two 2-day meetings with policymakers or professional conferences each year, including the Institute's annual Principal Investigators meeting in Washington, D.C.

### (2) Awards

All Research Teams **must** conform to the following limits on duration and cost:

**Duration Maximum:**

- **The maximum duration of a Research Team project is 5 years.** An application of this type proposing a project length of greater than 5 years will be deemed nonresponsive to the Request for Applications and will not be accepted for review.

**Cost Maximum:**

- **The maximum award for a Research Team project is $4,000,000 (total cost = direct costs + indirect costs).** An application of this type proposing a budget higher than the maximum award will be deemed nonresponsive to the Request for Applications and will not be accepted for review.

**Maximum Number of Awards:**

- The Institute intends to make up to **four awards** to Research Teams to form the MTSS Network.

### (3) Data Management Plan

For Research Teams proposing to include efficacy and effectiveness research, applications must include a data management plan (DMP, recommended length: no more than five pages in Appendix F) that describes your plans for making the final research data from the proposed projects accessible to others. Resources that may be of interest to researchers in developing a data management plan can be found at http://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp.

DMPs are expected to differ depending on the nature of the project and the data collected. By addressing the items identified below, your DMP describes how you will meet the requirements of the Institute's policy for data sharing. The DMP should include the following:

- Type of data to be shared.
- Procedures for managing and for maintaining the confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information.

- Roles and responsibilities of project or institutional staff in the management and retention of research data, including a discussion of any changes to the roles and responsibilities that will occur should the Project Director/Principal Investigator and/or co-Project Directors/co-Principal Investigators leave the project or their institution.
- Expected schedule for data access, including how long the data will remain accessible (at least 10 years) and acknowledgement that the timeframe of data accessibility will be reviewed at the annual progress reviews and revised as necessary.
- Format of the final data set.
- Data set documentation to be provided.
- Method of data access (e.g., provided by the Project Director/Principal Investigator, through a data archive) and how those interested in using the data can locate and access them.
- Whether or not a data agreement that specifies conditions under which the data will be shared will be required.
- Any circumstances that prevent all or some of the data from being made accessible. This includes data that may fall under multiple statutes and, hence, must meet the confidentiality requirements for each applicable statute (e.g., data covered by Common Rule for Protection of Human Subjects, FERPA, HIPAA).

The costs of the DMP can be covered by the grant and should be included in the budget and explained in the budget narrative. The peer-review process will not include the DMP in the scoring of the scientific merit of the application. The Institute's Program Officers will be responsible for reviewing the completeness of the proposed DMP. If your application is being considered for funding based on the scores received during the peer-review process but your DMP is determined incomplete, you will be required to provide additional detail regarding your DMP (see Pre-Award Requirements).

## 2. MTSS Network Lead Requirements

### a) Overview

The Institute requests applications from institutions interested in serving as Network Lead for the MTSS Network. The Institute acknowledges the challenge of writing an application for the Network Lead without knowing in advance which Research Teams will be working together and realizes that the Network Lead role may evolve over the course of the project. However, there are some basic responsibilities expected of the Network Lead and the applicant is expected to draw upon its team members' past experiences in similar collaborations. The Network Lead will play a critical role in convening members and providing the support needed to make sure the network functions smoothly and accomplishes its goals and objectives. The Network Lead will also provide national leadership and work with Research Teams to implement a communications strategy that informs and engages policymakers, practitioners, and researchers around MTSS in elementary schools. The Institute expects the Network Lead to possess expertise in this field and to have a strong commitment to research that will help improve outcomes for all students, particularly with a focus on those with or at risk for disabilities. The ideal Network Lead will respect and promote different perspectives, encourage collaboration, and foster innovation.

The Network Lead is responsible for three major sets of activities:

(1) **Network administration and coordination.** The Network Lead will function as the convener for network meetings and activities. The Institute expects the members of the network to meet in person at least twice in the first 12 months of the award and at least once a year thereafter, though additional in-person and teleconference meetings may be arranged as needed. The meetings are intended to serve multiple purposes: build interpersonal and cross-team relationships, facilitate exchange of ideas and information, review and provide feedback on draft instruments (if relevant) and documents, plan collaborative activities, and coordinate dissemination. These meetings will also be used for planning activities to take leadership in the field, such as hosting a national conference on integrated MTSS. In-person meetings will be held in Washington, DC to allow participation by Institute staff, and the Institute will provide meeting space to help reduce costs.

(2) **Coordinating cross-team training or early career activities.** The Network Lead will organize opportunities for cross-team training of students, postdoctoral fellows, and other early career researchers on issues related to MTSS. These may take any of a variety of forms, such as organizing webinars or other forms of online training, opportunities to work on research carried out by different teams in the network, summer workshops, or facilitating cross-team mentorship when there are common research interests.

(3) **Communication of network findings.** The Institute expects the Network Lead to host a network website that will communicate the goals and objectives of the network, describe the projects of the Network Lead and the Research Teams, and make the network's research papers and products available to the public at no cost. Ideally, the website will include graphics and interactive features to make it engaging and useful for visitors.

In addition to hosting the website, the Institute expects the Network Lead to organize briefings or presentations for federal and state policymakers and other key stakeholders. These events should be two-directional, allowing the Network Lead and Research Teams to discuss research objectives and findings and providing opportunities for feedback to improve the quality and relevance of the research. The Network Lead should also identify opportunities for network members to present their work at national conferences involving policymakers, practitioners, and researchers focused on issues related to MTSS. The Network Lead should propose to organize a final conference, in Washington, DC, on the findings and implications of the MTSS Network for future policy, practice, and research.

The Institute expects the Network Lead to synthesize the network's findings by producing a comprehensive summary of results across the research teams. This synthesis should discuss similarities and differences in findings and potential next steps in MTSS research. The Network Lead should write this synthesis for a variety of target audiences in ways that help non-researchers understand the findings as well as the limits of those findings (e.g., limits on causal inference and generalization beyond samples in the study).

Finally, the Institute encourages the Network Lead to work with the Institute's Regional Educational Laboratories to provide opportunities for practitioners and policymakers to learn about the research findings and to consider how these findings may apply to their own context.

### b) General Requirements

In order to be considered for Network Lead, you **must submit an application** (recommended length: no more than 15 pages) and **meet the requirements set out under (b) General Requirements** (this section) and **(c) Awards.**

**Requirements:** In order to be responsive and sent forward for peer review, your Network Lead application **must** include the five items below:

(1) A plan for network administration and coordination, including leadership activities;
(2) A plan for coordinating training activities for early career researchers in the network;
(3) A plan for communication and dissemination of network findings;
(4) A description of personnel qualifications; and
(5) A description of organizational resources.

**Recommendations for a Strong Application**: In order to address the above requirements, the Institute recommends that you do the following in your application:

#### (1) Network Administration and Coordination

- Describe your vision of how the Network Lead will help the network accomplish its goals and advance research and practice around MTSS.
- Discuss your plans for network meetings, including major goals for meetings and how you will facilitate exchange of information and ideas, review and feedback of draft reports, and planning for new activities and collaborations. You might consider including a proposed agenda for the first network meeting in your narrative or Appendix C.
- Discuss some of the major challenges you expect the network might face. These might include challenges internal to the network (e.g., keeping the group focused and on track) or external challenges (e.g., delivering findings suggesting the absence of a significant association or presence of adverse link between a specific practice and student outcomes to policymakers and practitioners in a way that helps them move forward). Describe how, as Network Lead, you would work with Research Teams to overcome these challenges.
- Discuss what leadership activities you intend to conduct and how you will work with the Research Teams collaboratively on these national leadership activities.

#### (2) Coordination of Training Activities for Early Career Researchers

- Describe your plans for coordinating cross-team training activities for students and other early career researchers working on various Research Teams within the network.
- Discuss the role you envision for each Research Team in participating in the cross-team training activities. For example, this may include leading a workshop or webinar, finding research opportunities on each team's project for additional early career researchers, or other activities to help train the early career researchers throughout the network.
- Describe any barriers to the participation of early career researchers and how you will work with the Research Teams to overcome those barriers.

**(3) Communication of Network Findings**

- Explain how you will work with the Research Teams to communicate broadly about the objectives, findings, and activities of the MTSS Research Network. Identify the various audiences you intend to reach with your communication activities.
- Discuss your plans to take the lead in writing a synthesis of the network's major findings across teams.
- Discuss the expected timing of various dissemination activities based on the anticipated timing of the research activities. For example, what type of information do you expect to be able to communicate at each stage of the Research Teams' progress?
- Discuss your ideas for using briefings and other forums to encourage dialogue and feedback on the network's research objectives, findings, and future activities.
- Discuss your vision for the network website. Include your ideas for making the website a "go to" source for research on MTSS and how you will make it informative and engaging for non-researchers.
- Explain how you will work with the Institute's Regional Educational Laboratories to disseminate findings and products from the network.
- Describe how you will coordinate with national and state associations and/or use conferences to share information and exchange ideas with policymakers, practitioners, and researchers focused on MTSS.

**(4) Personnel Qualifications**

- Discuss the PI's professional background in conducting high-quality, scientific research on MTSS, particularly focused on children with or at risk for disabilities. Attach a biographical sketch to the Research and Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) form.
- Describe the PI's past experience working in a research network or collaboration, either as a network member or a leader. Discuss what this prior network or collaboration intended to do and what it actually accomplished, along with any lessons you learned from this experience.
- Describe the PI's past experience working with educators and policymakers, including disseminating research findings and providing technical support and guidance to educators, policymakers, families of children with disabilities, and other stakeholders.
- Describe the PI's past experience in coordinating activities related to the training or mentoring of early career researchers, including students.
- Identify key personnel who will be working to support you as Network Lead and the roles these individuals will play. Include information on the educational background and professional experience of key personnel. Attach their biographical sketches to the Research and Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) form.
- Identify the management structure and procedures that will be used to ensure that the Network Lead delivers on its obligations to the Research Teams and the Institute.
- Provide information on the percentage of time the PI and other key personnel will devote to the Network Lead role.

**(5) Organizational Resources**

- Describe your institution's capacity and experience to function as Network Lead for the network. Be sure to include prior history of managing grants of this size.

- Discuss the physical and technological resources you have available to support network meetings and interactions as well as coordinate training activities (e.g., videoconferencing facilities).
- Describe your plan for acquiring any resources that are not currently accessible, will require significant expenditures, and are necessary for the successful completion of the project (e.g., equipment).
- Discuss your editorial and communications capacity to produce and disseminate a research synthesis or other form of comprehensive summary, host a website, and distribute network products and papers to target audiences.

### c) Awards

#### Duration Maximum:

- **The maximum duration of the MTSS Network Lead award is 5 years.** An application of this type proposing a project length of greater than 5 years will be deemed nonresponsive to the Request for Applications and will not be accepted for review.

#### Cost Maximum:

- **The maximum award for the MTSS Network Lead is $1,500,000 (total cost = direct costs + indirect costs).** An application of this type proposing a budget higher than the maximum award will be deemed nonresponsive to the Request for Applications and will not be accepted for review.

#### Maximum Number of Awards:

- The Institute will make no more than **one** award for the MTSS Network Lead. In addition, no Network Lead will be awarded unless at least two Research Teams are awarded.

# PART III: COMPETITION REGULATIONS AND REVIEW CRITERIA

## A. FUNDING MECHANISMS AND RESTRICTIONS

### 1. Mechanism of Support

The Institute intends to award cooperative agreements pursuant to this Request for Applications.

### 2. Funding Available

Although the Institute intends to support the network topic described in this announcement, all awards pursuant to this Request for Applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of meritorious applications. The Institute makes its awards to the highest quality applications, as determined through scientific peer review, regardless of role. For NCSER's Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education competition, we intend to fund one Network Lead and up to four Research Teams. At least two Research Team awards are needed to form the Network. If only one Research Team receives an award, the awardee will conduct the project independently. No Network Lead will receive an award unless at least two Research Teams receive awards. Contingent on the availability of funds and the quality of applications, the Institute may make additional awards in FY 2019 from the list of unfunded applications from the FY 2018 competitions.

**The size of the award depends on the network role and scope of the project**. Please attend to the duration and budget maximums set for each network topic and role in Part II: Network Requirements. **If you request an award duration longer than the maximum or a budget higher than the maximum, your application will be deemed nonresponsive and will not be reviewed.**

| Network Role | Maximum Number of Awards | Maximum Grant Duration | Maximum Grant Award |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research Team | 4 | 5 years | $4,000,000 |
| Network Lead | 1 | 5 Years | $1,500,000 |

### 3. Cooperative Agreement

Through the terms of the cooperative agreement, grantees will work with the Institute to plan work related to Research Team and Network Lead activities.

### 4. Special Consideration for Budget Expenses

*Indirect Cost Rate*

When calculating your expenses for research conducted in field settings, you should apply your institution's federally negotiated off-campus indirect cost rate. Questions about indirect cost rates should be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Indirect Cost Group: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/icgindex.html.

Institutions, both primary grantees and subawardees, not located in the territorial United States cannot charge indirect costs.

*Meetings and Conferences*

If you are requesting funds to cover expenses for hosting meetings or conferences, please note that there are statutory and regulatory requirements in determining whether costs are reasonable and necessary. Please refer to OMB's Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), 2 CFR, §200.432 Conferences.

In particular, federal grant funds cannot be used to pay for alcoholic beverages or entertainment, which includes costs for amusement, diversion, and social activities. In general, federal funds may not be used to pay for food. A grantee hosting a meeting or conference may not use grant funds to pay for food for conference attendees unless doing so is necessary to accomplish legitimate meeting or conference business. You may request funds to cover expenses for working meetings (e.g., working lunches); however, the Institute will determine whether these costs are allowable in keeping with the Uniform Guidance Cost Principles. Grantees are responsible for the proper use of their grant awards and may have to repay funds to the Department if they violate the rules for meeting- and conference-related expenses or other disallowed expenditures.

### 5. Program Authority

20 U.S.C. 9501 et seq., the "Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002," Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

### 6. Applicable Regulations

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) codified at CFR Part 200. The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 77, 81, 82, 84, 86 (part 86 applies only to institutions of higher education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.101(b), 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.211, 75.217, 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, and 75.230.

## B. ADDITIONAL AWARD REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Public Availability of Data and Results

You must include a Data Management Plan (DMP) in Appendix F: Data Management Plan if you are submitting an application that includes efficacy or effectiveness research. The scientific peer-review process will not include the DMP in the scoring of the scientific merit of the application. Instead, the Institute's Program Officers will be responsible for reviewing the completeness of the proposed DMP. The costs of the DMP can be covered by the award and should be included in the budget and explained in the budget narrative.

Recipients of awards are expected to publish or otherwise make publicly available the results of the work supported through this program. Institute-funded investigators must submit final manuscripts resulting from research supported in whole or in part by the Institute to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC, http://eric.ed.gov) upon acceptance for publication. An author's final manuscript is defined as the final version accepted for journal publication and includes all graphics and supplemental materials that are associated with the article. The Institute will make the manuscript available to the public through ERIC no later than 12 months after the official date of publication. Investigators and their institutions are responsible for ensuring that any publishing or copyright agreements concerning submitted articles fully comply with this requirement.

### 2. Special Conditions on Grants

The Institute may impose special conditions on a grant pertinent to the proper implementation of key aspects of the proposed research design or if the grantee is not financially stable, has a history of unsatisfactory performance, has an unsatisfactory financial or other management system, has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant, or is otherwise not responsible.

### 3. Demonstrating Access to Data and Authentic Education Settings

The research you propose to do will most likely require that you have (or will obtain) access to authentic education settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts), secondary data sets, or studies currently under way. In such cases, you will need to provide evidence that you have access to these resources prior to receiving funding. Whenever possible, include Letters of Agreement in Appendix E from those who have responsibility for or access to the data or settings you wish to incorporate when you submit your application. Even in circumstances where you have included such letters with your application, **the Institute may require additional supporting evidence prior to the release of funds**. If you cannot provide such documentation, the Institute may not award the grant or may withhold funds.

You will need supporting evidence of partnership or access if you are:

- *Conducting research in or with authentic education settings* - If your application is being considered for funding based on scientific merit scores from the scientific peer-review panel and your research relies on access to authentic education settings (e.g., schools), you will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary settings in order to receive the award. This means that if you do not have permission to conduct the proposed project in the necessary number of settings at the time of application, you will need to provide documentation to the Institute indicating that you have successfully recruited the necessary number of settings for the proposed research before the full first-year costs will be awarded. If you recruited sufficient numbers of settings prior to the application, the Institute may ask you to provide documentation that the settings originally recruited for the application are still willing to partner in the research.
- *Using secondary data sets* - If your application is being considered for funding based on scientific merit scores from the scientific peer review panel and your research relies on access to secondary data sets (such as federally collected data sets, state or district administrative data, or data collected by you or other researchers), you will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary data sets in order to receive the award. This means that if you do not have permission to use the proposed data sets at the time of application, you must provide documentation to the Institute from the entity controlling the data set(s) before the grant will be awarded. This documentation must indicate that you have permission to use the data for the proposed research for the time period discussed in the application. If you obtained permission to use a proposed data set prior to submitting your application, the Institute will ask you to provide updated documentation indicating that you still have permission to use the data set to conduct the proposed research during the project period.
- *Building off of existing studies* - You may propose studies that piggyback onto an ongoing study (i.e., that require access to subjects and data from another study). In such cases, the Principal Investigator of the existing study should be one of the members of the research team applying to this competition to conduct the new project.

In addition to obtaining evidence of access, the Institute strongly advises applicants to establish a written agreement, within 3 months of receipt of an award, among all key collaborators and their institutions (e.g., Principal and co-Principal Investigators) regarding roles, responsibilities, access to data, publication rights, and decision-making procedures.

## C. OVERVIEW OF APPLICATION AND PEER REVIEW PROCESS

### 1. Submitting a Letter of Intent

The Institute strongly encourages potential applicants to submit a Letter of Intent by July 13, 2017. Letters of Intent are optional, non-binding, and not used in the peer review of a subsequent application. When you submit a Letter of Intent, one of the Institute's Program Officers will contact you regarding your proposed research to offer assistance. The Institute also uses the Letter of Intent to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer-review panels and to secure a sufficient number of reviewers to handle the anticipated number of applications. Should you miss the deadline for submitting a Letter of Intent, you still may submit an application. If you miss the Letter of Intent deadline, the Institute asks that you inform the relevant Program Officer of your intention to submit an application.

Letters of Intent are submitted online at https://iesreview.ed.gov. **Select the Letter of Intent form for the grant program under which you plan to submit your application**. The online submission form contains fields for each of the seven content areas listed below. Use these fields to provide the requested information. The project description should be single-spaced and is recommended to be no more than one page (about 3,500 characters).

- Descriptive title
- Network role(s) (e.g., Research Team, Network Lead) [under the "topic" field]
- Brief description of the proposed network project
- Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the Principal Investigator and any co-Principal Investigators
- Name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators and contractors
- Duration of the proposed project (attend to the Duration maximum)
- Estimated total budget request (attend to the Budget maximum)

You may use the same Letter of Intent if you plan to submit both an application to be a Research Team member and an application to be Network Lead.

## 2. Application Processing

**Applications must be submitted electronically and received no later than 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time on September 21, 2017** through the Internet using the software provided on the Grants.gov website: http://www.grants.gov/. You must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in Part IV: Preparing Your Application and Part V: Submitting Your Application and the instructions in the User Guides provided by Grants.gov (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html).

After receiving the applications, Institute staff will review each application for compliance and responsiveness to this Request for Applications. Applications that do not address specific requirements of this request will not be considered further.

Once you formally submit an application, Institute staff will not comment on its status until the award decisions are announced (no later than July 1, 2018) except with respect to issues of compliance and responsiveness. This communication will come through the Applicant Notification System (https://iesreview.ed.gov/).

**Once an application has been submitted and the application deadline has passed, you may not submit additional materials for inclusion with your application.**

## 3. Scientific Peer Review Process

The Institute will forward all applications that are compliant and responsive to this Request for Applications to be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Scientific reviews are conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below and the review procedures posted on the Institute's website, http://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/peer_review/application_review.asp, by a panel of scientists who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and Request for Applications.

Each compliant and responsive application is assigned to one of the Institute's scientific review panels http://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/peer_review/reviewers.asp. At least two primary reviewers will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, the Institute calculates an average overall score for each application and prepares a preliminary rank order of applications before the full peer-review panel convenes to complete the review of applications.

The full panel will consider and score only those applications deemed to be the most competitive and to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order. A panel member may nominate for consideration by the full panel any application that he or she believes merits full panel review but that would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

## 4. Review Criteria for Scientific Merit

The purpose of Institute-supported research is to contribute to solving education problems and to provide reliable information about the education practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to education for all students. The Institute expects reviewers for all applications to assess the following aspects of an application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of that goal. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is described in Part II: Network Requirements.

*Research Team applications*

**a) Significance**

Does the applicant provide a compelling rationale for the significance of the project as defined in the Significance section?

**b) Research Plan**

Does the applicant meet the requirements and address the recommendations described in the Research Plan section?

**c) Personnel**

Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the Principal Investigator and other key personnel possess appropriate training and experience and will commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed research?

**d) Resources**

Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed activities? Do the commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project? Does the applicant have adequate capacity to disseminate results to a range of audiences in ways that are useful to them and reflective of the type of research done, and to contribute to the coordinated dissemination efforts of the Network Lead?

*Network Lead applications*

**a) Administration and Coordination**

Does the applicant offer a clear and compelling vision for how the network will accomplish its goals? Does the applicant present a sensible plan for how network meetings will be conducted? Does the applicant describe plans for working with network members to encourage collaboration and provide leadership to the field?

**b) Training for Early Career Researchers**

Does the applicant provide a clear and compelling vision for coordinating training activities across the Research Teams for students and other early career researchers? Are there plans for the specific training activities? Are there plans to encourage early career participation in cross-team training and overcome any barriers to participation?

**c) Communication**

Does the applicant describe clear plans for communicating the objectives, findings, and activities of the network? Are appropriate target audiences identified? Is there a strong description of the network website? Is there a plan for working with the teams to create a synthesis, or comprehensive summary, of the major network findings? Are there thoughtful plans to conduct briefings with key stakeholders and present at major conferences?

**d) Personnel**

Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the Principal Investigator and other key personnel possess appropriate training and experience and will commit sufficient time to fulfill the expectations of Network Lead?

**e) Resources**

Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed activities? Do the commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project? Does the applicant have adequate capacity to disseminate results to a range of audiences in ways that are useful to them and reflective of the type of research conducted by the network?

## 5. Award Decisions

The following will be considered in making award decisions for responsive and compliant applications:

- Scientific merit as determined by scientific peer review,
- Performance and use of funds under a previous federal award,
- Contribution to the overall program of research described in this Request for Applications, and
- Availability of funds.

# PART IV: PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION

## A. OVERVIEW

The application contents – individual forms and their PDF attachments – represent the body of an application to the Institute. **All applications for Institute funding must be self-contained**. As an example, reviewers are under no obligation to view an internet website if you include the site address (URL) in the application. In addition, **you may not submit additional materials directly to the Institute after the application package is submitted**.

## B. GRANT APPLICATION PACKAGE

The Application Package for this competition (84-324N2018) provides all of the forms that you must complete and submit. The application form approved for use in the competition specified in this Request for Applications is the government-wide SF-424 Research and Related (R&R) Form (OMB Number 4040-0001).[4]

### 1. Date Application Package is Available on Grants.gov

The Application Package will be available on http://www.grants.gov/ by July 13, 2017.

### 2. How to Download the Correct Application Package

To find the correct downloadable Application Package, you must first search by the CFDA number for this research competition without the alpha suffix. To submit an application to the Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education program, you must search on: CFDA 84.324.

The Grants.gov search on CFDA 84.324 will yield more than one Application Package. For the Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education program, you must download the Application Package marked:

- Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education CFDA 84.324N

You must download the Application Package that is designated for this competition. If you use a different Application Package, even if it is for another Institute competition, the application will be submitted to the wrong competition. Applications submitted using the incorrect application package run the risk of not being reviewed according to the requirements and recommendations for the Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education competition.

See Part V: Submitting Your Application, for a complete description of the forms that make up the application package and directions for filling out these forms.

## C. GENERAL FORMATTING

For a complete application, you must submit the following as individual attachments to the R&R forms that are contained in the application package for this competition in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF):

[4] According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control numbers for this information collection are 4040-0001 and 4040-0010. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 40 hours per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this family of forms, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4537.

- Project Summary/Abstract;
- Project Narrative, Appendix A: Dissemination Plan; Appendix C: Supplemental Charts, Tables, and Figures; Appendix D: Examples of Intervention or Assessment Materials; Appendix E: Letters of Agreement; and Appendix F: Data Management Plan (all together as one PDF file);
- Bibliography and References Cited;
- Research on Human Subjects Narrative (i.e., Exempt or Non-Exempt Research Narrative);
- A Biographical Sketch for each senior/key person;
- A Narrative Budget Justification for the total project budget; and
- Subaward Budget(s) that has (have) been extracted from the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form, if applicable.

Information about formatting all of these documents except the subaward budget attachment (see Part V.E.6) is provided below.

### 1. Page and Margin Specifications

For all Institute research grant applications, a “page” is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

### 2. Page Numbering

Add page numbers using the header or footer function, and place them at the bottom or upper right corner for ease of reading.

### 3. Spacing

We recommend that you use single spacing.

### 4. Type Size (Font Size)

Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the application. To ensure legibility, we recommend the following:

- The height of the letters is not smaller than a type size of 12-point.
- Type density, including characters and spaces, is no more than 15 characters per inch (cpi). For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text does not exceed 15 cpi.
- Type size yields no more than 6 lines of type within a vertical inch.

As a practical matter, if you use a 12-point Times New Roman font without compressing, kerning, condensing, or other alterations, the application will typically meet these recommendations. When converting documents into PDF files, you should check that the resulting type size is consistent with the original document.

### 5. Graphs, Diagrams, and Tables

We recommend that you use black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. If color is used, you should ensure that the material reproduces well when printed or photocopied in black and white. Text in figures, charts, and tables, including legends, should be readily legible.

## D. PDF ATTACHMENTS

The information you include in these PDF attachments provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the application.

## 1. Project Summary/Abstract

### a) Submission

You must submit the project summary/abstract as a separate PDF attachment at Item 7 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

### b) Recommended page length

We recommend that the Project Summary/Abstract be no more than one page.

### c) Content

The project summary/abstract for *Research Team* applications should include the following:

- **Title** of the proposed project.
- **Purpose**: A brief description of the purpose of the project and its significance for improving student education outcomes.
- **Setting**: A brief description of the location (e.g., state or states) where the research will take place and other important characteristics of the locale (e.g., urban/suburban/rural).
- **Sample**: A brief description of the sample that will be involved in the study (e.g., number of participants, age or grade level, race/ethnicity, SES).
- **Intervention(s)/Assessment(s)**: If applicable, a brief description of the intervention and/or assessment to be developed, evaluated, or validated.
- **Control Condition**: If applicable, a brief description of the control or comparison condition (i.e., who the participants in the control condition are and what they will experience).
- **Research Design and Methods**: Briefly describe the major features of the design and methodology to be used (e.g., randomized controlled trial, quasi-experimental design, mixed method design; iterative design process).
- **Key Measures:** A brief description of key measures and outcomes.
- **Data Analytic Strategy**: A brief description of the data analytic strategy that will be used to answer research questions.

The project summary/abstract for *Network Lead* applications should include the following:

- **Title** of the proposed project.
- **Purpose**: A brief description of the purpose of the project and its significance for improving student education outcomes.
- **Network Administration and Coordination**: A brief summary of the main coordination activities that will ensure collaboration among network teams (e.g. convening members for annual meetings as well as additional activities to keep the group focused and on track to complete its objectives; activities to take leadership in the field).
- **Training for Early Career Researchers**: A brief summary of training activities the Network Lead will organize across teams for students and other early career researchers.
- **Communication of Network Findings**: A brief summary of the main components of the project's communication strategy, with reference to the network website, organizational venues, and target audiences.

Please see http://ies.ed.gov/ncser/projects for examples of the content to be included in your project summary/abstract.

## 2. Project Narrative

### a) Submission

You must submit the project narrative as a separate PDF attachment at Item 8 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

### b) Recommended page length

We recommend that the project narrative be no more than 30 pages for Research Teams and no more than 15 pages for Network Leads. To help reviewers locate information and conduct the highest quality review, write a concise and easy to read narrative, with pages numbered consecutively using the header or footer function to place numbers at the top or bottom right-hand corner.

### c) Citing references in text

We recommend you use the author-date style of citation (e.g., James, 2004), such as that described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Ed. (American Psychological Association, 2009).

### d) Content

For Research Team applications, the project narrative **must** include four sections in order to be compliant with the requirements of this Request for Applications: (1) Significance, (2) Research Plan, (3) Personnel, and (4) Resources.

For Network Lead applications, the project narrative **must** address five topics: (1) A plan for Network administration and coordination, (2) A plan for coordinating cross-team training activities, (3) A plan for communication of network findings, (4) A description of personnel qualification, and (5) A description of organizational resources. Information to be included in each of these sections is detailed in Part II: Network Requirements.

## 3. Appendix A Dissemination Plan (Required)

### a) Submission

All applications **must** include Appendix A after the project narrative as part of the same PDF attachment at Item 8 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information). The Network Lead is expected to engage in the bulk of the network's dissemination efforts. These plans should include the ways in which the Lead will incorporate information from different Research Teams and coordinate the overall dissemination effort. Research Teams' plans should include information about how the team will contribute to the network's overall, larger dissemination efforts, as well as its own efforts.

### b) Recommended page length

We recommend that Appendix A be no more than two pages.

### c) Content

In Appendix A, describe your required plan to disseminate the findings from the proposed project. In your dissemination plan, you should

- Identify the audiences that you expect will be most likely to benefit from your research (e.g., federal policymakers and program administrators, state policymakers and program administrators, state and local school system administrators, school administrators, teachers and other school staff, parents, students, and other education researchers).
- Discuss the different ways in which you intend to reach these audiences through the major publications, presentations, and products you expect to produce.

- IES-funded researchers are expected to publish their findings in scientific, peer-reviewed journals and present them at conferences attended by other researchers.
- IES-funded researchers are also expected to publish and present in venues designed for policymakers and practitioners. For example:
  - Report findings to the education agencies and schools that provided the project with data and data-collection opportunities.
  - Give presentations and workshops at meetings of professional associations of teachers and leaders.
  - Publish in practitioner journals when possible.
  - As appropriate, engage in activities with a relevant IES-funded Research and Development (R&D) Center or Regional Educational Laboratory (REL)
    - R&D Centers: https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/RandD/; https://ies.ed.gov/ncer/RandD/
    - RELs: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/
- IES-funded researchers who create products for use in research and practice as a result of their project (such as curricula, professional development programs, measures and assessments, guides and toolkits) are expected to make these products available for research purposes or (after evaluation or validation) for general use.

- Your dissemination plan should reflect the purpose of your project's research goals and how this affects the type and use of your findings. For example, if relevant, the following may be part of your dissemination plan:
  - Findings from exploratory research may identify potentially important associations between malleable factors and student education outcomes that may be useful in pointing out potentially fruitful areas for further attention from researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.
  - Dissemination efforts from development projects may focus on letting others know about the availability of a new intervention, model, or system for more rigorous evaluation and further adaptation. Dissemination efforts from development projects may also provide useful information on the design process; how development can be accomplished in partnership with practitioners; and what types of new practices are feasible or not feasible for use by practitioners.
  - Positive findings from studies focused on the impacts of an intervention, model, or system on student outcomes could support the wider use of the intervention and the further adaptation to different conditions. Findings of no impacts from such studies are important for decisions regarding the ongoing use and wider dissemination of an intervention, model, or system, as well as further revision of the intervention, implementation, or underlying theory of change.
  - Dissemination of findings from measure development may provide the psychometric properties of the assessment and identify the specific uses and populations for which it was validated. Should a project fail to validate an assessment for a specific use and population, these findings are important to disseminate in order to support decision-making regarding their current use and further development.

The Dissemination Plan is the only information that should be included in Appendix A.

## 4. Appendix B: Response to Reviewers (Not Applicable)

### a) Submission

A Response to Reviewers is not required in Appendix B, as this is the first time the Network is being competed.

#### b) Recommended page length
Not applicable.

#### c) Content
Not applicable. No materials should be included in Appendix B.

### 5. Appendix C: Supplemental Charts, Tables, and Figures (Optional)

#### a) Submission
If you choose to have an Appendix C, you must include it at the end of the project narrative, following Appendix A and submit it as part of the same PDF attachment at Item 8 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

#### b) Page limitations
We recommend that Appendix C be no more than 15 pages.

#### c) Content
You may include figures, charts, tables (e.g., a timeline for your research project, a diagram of the management structure of your project), or measures (e.g., individual items, tests, surveys, observation and interview protocols) used to collect data for your project. These are the only materials that should be included in Appendix C.

### 6. Appendix D: Examples of Intervention or Assessment Materials (Optional)

#### a) Submission
If you choose to have an Appendix D, you must include it following Appendix C (if included; if no Appendix C is included, then Appendix D should follow Appendix A, required, which follows the project narrative), and submit it as part of the same PDF attachment at Item 8 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

#### b) Recommended page length
We recommend that Appendix D be no more than 10 pages.

#### c) Content
In Appendix D, if you are proposing to explore, develop, evaluate, or validate an intervention or assessment you may include examples of curriculum materials, computer screen shots, assessment items, or other materials used in the intervention or assessment to be explored, developed, evaluated, or validated. These are the only materials that should be included in Appendix D.

### 7. Appendix E: Letters of Agreement (Optional)

#### a) Submission
If you choose to have an Appendix E, you must include it following the other Appendices included at the end of the project narrative and submit it as part of the same PDF attachment at Item 8 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

#### b) Recommended page length
We do not recommend a page length for Appendix E.

#### c) Content
Include in Appendix E the Letters of Agreement from partners (e.g., schools and districts), data sources (e.g., state agencies holding administrative data), and consultants. Ensure that the letters reproduce well

so that reviewers can easily read them. Do not reduce the size of the letters. See Part V.D.4 Attaching Files for guidance regarding the size of file attachments.

Letters of Agreement should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources to the research project that will be required if the application is funded. A common reason for projects to fail is loss of participating schools and districts. Letters of Agreement regarding the provision of data should make it clear that the author of the letter will provide the data described in the application for use in the proposed research and in time to meet the proposed schedule.

These are the only materials that should be included in Appendix E.

## 8. Appendix F: Data Management Plan (Required for Research Team applications conducting efficacy and effectiveness research)

### a) Submission

Research Team applications that propose conducting efficacy or effectiveness research **must** include Appendix F following the other Appendices included at the end of the project narrative, and submit it as part of the same PDF attachment at Item 8 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information). If you are not proposing to conduct efficacy or effectiveness evaluation work, do not include Appendix F.

### b) Recommended page length

We recommend that Appendix F be no more than five pages.

### c) Content

Include in Appendix F your Data Management Plan (DMP). The content of the DMP is discussed under (3) Data Management Plan in Network Requirements for Research Teams. These are the only materials that should be included in Appendix F.

## 9. Bibliography and References Cited

### a) Submission

You must submit this section as a separate PDF attachment at Item 9 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

### b) Recommended page length

We do not recommend a page length for the Bibliography and References cited.

### c) Content

You should include complete citations, including the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), titles (e.g., article and journal, chapter and book), page numbers, and year of publication for literature cited in the project narrative.

## 10. Research on Human Subjects Narrative

### a) Submission

The human subjects narrative must be submitted as a PDF attachment at Item 12 of the Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information).

### b) Recommended page length

We do not recommend a page length for the Human Subjects Narrative.

### c) Content

The human subjects narrative should address the information specified by the U.S. Department of Education's Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (see http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/humansub.html for additional information).

*Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative*

Provide an "exempt" narrative if you checked "yes" on Item 1 of the Research & Related Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information). The narrative must contain sufficient information about the involvement of human subjects in the proposed research to allow a determination by the Department that the designated exemption(s) are appropriate. The six categories of research that qualify for exemption from coverage by the regulations are described on the Department's website http://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/guid/humansub/overview.html.

*Non-Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative*

If some or all of the planned research activities are covered by (not exempt from) the Human Subjects Regulations and you checked "no" on Item 1 of the Research & Related Other Project Information form (see Part V.E.4 Research & Related Other Project Information), provide a "non-exempt research" narrative. The nonexempt narrative should describe the following: the characteristics of the subject population; the data to be collected from human subjects; recruitment and consent procedures; any potential risks; planned procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks; the importance of the knowledge to be gained relative to potential risks; and any other sites where human subjects are involved.

Note that the U.S. Department of Education does not require certification of Institutional Review Board approval at the time you submit your application. However, if an application that involves non-exempt human subjects research is recommended/selected for funding, the designated U.S. Department of Education official will request that you obtain and send the certification to the Department within 30 days after the formal request.

## 11. Biographical Sketches of Senior/Key Personnel

### a) Submission

Each sketch will be submitted as a separate PDF attachment and attached to the Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) form (see Part V.E.2 Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)). The Institute encourages you to use the IES Biosketch template (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK154494/#sciencv) available through SciENcv or you may develop your own biosketch format.

### b) Recommended page length

We recommend that each Biographical Sketch be no more than five pages, which includes Current and Pending Support.

### c) Content

Provide a Biographical Sketch for the Principal Investigator, each co-Principal Investigator, and other key personnel. Each sketch should include information sufficient to demonstrate that key personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their specified duties on the proposed project (e.g., publications, grants, and relevant research experience). If you'd like, you may also include biographical sketches for consultants (the form will allow for up to 40 biographical sketches in total).

Provide a list of current and pending grants for the Principal Investigator, each co-Principal Investigator, and other key personnel, along with the proportion of his/her time, expressed as percent effort over a

12-month calendar year, allocated to each project. Include the proposed network grant as one of the pending grants in this list. If the total 12-month calendar year percent effort across all current and pending projects exceeds 100 percent, you must explain how time will be allocated if all pending applications are successful in the Narrative Budget Justification. If you use SciENcv, the information on current and pending support will be entered into the IES biosketch template. If you use your own format, you will need to provide this information in a separate table.

## 12. Narrative Budget Justification

### a) Submission

The Narrative Budget Justification must be submitted as a PDF attachment at Section K of the first project period of the Research & Related Budget (SF 424) Sections A & B; C, D, & E; and F-K form for the Project (see Part V.E.5 Research & Related Budget (Total Federal + Non-Federal) - Sections A & B; C, D, & E; and F-K). For grant submissions with a subaward(s), a separate narrative budget justification for each subaward must be submitted and attached at Section K of the Research & Related Budget (SF 424) for the specific Subaward/Consortium that has been extracted and attached using the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form (see Part V.E.6).

### b) Recommended page length

We do not recommend a page length for the Narrative Budget Justification.

### c) Content

A Narrative Budget Justification must be submitted for the project budget, and a separate Narrative Budget Justification must be submitted for any subaward budgets included in the application. Each Narrative Budget Justification should provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project and its subawards, if applicable. The budget justification should correspond to the itemized breakdown of project costs that is provided in the corresponding Research & Related Budget (SF 424) Sections A & B; C, D, & E; and F-K form for each year of the project. The narrative should include the time commitments for key personnel expressed as annual percent effort (i.e., calculated over a 12-month period) and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel. For consultants, the narrative should include the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs. A justification for equipment purchases, supplies, travel (including information regarding number of days of travel, mode of transportation, per diem rates, number of travelers, etc.), and other related project costs should also be provided in the budget narrative for each project year outlined in the Research & Related Budget (SF 424).

### d) Indirect Cost Rate

You must use your institution's federally negotiated indirect cost rate (see Part IV.A.3 Special Considerations for Budget Expenses). When calculating your indirect costs on expenses for research conducted in field settings, you should apply your institution's federally negotiated off-campus indirect cost rate. If your institution does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, you should consult a member of the Indirect Cost Group (ICG) in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/icgreps.html) to help you estimate the indirect cost rate to put in your application.

# PART V: SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

This part of the RFA describes important submission procedures you need to be aware of to ensure your application is received on time (no later than 4:30:00pm Washington, DC time on September 21, 2017) and accepted by the Institute.

Any questions that you may have about electronic submission via Grants.gov should first be addressed to Grants.gov Applicant Support (support@grants.gov, http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html, 1-800-518-4726). Grants.gov also provides a number of resources to support applicants with the electronic submission procedures (see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html). The Institute also offers webinars on the application submission process http://ies.ed.gov/funding/webinars/index.asp.

## A. MANDATORY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Internet using the software and application package provided on the Grants.gov web site: http://www.grants.gov/. Applications must be received (fully uploaded and processed by Grants.gov) no later than 4:30:00 pm Washington, DC time on September 21, 2017. **Applications received by Grants.gov after the 4:30:00 p.m. Washington DC time application deadline will be considered late and will not be sent forward for scientific peer review**.

Electronic submission is required unless you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement *and* submit, no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. A description of the Allowable Exceptions to Electronic Submissions is provided at the end of this document.

Please consider submitting your application ahead of the deadline date (the Institute recommends 3 to 4 days in advance of the closing date and time) to avoid running the risk of a late submission that will not be reviewed. **The Institute does not accept late applications**.

## B. REGISTER ON GRANTS.GOV

To submit an application through Grants.gov, your institution must be registered with Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html).

Grants.gov registration involves many steps including prior registration in the System for Award Management (SAM: formerly known as the Central Contractor Registry or CCR) at http://www.sam.gov. Grants.gov recommends that your institution begin the registration process at least 4 weeks prior to the application deadline date.

### 1. Working Offline

Registration involves multiple steps (described below) and takes at least 3 to 5 business days, or as long as 4 weeks, to complete. You must complete all registration steps to allow a successful application submission via Grants.gov. You may begin working on your application while completing the registration process, but you will not be permitted to submit your application until all of the registration steps are complete.

### 2. How to Register

- Choose "Organization Applicant" for the type of registration.
- Complete the DUNS OR DUNS+4 Number field.

- o If your organization does not already have a DUNS Number, you can request one online by using the form at the Dun & Bradstreet website http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform or by phone (866-705-5711).

- o To submit successfully, you must provide the DUNS number on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov. This DUNS number is typically the same number used when your organization registered with the SAM. **If you don't enter the same DUNS number as the DUNS you registered with, Grants.gov will reject your application**.

- Register with the System for Award Management (SAM): https://www.sam.gov/.

  - o You can learn more about the SAM and the registration process for grant applicants in the SAM user guide: https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/Quick_Guide_for_Grants_Registrations_v1.7.pdf

    For further assistance, please consult the tip sheet that the U.S. Department of Education has prepared for help with the SAM system: http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/sam-faqs.html.

  - o Registration with the SAM may take a week to complete, but could take as many as several weeks to complete, depending on the completeness and accuracy of the data entered into the SAM database by an applicant. **The SAM registration must be updated annually.**

  - o Once your SAM registration is active, it will take 24 to 48 hours for the information to be available in Grants.gov. You will only be able to submit your application via Grants.gov once the SAM information is available in Grants.gov.

- Create your Username & Password.

  - o Complete your AOR profile on Grants.gov and create your username and password. You will need to use your organization's DUNS Number to complete this step https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/OrcRegister.

- AOR Authorization

  - o The E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) at your organization must log in to Grants.gov to confirm you as an AOR. Please note that there can be more than one AOR for your organization. In some cases the E-Biz POC is also the AOR for an organization.

## C. SUBMISSION AND SUBMISSION VERIFICATION

### 1. Submit Early

The Institute strongly recommends that you do not wait until the deadline date to submit an application. Grants.gov will put a date/time stamp on the application and then process it after it is fully uploaded. **The time it takes to upload an application will vary depending on a number of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection.** If Grants.gov rejects your application due to errors in the application package, you will need to resubmit successfully before 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date as determined by Grants.gov. As an example, if you begin the submission process at 4:00:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date, and Grants.gov rejects the application at 4:15:00 p.m. Washington, DC time, there may not be enough time for you to locate the error that caused the submission to be rejected, correct it, and then attempt to submit the application again before the 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time deadline. **You are strongly encouraged to begin the submission process at least 3 to 4 days before the deadline date to ensure a successful, on-time submission.**

## 2. Verify Submission is OK

The Institute urges you to verify that Grants.gov and the Institute have received the application on time and that it was validated successfully. To see the date and time that your application was received by Grants.gov, you need to log on to Grants.gov and click on the "Track My Application" link http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html. For a successful submission, the date/time received should be no later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington DC time on the deadline date AND the application status should be: (1) Validated (i.e., no errors in submission), (2) Received by Agency (i.e., Grants.gov has transmitted the submission to the U.S. Department of Education), or (3) Agency Tracking Number Assigned (the U.S. Department of Education has assigned a unique PR/Award Number to the application).

Note: If the date/time received is later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the deadline date, the application is late. If the application has a status of “Received,” it is still awaiting validation by Grants.gov. Once validation is complete, the status will change either to “Validated” or “Rejected with Errors.” If the status is “Rejected with Errors,” the application has not been received successfully. Grants.gov provides information about error messages on its For Applicants page http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html.

- Grants.gov FAQ
  http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/encountering-error-messages.html

You will receive four emails regarding the status of your submission; the first three will come from Grants.gov and the fourth will come from the U.S. Department of Education. Within 2 days of submitting a grant application to Grants.gov, you will receive three emails from Grants.gov:

- The first email message will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system and will provide you with an application tracking number beginning with the word “GRANT,” for example GRANT00234567. You can use this number to track your application on Grants.gov using the “Track My Application” link http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html before it is transmitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

- The second email message will indicate that the application EITHER has been successfully validated by the Grants.gov system prior to transmission to the U.S. Department of Education OR has been rejected due to errors, in which case it will not be transmitted to the Department.

- The third email message will indicate that the U.S. Department of Education has confirmed retrieval of the application from Grants.gov once it has been validated.

If the second email message indicates that the application, as identified by its unique application tracking number, is valid and the time of receipt was no later than 4:30:00 p.m. Washington DC time, then the application submission is successful and on-time.

Note: You should not rely solely on email to confirm whether an application has been received on-time and validated successfully. The Institute urges you to use the “Track My Application” link on Grants.gov to verify on-time, valid submissions in addition to the confirmation emails http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html.

Once Grants.gov validates the application and transmits it to the U.S. Department of Education, you will receive an email from the U.S. Department of Education.

- This fourth email message will indicate that the application has been assigned a PR/Award number unique to the application beginning with the letter R, followed by the section of the CFDA number unique to that research competition (e.g., 324N), the fiscal year for the submission (e.g., 18 for fiscal year 2018), and finally four digits unique to the application (e.g., R324N18XXXX). If the application was received after the closing date/time, this email will also indicate that the application is late and will not be given further consideration.

Note: The Institute strongly recommends that you begin the submission process at least 3 to 4 days in advance of the closing date to allow for a successful and timely submission.

### 3. Late Applications

If your application is submitted after 4:30:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on the application deadline date your application will not be accepted and will not be reviewed. **The Institute does not accept late applications.**

Late applications are often the result of one or more common submission problems that could not be resolved because there was not enough time to do so before the application deadline. Grants.gov has several resources that can help you resolve problems such as these.

- http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html
- http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/encountering-error-messages.html

If after consulting these resources you still experience problems submitting an application through Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support (support@grants.gov, http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html, 1-800-518-4726) to obtain a Case Number (e.g., 1-12345678) that you should keep as a record of the problem(s) you experienced.

If Grants.gov Applicant Support determines that the Grants.gov website was inaccessible due to technical problems on the Grants.gov website, and determines that this affected your ability to submit the application by the submission deadline, you may petition the Institute to review your application by emailing the relevant Program Officer with the Grants.gov case number and related information. However, if Grants.gov determines that the problem you experienced is one of those identified by Grants.gov as common application errors, do not petition the Institute to have your case reviewed because these common submission problems are not grounds for petition. **The Institute will not accept an application that was late due to failure to follow the submission guidelines provided by Grants.gov and summarized in this RFA**.

## D. TIPS FOR WORKING WITH GRANTS.GOV

The Institute strongly encourages you to use the “Check Application for Errors” button at the top of the grant application package to identify errors or missing required information that can prevent an application from being processed and sent forward for review.

Note: You must click the “Save and Submit” button at the top of the application package to upload the application to the Grants.gov website. The “Save and Submit” button will become active only after you have used the “Check Package for Errors” button and then clicked the “Save” button. Once the “Save and Submit” button is clicked, you will need to enter the username and password that were created upon registration with Grants.gov.

## 1. Working Offline

When you download the application package from Grants.gov, you will be working offline and saving data on your computer. You will need to log in to Grants.gov to upload the completed application package and submit the application.

## 2. Connecting to the Internet

- Using a dial-up connection to upload and submit an application can take significantly longer than using a high-speed connection to the internet (e.g., cable modem/DSL/T1). Although times will vary depending upon the size of the application, it can take a few minutes to a few hours to complete the grant submission using a dial-up connection.
- The latest versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE), Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari are supported for use with Grants.gov. However, these web browsers undergo frequent changes and updates so it is recommended you have the latest version when using Grants.gov. Legacy versions of these web browsers may be functional, but you may experience issues.
- For additional information or updates, please see the Grants.gov Browser Information in the Applicant FAQs: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html#browser.

## 3. Software Requirements

You will need Adobe software to read and complete the application forms for submission through Grants.gov. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9 through 11 and certain versions of Adobe Reader DC http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.

## 4. Attaching Files

The forms included in the application package provide the means for you to attach Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. **You must attach read-only, non-modifiable PDF files**; any other file attachment will not be reviewed.

If you include scanned documents as part of a PDF file (e.g., Letters of Agreement in Appendix E), scan them at the lowest resolution to minimize the size of the file and expedite the upload process. PDF files that contain graphics and/or scanned material can greatly increase the size of the file attachments and can result in difficulties opening the files. The average discretionary grant application package totals 1 to 2 MB; therefore, **check the total size of your application package before you attempt to submit it.** Very large application packages can take a long time to upload, putting the application at risk of being received late and therefore not accepted by the Institute.

PDF files included in the application **must** be

- **In a read-only, non-modifiable format.**
- **Individual files** (attachments that contain files within a file, such as PDF Portfolio files, or an interactive or fillable PDF file will not be read).
- **Not password protected.**
- **Given a file name that**
    - **Is unique -** Grants.gov cannot process an application that includes two or more file attachments that have the same name.
    - **Has no more than 50 characters.** Uploaded file names must be fewer than 50 characters, and, in general, applicants should not use any special characters.
        - Grants.gov does allow for the following UTF-8 characters when naming your attachments: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, period, parenthesis, curly braces, square brackets, ampersand, tilde, exclamation point, comma, semi

colon, apostrophe, at sign, number sign, dollar sign, percent sign, plus sign, and equal sign.

Applications submitted that do not comply with the Grants.gov guidelines will be rejected at Grants.gov and not forwarded to the Department.

### 5. Workspace

In addition to the Adobe form application package, Grants.gov offers a new option called Workspace for application completion and submission. Workspace allows a team of registered Grants.gov applicants to use a shared online space to complete and submit an application. See https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html for more information.

## E. REQUIRED RESEARCH & RELATED (R&R) FORMS AND OTHER FORMS

You must complete and submit the R&R forms described below. All of these forms are provided in the application package for this competition (84-324N2018). Please note that fields marked by an asterisk and highlighted in yellow and outlined in red on these forms are required fields and must be completed to ensure a successful submission.

Note: Although not required fields, Items 4a (Federal Identifier) and b (Agency Routing Number) on the Application for Federal Assistance SF 424 (R&R) form provide critical information to the Institute and should be filled out for an application to this research grant competition.

### 1. Application for Federal Assistance SF 424 (R&R)

This form asks for general information about the applicant, including but not limited to the following: contact information; an Employer Identification Number (EIN); a DUNS number; a descriptive title for the project; an indication of the network role; Principal Investigator contact information; start and end dates for the project; congressional district; total estimated project funding; and Authorized Representative contact information.

Because information on this form populates selected fields on some of the other forms described below, you should complete this form first. This form allows you to attach a cover letter; however, the Institute does not require a cover letter so you should not attach one here.

Provide the requested information using the drop down menus when available. Guidance for completing selected items follows.

- Item 1

  Type of Submission. Select either “Application” or “Changed/Corrected Application.” “Changed/Corrected Application” should only be selected in the event that you need to submit an updated version of an already submitted application (e.g., you realized you left something out of the first application submitted). The Institute does not require Pre-applications for its grant competitions.

- Item 2

  Date Submitted. Enter the date the application is submitted to the Institute.

  Applicant Identifier. Leave this blank.

- Item 3

Date Received by State and State Application Identifier. Leave these items blank.

- Item 4

  Note: This item provides important information that is used by the Institute to screen applications for responsiveness to the competition requirements and for assignment to the appropriate scientific peer-review panel. **It is critical that you complete this information completely and accurately or the application may be rejected as nonresponsive or assigned inaccurately for scientific review of merit**.

  - Item 4a: Federal Identifier. **This field is used for applications that are Resubmissions**. Because FY 2018 is the first year that this Request for Applications is being competed, this field should remain blank.

  - Item 4b: Agency Routing Number. **Enter the code for the role that the application addresses in this field**. Applications to the Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice in Special Education (CFDA 84.324N) program must be submitted to one of two roles within each topic, as outlined in Part II.B: Requirements for Network Roles.

| Network Role | Code |
|---|---|
| MTSS Research Network – Research Team | NCSER-MTSSRT |
| MTSS Research Network – Network Lead | NCSER-MTSSNL |

**It is critical that you use the appropriate codes in this field and that the codes shown in this field agree with the information included in the application abstract**. Indicating the correct code facilitates the appropriate processing and review of the application. Failure to do so may result in delays to processing and puts your application at risk for being identified as nonresponsive and not considered for further review.

  - Item 4c: Previous Grants.gov Tracking ID. If you are submitting a "Changed/Corrected" application (see Item 1) to correct an error, enter the Grants.gov Tracking Number associated with the application that was already submitted through Grants.gov. Note: If you need to correct an error and submit a "Changed/Corrected" application, contact the Program Officer listed on the application package and provide the Grants.gov tracking numbers associated with both applications (the one with the error and the one that has been corrected) and identify which one should be reviewed by the Institute.

- Item 5

  Applicant Information. Enter all of the information requested, including the legal name of the applicant, the name of the primary organizational unit (e.g., school, department, division, etc.) that will undertake the activity, and the address, including the county and the 9-digit ZIP/Postal Code of the primary performance site (i.e., the Applicant Institution) location. This field is required if the Project Performance Site is located in the United States. The field for "Country" is pre-populated with "USA: UNITED STATES." For applicants located in another country, contact the Program Officer (see Part II: Network Requirements or the list of Program Officers in Part V.H) before submitting the application. Use the drop down menus where they are provided.

  Organizational DUNS. Enter the DUNS or DUNS+4 number of the applicant organization. A **Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)** number is a unique 9-character identification number provided by the commercial company Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) to identify organizations. If your institution does not have a DUNS number and therefore needs to register for one, a DUNS number can be obtained through the Dun & Bradstreet website http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do.

Note: The DUNS number provided on this form must be the same DUNS number used to register on Grants.gov (and the same as the DUNS number used when registering with the SAM). **If the DUNS number used in the application is not the same as the DUNS number used to register with Grants.gov, the application will be rejected with errors by Grants.gov**.

Person to Be Contacted on Matters Involving this Application. Enter all of the information requested, including the name, telephone and fax numbers, and email address of the person to be contacted on matters involving this application. The role of this person is primarily for communication purposes on the budgetary aspects of the project. As an example, this may be the contact person from the applicant institution's office of sponsored projects. Use the drop down menus where they are provided.

- Item 6

Employer Identification (EIN) or (TIN). Enter either the Employer Identification Number (EIN) or Tax Identification Number (TIN) as assigned by the Internal Revenue Service. If the applicant organization is not located in the United States, enter 44-4444444.

- Item 7

Type of Applicant. Use the drop down menu to select the type of applicant. If Other, please specify.

Small Business Organization Type. If "Small Business" is selected as Type of Applicant, indicate whether or not the applicant is a "Women Owned" small business – a small business that is at least 51% owned by a woman or women, who also control and operate it. Also indicate whether or not the applicant is a "Socially and Economically Disadvantaged" small business, as determined by the U.S. Small Business Administration pursuant to section 8(a) of the Small Business Act U.S.C. 637(a).

- Item 8

Type of Application. Indicate whether the application is a "New" application or a "Resubmission" of an application that was submitted under a previous Institute competition and received reviewer comments. Only the "New" and "Resubmission" options apply to Institute competitions. Do not select any option other than "New" or "Resubmission."

Submission to Other Agencies. Indicate whether or not this application is being submitted to another agency or agencies. If yes, indicate the name of the agency or agencies.

- Item 9

Name of Federal Agency. Do not complete this item. The name of the federal agency to which the application is being submitted will already be entered on the form.

- Item 10

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number. Do not complete this item. The CFDA number of the program competition to which the application is being submitted will already be entered on the form. The CFDA number can be found in the Federal Register Notice and on the face page of the Request for Applications.

- Item 11

  Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project. **Enter a distinctive, descriptive title for the project**. The maximum number of characters allowed in this item field is 200.

- Item 12

  Proposed Project Start Date and Ending Date. Enter the proposed start date of the project and the proposed end date of the project. The start date must not be earlier than July 1, 2018, which is the Earliest Anticipated Start Date listed in this Request for Applications, and must not be later than September 1, 2018. The end date is restricted based on the duration maximum (see Part III: Competition Regulations and Review Criteria).

- Item 13

  Congressional District of Applicant. For both the applicant and the project, enter the Congressional District in this format: 2-character State Abbreviation and 3-character District Number (e.g., CA-005 for California's 5th district, CA-012 for California's 12th district). Grants.gov provides help for finding this information http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html under "How can I find my congressional district code?" If the program/project is outside the U.S., enter 00-000.

- Item 14

  Project Director/Principal Investigator Contact Information. Enter all of the information requested for the Project Director/Principal Investigator, including position/title, name, address (including county), organizational affiliation (e.g., organization, department, division, etc.), telephone and fax numbers, and email address. Use the drop down menus where they are provided.

- Item 15

  Estimated Project Funding

  - Total Federal Funds Requested. Enter the total Federal funds requested for the entire project period. The total Federal funds requested must not exceed the cost maximums for the selected network role (see Part III: Competition Regulations and Review Criteria).

  - Total Non-Federal Funds. Enter the total Non-Federal funds requested for the entire project period.

  - Total Federal & Non-Federal Funds. Enter the total estimated funds for the entire project period, including both Federal and Non-Federal funds.

  - Estimated Program Income. Identify any program income estimated for the project period, if applicable.

- Item 16

Is Application Subject to Review by State Executive Order 12372 Process? The Institute is not soliciting applications that are subject to review by Executive Order 12372; therefore, check the box "Program is not covered by E.O. 12372" to indicate "No" for this item.

- Item 17

  This is the Authorized Organization Representative's electronic signature.

  By providing the electronic signature, the Authorized Organization Representative certifies the following:

  - To the statements contained in the list of certifications, and
  - That the statements are true, complete and accurate to the best of his/her knowledge.

  By providing the electronic signature, the Authorized Organization Representative also provides the required assurances, agrees to comply with any resulting terms if an award is accepted, and acknowledges that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject him/her to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties.

  Note: The certifications and assurances referred to here are described in Part V.E.7 Other Forms Included in the Application Package.

- Item 18

  SF LLL or other Explanatory Documentation. Do not add the SF LLL here. A copy of the SF LLL is provided as an optional document within the application package. See Part V.E.7 Other Forms Included in the Application Package to determine applicability. If it is applicable to the grant submission, choose the SF LLL from the optional document menu, complete it, and save the completed SF LLL form as part of the application package.

- Item 19

  Authorized Representative. The Authorized Representative is the official who has the authority both to legally commit the applicant to (1) accept federal funding and (2) execute the proposed project. Enter all information requested for the Authorized Representative, including name, title, organizational affiliation (e.g., organization, department, division, etc.), address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address of the Authorized Representative. Use the drop down menus where they are provided.

  Signature of Authorized Representative. Leave this item blank as it is automatically completed when the application is submitted through Grants.gov.

  Date Signed. Leave this item blank as the date is automatically generated when the application is submitted through Grants.gov.

- Item 20

  Pre-application. Do not complete this item as the Institute does not require pre-applications for its grant competitions.

- Item 21

Cover Letter. Do not complete this item as the Institute does not require cover letters for its grant competitions.

## 2. Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

This form asks you to: (1) identify the Project Director/Principal Investigator and other senior and/or key persons involved in the project; (2) specify the role key staff will serve; and (3) provide contact information for each senior/key person identified. The form also requests information about the highest academic or professional degree or other credentials earned and the degree year. This form includes a "Credential/Agency Log In" box that is optional.

This form also provides the means for attaching the Biographical Sketches of senior/key personnel as PDF files. This form will allow for the attachment of a total of 40 biographical sketches: one for the Project Director/Principal Investigator and up to 39 additional sketches for senior/key staff. See Part IV.D.11 Biographical Sketches of Senior/Key Personnel for information about recommended formatting and page lengths, and content to be included in the biographical sketches. The persons listed on this form should be the same persons listed in the Personnel section of the Project Narrative. If consultants are listed there, you may include a biographical sketch for each one listed. As a reminder, the Institute strongly encourages the use of SciENcv to create IES Biosketches for grant applications to the Institute.

## 3. Project/Performance Site Location(s)

This form asks you to identify the primary site where project work will be performed. You must complete the information for the primary site. If a portion of the project will be performed at any other site(s), the form also asks you to identify and provide information about the additional site(s). As an example, a research proposal to an Institute competition may include the applicant institution as the primary site and one or more schools where data collection will take place as additional sites. The form permits the identification of eight project/performance site locations in total. This form requires the applicant to identify the Congressional District for each site. See above, Application for Federal Assistance SF 424 (R&R), Item 13 for information about Congressional Districts. DUNS number information is optional on this form.

## 4. Research & Related Other Project Information

This form asks you to provide information about any research that will be conducted involving Human Subjects, including: (1) whether human subjects are involved; (2) if human subjects are involved, whether or not the project is exempt from the human subjects regulations; (3) if the project is exempt from the regulations, an indication of the exemption number(s); and (4) if the project is not exempt from the regulations, whether an Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is pending; and if IRB approval has been given, the date on which the project was approved; and the Human Subject Assurance number. This form also asks you: (1) whether there is proprietary information included in the application; (2) whether the project has an actual or potential impact on the environment; (3) whether the research site is designated or eligible to be designated as a historic place; and (4) if the project involves activities outside the U.S., to identify the countries involved.

This form also provides the means for attaching a number of PDF files (see Part IV.D PDF Attachments for information about content and recommended formatting and page lengths) including the following:

- Project Summary/Abstract,
- Project Narrative and Required and Optional Appendices,
- Bibliography and References Cited, and
- Research on Human Subjects Narrative.

- Item 1

Are Human Subjects Involved? If activities involving human subjects are planned at any time during the proposed project at any performance site or collaborating institution, you must check “Yes.” (You must check “Yes” even if the proposed project is exempt from Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects.) If there are no activities involving human subjects planned at any time during the proposed project at any performance site or collaborating institution, you may check “No” and skip to Item 2.

Is the Project Exempt from Federal Regulations? If all human subject activities are exempt from Human Subjects regulations, then you may check “Yes.” You are required to answer this question if you answered “yes” to the first question “Are Human Subjects Involved?”

If you answer “yes” to the question “Is the Project Exempt from Federal Regulations?” you are required to check the appropriate exemption number box or boxes corresponding to one or more of the exemption categories. The six categories of research that qualify for exemption from coverage by the regulations are described on the U.S. Department of Education’s website http://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/guid/humansub/overview.html. Provide an Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative at Item 12 of this form (see Part V.D.10 Research on Human Subjects Narrative).

If you answer “no” to the question “Is the Project Exempt from Federal Regulations?” you will be prompted to answer questions about the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review.

If no, is the IRB review pending? Answer either “Yes” or “No.”

If you answer “yes” because the review is pending, then leave the IRB approval date blank. If you answer “no” because the review is not pending, then you are required to enter the latest IRB approval date, if available. Therefore, you should select “No” only if a date is available for IRB approval.

Note: IRB approval may not be pending because you have not begun the IRB process. In this case, an IRB approval date will not be available. However, a date must be entered in this field if “No” is selected or the application will be rejected with errors by Grants.gov. Therefore, you should check “Yes” to the question “Is the IRB review pending?” if an IRB approval date is not available.

If you answer “no” to the question “Is the Project Exempt from Federal Regulations?” provide a Non-exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative at Item 12 of this form (see Part V.D.10 Research on Human Subjects Narrative).

Human Subject Assurance Number: Leave this item blank.

- Item 2

  Are Vertebrate Animals Used? Check whether or not vertebrate animals will be used in this project.

- Item 3

  Is proprietary/privileged information included in the application? Patentable ideas, trade secrets, privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, disclosure of which may harm the applicant, should be included in applications only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. If the application includes such information, check “Yes” and clearly mark each line or paragraph on the pages containing the proprietary/privileged information with a legend similar to, "The following contains proprietary/privileged information that (name of applicant) requests not be released to persons outside the Government, except for purposes of review and evaluation."

- Item 4

  Does this project have an actual or potential impact on the environment? Check whether or not this project will have an actual or potential impact on the environment.

- Item 5

  Is the research site designated or eligible to be designated as a historic place? Check whether or not the research site is designated or eligible to be designated as a historic place. Explain if necessary.

- Item 6

  Does the project involve activities outside of the United States or partnerships with international collaborators? Check "Yes" or "No." If the answer is "Yes," then you need to identify the countries with which international cooperative activities are involved. An explanation of these international activities or partnerships is optional.

- Item 7

  Project Summary/Abstract. Attach the Project Summary/Abstract as a PDF file here. See Part IV.D PDF Attachments for information about content and recommended formatting and page length for this PDF file.

- Item 8

  Project Narrative. Create a single PDF file that contains the Project Narrative and Appendix A (required), Appendix C (optional), Appendix D (optional), Appendix E (optional), and Appendix F (required for efficacy or effectiveness research). Attach this single PDF file here. See Part IV.D PDF Attachments for information about content and recommended formatting and page length for the different components of this PDF file.

- Item 9

  Bibliography and References Cited. Attach the Bibliography and References Cited as a PDF file here. See Part IV.D PDF Attachments for information about content and recommended formatting and page length for this PDF file.

- Item 10

  Facilities and Other Resources. The Institute does not want an attachment here. Explanatory information about facilities and other resources must be included in the Resources Section of the Project Narrative for the application and may also be included in the Narrative Budget Justification. In the project narrative of competitive proposals, applicants describe having access to institutional resources that adequately support research activities and access to schools in which to conduct the research. Strong applications document the availability and cooperation of the schools or other education delivery settings that will be required to carry out the research proposed in the application via a letter of agreement from the education organization. Include Letters of Agreement in Appendix E.

- Item 11

  Equipment. The Institute does not want an attachment here. Explanatory information about equipment may be included in the Narrative Budget Justification.

- Item 12

  Other Attachments. Attach a Research on Human Subjects Narrative as a PDF file here. You must attach either an Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative or a Non-Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative. See Part IV.D PDF Attachments for information about content and recommended formatting and page length for this PDF file.

  If you checked "Yes" to Item 1 of this form "Are Human Subjects Involved?" and designated an exemption number(s), then you must provide an "Exempt Research" narrative. If some or all of the planned research activities are covered by (not exempt from) the Human Subjects Regulations, then you must provide a "Nonexempt Research" narrative.

## 5. Research & Related Budget (Total Federal+Non-Federal)-Sections A & B; C, D, & E; F-K

This form asks you to provide detailed budget information for each year of support requested for the applicant institution (i.e., the Project Budget). The form also asks you to indicate any Non-Federal funds supporting the project. You should provide this budget information for each project year using all sections of the R&R Budget form. Note that the budget form has multiple sections for each budget year: A & B; C, D, & E; and F-K.

- Sections A & B ask for information about Senior/Key Persons and Other Personnel
- Sections C, D & E ask for information about Equipment, Travel, and Participant/Trainee Costs
- Sections F-K ask for information about Other Direct Costs and Indirect Costs

You must complete each of these sections for as many budget periods (i.e., project years) as you are requesting funds.

**Note**: The narrative budget justification for each of the project budget years must be attached at Section K of the first budget period; otherwise you will not be able to enter budget information for subsequent project years.

**Note: Budget information for a subaward(s) on the project must be entered using a separate form, the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form**, described in Part V.E.6. This is the only form that can be used to extract the proper file format to complete subaward budget information. **The application will be rejected with errors by Grants.gov if subaward budget information is included using any other form or file format.**

Enter the Federal funds requested for all budget line items as instructed below. If any Non-Federal funds will be contributed to the project, enter the amount of those funds for the relevant budget categories in the spaces provided. Review the cost maximums for the network role selected (see Part III: Competition Regulations and Review Criteria) to ensure the application will be deemed responsive and sent forward for peer review.

All fields asking for total funds in this form will auto calculate.

- Organizational DUNS

  If you completed the SF 424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance form first, the DUNS number will be pre-populated here. Otherwise, the organizational DUNS number must be entered here. See Part V.E.1 for information on the DUNS number.

- Budget Type

  Check the box labeled "Project" to indicate that this is the budget requested for the primary applicant organization. If the project involves a subaward(s), you must access the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form to complete a subaward budget (see Part V.E.6 for instructions regarding budgets for a subaward).

- Budget Period Information

  Enter the start date and the end date for each budget period. **Enter only the number of budget periods allowed for the project as determined by the Award Duration Maximum** (see Part III.A.2 Funding Available). Note: If you activate an extra budget period and leave it blank this may cause your application to be rejected with errors by Grants.gov.

- Budget Sections A & B

  A. Senior/Key Person. The Project Director/Principal Investigator information will be pre-populated here from the SF 424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance form if it was completed first. Then, enter all of the information requested for each of the remaining senior/key personnel, including the project role of each and the number of months each will devote to the project, i.e., calendar or academic + summer. You may enter the annual compensation (base salary – dollars) paid by the employer for each senior/key person; however, you may choose to leave this field blank. Regardless of the number of months devoted to the project, indicate only the amount of salary being requested for each budget period for each senior/key person. Enter applicable fringe benefits, if any, for each senior/key person. Enter the Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars.

  B. Other Personnel. Enter all of the information requested for each project role listed – for example Postdoctoral Associates, Graduate Students, Undergraduate Students, Secretary/Clerical, etc. – including, for each project role, the number of personnel proposed and the number of months devoted to the project (calendar or academic + summer). Regardless of the number of months devoted to the project, indicate only the amount of salary/wages being requested for each project role. Enter applicable fringe benefits, if any, for each project role category. Enter the Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars.

  Total Salary, Wages, and Fringe Benefits (A + B). This total will auto calculate.

- Budget Sections C, D & E

  C. Equipment Description. Enter all of the information requested for Equipment. Equipment is defined as an item of property that has an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more (unless the applicant organization has established lower levels) and an expected service life of more than 1 year. List each item of equipment separately and justify each in the narrative budget justification. Allowable items ordinarily will be limited to research equipment and apparatus not already available for the conduct of the work. General-purpose equipment, such as a personal computer, is not eligible for support unless primarily or exclusively used in the actual conduct of scientific research. Enter the Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars.

Total C. Equipment. This total will auto calculate.

D. Travel. Enter all of the information requested for Travel.

Enter the total funds requested for domestic travel. In the narrative budget justification, include the purpose, destination, dates of travel (if known), applicable per diem rates, and number of individuals for each trip. If the dates of travel are not known, specify the estimated length of the trip (e.g., 3 days). Enter the Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars.

Enter the total funds requested for foreign travel. In the narrative budget justification, include the purpose, destination, dates of travel (if known), applicable per diem rates, and number of individuals for each trip. If the dates of travel are not known, specify the estimated length of the trip (e.g., 3 days). Enter the Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars.

Total D. Travel Costs. This total will auto calculate.

E. Participant/Trainee Support Costs. Do not enter information here; this category is not used for project budgets for this competition.

Number of Participants/Trainees. Do not enter information here; this category is not used for project budgets for this competition.

Total E. Participants/Trainee Support Costs. Do not enter information here; this category is not used for project budgets for this competition.

- Budget Sections F-K

F. Other Direct Costs. Enter all of the information requested under the various cost categories. Enter the Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars.

Materials and Supplies. Enter the total funds requested for materials and supplies. In the narrative budget justification, indicate the general categories of supplies, including an amount for each category. Categories less than $1,000 are not required to be itemized.

Publication Costs. Enter the total publication funds requested. The proposed budget may request funds for the costs of documenting, preparing, publishing or otherwise making available to others the findings and products of the work conducted under the award. In the narrative budget justification, include supporting information.

Consultant Services. Enter the total costs for all consultant services. In the narrative budget justification, identify each consultant, the services he/she will perform, total number of days, travel costs, and total estimated costs. Note: Travel costs for consultants can be included here or in Section D. Travel.

ADP/Computer Services. Enter the total funds requested for ADP/computer services. The cost of computer services, including computer-based retrieval of scientific, technical, and education information may be requested. In the narrative budget justification, include the established computer service rates at the proposing organization if applicable.

Subaward/Consortium/Contractual Costs. Enter the total funds requested for: (1) all subaward/consortium organization(s) proposed for the project and (2) any other contractual costs proposed for the project. Use the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form to provide detailed subaward information (see Part V.E.6).

Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees. Enter the total funds requested for equipment or facility rental/user fees. In the narrative budget justification, identify each rental user fee and justify.

Alterations and Renovations. Leave this field blank. The Institute does not provide funds for construction costs.

Other. Describe any other direct costs in the space provided and enter the total funds requested for this "Other" category of direct costs. Use the narrative budget justification to further itemize and justify.

Total F. Other Direct Costs. This total will auto calculate.

- G. Direct Costs

Total Direct Costs (A thru F). This total will auto calculate.

- H. Indirect Costs

Enter all of the information requested for Indirect Costs. Principal Investigators should note that if they are requesting reimbursement for indirect costs, this information is to be completed by their Business Office.

Indirect Cost Type. Indicate the type of base (e.g., Salary & Wages, Modified Total Direct Costs, Other [explain]). In addition, indicate if the Indirect Cost type is off-site. If more than one rate/base is involved, use separate lines for each. When calculating your expenses for research conducted in field settings, you should apply your institution's negotiated off-campus indirect cost rate, as directed by the terms of your institution's negotiated agreement with the Federal government.

Institutions, both primary grantees and subawardees, not located in the territorial U.S. cannot charge indirect costs.

If you do not have a current indirect rate(s) approved by a Federal agency, indicate "None--will negotiate." **If your institution does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate,** you should consult a member of the Indirect Cost Group (ICG) in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the Chief Financial Officer http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/icgreps.html to help you estimate the indirect cost rate to put in your application.

Indirect Cost Rate (percent). Indicate the most recent Indirect Cost rate(s) (also known as Facilities & Administrative Costs [F&A]) established with the cognizant Federal office, or in the case of for-profit organizations, the rate(s) established with the appropriate agency.

If your institution has a cognizant/oversight agency and your application is selected for an award, you must submit the indirect cost rate proposal to that cognizant/oversight agency office for approval.

Indirect Cost Base ($). Enter the amount of the base (dollars) for each indirect cost type.

Depending on the grant program to which you are applying and/or the applicant institution's approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, some direct cost budget categories in the grant application budget may not be included in the base and multiplied by the indirect cost rate. Use the narrative budget justification to explain which costs are included and which costs are excluded from the base to which the indirect cost rate is applied. If your grant application is selected for an award, the Institute will request a copy of the applicant institution's approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

Indirect Cost Funds Requested. Enter the funds requested (Federal dollars and, if applicable, the Non-Federal dollars) for each indirect cost type.

Total H. Indirect Costs. This total will auto calculate.

Cognizant Agency. Enter the name of the Federal agency responsible for approving the indirect cost rate(s) for the applicant. Enter the name and telephone number of the individual responsible for negotiating the indirect cost rate. If a Cognizant Agency is not known, enter “None.”

- Total Direct and Indirect Costs

  Total Direct and Indirect Costs (G + H). This total will auto calculate.

- J. Fee

  Do not enter a dollar amount here as you are not allowed to charge a fee on a grant or cooperative agreement.

- K. Budget Justification

  Attach the Narrative Budget Justification as a PDF file at Section K of the first budget period (see Part IV.D.12 for information about content and recommended formatting and page length for this PDF file). Note that if the justification is not attached at Section K of the first budget period, you will not be able to access the form for the second budget period and all subsequent budget periods. The single narrative must provide a budget justification for each year of the entire project.

- Cumulative Budget. This section will auto calculate all cost categories for all budget periods included.

**Final Note: The overall grant budget cannot exceed the maximum award for the role being applied under as listed in the table below. Applications with budgets and durations greater than the maximum award will not be forwarded for review.**

| Network Role | Maximum Number of Awards | Maximum Grant Duration | Maximum Grant Award |
|---|---|---|---|
| Research Team | 4 | 5 years | $4,000,000 |
| Network Lead | 1 | 5 Years | $1,500,000 |

## 6. R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form

This form provides the means to both extract and attach the Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) form that is to be used by an institution that will hold a subaward on the grant. Please note that separate budgets are required only for subawardee/consortium organizations that perform a substantive portion of the project. As with the Primary Budget, the extracted Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) form asks you to provide detailed budget information for each year of support requested for a subaward/consortium member with substantive involvement in the project. The budget form also asks for information regarding Non-Federal Funds supporting the project at the subaward/consortium member level. You should provide this budget information for each project year using all sections of the R&R Budget form. Note that the budget form has multiple sections for each budget year: A & B; C, D, & E; and F-K.

- Sections A & B ask for information about Senior/Key Persons and Other Personnel.
- Sections C, D & E ask for information about Equipment, Travel, and Participant/Trainee Costs.
- Sections F-K ask for information about Other Direct Costs and Indirect Costs.

"Subaward/Consortium" must be selected as the Budget Type, and all sections of the budget form for each project year must be completed in accordance with the R&R (Federal/Non-Federal) Budget instructions provided above in Part V.E.5. Note that subaward organizations are also required to provide their DUNS or DUNS+4 number.

You may extract and attach up to 10 subaward budget forms. When you use the button "Click here to extract the R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment," a Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) form will open. Each institution that will hold a subaward to perform a substantive portion of the project must complete one of these forms and save it as a PDF file with the name of the subawardee organization. Once each subawardee institution has completed the form, you must attach these completed subaward budget form files to the R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form. Each subaward budget form file attached to this form must have a unique name.

**Note**: This R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form must be used to attach only one or more Research & Related Budget (Total Fed + Non-Fed) form(s) that have been extracted from this form. Note the form's instruction: "Click here to extract the R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment." **If you attach a file format to this form that was not extracted from this attachment form your application will be rejected with errors by Grants.gov.**

### 7. Other Forms Included in the Application Package

You are required to submit the first two forms identified here. You are not required to submit the third form, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities – Standard Form LLL, unless it is applicable.

- SF 424B-Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.
- Grants.gov Lobbying form (formerly ED 80-0013 form).
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities – Standard Form LLL (if applicable).

## F. SUMMARY OF REQUIRED APPLICATION CONTENT

| R&R Form | Instructions Provided | Additional Information |
|---|---|---|
| Application for Federal Assistance SF 424 (R&R) | Part V.E.1 | Form provided in Grants.gov application package |
| Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) | Part V.E.2 | Form provided in Grants.gov application package |
| Project/Performance Site Location(s) | Part V.E.3 | Form provided in Grants.gov application package |
| Other Project Information | Part V.E.4 | Form provided in Grants.gov application package |
| Budget (Total Federal + Non-Federal):<br>Sections A & B<br>Sections C, D, & E<br>Sections F - K | Part V.E.5 | Form provided in Grants.gov application package |
| R&R Subaward Budget (Fed/Non-Fed) Attachment(s) Form | Part V.E.6 | Form provided in Grants.gov application package. Use this form to *extract and attach* a subaward budget(s). |
| SF 424B Assurances – Non-Construction Programs<br>Grants.gov Lobbying form –<br>Disclosure of Lobby Activities – Standard Form LLL (if applicable) | Part V.E.7 | Forms provided in Grants.gov application package |
| Project Summary/Abstract | Part IV.D.1 | Attach PDF at Item 7 of "Other Project Information" form |
| Project Narrative and Appendices<br>• Narrative<br>• Appendix A<br>• Appendix C<br>• Appendix D<br>• Appendix E<br>• Appendix F | Part IV.D.2-8 | Project Narrative and Appendix A, and if applicable, Appendices C, D, E, and F must ALL be included together in one PDF attached at Item 8 of "Other Project Information" form. |
| Bibliography and References Cited | Part IV.D.9 | Attach PDF at Item 9 of "Other Project Information" form. |
| Research on Human Subjects Narrative, if human subjects are involved | Part IV.D.10 | Attach PDF at Item 12 of "Other Project Information" form. |
| Biographical Sketches of Senior/Key Personnel Including Current and Pending Support | Part IV.D.11 | Attach each as a separate PDF to "Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)" form. |
| Narrative Budget Justification | Part IV.D.12 | Attach PDF using *Section K – Budget Period 1* of the "Budget (Total Federal + Non-Federal)" form. |

## G. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

| | |
|---|---|
| Have each of the following forms been completed? | |
| | SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance |
| | For item 4b, is the correct network role code included following the instructions in Part V.E.1? |
| | For item 8, is the Type of Application appropriately marked as "New" following the instructions in Part V.E.1? |
| | Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) |
| | Project/Performance Site Location(s) |
| | Other Project Information |
| | Budget (Total Federal + Non-Federal): Sections A & B; Sections C, D, & E; Sections F - K |
| | R&R Subaward Budget (Federal/Non-Federal) Attachment(s) form (if applicable) |
| | SF 424B Assurances – Non-Construction Programs |
| | Grants.gov Lobbying form (formerly ED 80-0013 form) |
| | Disclosure of Lobby Activities – Standard Form LLL (if applicable) |
| Have each of the following items been attached as PDF files in the correct place? | |
| | Project Summary/Abstract, using Item 7 of the "Other Project Information" form |
| | Project Narrative, and where applicable, Appendix A, Appendix C, Appendix D, Appendix E, and Appendix F as a single file using Item 8 of the "Other Project Information" form |
| | Bibliography and References Cited, using Item 9 of the "Other Project Information" form |
| | Research on Human Subjects Narrative, either the Exempt Research Narrative or the Non-exempt Research Narrative, using Item 12 of the "Other Project Information" form |
| | Biographical Sketches including Current and Pending Support of Senior/Key Personnel, using "Attach Biographical Sketch" of the "Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)" form |
| | Narrative Budget Justification, using Section K – Budget Period 1 of the "Budget (Total Federal + Non-Federal)" form |
| | Budget (Total Federal + Non-Federal): Sections A & B; Sections C, D, & E; Sections F – K for the Subaward(s), using the "R&R Subaward Budget (Federal/Non-Federal) Attachment(s)" form, as appropriate, that conforms to the Award Duration and Cost Maximums for the network role selected |
| Have the following actions been completed? | |

| | |
|---|---|
| | The correct PDF files are attached to the proper forms in the Grants.gov application package. |
| | The "Check Package for Errors" button at the top of the grant application package has been used to identify errors or missing required information that prevents an application from being processed. |
| | The “Track My Application” link has been used to verify that the upload was fully completed and that the application was processed and validated successfully by Grants.gov before 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time on the deadline date. |

## H. PROGRAM OFFICER CONTACT INFORMATION

As a reminder, please contact the Institute's Program Officer with any questions you may have. Program Officers function as knowledgeable colleagues who can provide substantive feedback on your research idea, including reading a draft of your project narrative. Program Officers can also help you with any questions you may have about the content and preparation of PDF file attachments. However, any questions you have about individual forms within the application package and electronic submission of your application through Grants.gov should be directed first to Grants.gov Applicant Support (support@grants.gov, http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html, 1-800-518-4726).

Amy Sussman, Ph.D.
Email: Amy.Sussman@ed.gov
Telephone: (202) 245-7424

# GLOSSARY

Administrative data: Information that is routinely collected about students, teachers, schools, and districts by state and local education agencies to assess progress, monitor programs, or adhere to reporting requirements. Examples of data include student enrollment, class schedules, grades, and assessments; teacher assignments and schedules; electronic communications with students, parents, and teachers; reports completed for EDFacts, Civil Rights Data Collection, and other federal initiatives; and fiscal records. Administrative data also include non-routine special data collections, for example, on a specific agency program, project or policy or on a specific type of student, teacher, school, or district.

Assessment: "Any systematic method of obtaining information, used to draw inferences about characteristics of people, objects, or programs; a systematic process to measure or evaluate the characteristics or performance of individuals, programs, or other entities, for purposes of drawing inferences; sometimes used synonymously with test" (AERA, 2014).

Authentic education setting: Proposed research must be relevant to education in the United States and must address factors under the control of the U.S. education system (be it at the national, state, local, and/or school level). To help ensure such relevance, the Institute requires research to work within or with data from authentic education settings. Setting refers to the environment where education is being delivered not the physical location of the researcher. For this competition, authentic education settings can be identified for the following education levels:

- Authentic Preschool Settings are defined as:
  - Preschool or pre-kindergarten programs that are part of a K-12 school system

- Authentic K-12 Elementary School Education Settings are defined as:
  - Elementary schools
  - School systems (e.g., local education agencies or state education agencies), focused on elementary schools

Compliant: The part of the process of screening applications for acceptance for review that focuses on adherence with the application rules (e.g., completion of all parts of the application, inclusion of the required appendices).

Concurrent validity: Evidence that indicates how accurately scores can predict criterion scores that are obtained at a similar time.

Convergent validity: "Evidence based on the relationship between test scores and other measures of the same or related construct" (AERA, 2014).

Development process: The process used to develop and/or refine an intervention or assessment.

Discriminant validity evidence: "Evidence indicating whether two tests interpreted as measures of different constructs are sufficiently independent (uncorrelated) and that they do, in fact, measure two distinct constructs" (AERA, 2014).

Effectiveness study: The independent evaluation of a fully-developed education intervention with prior evidence of efficacy to determine whether it produces a beneficial impact on student education outcomes relative to a counterfactual when implemented under routine practice in authentic education settings.

Efficacy study: A study that tests an intervention's beneficial impacts on student education outcomes in comparison to an alternative practice, program, or policy.

Fidelity of implementation: The extent to which the intervention is being delivered as it was designed to be by end users in an authentic education setting.

Final manuscript: The author's final version of a manuscript accepted for publication that includes all modifications from the peer-review process.

Final research data: The recorded factual materials commonly accepted in the scientific community as necessary to document and support research findings. For most studies, an electronic file will constitute the final research data. This data set will include both raw data and derived variables, which will be fully described in accompanying documentation. Researchers are expected to take appropriate precautions to protect the privacy of human subjects. Note that final research data does not mean summary statistics or tables but, rather, the factual information on which summary statistics and tables are based. Final research data do not include laboratory notebooks, preliminary analyses, drafts of scientific papers, plans for future research, peer-reviewed reports, or communications with colleagues.

Intervention: The wide range of education curricula, instructional approaches, professional development, technology, and practices, programs, and policies that are implemented at the student, classroom, school, district, state, or federal level to improve student education outcomes.

Moderators: Factors that affect the strength or the direction of the relationship between the intervention and student education outcomes (e.g., an intervention's impacts may differ by such student characteristics as achievement level, motivation, or social-economic status; and by organizational or contextual factors, such as school size or neighborhood characteristics).

Predictive validity evidence: "Evidence indicating how accurately test data collected at one time can predict criterion scores that are obtained at a later time" (AERA, 2014).

Reliability: "The degree to which test scores for a group of test takers are consistent over repeated applications of a measurement procedure and hence are inferred to be dependable and consistent for an individual test taker; the degree to which scores are free of random error of measurement for a given group" (AERA, 2014).

Responsive: The part of the process of screening applications for acceptance for review that focuses on responsiveness to the Request for Applications. This screening includes making sure applications (1) are submitted to the correct competition and/or topic and (2) meet the basic requirements set out in the Request for Applications.

Secondary data sets: Data sets that are often generated from nationally representative surveys or evaluations (e.g., http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/licenses.asp); administrative data from federal, state, or district agencies or from non-public organizations; and/or data from previous research studies.

Student education outcomes: The outcomes to be changed by the intervention. The intervention may be expected to directly affect these outcomes or indirectly affect them through intermediate student or instructional personnel outcomes. There are five types of student education outcomes.

- Developmental outcomes: Outcomes pertaining to cognitive, communicative, linguistic, social, emotional, adaptive, functional or physical development.

- School readiness: Pre-reading, language, vocabulary, early science and mathematics knowledge, social and behavioral competencies that prepare young children for school.

- Student academic outcomes: The Institute supports research on a diverse set of student academic outcomes. For this competition, these outcomes reflect learning and achievement in the core academic content areas (e.g., measures of understanding and achievement in reading, writing, math, and science).

- Social and behavioral competencies: Social skills, attitudes, and behaviors that may be important to students' academic and post-academic success.

- Functional outcomes: Skills or activities that are not considered academic or related to a child's academic achievement; "functional" is often used in the context of routine activities of everyday living.

Theory of change: The underlying process through which key components of a specific intervention are expected to lead to the desired student education outcomes. A theory of change should be specific enough to guide the design of the evaluation (e.g., selecting an appropriate sample, measures and comparison condition).

Validity: "The degree to which accumulated evidence and theory support a specific interpretation of test scores for a given use of a test. If multiple interpretations of a test score for different uses are intended, validity evidence for each interpretation is needed" (AERA, 2014).

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You may qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement and submit an application in paper format if you are unable to submit the application through the Grants.gov system because: (a) you do not have access to the Internet; or (b) you do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system; and (c) no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date (14 calendar days or, if the fourteenth calendar date before the application deadline date falls on a Federal holiday, the next business day following the Federal holiday), you mail or fax a written statement to the Institute explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevents you from using the Internet to submit the application. If you mail the written statement to the Institute, it must be postmarked no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax the written statement to the Institute, the faxed statement must be received no later than 2 weeks before the application deadline date. The written statement should be addressed and mailed or faxed to:

Ellie Pelaez, Office of Administration and Policy
Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Room 600E
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You must show one of the following as proof of mailing: (a) a legibly dated U.S. Postal Service Postmark; (b) a legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service; (c) a dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier; or (d) any other proof of mailing acceptable to the U.S. Secretary of Education (a private metered postmark or a mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Services will not be accepted by the Institute). Note that the U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office. If your application is postmarked after the application deadline date, the Institute will not consider your application. The Application Control Center will mail you a notification of receipt of the grant application. If this notification is not received within 15 business days from the application deadline date, call the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

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