

# Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Education Policy and Practice

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): 84.305N

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*A Product of the National Center for Education Research*

<b>Letter of Intent Due:</b>	January 13, 2022	<a href="https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit">https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit</a>
<b>Application Package Available:</b>	December 16, 2021	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/">https://www.grants.gov/</a>
<b>Application Deadline:</b>	11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 10, 2022	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/">https://www.grants.gov/</a>
<b>Possible Start Dates:</b>	September 1, 2022	

All applicants must also read the companion IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) for information on how to prepare and submit applications electronically through Grants.gov.

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## Part I: Overview

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### A. Purpose of the Education Research Networks Grants Program

Through its National Center for Education Research (NCER), the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) supports research to build knowledge and understanding of education practice and policy. IES was established by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA – P.L. 107-279), in part to improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all learners (ESRA, § 111.b.1.B), but also to focus especially on learners whose increased achievement would help close achievement gaps (ESRA, § 115.a.1) or who lack access to educational opportunities (ESRA, § 115.a.2.A and 115.a.2.B). In carrying out this mission, IES takes steps to ensure that our work is carried out in a manner that is objective, secular, neutral, and nonideological and free of partisan political influence and racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias (ESRA, § 111.b.2.B). NCER's program of research is intended to:

1. Improve access to high-quality education for all learners from early childhood through adulthood, particularly learners least likely to have such access
2. Improve academic achievement for all learners from early childhood through adulthood, particularly those least likely to achieve academically
3. Reduce opportunity and achievement gaps between high-performing and low-performing learners
4. Improve access to, persistence in, progress through, and successful completion of postsecondary education

In this competition, NCER requests applications to form a network under the Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Education Policy and Practice program. This Education Research Network Grants program focuses resources and attention on education problems or issues that are a high priority for the nation and that 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. Networks advance the field's understanding of a problem or issue beyond what an individual research project or team can do on its own and assist policymakers and practitioners in using this information to strengthen education policies and programs and improve learners' education outcomes. NCER's ability to support high quality research depends on our ability to train and support talented researchers, statisticians, and evaluators that reflect this diversity. IES encourages principal investigators and personnel from all demographic backgrounds (<https://ies.ed.gov/aboutus/diversity.asp>). IES also encourages applications from minority-serving institutions.

For FY 2022, IES invites proposals on a single topic: Leveraging Evidence to Accelerate Recovery Nationwide Network (the LEARN Network).

Consistent with the authority provided in Sec. 2010 of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), the LEARN Network will focus on adapting and preparing to scale existing, evidence-based products that have the potential to accelerate students' learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth for the many learners enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, postsecondary education, or adult education programs whose learning was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>. NCER is particularly interested in applications that address learning acceleration and recovery for students from underrepresented groups that were disproportionately affected

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants should consult resources that provide strategies for integrating scaling methodologies into product research and development, such as: Wu, J., Wingard, A, Golan, S., & Kothari M. (2021). From research to market: Development of a transition process to integrate sustainable scaling methodologies into education innovation research design and development. SRI International. The article can be accessed here: <https://www.sri.com/publication/from-research-to-market-development-of-a-transition-process-to-integrate-sustainable-scaling-methodologies-into-education-innovation-research-design-and-development/>

by COVID-19<sup>2</sup>.

Under the LEARN Network, IES intends to establish one network consisting of up to ten Product Teams focused on adapting and preparing to scale existing evidence-based products that have the potential to accelerate learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth, and one Network Scaling Lead who will focus broadly on scaling evidence-based products and will support the Product Teams.

IES will consider only applications that are responsive and compliant to the requirements described in this Request for Applications (RFA) and submitted on time electronically via Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>).

For this competition, all awards will be made as cooperative agreements to facilitate IES's involvement in the planning and implementation of network activities. As part of the cooperative agreements with IES, each Product Team and the Network Scaling Lead, will commit to collaborative participation with the network. See Part IV.B.1.b Network Commitments for the specific agreements for members of the network.

To encourage rigorous education research that is transparent, actionable, and focused on meaningful outcomes, all applications to this competition are expected to incorporate the principles outlined in the IES-wide Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER; <https://ies.ed.gov/seer/>), as applicable. These principles include –

- Pre-registering studies
- Making research findings, methods, and data available to others
- Identifying core intervention components
- Documenting intervention implementation and contrast to inform use in other settings
- Analyzing costs
- Focusing on outcomes meaningful to learners' success (learning outcomes, opportunities in education, or success from education)
- Facilitating generalization of study findings
- Conducting research in a way that informs the future scaling of interventions

IES-funded research should yield outcomes and products that are meaningful, inform stakeholders about the cost and practical benefits and effects of interventions (programs, policies, practices) on relevant outcomes for learners, and contribute to scientific knowledge and theory of teaching, learning, and organizing education systems (ESRA, § 112.1). NCER expects grantees receiving funding through this program to disseminate evidence in a way that is useful to and accessible by educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public (ESRA, § 112.2).

## **B. Getting Started**

### ***1. Technical Assistance for Applicants***

IES provides technical assistance to applicants that addresses the appropriateness of project ideas for this competition and methodological and other substantive issues concerning research in education settings. IES program officers work with applicants through a variety of formats up until the time of Grants.gov submission.

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<sup>2</sup> The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 identifies the following subgroups for IES to carry out research related to addressing learning loss caused by the coronavirus: students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and subgroups identified in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which includes major racial and ethnic groups, economical disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English proficiency status, gender, and migrant status.

If you submit a letter of intent (LOI) at <https://iesreview.ed.gov/>, a program officer will contact you regarding your proposed project. IES also provides funding opportunities webinars (live and on demand at <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/webinars/>) that include advice on choosing the correct competition, grant writing, and submitting your application.

The program officer for the LEARN Network is –

- Dr. Erin Higgins  
(202) 706-8509  
[Erin.Higgins@ed.gov](mailto:Erin.Higgins@ed.gov)

## ***2. Eligible Applicants***

Organizations that have the ability and capacity to conduct rigorous research and development are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, institutions of higher education and non-profit, for-profit, public, or private agencies.

**Broadening Participation in the Education Sciences:** IES is interested in broadening institutional participation in its research grant programs. IES encourages applications from minority-serving institutions (MSIs), alone or in combination with other institutions, that meet the eligibility criteria for this RFA. MSIs include Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, and Native American-Serving, Nontribal Institutions.

**The Principal Investigator:** The applicant organization is responsible for identifying the principal investigator (PI) on a grant application and may elect to designate more than one person to serve in this role. The 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. If more than one PI is named, the organization 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, organizations 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 this person should be listed as the PI. All other PIs should be listed as co-principal investigators.

## ***3. RFA Organization and the IES Application Submission Guide***

To submit a compliant, responsive, and timely application, you will need to review two documents:

1. *This RFA* – to learn how to prepare an application that is compliant and responsive to the requirements. [Part I](#) provides an overview of the Education Research Networks grants program. [Part II](#) describes the requirements and recommendations for this competition. [Part III](#) provides information about general formatting and other narrative content for the application, including required appendices. [Part IV](#) provides general information on competition regulations and the review process. [Part V](#) provides **a checklist that you can use to ensure you have included all required application elements to advance to scientific peer review**. [Part VI](#) provides the topic and network role codes that you must enter in Item 4b of the SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance form.
2. *The IES Application Submission Guide* (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) – for important information about submission procedures and IES-specific guidance and recommendations to help you ensure your application is complete and received on time without errors through Grants.gov.

We strongly recommend that both the principal investigator (PI) and the authorized organization representative (AOR) read both documents, whether submitting a new or revised application.

#### ***4. Ensuring Your Application is Forwarded for Scientific Peer Review***

**Only compliant and responsive applications received before the date and time deadline are peer reviewed for scientific merit.** The PI and the AOR should work together to ensure that the application meets these criteria.

*(a) On-time submission*

- See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>)
- Received and validated by Grants.gov no later than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 10, 2022.

*(b) Compliance*

- Includes the **required project narrative** (see [Part II](#))
- Adheres to all formatting requirements (see [Part III](#))
- Adheres to all page limit maximums for the project narratives and appendices. IES will remove any pages above the maximum before forwarding an application for peer review
- Includes all **required appendices** (see [Part III](#))
  - [Appendix A: Dissemination History and Plan](#) (Product Teams only)

*(c) Responsiveness*

- Meets **requirements** for the LEARN Network, which differ by network role –Product Team versus Network Scaling Lead (see [Parts II](#) and [Part III](#))

## Part II: Competition Requirements and Recommendations

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### A. General Requirements

Applications to the LEARN Network **must meet these general requirements** to be sent forward for scientific peer review.

#### 1. Education Outcomes

##### *(a) Academic Outcomes (Product Teams only)*

Product Teams **must** propose to focus on a product or products that address academic outcomes of learners and must include research that uses measures of those outcomes. IES supports research on a diverse set of academic outcomes that reflect **learning and achievement** in academic content areas and learners' **successful progression** through education systems. IES is interested in the following academic outcomes:

- For **kindergarten through Grade 12**, learning, achievement, and higher order thinking in academic content areas, including literacy<sup>3</sup>, STEM, social studies<sup>4</sup>; English language proficiency; career and technical education (CTE) attainment<sup>5</sup>; and progression through education systems as indicated by course and grade completion, retention, high school graduation, and dropout
- For **postsecondary**, learning, achievement, and higher order thinking in postsecondary courses; and access to, persistence in, progress through, and completion of postsecondary education, which includes developmental education courses and bridge programs as well as programs that lead to occupational certificates, associate's, or bachelor's degrees
- For **adult education**,<sup>6</sup> achievement in literacy, English language proficiency, and numeracy, as well as access to, persistence in, progress through, and completion of adult education courses and programs

##### *(b) Additional Outcomes – Recommended when Appropriate*

In addition to a required academic outcome, IES encourages applicants to propose inclusion of additional outcomes relevant to their research focus when appropriate. All applications that include such outcomes **must also include** a required academic outcome. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the additional outcomes applicants may propose.

- Digital Literacy<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> By *literacy*, IES refers to language-based skills to include reading, writing, listening, and speaking regardless of modality (such as online or in person).

<sup>4</sup> *Social studies* outcomes are defined as a learner's understanding of government structures and processes and how to be an engaged and knowledgeable citizen through skills and knowledge in civics, citizenship, geography, history, and economics.

<sup>5</sup> *CTE attainment* is defined as an indicator of mastery of CTE content or skills such as CTE course grades or credits earned, technical skills, assessment scores, industry certification, or employment outcomes in a field related to the CTE training.

<sup>6</sup> *Adult education* refers to the system that serves learners at least 16-years old and outside the K-12 system who are preparing for, transitioning into, or currently enrolled in adult education, as defined in Title II of the 2015 Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIAO), such as Adult Basic Education, adult English language programs, and preparation programs for high school equivalency exams.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this competition, we are adopting the American Library Association definition of the term *digital literacy*: "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."



- Social and Behavioral Competencies<sup>8</sup>
- Educator Outcomes<sup>9</sup>
- Labor market success

## 2. Education Settings

Proposed research and development must be relevant to education in the United States and must address factors under the control of U.S. education systems. Education in the U.S. is delivered in a wide range of formal settings, such as public and private K-12 schools, technical and community colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities. In addition, there are also formal programs under the control of education agencies that take place outside of school, including after-school, distance learning, online, and formal settings authorized by state or local agencies, such as adult education programs run through grants to community-based organizations. IES does not support research and development that is relevant only in informal contexts outside of education systems. Contact an IES program officer if you have questions about the setting you have identified for your proposed research.

## 3. Award Limits

The maximum grant award amount depends on the network role. All applicants should align their budgets with proposed project activities and provide justification for the amount requested in the budget narrative.

Network Role	Maximum Number of Awards	Maximum Grant Duration	Maximum Grant Award
Product Team	10	2 years	\$1,000,000 per team
Network Scaling Lead	1	3 years	\$3,000,000

## B. Background and Goals for the LEARN Network

### 1. Overview and Goals of the LEARN Network

Students across the United States experienced unprecedented challenges to their learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our nation’s students deserve to have access to high quality, evidence-based products that accelerate their learning. Consistent with the authority provided in Sec. 2010 of the American Rescue Plan, IES seeks applications to focus on adapting and preparing to scale up existing products that have prior evidence demonstrating their potential to accelerate students’ learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth, especially for students from historically underserved populations who, data show, experienced the most severe learning losses. IES is interested in a wide range of products that have the potential to rapidly improve students’ learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include curriculum supplements to support accelerated learning in a specific content area, new data-driven instructional support for teachers, and education technology products that adapt learning to individual needs.

The impacts of COVID-19 on students’ learning experiences were unprecedented, but also varied substantially across students. First, the responses of schools, colleges and universities, districts, and states to

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<sup>8</sup> *Social and behavioral competencies* refer to the social skills, attitudes/emotions, and behaviors that are important to learners’ success in school and beyond.

<sup>9</sup> *Educator outcomes* refers to measures of educator knowledge, skills, beliefs, behaviors, and/or practices.

the pandemic are wide ranging. Some schools, colleges, and universities were fully remote for many months, while others remained open. Those that were remote implemented different approaches to remote instruction, which varied along dimensions such as the frequency of synchronous instruction and the online platforms used to deliver instruction. Even when a school, college, or university was open, many students stayed home. While some schools and districts provided technology for students to use at home, there were still students who lacked access to a computer and a reliable internet connection. All of this led to variability in the learning and social emotional environments that learners experienced as well as in the level of exposure to academic content. Second, the pandemic caused financial and housing challenges for many students and their families, leading to stress and instability. These conditions likely made it difficult for learners of all ages to achieve their learning goals. For these, and many other reasons, students are returning to the classroom with a wider range of needs than before. Despite these needs, the amount of time a student spends in the classroom and within the education system remains the same as it was before the pandemic. One approach to addressing this challenge is to identify and scale up products that have the potential to accelerate students' learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth.

Accelerating learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic requires an understanding of this unique learning context, identification of the tools and supports that would empower teachers to meet their students where they are, recognition that students have a range of social and emotional needs that must be met, and the capacity to adapt to significant variation in cognitive and academic skills due to the wide-ranging education experiences learners have had throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The challenge of delivering evidence-based products to the education marketplace that accelerate learning will also require innovation, high quality research, and interdisciplinary teams. Researchers in the education and learning sciences have generated many insights about how people learn and the ways that instruction and education materials can be adapted to support learning, engagement, motivation, self-efficacy, and other critical skills and attitudes. However, the gap between research and practice remains large, and conducting research by itself does not result in market-ready solutions. Meanwhile, product developers have the skills to create market-ready products but would benefit from research insights at all stages of the product development and scaling process. IES is establishing the LEARN Network to support the adaptation and scaling of evidence-based products that will accelerate learning, to help students get back on track. The LEARN Network will be composed of up to ten Product Teams and a Network Scaling Lead.

Each of the Product Teams will focus on a product that has the potential to accelerate learning at any level in K-12, postsecondary education, and/or adult education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve the quick turnaround necessary to provide timely support to learners after the pandemic, Product Teams will focus on existing products that already have evidence of causal impact on students' academic outcomes and/or information about validity if the product includes an assessment. For example, teachers may find that their students are coming into the classroom with wider variation in skills and that a larger proportion of students are struggling with grade-level content. Products that can support teachers by quickly identifying students' skills and knowledge will likely save teachers time and provide them the insights they need to differentiate instruction. In addition, teams may consider focusing on products that provide adaptive instruction for students in content areas that were particularly difficult to teach remotely during the pandemic. At the end of two years, each Product Team will have one or more products adapted based on an analysis of user needs, insights from the education and learning sciences, and consideration of product-market fit as well as evidence that the product accelerates students' learning.

The Network Scaling Lead will focus on identifying and ameliorating the barriers to scaling products by working closely with educators and leaders in the education marketplace. Initially, the Network Scaling Lead will focus on providing support to the Product Teams around adapting and preparing to scale up evidence-based products. Next, the Network Scaling Lead will focus on generating a broader set of resources to support the scaling of any evidence-based product intended for use in education settings. The Network Scaling Lead will also take the lead in developing a plan for a coordinated dissemination about their work and that of the Product Teams.

## **2. LEARN Network Product Team Requirements**

### *(a) Overview*

Each Product Team will conduct independent, but coordinated, activities. Product Teams will focus on adapting an existing product to address learning acceleration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to increase the likelihood that the product can be scaled quickly. At the end of two years, each Product Team will have one or more products adapted based on an analysis of user needs, insights from the education and learning sciences, and consideration of product-market fit as well as evidence that the product accelerates students' learning<sup>10</sup>. To be responsive to the LEARN Network Product Team role and forwarded for peer review, the proposed project must meet the requirements listed below.

### *(b) Product Team Project Narrative Requirements*

Each Product Team project narrative **must** adhere to the formatting guidelines (see [Part III.B](#)) and be **no more than 22 pages**. If the narrative exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 22<sup>nd</sup> page of the narrative. The project narrative for a Product Team application **must** include four sections: Significance, Product Improvement Plan, Personnel, and Resources.

#### **(1) Significance**

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the product you are adapting and preparing to scale and the research that supports it.

You **must describe**:

- The product you will focus on and how it will accelerate learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth to address learning losses experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Existing evidence of the causal impact of the product on academic outcomes
- Prior validation studies if the product includes an assessment

#### **(2) Product Improvement Plan**

The purpose of this section is to describe your plans for adapting and conducting research on the product.

You **must describe your plans to**

- Adapt the product to focus on accelerating learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Identify the needs of users as well as product-market fit of the product and adapt the product in response
- Identify the factors that lead to successful implementation and uptake of the product
- Collect data on one or more academic outcomes listed in [Part II.A.1](#) to test whether the product accelerates students' learning as compared to estimates of pre-pandemic rates of growth
- Conduct a cost analysis

#### **(3) Personnel**

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that your team possesses the appropriate experience for the proposed work and will commit enough time to the project.

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<sup>10</sup> Applicants should consult resources that provide strategies for integrating scaling methodologies into product research and development, such as: Wu, J., Wingard, A, Golan, S., & Kothari M. (2021). From research to market: Development of a transition process to integrate sustainable scaling methodologies into education innovation research design and development. SRI International. The article can be accessed here: <https://www.sri.com/publication/from-research-to-market-development-of-a-transition-process-to-integrate-sustainable-scaling-methodologies-into-education-innovation-research-design-and-development/>

You **must describe** your project team.

#### **(4) Resources**

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how you have the organizational capacity and access to resources needed to execute a project of this size and complexity.

You **must describe** your resources to conduct the project.

#### *(c) Award Limits*

Awards made under the LEARN Network Product Teams role **must** conform to the following limits on duration and cost.

#### **(1) Duration Maximum**

The maximum duration of Product Team award is **2 years**.

#### **(2) Cost Maximum**

The maximum cost for each Product Team award is **\$1,000,000** (total cost = direct + indirect costs).

#### **(3) Maximum Number of Awards**

IES intends to make **no more than ten awards**. However, should funding be available, IES may consider making additional awards to high-quality applications that remain unfunded after ten awards have been made.

#### *(d) Recommendations for a Strong Application*

These recommendations are intended to improve the quality of your application, and peer reviewers are asked to consider these recommendations in their evaluation of your application.

#### **(1) Significance**

State the needs hypothesis for the product. Describe the specific pandemic-related problem or issue that the product will address and demonstrate that it was caused by or made worse from the pandemic. Clear evidence of the problem or issue's importance to educators may be provided in a letter, which can be included in Appendix D.

Identify the population of learners and educators the product is intended for, describe why the product meets a critical need for that population and note how it is different and better than existing products.

Describe the extent to which your product addresses learning acceleration and recovery for underrepresented subgroups of learners disproportionately affected by COVID-19<sup>11</sup>.

Describe the academic outcomes your product will focus on and justify the importance of those outcomes. Describe the product's potential to accelerate learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth.

Describe the components of the product and how it will be implemented. Describe the current version of the product and any proposed modifications to meet the needs of learners in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are focusing on an adaptive intervention, clearly identify and present a rationale for decision points, tailoring variables, decision rules, and intervention options.

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<sup>11</sup> The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 identifies the following subgroups for IES to carry out research related to addressing learning loss caused by the coronavirus: students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and subgroups identified in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xi) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which includes major racial and ethnic groups, economical disadvantaged students, children with disabilities, English proficiency status, gender, and migrant status.

Describe the value of the product to customers and users.

Describe the product's current position in the market, the potential market for the product, the resources and organizational structure necessary for the wide adoption and implementation of the product, and preliminary plans for scaling up the product.

Provide a theory of change to show how the core components of the product are hypothesized to lead to accelerated learning. Include the theoretical justifications and empirical evidence to support your theory of change.

- Include a visual representation of your theory of change in [Appendix B: Supplemental Charts, Tables, and Figures](#).
- Identify the key performance indicators (KPIs) that would suggest the product is working as intended and that would provide evidence for the theory of change.

Describe prior research that demonstrates the impact of the product on students' academic outcomes and explain how that existing evidence supports the promise for accelerating learning relative to pre-pandemic growth.

Describe prior research that supports any adaptations you are proposing in order to support learning acceleration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Describe the findings from validation studies if your product includes an assessment.

## **(2) Product Improvement Plan**

Describe the process for assessing product-user fit and making adaptations as needed to ensure the product meets the needs of the end users identified in the significance section. Identify how you will collect evidence to demonstrate the product's value for end users in terms of performance, reliability, convenience, and cost.

Describe the process for adapting the product so that it is capable of supporting learning acceleration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Describe the research methods you will use to make decisions about the adaptations to include and how they should be designed.

Describe how you will collect data to assess whether the product accelerates students' learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth. Include the following details:

- Include one or more academic outcomes that meet the education outcomes requirement listed in [Part II.A.1](#).
- Describe your research design, which should include a comparison condition or comparison dataset that provides an estimate of pre-pandemic rates of growth for the academic outcome(s) of interest. Given time and resources, the Institute does not expect applicants to conduct a fully powered efficacy trial at this time.
- Explain why the research design you are choosing is the most rigorous design you can implement given time and resources constraints.
- Describe your methods, measures, and data analysis plans.

Describe plans to identify the factors that lead to successful implementation and adoption of the product. Describe the research methods and types of data you will use. Discuss the characteristics of your sample and the population(s) they represent.

Describe how you will initially and continually assess product-market fit and use that information to make adjustments to the product, how it is implemented, and the resources and documentation provided to support implementation. For all research activities, discuss the characteristics of your sample and the

population(s) they represent. Ensure that your sample reflects the diversity of the population(s) for whom the product is intended.

Describe how you will collect information to inform your plans to scale up the product, including how you will identify champions for the product, how you will identify and map out the roles of key stakeholders, and how you will conduct market differentiation and market segmentation analyses.

*Cost analysis:*

Describe your plan to determine the quantity, quality, and value of all resources needed to use the product.

Your plan should describe the following:

- How you will estimate costs using a societal perspective and the cost method you will use, noting whether another perspective, such as that of the local education agency, will also be included
- The resources you will use to implement the product including personnel, facilities, equipment, materials, training, or other inputs, and describe each resource's quality and quantity
- How you will collect data about costs, including the period for the cost data collection, the data collection instruments you will use, and the sources you will use to obtain national prices for resources and, if useful to a local audience, local prices
- How you will calculate the cost of the resources and the product's total cost, including details such as how you will adjust prices where needed (for example, to account for geographic price differences), assign costs to resources that are provided at below their actual value, and run sensitivity analyses to check assumptions
- The metrics you will use to report costs and how you will explain their meaning to education stakeholders

For more information on planning and implementing a cost study, here are some recent resources for education researchers:

- IES Cost Analysis Starter Kit available at [https://ies.ed.gov/seer/cost\\_analysis.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/seer/cost_analysis.asp) (<https://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=IES2020001rev>)
- Checklist for Cost Analysis Plans available at <https://capproject.org/resources>
- Hollands, F.M., Pratt-Williams, J., & Shand, R. (2021). Cost Analysis Standards and Guidelines 1.1 (<https://capproject.org/resources>)
- Cost Analysis Standards Project (CASP) (2021) Standards for the Economic Analysis of Educational and Social Programs (<https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Standards-for-theEconomic-Evaluation-of-Educational-and-Social-Programs-CASP-May-2021.pdf>)
- Additional resources are available at the IES Standards for Excellence in Education website ([https://ies.ed.gov/seer/cost\\_analysis.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/seer/cost_analysis.asp)) and the Cost Analysis in Practice (CAP) Project and Help Desk (<https://capproject.org/>), hosted by Teachers College, Columbia University

Provide a clear timeline for the project. Timeline tables or figures should be placed in either the project narrative or [Appendix B: Supplemental Charts, Tables, and Figures](#), but discussion of the timeline should be included only in the project narrative.

### **(3) Personnel**

Identify and describe expertise and qualifications of the project team at the primary applicant organization and at any subaward organizations to carry out the proposed work.

Describe partnerships with education agencies to carry out the proposed work. Including education agencies as partners ensures that the product meets the needs of education practitioners and policymakers.

Because the focus of the Product Team's work will be on adapting and preparing to scale a product, Product Teams should have a product manager, instructional designers, content experts, educators, and researchers who can carry out all aspects of the work proposed, including the cost analysis. For teams focused on education technology products, software development personnel and data scientists should also be included.

In its research grant programs, IES is committed to broadening participation, including personnel from underrepresented communities and diverse institutions. Describe how the background and experience of the project team supports the successful conduct of the proposed work. Discuss your team's experience working with populations of learners from the underrepresented communities that your project addresses.

Identify the management structure and procedures that will be used to keep the project on track and ensure the quality of its work, including

- Roles and responsibilities of personnel on the project
- Proportion of time personnel will devote to the project, expressed as percent effort over a 12- month calendar year

#### **(4) Resources**

Describe your organization's capacity to manage a grant of this size.

Describe your access to resources available at the primary and any subaward organizations.

Describe your plan for acquiring resources that are not currently accessible, will require significant expenditures, and are necessary for the successful completion of the project, such as equipment, test materials, curriculum, or training materials.

Describe your access to any necessary datasets. Include letters of agreement, data licenses, or existing memoranda of understanding in [Appendix D](#), if applicable to your project.

### ***3. LEARN Network Scaling Lead Requirements***

#### *(a) Overview*

The Network Scaling Lead will focus on identifying and ameliorating the barriers to scaling products by working closely with educators and leaders in the education marketplace. Initially, the Network Scaling Lead will focus on providing support to the Product Teams around adapting and preparing to scale up evidence-based products. Next, the Network Scaling Lead will focus on generating a broader set of resources to support the scaling of any evidence-based product intended for use in education settings. The Network Scaling Lead will also take the lead in developing a plan for a coordinated dissemination about their work and that of the Product Teams.

#### *(b) Network Scaling Lead Project Narrative*

The Network Scaling Lead project narrative **must** adhere to the formatting guidelines (see [Part III.B](#)) and be **no more than 15 pages**. If the narrative exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 15<sup>th</sup> page of the narrative. The narrative for a Network Scaling Lead application **must** include four sections: Significance, Network and Scaling Activities, Personnel, and Resources.

#### **(1) Significance**

The purpose of this section is to describe your vision for the LEARN Network and for your role as the Network Scaling Lead.

You **must describe** your vision for the LEARN Network and your ideas for how to scale up evidence-based products in education settings, in particular products that accelerate recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

#### **(2) Network and Scaling Activities**

The purpose of this section is to describe your plans to work with Product Teams and educators to facilitate the process of scaling up evidence-based products.

You **must describe** your plans to:

- Engage with educators and leaders in the education marketplace to understand the barriers and challenges of scaling up evidence-based products
- Develop new resources, tools, and/or technologies to scale up evidence-based products that align to districts' needs
- Provide training and support to Product Teams around adapting and scaling up evidence-based products.
- Coordinate dissemination for the LEARN Network

### **(3) Personnel**

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that your team possesses appropriate experience for the proposed network and scaling activities and will commit enough time to the project.

You **must describe** your project team.

### **(4) Resources**

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how you have the organizational capacity and access to resources needed to execute a project of this size and complexity.

You **must describe** your resources to conduct the project.

#### *(c) Award Limits*

Awards made under the LEARN Network Scaling Lead role **must** conform to the following limits on duration and cost.

#### **(1) Duration Maximum**

The maximum duration of a LEARN Network Scaling Lead project is **3 years**.

#### **(2) Cost Maximum**

The maximum cost for a LEARN Network Scaling Lead project is **\$3,000,000** (total cost = direct costs + indirect costs).

#### **(3) Maximum Number of Awards**

IES intends to make **no more than one** Network Scaling Lead award.

#### *(d) Recommendations for a Strong Application*

These recommendations are intended to improve the quality of your application, and peer reviewers are asked to consider these recommendations in their evaluation of your application.

#### **(1) Significance**

Describe your vision for what is needed to provide a clear path for evidence-based products to scale up successfully in the education sector.

Describe your understanding of the barriers and challenges states, districts, schools, and colleges and universities face as they make procurement decisions.

Describe how the Network Scaling Lead's activities will provide insights into how states, districts, schools, and colleges and universities use evidence is used to make procurement decisions.



Describe your ideas for identifying existing and developing new resources, tools, and/or technologies that may help states, districts, schools, and colleges and universities identify evidence-based products that align to their needs and that would facilitate the scaling of evidence-based products.

Describe the barriers and challenges the Product Teams may face when they adapt and scale an evidence-based product and how you could help navigate through these challenges. For example, there may be training opportunities you could offer to Product Teams.

### **(2) Network and Scaling Activities**

Provide a timeline that shows when major activities will take place and a description of how those activities will inform one another and how they build from or feed into the broader goals of the network. The first two years will be focused on collaborations with the Product Teams and will primarily lead to insights about how to scale products that will accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The third year will focus on generating a broader set of resources to support the scaling of any evidence-based product intended for use in education settings.

Describe the process you will use for working with states, districts, schools, and colleges and universities to (1) learn about the barriers and challenges they face when making procurement decisions and (2) understand when and how they use evidence to make decisions.

Describe the process for working with Product Teams to identify their needs and to support them in thinking about how to scale up their products if they are shown to be effective. This may include a description of an initial plan for training you would offer for Product Teams, along with potential training providers and a timeline.

Describe your plans for curating and developing resources, tools, and/or technology to support the scale up of evidence-based products. Describe how you will ensure that these resources will make it easier for educators to find evidence-based products that align to their individual needs. Describe a plan to test the usability and feasibility of the resources.

Provide a plan for a coordinated dissemination effort for the network.

- Identify existing forums, such as annual professional conferences, where the network members can disseminate to technical and non-technical audiences.
- Describe the LEARN Network website you will design, including its content and the audiences you intend to reach. Discuss your use of social media and electronic forms of communication (such as webinars, podcasts, and videos) to broaden the reach of the network at a relatively low cost.

### **(3) Personnel**

Identify and describe the expertise and qualifications of the project team at the primary applicant organization and at any subaward organizations. Also include –

- Roles and responsibilities of personnel on the project
- Proportion of time personnel will devote to the project, expressed as percent effort over a 12- month calendar year

In its research grant programs, IES is committed to broadening participation, including personnel from underrepresented communities and diverse institutions. Describe how the background and experience of the project team supports the successful conduct of the proposed work. Discuss your team's experience working with populations of learners from the underrepresented communities that your project addresses.

Describe how the backgrounds and experiences of the project team will support the successful conduct of the proposed work. Include the following details:

- Experience that is relevant to the use of research to make decisions in the education sector
- Experience that is relevant to best practices for developing and scaling up products

- Experience and capacity to manage a project of this size and type
- Experience executing a dissemination strategy consistent with the IES mission to promote scientifically valid research findings that can provide the basis for improving academic instruction and lifelong learning.

IES strongly encourages applicants to propose partnerships with researchers, education marketplace leaders, and other education stakeholders to help guide the program of work.

Identify who will manage dissemination across the network and with the public. Strong applications will have a dedicated communications manager or communications team.

**(4) Resources**

Describe your plans and procedures for the overall management of the project and its diverse activities.

Describe your organization's capacity to manage a grant of this size.

Describe your access to resources available at the primary and any subaward organizations.

Describe your plan for acquiring resources that are not currently accessible, will require significant expenditures, and are necessary for the successful completion of the project, such as equipment, test materials, curriculum, or training materials.

## Part III: Preparing Your Application

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### A. Overview

The application contents—individual forms and their PDF attachments—represent the body of an application to IES. IES encourages you to refer to the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) for additional information about preparing to submit your application and ensuring your application is sufficient.

### B. General Formatting

To ensure that reviewers can read your application and that all applicants have similar expectations for length and space, IES specifies the following formatting conventions. Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements is necessary so that no applicant will have an unfair advantage by using small type or by providing more text in their applications. These requirements apply to the PDF file as submitted, unless otherwise specified. In order for an application to be compliant and sent forward for review, the applicant should ensure that each narrative section follows both the page limit maximums and the formatting guidelines below unless otherwise specified.

#### 1. Page and Margin Specifications

For all IES 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

Text must be single spaced.

#### 4. Type Size (Font Size)

Type must conform to the following three requirements:

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

You should check the type size using a standard device for measuring type size, rather than relying on the font selected for a particular word processing/printer combination. Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the application; consequently, the use of small type will be grounds for IES to return the application without scientific peer review. Adherence to these requirements also is necessary to ensure that no applicant will have an unfair advantage by using smaller type or line spacing to provide more text in the application.

As a practical matter, if you use a 12-point Times New Roman font without compressing, kerning, condensing, or other alterations, and use footnotes sparingly, if at all, the application will typically meet these requirements. Readability should guide your selection of an appropriate font and your use of footnotes.

#### 5. Citations

Use the parenthetical author-date style for citations rather than numeric citations that correspond to the reference list.

## **6. Graphs, Diagrams, and Tables**

IES encourages you to 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, may be in a type size smaller than 12-point but must be readily legible.**

## **C. Required and Optional Appendices**

The required project narrative that is described for each network role (see [Part II: Competition Requirements and Recommendations](#)) is followed by several appendices. Some of these appendices are required, and some are optional. When you submit your application through Grants.gov, you will create a single PDF file that *contains the project narrative and all appendices* and include it as an attachment in the application package. Include appendices in alphabetical order and simply skip an appendix if it is not required for your application or if you choose not to include one of the optional appendices. See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) for more information about preparing and submitting your application using the required application package for this competition through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

The project narrative and appendices are critical parts of the IES application because they include the substantive content that will be reviewed for theoretical and practical significance and scientific merit.

### **1. Appendix A: Dissemination History and Plan (Required for Product Teams only)**

Product Team applicants **must** include Appendix A after the project narrative. Appendix A includes two sections: Dissemination History and Dissemination Plan. Appendix A **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than three pages**, including one page for the Dissemination History and two pages for the Dissemination Plan. If Appendix A exceeds this three-page limit, IES will remove any pages after the third page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

#### *(a) Dissemination History*

The dissemination history is intended to demonstrate that the research and development you and your project team have conducted in the past has been disseminated in a way that is consistent with the IES mission to promote scientifically valid research findings that can provide the basis for improving academic instruction and lifelong learning. PIs who have never led an IES grant should focus on dissemination history of related, past federal or non-federal research projects in which they and their project team have participated or other relevant research dissemination activities. Reviewers will use this information to determine whether the project personnel have dissemination experience that will support the proposed dissemination plan.

The dissemination history should include the following:

- A brief description of the outcomes of prior research and development, including products developed or tested and how the project's findings and products were disseminated
- For interventions or assessments that were developed through one or more projects and have evidence of impact on learner outcomes or of the validity and reliability of the assessment for intended purposes and learners, an explanation for how it has been made available to users, the number of active users of the product, the number of users of the product during its history, and funding agreements or outside investments for commercialization (if applicable)
- Other unique dissemination products or notable presentations of research findings, particularly those that were intended for practitioners, policymakers, parents, students, and/or the general public

*(b) Dissemination Plan*

Describe your plan to disseminate the findings from the proposed project. Dissemination plans should be tailored to the audiences that will benefit from the findings and reflect the unique purpose of the project.

Identify the audiences that you expect will most likely benefit from your research such as federal and state policymakers and program administrators and local school system administrators, school administrators, educators, parents, learners, and other education researchers.

Discuss the different ways in which you intend to reach these audiences through the publications, presentations, and products you expect to produce.

The Dissemination History and Plan is the only information that may be included in Appendix A; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application.

## ***2. Appendix B: Supplemental Charts, Tables, and Figures (Optional)***

Appendix B **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than 15 pages**. If Appendix B exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 15<sup>th</sup> page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review. In Appendix B, you may include figures, charts, or tables with supplementary information like a timeline for your research project, a diagram of the management structure of your project, or examples of measures used to collect data for your project such as individual test items, tests, surveys, and observation and interview protocols.

These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix B; all other material will be removed prior to review of the application.

## ***3. Appendix C: Examples of Intervention or Assessment Materials (Optional)***

Appendix C **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than 10 pages**. If Appendix C exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 10<sup>th</sup> page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review. 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 C; all other material will be removed prior to review of the application.

## ***4. Appendix D: Letters of Agreement (Optional)***

There is **no recommended page length** for Appendix D. Use this appendix to provide copies of letters of agreement from schools, districts, platform developers, and/or other settings or data sources that will be a part of or will provide data for the proposed research and/or individuals who will serve as consultants. You may also use this appendix to provide copies of letters that provide clear evidence of the education problem or issue's importance to educators. Ensure that the letters reproduce well so that reviewers can easily read them. Do not reduce the size of the letters. See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) 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.

IES understands that, due to school closings associated with COVID-19, you may have difficulty providing letters from schools, districts, and other education sites that would participate in or provide data for the proposed research. If you are unable to provide these letters in your application, include a description in Appendix D of why you were not able to obtain letters and your plan for securing them if your application is recommended for funding. NOTE: Special conditions may be placed on the grant awards if these letters are not received before the award date. Reviewers will be instructed to not penalize applicants for failure to include letters of agreement due to the coronavirus pandemic.

These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix D; all other material will be removed prior to review of the application.

## D. Other Narrative Content

In addition to the project narrative (see [Part II: Competition Requirements and Recommendations](#)) and required and optional appendices (see above), you will also prepare a project summary/structured abstract, a bibliography and references cited, an exempt or non-exempt research on human subjects narrative, and biosketches for key personnel and consultants to include as file attachments in your application. See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) for more information about preparing and submitting your application using the required application package for this competition on Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

### 1. Project Summary/Structured Abstract

You **must** submit the project summary/structured abstract as a separate PDF attachment in the application package. If your project is recommended for funding, IES will use this abstract as the basis for the online abstracts that we post when new awards are announced. We recommend that the project summary/structured abstract be two-pages long and follow the format used for IES online abstracts (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/>).

#### (a) Title and Network Role

- **Title:** Distinct, descriptive title of the project.
- **Network Role:** Identify the network role to which you are applying (see [Parts II](#) and [III](#)). This information should match the code entered for Item 4b: Agency Routing Number on the SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance form (see the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) and [Part VI: Required Codes for Item 4b of the SF 424 Cover Sheet](#) for more information).

#### (b) Project Summary

The purpose of the project summary is to provide a high-level overview that is accessible to a range of audiences, such as policymakers, practitioners, and the general public. This section should use short, active sentences to briefly describe the significance of the project, project activities, and the intended outcomes.

- **Purpose:** A brief description of the purpose of the project and its significance for accelerating students' learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For Product Team applicants, this should include identification of the product and why it is addressing a critical need, what this project will do to adapt and prepare to scale the product, and the general expected outcomes of the project.
- **Project Activities:** An overview of the project activities the team plans to carry out.
- **Products and Dissemination:** A brief description of the product or products that are the focus of the project. This section may also describe information that will be learned and disseminated.

*(c) Structured Abstract*

The purpose of the structured abstract is to provide key details about the project activities. This section is most likely to be used by other researchers but should be written in a way that is accessible to anyone who wants more information about the project.

- **Setting:** A brief description of the location (identified at the state level) where the project activities will take place and other important characteristics of the locale, such as whether it is rural or urban.
- **Population/Sample:** A brief description of the sample who will participate in the proposed project activities, including number of participants; the composition of the sample including age or grade level, race/ethnicity, or disability status as appropriate; and the population the sample is intended to represent.
- **Product:** A brief description of the product/products that is/are the focus of the proposed work. Network Scaling Lead Team applicants should describe the resources, tools, and/or technology that will be developed to support the scale up of evidence-based products.
- **Project Activities:** A brief description of the major features of the research and development activities that are being proposed in the application, including a brief description of the project timeline.
- **Cost Analysis:** If applicable, a brief description of the cost and/or cost-effectiveness analyses planned.
- **Related IES Projects:** A list of the IES-issued award number and/or corresponding online abstract link (URLs) to completed or ongoing IES-funded projects that are related to the proposed project (for example, if you submit a Product Team application to focus on an intervention originally developed with IES funding, list that Development and Innovation grant number here).

See our online search engine of funded research grants (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/>) for examples of the content to be included in your project summary/structured abstract and to search for award numbers and URLs.

## ***2. Bibliography and References Cited***

You **must** submit the bibliography and references cited as a separate PDF attachment in the application package. There is **no recommended page length** for the bibliography and references cited. You should include complete citations, including the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), titles of relevant elements such as the article/journal and chapter/book, page numbers, and year of publication for literature cited in the project narrative.

## ***3. Human Subjects Narrative***

You **must** submit an exempt or non-exempt human subjects narrative as a separate PDF attachment in the application package. We do not recommend a page length for the human subjects narrative. See *Information About the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Supported by the Department of Education* (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/guid/humansub/hrsnarrative1.html>) for a brief overview of principles, regulations, and policies which affect research involving human subjects in research activities supported by the Department of Education.

Note that the Revised Common Rule is now in effect with changes that will affect Institutional Review Board (IRB) review of your proposed research protocol. Take care to address how changes to exemption and continuing review procedures, and the use of a single IRB, will be addressed should your application be recommended for funding.

The U.S. Department of Education does not require certification of IRB approval at the time you submit your application. However, if an application that involves non-exempt human subjects research is recommended

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 of the formal request from the Department.

#### ***4. Biographical Sketches for Key Personnel***

You **must** submit a biographical sketch for each person named as key personnel in your application. You may also submit biographical sketches for consultants (optional). Each biographical sketch (an abbreviated CV plus current and pending support information) **must be no more than five pages in length**. If a biographical sketch exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the fifth page before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

Biographical sketches are submitted as separate PDF attachments in the application package. IES strongly encourages applicants to use SciENcv (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/>) where you will find an IES biosketch form. IES will accept the SciENcv format for your biographical sketch even though it does not adhere exactly to our general formatting requirements. You may also develop your own biosketch format. 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.

The biographical sketch for the principal investigator, each co-principal investigator, other key personnel, and consultants (if included) should show how members of the project team possess training and expertise commensurate with their specified duties on the proposed project, for example, by describing relevant publications, grants, and research experience, including experience working with the study population as applicable.

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 their time, expressed as percent **effort over a 12-month calendar year**, allocated to each project. Include the proposed IES grant as one of the pending grants in this list.

Be sure to include your ORCID iD (Open Researcher and Contributor; <https://orcid.org/>) if you have one and consider establishing one if you have yet to do so.



## Part IV: Competition Regulations and Review Criteria

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### A. Funding Mechanisms and Restrictions

#### 1. Mechanism of Support

IES intends to award cooperative agreements pursuant to this Request for Applications.

#### 2. Funding Available

Although IES intends to support the topic and network roles 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. IES makes its awards to the highest quality applications, as determined through scientific peer review.

**The size of the award depends on the network role as well as the scope of the project.** Please attend to the duration and budget maximums set for each network role in [Part II: Competition Requirements and Recommendations](#). IES intends to award up to ten Product Teams and one Network Scaling Lead.

#### 3. Special Considerations for Budget Expenses

##### *(a) 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. Please note that the Indirect Cost Group (ICG) in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the Chief Financial Officer will not be available for assistance during the application preparation process. If your institution does not have an indirect cost rate and you receive a grant from IES, the ICG group can help with obtaining an indirect cost rate once the grant is awarded.

Most institutions that do not have a current negotiated rate may use a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (see 2 CFR §200.414 [https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=se2.1.200\\_1414&rgn=div8](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=se2.1.200_1414&rgn=div8) for more information). This de minimis rate may be used indefinitely and no documentation is required to justify its use.

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

##### *(b) 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 the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), 2 CFR, §200.432 Conferences ([https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=dcd3efbcf2b6092f84c3b1af32bdcc34&node=se2.1.200\\_1432&rgn=div8](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=dcd3efbcf2b6092f84c3b1af32bdcc34&node=se2.1.200_1432&rgn=div8)).

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, such as working lunches; however, IES 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.

#### **4. Program Authority**

“American Rescue Plan Act” of 2021 (H.R. 1319) Sec. 2010, and 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.

#### **5. 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 Requirements**

### **1. Pre-Award**

#### *(a) Clarification and Budget Questions*

IES uses the scientific peer review process as the first step in making funding decisions. If your application is recommended for funding based on the outcome of the scientific peer review, an IES program officer will contact you to clarify any issues that were raised by the peer reviewers and to address whether the proposed budget adequately supports the scope of work and meets federal guidelines.

#### *(b) Demonstrating Access to Data and Education Settings*

The research you propose to conduct will most likely require that you have (or will obtain) access to education settings such as classrooms, schools, districts, colleges/universities; secondary datasets; 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 D](#) 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, **IES will require additional supporting evidence prior to the release of funds**. If you cannot provide such documentation, IES may not award the grant or may withhold funds.

You will need supporting evidence of partnership or access if you are doing any of the following.

#### **(1) Conducting research in or with 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 education settings, you will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary settings in order to receive the grant. 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 IES 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, IES will ask you to provide documentation that the settings originally recruited for the application are still willing to partner in the research.

#### **(2) Using secondary datasets**

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 datasets (such as federally collected datasets, 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 datasets in order to receive the grant. This means that if you do not have permission to use the proposed datasets at the time of application, you must provide

documentation to IES from the entity controlling the dataset(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 dataset prior to submitting your application, IES will ask you to provide updated documentation indicating that you still have permission to use the dataset to conduct the proposed research during the project period.

### **(3) Building on existing studies**

You may propose studies that piggyback onto an ongoing study, which will require access to those subjects and data. In such cases, the principal investigator of the existing study should be one of the members of the research team applying for the grant to conduct the new project.

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

#### *(c) Assessment of Past Performance*

IES considers the applicant's performance and use of funds under a previous federal award as part of the criteria for making a funding decision. Performance on previous Department of Education awards is considered as is additional information that may be requested from the applicant, including compliance to the IES Public Access Policy (applicable for all grants funded from 2012 to present; <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>).

## **2. Post-Award**

#### *(a) Compliance with IES Policy on Public Access to Results*

IES requires all grantees to submit the electronic version of peer-reviewed scholarly publications to ERIC (<https://eric.ed.gov/>), a publicly accessible and searchable electronic database of education research that makes available full-text documents to the public for free. This public access requirement (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>) applies to peer-reviewed, original scholarly publications that have been supported (in whole or in part) with direct funding from IES, although it does not apply to book chapters, editorials, reviews, or non-peer-reviewed conference proceedings. **As the designated representative for the grantee institution, IES holds the principal investigator responsible** for ensuring that authors of publications stemming from the grant comply with this requirement.

The author's final manuscript is defined as the final version accepted for journal publication and includes all modifications from the peer review process. Submission of accepted manuscripts for public accessibility through ERIC is strongly encouraged as soon as possible **but must occur within 12 months of the publisher's official date of publication**. ERIC will not make the accepted manuscripts available to the public prior to the end of the 12-month embargo period, unless specified by the publisher.

The ERIC website includes a homepage for the Grantee and Online Submission System (<https://eric.ed.gov/submit/>), as well as a Frequently Asked Questions page (<https://eric.ed.gov/?granteefaq>). During the submission process, authors will submit bibliographic information from the publication, including title, authors, publication date, journal title, and associated IES award number(s).

#### *(b) Special Conditions on Grants*

IES 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.

*(c) Attendance at the Annual IES Principal Investigators Meeting*

The principal investigator (PI) is required to attend one meeting each year (for up to 3 days) in Washington, DC with other IES grantees and IES staff. The project's budget should include this meeting. PIs who are not able to attend the meeting may designate another person who is key personnel on the research team to attend.

*(d) Network Commitments*

Below are the commitments that each team will need to agree to as part of its cooperative agreement, which is completed prior to award.

*All members of the LEARN Network must agree to the following:*

- Co-create and implement a network-wide dissemination plan
- Ensure representation at virtual and in-person LEARN Network meetings

*The LEARN Network Product Teams must also agree to the following:*

- Participate in training from and communicate with the Network Scaling Lead about adapting and scaling up evidence-based products.

*The LEARN Network Scaling Lead must also commit to the following:*

- Ensure the network-wide dissemination plan is enacted and updated as necessary
- Provide training and support to Product Teams around adapting and scaling up evidence-based products.

## **C. Overview of Application and Scientific Peer Review Process**

### ***1. Submitting Your Letter of Intent***

Letters of intent (LOIs) are submitted online at the IES Peer Review Information Management Online (PRIMO) system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit>). **Select the Letter of Intent form for the competition 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). The LOI is non-binding and optional but strongly recommended. If you submit an LOI, a program officer will contact you regarding your proposed research. IES staff also use the information in the LOI 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.

*(a) Elements for the Letter of Intent:*

- Descriptive title
- Topic and network role for your application
- Brief description of the proposed project
- Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number, and email 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 maximums for each project type)
- Estimated total budget request (attend to the Budget maximums for each project type)

## ***2. Multiple Submissions***

You may submit applications to more than one of the FY 2022 IES grant programs and to multiple topics within the Education Research Grants program. In addition, within a particular grant program or topic, you may submit multiple applications. However, you may submit a given application only once for the FY 2022 grant competitions, meaning you may not submit the same application or similar applications to multiple grant programs, multiple topics, or multiple times within the same topic. If you submit the same or similar applications, IES will determine whether and which applications will be accepted for review and/or will be eligible for funding.

## ***3. Application Processing***

**Applications must be submitted electronically and received no later than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 10, 2022**, using the software provided on the Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>) website. You must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) and on Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

After applications are fully uploaded and validated at Grants.gov, the U.S. Department of Education receives the applications for processing and transfers them to the IES PRIMO system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov/>). PRIMO allows applicants to track the progress of their application via the Applicant Notification System (ANS).

Approximately 1 to 2 weeks after the application deadline, invitation emails are sent to applicants who have never applied to IES before to create their individual PRIMO ANS accounts. Both the PI and the AOR will receive invitation emails. Approximately four to six weeks after the application deadline, all applicants (new and existing ANS users) will begin to receive a series of emails about the status of their application. See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) for additional information about ANS and PRIMO.

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

## ***4. Scientific Peer Review Process***

IES 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 IES website ([https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/application\\_review.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/application_review.asp)) by a panel of experts who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and Request for Applications.

Each compliant and responsive application is assigned to an IES review panel convened for this competition.

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, IES 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.

## **5. Review Criteria for Scientific Merit**

The purpose of IES-supported research is to contribute to solving education problems and provide reliable information about the education practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to education for all learners. IES expects reviewers to assess the scientific rigor and practical significance of the research proposed in order to judge the likelihood that it will make a meaningful contribution to the larger IES mission. Information about each of these criteria is described in [Part II: Competition Requirements and Recommendations](#).

### *(a) Product Teams*

#### **(1) Significance**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Significance section for the Product Team role?

#### **(2) Product Improvement Plan**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Product Improvement Plan section for the Product Team role?

#### **(3) Personnel**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Personnel section for the Product Team role? Do the principal investigator and other key personnel possess appropriate experience, and will they commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed work?

#### **(4) Resources**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Resources section for the Product Team role? 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?

#### **(5) Dissemination**

Does the application address the recommendations described in Appendix A: Dissemination History and Plan? Does the applicant present a dissemination plan that is tailored to audiences that will benefit from the findings and reflect the purpose of the project? Does the applicant describe a dissemination history that demonstrates past success in sharing results of education research widely and appropriately?

### *(b) Network Scaling Lead*

#### **(1) Significance**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Significance section for the Network Scaling Lead role?

#### **(2) Network and Scaling Activities**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Network and Scaling Activities section for the Network Scaling Lead role?

#### **(3) Personnel**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Personnel section for the Network Scaling Lead role? Do the principal investigator and other key personnel possess appropriate experience, and will they commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed activities?

#### **(4) Resources**

Does the applicant address the recommendations described in the Resources section for the Network Scaling Lead role? 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?

## **6. 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
- Ability to carry out the proposed research within the maximum award and duration requirements
- Availability of funds

## Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist

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Only compliant and responsive applications will be forwarded for scientific peer review. Use this checklist to better ensure you have included all required components for compliance and that you have addressed all general and project narrative requirements for responsiveness.

See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>) for an application checklist that describes the forms in the application package that must be completed and the PDF files that must be attached to the forms for a successful submission through Grants.gov.

<b>Compliance</b>	
	Have you included a Project Narrative?
	Have you included Appendix A: Dissemination History and Plan if you are applying to the LEARN Network Product Team role?
<b>Responsiveness</b>	
	Have you met all the Requirements for an application?
	Does your proposed research include a measure or measures of academic outcomes?
	Is your project relevant to education in the United States and does it address factors under the control of U.S. education systems?
	Have you indicated a single network role for your application?
	Does your Project Narrative include the required sections and the associated requirements for the selected network role? Did you describe the elements required for each section as listed below?

*(Table continues on the following page)*



Required Project Narrative Elements			
Product Team			
Significance	Research Plan	Personnel	Resources
<p>You <b>must describe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The product you will focus on and how it will accelerate learning relative to pre-pandemic rates of growth to address learning losses experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic</li> <li>Existing evidence of the causal impact of the product on academic outcomes</li> <li>Prior validation studies if the product includes an assessment</li> </ul>	<p>You <b>must describe</b> your plans to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt the product to focus on accelerating learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic</li> <li>Identify the needs of users as well as product-market fit of the product and adapt the product in response</li> <li>Identify the factors that lead to successful implementation and uptake of the product</li> <li>Collect data on one or more academic outcomes listed in Part II.A.1 to test whether the product accelerates students' learning as compared to estimates of pre-pandemic rates of growth.</li> <li>Conduct a cost analysis</li> </ul>	<p>You <b>must describe</b> your project team.</p>	<p>You <b>must describe</b> your resources to conduct the project.</p>
Network Scaling Lead			
Significance	Network Activities	Personnel	Resources
<p>You <b>must describe</b> your vision for the LEARN Network and your ideas for how to scale up evidence-based products in education settings, in particular products that accelerate recovery from the effects of the pandemic.</p>	<p>You <b>must describe</b> your plans to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with educators and leaders in the education marketplace to understand the barriers and challenges of scaling up evidence-based products</li> <li>Develop new resources, tools, and/or technologies to scale up evidence-based products that align to districts' needs</li> <li>Provide training and support to Product Teams around adapting and scaling up evidence-based products.</li> <li>Coordinate dissemination for the LEARN Network</li> </ul>	<p>You <b>must describe</b> your project team.</p>	<p>You <b>must describe</b> your resources to conduct the project.</p>

## Part VI: Required Codes for Item 4b of the SF 424 Cover Sheet

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Applications to the **Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Policy and Practice (ALN 84.305N) program** are submitted under a single topic and a single network role. You must enter the appropriate topic and network role code in Item 4b of the SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance form (see the IES Application Submission Guide, <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/submissionguide.pdf>, for more information about this form). For example, an application under the LEARN Network topic and the Network Scaling Lead role should have the code “NCER-LEARN Scaling” entered in the field for Item 4b.

Topic	Code
LEARN Network	NCER-LEARN

Network Role	Code
Network Scaling Lead	Scaling
Product Team	Product