

Special Education Research and Development Center Program

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): 84.324C

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Product of the National Center for Special Education Research

Letter of Intent Due:	October 12, 2023	https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit
Application Package Available:	September 21, 2023	https://www.grants.gov/
Application Deadline:	11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 11, 2024	https://www.grants.gov/
Possible Start Dates:	August 1 – September 1, 2024	
See the companion IES Application Submission Guide (https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp) for guidance on preparing and submitting applications through Grants.gov		

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Part I: Overview

A. Introduction

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) provides scientific evidence to improve education practice and policy and shares that evidence in ways that can be used by educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public. Within IES, the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE) supports research to

1. Expand knowledge and understanding of the needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities in order to improve the developmental, education, and transition outcomes of such individuals
2. Improve services provided under, and support the implementation of, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.)

In this Request for Applications (RFA), NCSE invites applications for the Special Education Research and Development Center program (ALN 84.324C). Research and Development (R&D) Centers conduct focused, scientific research on key education issues facing our nation. Through the Special Education R&D Center Program, researchers tackle complex special education problems and develop innovative solutions by engaging in research, development, evaluation, and national leadership activities aimed at improving the education system and, ultimately, student achievement. For information on previous Special Education R&D Centers, please see <https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/research/developmentCenters.asp>.

For FY 2024, NCSE is accepting applications for a R&D Center on the K-12 Special Education Teacher Workforce (Teacher Workforce Center). The overarching goal of the Teacher Workforce Center is to provide national leadership on issues affecting the special education teacher workforce. Specifically, the R&D Center will be responsible for

1. Conducting research that will lead to a better understanding of the special education teacher pipeline and the role of specific programs and policies in shaping the special education teacher workforce and subsequent student and teacher outcomes.
2. Providing national leadership and building capacity by engaging in dialogue with researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and other key stakeholders in the special education community to improve research, practice, and policy; developing recommendations and/or products to improve data collection on the special education teacher workforce and facilitate further research; disseminating research findings; and training and mentoring doctoral students and early career investigators to conduct research focused on the special education teacher workforce.
3. Conducting supplemental, just-in-time research and/or national leadership activities based on emerging needs of state education leaders and the broader field.

To encourage rigorous education research that is transparent, actionable, and focused on consequential outcomes, all applications are expected to follow 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 findings, methods, and data open; addressing inequities in learners' opportunities, access to resources, and outcomes; identifying interventions' components; documenting treatment implementation and contrast; analyzing interventions' costs; using high-quality outcome measures; facilitating generalization of study findings; and supporting scaling of promising interventions.

B. Getting Started

1. Technical Assistance for Applicants

IES program officers are available to help applicants refine their project ideas and offer advice on methodological and other substantive issues concerning education research. Program officers can work with applicants through a variety of formats up until the time of Grants.gov submission. If you submit a letter of

intent (LOI) at <https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit>, a program officer will contact you regarding your proposed project. Applicants are encouraged to visit <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/> for additional application resources that address a variety of issues related to application preparation, submission, and the peer review process.

The program officer for this competition is Katherine (Katie) Taylor (Katherine.Taylor@ed.gov).

2. Eligible Applicants

Institutions that have the ability and capacity to conduct rigorous research are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities.

Broadening participation in the education sciences:¹ IES is interested in broadening institutional participation in its research grant programs. IES encourages applications from minority-serving institutions (MSIs) that meet the eligibility criteria in 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.

3. Building Your Team

The principal investigator (PI) 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, and is the primary point of contact with IES. The PI is designated by the institution submitting the application. Other personnel having authority and responsibility for the R&D Center and use of grant funds should be designated as co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs). Even if two or more people will share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the Center intellectually and logistically as co-PIs, only one of them may be identified as the PI for the purposes of making an award.

IES strives to ensure that the researchers we fund are drawn from the entire pool of talented individuals who bring different backgrounds, perspectives, interests, and experiences to address complex education problems (<https://ies.ed.gov/aboutus/diversity.asp>).

4. Documents Needed

To submit a compliant, responsive, and timely application, applicants 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 competition. [Part II](#) describes the requirements and recommendations for the R&D Center program. [Part III](#) provides information about general formatting and the other narrative content for the application, including the 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.
2. [The IES Application Submission Guide](#) (https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp) for important information about submission procedures and IES-specific guidance and recommendations to help ensure applications are complete and received without errors on time

¹ Section 114 of the Education Science Reform Act of 2002 charges IES with undertaking “initiatives and programs to increase the participation of researchers and institutions that have been historically underutilized in Federal education research activities of the Institute, including historically Black colleges or universities or other institutions of higher education with large numbers of minority students.”

through Grants.gov.

IES strongly recommends that both the PI and authorized organization representative (AOR) read these documents.

5. 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

- Received and validated by Grants.gov **no later than** 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 11, 2024 (see the IES Application Submission Guide; https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)

(b) Compliance

- Includes the required R&D Center narrative (see RFA [Part II.C](#))
- Adheres to all formatting requirements (see RFA [Part III.B](#))
- Adheres to all page limit maximums for the R&D Center narrative and appendices. IES will remove any pages above the maximum before forwarding an application for peer review.
- Includes the required appendices (see RFA [Part III.C](#))
 - Appendix A: Data Sharing and Management Plan
 - Appendix C: Letters of Agreement

(c) Responsiveness

- Meets the general requirements (see RFA [Part II.B](#))
- Meets the R&D Center narrative requirements (see RFA [Part II.C](#))

C. Changes to the FY 2024 RFA

Major changes to the Special Education Research and Development Center Program (ALN 84.324C) competition in FY 2024 are listed below and described fully in relevant sections of the RFA.

New R&D Center topic — for FY 2024, NCSER is accepting applications for a R&D Center on the K-12 Special Education Teacher Workforce (Teacher Workforce Center).

Increased emphasis on open science principles — throughout the RFA, we highlight IES requirements that support the goals of open science and the various opportunities afforded to IES grantees to share their research findings broadly and to encourage transparency in education research.

- **Requirement for grantees to use persistent identifiers (PIDs)** — in August 2022, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) issued a Memorandum on Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08-2022-OSTP-Public-Access-Memo.pdf>). This updated open access policy will go into effect by December 31, 2025. In anticipation of these changes and consistent with National Security Presidential Memorandum 33 (NSPM-33; see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/010422-NSPM-33-Implementation-Guidance.pdf>) that establishes policies for federal funding agencies that protect national security while supporting open science, IES is requiring that all key personnel for funded projects obtain a PID such as ORCID iD (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification; <https://orcid.org/>) prior to award.
- **Updated guidance on the data sharing requirement component of the IES Policy Regarding Public Access to Research** — applicants are required to include a plan in [Appendix A](#) that describes how project data will be managed and ultimately how a final research dataset will be shared, as

required by the IES Public Access Policy <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>. We have updated our guidance on this IES requirement and made a change to the name of this plan: what was previously called the Data Management Plan is now called the Data Sharing and Management Plan to emphasize the need to anticipate sharing when collecting and curating data. When selecting a repository for data sharing, applicants are encouraged to select among public repositories that align with the characteristics described in the National Science and Technology Council document entitled “Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research” (<https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/113528>), whenever feasible.

Part II: R&D Center Purpose, Requirements, and Recommendations

A. Background and Purpose

Special education teacher shortages are a long standing and critical problem. Recent results from the IES School Pulse Panel indicate that 45% of public schools reported having one or more vacant teaching positions entering the 2022–23 school year. Special education teaching positions are among the most difficult to fill, with 86% of schools with a vacancy reporting that they are either somewhat (35%) or very difficult (51%) to fill. Shortages are driven by a decrease in the supply of teachers as well as high rates of turnover. Poor working conditions and burnout, key drivers of turnover, will only worsen as vacancies increase and are filled by underprepared teachers and students with disabilities are ultimately the ones who will suffer. Having a stable, well-qualified special education teacher workforce is a precondition for evidence-based practices and programs to be successful and improve the education outcomes of students with disabilities.

Although special education teacher shortages have been documented for decades, the field of special education needs national leadership to better confront staffing challenges and other special education teacher workforce issues, including the pre-service to in-service teacher pipeline, teacher preparation programs and policies, licensure/certification policies, and special education staffing models.

The Purpose of the R&D Center is to address the above research gaps through (a) a focused program of research; (b) national leadership and capacity-building activities (national leadership activities); and (c) supplemental activities. The overarching goals of the Teacher Workforce Center are to provide a better understanding of the current state of the special education teaching workforce in the U.S.; to improve inter- and intra-state data collection and infrastructure to facilitate ongoing research and data-based policy decisions related to the special education teacher workforce; to disseminate findings to various stakeholders; and to build the capacity of the next generation of researchers to do practice- and policy-relevant research on the special education teacher workforce.

The Center will conduct a **focused program of research**, consisting of a cohesive set of studies that draw on existing data from statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS), alone or in combination with other data sources. Applicants are required to use SLDS from at least one state but are encouraged to examine SLDS data across multiple states, if feasible and appropriate for the research questions. These data systems are intended to increase states' ability to manage and analyze education and workforce data and to inform education leaders' and policymakers' decisions about how to improve student outcomes. SLDSs are well suited to answering policy- and systems-level questions on the special education teacher workforce, and some allow for tracking teachers over time and linking teacher and student data.² Most importantly, analyses of these datasets can inform policy changes that impact the special education labor force. When possible and appropriate for the research questions, investigators are encouraged to link multiple datasets to provide a more complete picture of the special education teacher pipeline and/or include a broader set of variables; for example, applicants could consider linking data from SLDSs to data from teacher preparation programs or state and district surveys. Analyses of nationally representative data or other existing large-scale survey data may also be included to provide a more global picture of special education teacher workforce issues.

In addition to analyses of existing data, applicants may propose to collect and analyze primary data, if appropriate for the research questions. If applicable, IES encourages using a mixed methods approach that combines complementary quantitative and qualitative methods. Primary data collection and analyses are not required. If they are included, IES expects that most of the time and budget for the focused program of research will be spent on the analysis of existing data.

² For more information on the types of K–12 data included in SLDS and the capacity for linking data in the SLDS to other data, see <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022051.pdf>.

Examples of research questions to address are identified below.³ You may consider these in developing your application, but you should not feel limited by them. You are encouraged to think broadly about the issues facing the K-12 special education teacher workforce. Peer reviewers may consider these IES-identified research questions in their evaluation of the significance of the proposed R&D Center, but please note that IES also welcomes applications that address other research needs and questions.

- What is the extent of special education teacher vacancies and where are they felt most profoundly? How do they vary based on geography, types of districts or schools, and types of instructional settings (such as self-contained vs. inclusive classrooms)?
- What are the trajectories of teacher candidates and teachers with special education certification/licensure and how do they vary based on teacher characteristics (such as race/ethnicity)?
- Where along the pipeline do we lose special education teachers and what are the characteristics of teachers most at risk for problems with recruitment and retention and the classroom settings and schools they work in?
- How have policies (such as pay bonuses, dual licensure/certification, and allowance of grow-your-own teacher programs) impacted the supply and retention of special education teachers and outcomes for students?
- To what extent do states depend on alternative preparation programs (such as online programs) to attract and train special education teachers, what are the features of these programs, and what are outcomes for teachers (such as certification/licensure, workforce entry, retention, and instructional quality) and students?
- What are common types of special education staffing and service delivery models and how do they relate to teacher and student outcomes? What is the distribution of special education teachers and other professionals within and across different types of staffing and service delivery models?

The Center will also conduct **national leadership activities** to inform improvements to data collection around special education teacher workforce issues, to disseminate research findings to various audiences, and to build the field's capacity to conduct research on the special education teacher workforce. These national leadership activities will build from and feed into the focused program of research and will help address the needs of a wide range of stakeholders.

To facilitate ongoing research and data-based policy decisions related to the special education teacher workforce, the Center will engage in activities that could contribute to improved inter- and intra-state data collection and infrastructure. Example activities may include developing variables and metrics that could be added or modified in existing SLDSs or other surveys to promote a common language specific to the special education teacher workforce, to enable better cross-district and cross-state comparisons, and to facilitate better tracking of special education teacher trajectories. Activities could also include developing tools or websites that help states track and predict special education teacher vacancies.

To promote greater awareness and access to research-based information about the K-12 special education teacher workforce, the Center will disseminate information about its activities and research findings to various audiences, including policymakers, state and local education leaders, teacher educators, teachers, and researchers. Activities should include disseminating research findings through a website designed specifically for the Center, policy briefs, infographics, videos, webinars, social media posts, presentations at professional conferences, working papers, and journal publications. Activities may also include convenings with state- and

³ Example research questions were informed in part by an IES technical working group meeting which convened a group of experts to discuss ways research can be used to better prepare, support, and retain an effective K-12 special education teacher workforce. A summary of the meeting is available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/whatsnew/techworkinggroup/pdf/SpecialEducationTWGSummary.pdf>.

district-level policymakers, education leaders, professional organizations, and researchers to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas as well as consultation with technical assistance centers funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and IES Regional Education Laboratories (RELs) to support technical assistance based on the Center's findings.

To improve the research capacity of the field, the Center will conduct activities to support the training and development of doctoral students and/or early career investigators interested in conducting research focused on the K-12 special education teacher workforce. This may include opportunities to work on the funded studies, expand existing studies to address new questions, present findings to relevant practitioner and policymaker stakeholders, replicate existing findings from other state contexts, and/or design new studies to address research questions that are not being addressed adequately elsewhere. It could also include mentoring and networking opportunities, webinars, and training workshops. IES encourages applicants to ensure that research capacity-building activities include students and/or researchers from diverse backgrounds, including individuals from underrepresented communities, such as researchers with disabilities.

Finally, the Center will conduct **supplemental activities**, which may include just-in-time research/data analysis in response to questions that are not being addressed adequately elsewhere or additional national leadership activities. The Center will work cooperatively with IES to select and design these activities in response to policy and practice needs. For this reason, IES does not expect a detailed plan for these supplemental activities in the application but does expect a budget of \$250,000 set aside for them.

B. General Requirements

1. Data

Proposed research **must** use statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) from at least one state. Applicants are encouraged to use SLDSs from more than one state, if feasible and appropriate for the research questions.

In addition to SLDS data, applicants may propose to analyze other existing data sources, such as data from nationally representative surveys, and/or to collect and analyze primary data.

2. K-12 Special Education Teachers

Proposed research **must** focus on and include outcomes for K-12 special education teachers. Outcomes may include, but are not limited to, certification/licensure, workforce entry, knowledge, skills, instructional practices, job satisfaction, well-being, and retention/attrition.

You may also include other special education professionals, including paraprofessionals and related service providers.

3. Education Outcomes for Students with or At Risk for Disabilities

At least one study in the focused program of research **must** examine special education teacher workforce issues in relation to one or more academic outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities. Outcomes can reflect learning and achievement in academic content areas (such as literacy and STEM) as well as successful progression through education systems as indicated by attendance, course and grade completion, and graduation.

Applicants are encouraged to also include outcomes on social and behavioral competencies, defined as social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are important to learners' success in school and beyond.

Outcomes may be at the individual student level or aggregated at the school or district level, as appropriate for the proposed research questions.

Note: Not all studies within the focused program of research must include student outcomes; for instance, some studies may be descriptive and/or focused solely on outcomes for special education teachers.

4. Education Settings

Proposed research **must** be relevant to education in the United States and **must** address factors under the control of U.S. education systems.

5. Award Limits

Applications **must** conform to the following limits on award duration and cost.

- The maximum duration of a Teacher Workforce Center is **5 years**.
- The maximum cost for a Teacher Workforce Center award is **\$5,000,000** (total cost = direct costs + indirect costs).
 - No more than 70 percent of the total budget (direct costs + indirect costs) may be allocated to the focused program of research.
 - \$250,000 must be reserved for supplementary studies to be designed in collaboration with IES.

C. R&D Center Narrative Requirements

The R&D Center narrative **must** adhere to the formatting guidelines (see [Part III.B](#)) and be **no more than 35 pages**. If the narrative exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 35th page of the narrative. The narrative **must** include five sections: Significance, Research Plan, National Leadership Activities, Personnel, and Management and Institutional Resources.

1. Significance of the Focused Program of Research

The purpose of this section is to describe and justify the importance of the research that the Teacher Workforce Center will conduct.

You **must describe** the

- Special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies that will be studied
- Research questions the Center will address
- Dataset(s) to be used and variables that will be examined

2. Research Plan for the Focused Program of Research

The purpose of this section is to describe the design and methods for each study in the focused program of research and demonstrate how they will allow you to address your research questions.

You **must describe** the

- Characteristics of the setting(s) and sample(s)
- Research design, methods, and data analysis plans for each study proposed

3. National Leadership Activities

The purpose of this section is to describe and justify the importance of the national leadership activities that the Teacher Workforce Center's will conduct.

You **must describe** how you will

- Contribute to improved special education teacher workforce data collection and infrastructure
- Disseminate what the Center is learning to various stakeholders
- Build the field's capacity to conduct research on the K-12 special education teacher workforce

4. Personnel

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

You **must describe** the

- Project team

5. Management and Institutional Resources

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that you have the organizational structure, institutional capacity, and access to the resources needed to carry out and effectively manage the project.

You **must describe** the

- Organizational structure of the Center
- Plans and procedures for the overall management of the Center
- Resources to conduct the work of the Center

D. Recommendations for a Strong Application

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

1. Significance of the Focused Program of Research

Describe and justify the special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies that you propose to study and the relationships you expect them to have with teacher and student outcomes.

Present a conceptual framework and/or logic model that shows the expected relationships between the focal special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies and teacher and student outcomes and describe any empirical support for this framework.

Describe the research questions that will be addressed through the program of research and how they will contribute to a better understanding of the special education teacher pipeline and the role of specific programs and policies in shaping the special education teacher workforce and subsequent teacher student and teacher outcomes.

Describe and justify the dataset(s) you will use and why it is best suited to examining the special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies that you propose to study. Discuss the characteristics of the state(s) represented in the data and the extent to which the findings from the program of research will generalize to other states and contribute to a larger body of knowledge on the K-12 special education teacher workforce.

If you propose to collect and analyze primary data, justify why it is needed and how it will be used to supplement the analyses of existing data to address the proposed research questions.

Describe how the needs of key stakeholders are reflected in the conceptualization and design of the focused program of research and how findings from the program of research could be used to inform policy and practice.

2. Research Plan for the Focused Program of Research

Describe the research studies you will carry out and the specific research question(s) each study will address.

Discuss the setting(s) where the secondary data were collected and (if applicable) where the proposed primary data will be collected and discuss how it will allow you to draw conclusions about the settings your

research is intended to inform.

Discuss the characteristics of the sample(s) and the population(s) it represents and provide a rationale for the sample(s) proposed to address your research questions.

Describe the research design and methods and how they will allow you to address your research questions. Depending on your research questions, a variety of designs may be appropriate, including correlational, descriptive cross-sectional, longitudinal, and causal designs.

For studies involving secondary data analysis, describe the following:

- The key variables you will examine and whether they are available in the data or will be derived from the data.
- The process for creating variables (if applicable) and the expected amount of work involved.
- The process for linking datasets if multiple datasets will be used.

For studies involving primary data collection and analysis (if applicable), describe the following:

- The procedures for sample recruitment.
- The procedures for collecting data.
- The measures you will use and their validity and reliability for the intended purpose and population. If you need to develop a measure, describe what you will develop, why it is necessary, how it will be developed, and the process for checking its reliability and validity.

Describe your data analysis plan, including the following:

- How you will address exclusion from any dataset and missing data.
- For quantitative data, the statistical models to be used, including how they address the multilevel nature of education data and how well they control for selection bias, if necessary.
- For qualitative data, information on the analytical and interpretive processes.
- For mixed methods studies, how qualitative and quantitative data will be integrated.

Provide a detailed timeline for each study. Timeline tables or figures may be placed in either the R&D Center narrative or [Appendix B](#).

3. National Leadership Activities

Discuss needs and challenges pertaining to data, access to research-based information, and research capacity faced by various stakeholders—including policymakers, state and local education leaders, teacher educators, teachers, and/or researchers—and how the Center’s national leadership activities would address these needs and challenges.

Describe the activities the Center will engage in to identify the kinds of data collection that would be needed within SLDSs to more adequately understand the dynamics of the special education teaching workforce as well as any products that will be developed to communicate these recommendations to state education leaders.

Describe how you will disseminate information about the Center’s activities and research findings to various audiences through

- A Center website
- Policy briefs
- Discussions of findings with state and local education leaders
- Presentations at research conferences and meetings of professional associations of education leaders and teachers
- Publications in peer-reviewed journals
- Social media and other electronic forms of communication (such as webinars, podcasts, and videos)
- Discussions of findings with OSEP-funded technical assistance centers and IES RELs

Discuss your plans for convenings with various stakeholders—including policymakers, state and local education leaders (including those within and outside of the state(s) in which you are working), professional organizations, and researchers—to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas; determine information, training, data, and dissemination needs; and discuss ways to address those needs through the focused program of research, national leadership activities, and supplemental activities.

Discuss any opportunities you will provide for doctoral students, early career researchers, and other researchers, particularly those from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented communities, to contribute to the Center's activities and gain meaningful research experience. These may take a variety of forms, such as opportunities to work on research carried out by the Center, expand on existing studies, and/or design new studies to address new research questions; mentorship and networking opportunities; and/or online or in-person trainings.

Discuss how the national leadership activities and research studies will inform one another.

Provide a timeline that shows when major national leadership activities will take place and how they will inform one another and build upon or feed into the Center's research activities. Timeline tables or figures may be placed in either the R&D Center narrative or [Appendix B](#).

4. Personnel

IES strongly encourages applicants to propose partnerships among an interdisciplinary, multi-state team of researchers, teacher educators, state and local education leaders, and professional organizations to help guide the program of research and the national leadership activities. Discuss any existing partnerships with these stakeholders as well as plans to form additional partnerships to carry out the proposed work.

In its research grant programs, IES is strongly committed to broadening participation, including personnel from underrepresented communities and diverse institutions.

Identify and describe the following for all key personnel, including the principal investigator, co-principal investigators, and co-investigators:

- Qualifications to carry out the proposed work
- Roles and responsibilities within the project
- Amount of time to be devoted to the project
- Experience that is relevant to national leadership activities, including developing products or guidance for policymakers or state or local education leaders, disseminating research, and training and mentoring doctoral students and early career researchers
- Experience and capacity to manage a project of this size and type

Describe how the background and experience of the project team will support the successful conduct of the proposed work, including information on the project team's experience analyzing the proposed existing dataset(s) and working with state and local education leaders and policymakers on issues affecting the K-12 special education teacher workforce.

Discuss who will manage the communications across the Center and with key stakeholders, including policymakers, state and local education leaders, teacher educators, teachers, researchers, and professional organizations. Strong applications will have a dedicated communications manager or communications team.

5. Management and Institutional Resources

Describe your plans and procedures for the overall management of the Teacher Workforce Center and its various activities.

Identify the management structure and procedures that you will use to keep the project on track and ensure that the Center is responsive to the concerns and needs of IES while also carrying out the proposed research

and national leadership activities.

Include an organizational chart that shows how the major functions or activities of the Center will be organized.

Describe the capacity and resources to conduct the proposed project at both the primary applicant institution and any subaward institutions, including the following:

- Your institution's capacity to manage a grant of this size.
- Your immediate access to resources needed to conduct the proposed research and national leadership activities.
- Your plan for acquiring any resources that are not currently accessible, will require significant expenditures, and are necessary for the successful completion of the proposed research and national leadership activities.
- Your access to specific offices and organizations that will support your plan to disseminate results.
- Your access to specific offices or organizations that will support dataset documentation and execution of the required Data Sharing and Management Plan (DSMP) in [Appendix A](#).
- Your access to the SLDS data (and any other data) you propose to use in the focused program of research.
 - In [Appendix C](#), include a letter from the state agency or agencies stating that they will provide access to the SLDS data for use in the proposed research and in time to meet the proposed schedule. If you propose to include existing data from other sources, include letters of agreement from the entities responsible from that data as well.

Part III: Preparing Your Application

A. Overview

The application contents—individual forms and their PDF attachments—represent the body of an application to IES. Read the IES Application Submission Guide (https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp) to learn how to prepare a complete application that is submitted on time through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

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 application. 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 Limits

All applications must adhere to the page limit specifications for (1) the R&D Center narrative as described in [Part II](#) and for (2) the appendices as described in [Part III.C](#).

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Spacing

Text must be single spaced.

5. Type Size (Font Size)

Type must conform to the following three requirements:

- The height of the letters must not be smaller than a 12-point type size.
- 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.

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.

6. Citations

Use the parenthetical author-date style for citations (see for example the American Psychological Association, 2009) rather than numeric citations that correspond to the reference list.

7. 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 R&D Center narrative – Significance, Research Plan, National Leadership Activities, Personnel, and Management and Institutional Resources (see [Part II](#)) – is followed by several appendices. Two appendices (Appendix A and Appendix C) are required, and one (Appendix B) is optional. When you submit your application through Grants.gov, you will create a single PDF file that contains the R&D Center narrative and all required and optional appendices and include it as an attachment in the application package. Include appendices in alphabetical order and simply skip any optional appendix if you choose not to include it. See the IES Application Submission Guide (https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp) 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 R&D Center 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: Data Sharing and Management Plan (Required)

You **must** include Appendix A after the R&D Center narrative. Appendix A **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than five pages**. If Appendix A exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the fifth page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

When the PI and the AOR sign the cover page of the grant application, they will be assuring compliance with the IES Policy Regarding Public Access to Research (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>) as well as other policies and regulations governing research awards. This entails uploading full text of accepted or published manuscripts to ERIC (Education Resources Information Center; <https://eric.ed.gov/>) that have been supported (in whole or in part) with direct funding from IES, as well as the sharing of data.

Once the DSMP is approved by IES, the PI and the institution are required to carry it out and to report progress and problems through the regular reporting channels. Compliance with IES data sharing requirements is expected even if the final dataset may not be completed and prepared for data sharing until after the grant has been completed. In cases where the PI/grantee is non-compliant with the requirements of the data sharing policy or DSMP, subsequent awards to individuals or institutions may be affected.

DSMPs are expected to differ depending on the nature of the studies conducted by the R&D Center and the data used and collected. By addressing the items identified below, your DSMP describes how you will meet the requirements of the IES policy for data sharing and adopt best practices for adherence to open science principles.

The DSMP should include the following:

- The pre-registration repository where you will pre-register your study within the first year of the project, following the Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER; <https://ies.ed.gov/seer/preregistration.asp>).

- The data repository where you plan to share your data, and an indication of the selected repository's adherence with the National Science and Technology Council document entitled "Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research" (<https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/113528>).
- The type of data to be shared.
- The approach you will take to curating, cleaning, and preparing data for sharing, taking into consideration guidance from IES's Sharing Study Data: A Guide for Education Researchers (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022004/>).
- The format of the final dataset.
- Dataset documentation to be provided, including any decisions made about the data that would be important in replicating the results.
- Intentions to share analysis code to support reproducibility, including format and location.
- Procedures for managing and maintaining the confidentiality of personally identifiable information.
- Roles and responsibilities of project or institutional staff in the management and retention of research data, including a discussion of any changes to the roles and responsibilities that will occur should the PI and/or Co-PI leave the project or their institution.
- Expected schedule for data sharing, including how long the data will remain accessible (no later than publication of findings in a peer-reviewed publication and available for at least 10 years) and acknowledgement that the timeframe of data accessibility will be reviewed at the annual progress reviews and revised as necessary.
- Whether or not users will need to sign a data use agreement and, if so, what conditions they must meet.
- Any circumstances that prevent all or some of the data from being shared. This includes data that may fall under multiple statutes and, hence, must meet the confidentiality requirements for each applicable statute including data covered by Common Rule for Protection of Human Subjects, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- Approaches to disseminating the availability and location of data to support discoverability for reuse purposes.

The costs associated with implementing the DSMP can be covered by the grant and should be included in the budget and explained in the budget narrative. IES program officers will be responsible for reviewing the completeness of the proposed DSMP. If your application is being considered for funding based on the scores received during the scientific peer review process but your DSMP is determined incomplete, you will be required to provide additional detail regarding your DSMP.

This is the only material that may be included in Appendix A; all other material 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 15th 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 program of research and national leadership activities, the variables in the SLDS(s) that you will be using in your research, or a diagram of the management structure of your project.

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: Letters of Agreement (Required)

You **must** include Appendix C. There is **no recommended page length** for Appendix C. In Appendix C you **must** provide copies of letters of agreement from the state agency or agencies stating that they will provide access to the SLDS data for use in the proposed research and in time to meet the proposed schedule. If you

propose to analyze existing data from other sources, you should also include letters of agreement from the entities responsible for that data as well. You may also use Appendix C to provide letters of agreement from individuals who will serve as consultants or other partners.

Letters of agreement should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the time commitment and timing of participation, as well as the required space and personnel resources that the organization or individual is prepared to contribute to the project. In addition, letters should include the ways that the organization or individual will be expected to coordinate with the project team if the application is funded.

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/submission_guide.asp) for guidance regarding the size of file attachments.

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

D. Other Narrative Content

In addition to the R&D Center Narrative (see [Part II](#)) and required and optional appendices (see above), you will also prepare a project 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/submission_guide.asp) 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 Abstract

You **must** submit the project abstract as a separate PDF attachment in the application package. If your application is recommended for funding, IES will use this abstract as the basis for the online abstract that we post when new awards are announced. We recommend that the abstract be two pages long and include the following information:

- **Title:** Distinct, descriptive title of the project
- **Purpose:** A brief description of the purpose of the Center and its significance
- **Focused Program of Research:** An overview of the studies and research activities, such as setting(s) and sample(s) and research design, methods, and data analysis plan
- **National Leadership Activities:** An overview of the various leadership, capacity-building, and dissemination activities
- **Outcomes/Products:** A brief description of the expected products of the project, including the information that will be learned and disseminated
- **R&D Center Partners:** A description of the institutions involved in conducting the research and carrying out the national leadership activities as well as any partner organizations that will provide data or participate in the research
- **Related IES Projects:** A list of the IES-issued award numbers and corresponding online abstract links (URLs) to completed or ongoing IES-funded projects that are related to the proposed project

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 R&D Center 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. There is **no recommended 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 that 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, and this five-page limit includes current and pending support information. 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.

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 R&D Center project as one of the pending grants in this list.

Include persistent identifiers (PID) such as ORCID iDs (Open Researcher and Contributor; <https://orcid.org/>) in the biosketches for all key personnel. If you or any key member of your project team does not yet have a PID, IES encourages you to establish one as soon as possible, given the requirement that all key personnel are required to have a PID in place before an award will be made.

Part IV: Competition Regulations and Review Criteria

A. Funding Mechanisms and Restrictions

1. Mechanism of Support

IES intends to award a cooperative agreement pursuant to this Request for Applications. Through the terms of the cooperative agreement, the grantee will work with IES to plan and implement their activities.

2. Funding Available

Although IES intends to support the R&D Center 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. IES intends to fund no more than one R&D Center through this competition. However, should funding be available, we may consider making additional awards to high-quality applications that remain unfunded after one award is made.

The size of the award depends on the scope of the project. Please attend to the duration and budget maximums in [Part II](#).

3. Special Considerations for Budget Expenses

(a) Indirect Cost Rate

Applicants are expected to apply their institution's federally negotiated indirect cost rate when developing a budget for the proposed R&D Center.

If your institution does not have an indirect cost rate and you receive a grant from IES, the Indirect Cost Group (ICG) in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/faq.html>) can help with obtaining an indirect cost rate once the grant is awarded. Please note that the ICG is not available for assistance during the application preparation process. 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 at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E/subject-group-ECFRd93f2a98b1f6455/section-200.414> 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).

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 new OMB Uniform 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

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, 85, 86 (part 86 applies only to institutions of higher education), 97, 98, and 99 and 2 CFR 3485. 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 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

You will need to provide evidence that you have access to the proposed SLDS(s) and (if applicable) other data needed for the project prior to receiving funding. You must include letters of agreement in [Appendix C](#) from those who have responsibility for or access to the data you intend to use. Even with such letters, **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.

(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. IES also determines the PIs compliance with the IES Policy Regarding Public Access to Research if they were the PI on previous IES grants awarded in 2012 or later (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>).

(d) Persistent Identifiers (PIDs) for Key Personnel

All key personnel are required to have a persistent identifier (PID), such as ORCID iD (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification; <https://orcid.org/>) in place before an award will be made.

2. Post Award

(a) Compliance with IES Policy on Public Access to Data and Results

(1) Access to research results: Grantee submissions to ERIC

IES requires all grantees to submit the electronic version of peer-reviewed 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 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/>), and 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).

(2) Access to data

You must include a Data Sharing and Management Plan (DSMP) in [Appendix A](#). The scientific peer review process will not include the DSMP in the scoring of the scientific merit of the application. Instead, IES program officers will be responsible for reviewing the completeness of the proposed DSMP. The costs of the DSMP can be covered by the grant and should be included in the budget and explained in the budget narrative.

(b) Pre-Register Studies

Grantees must register their studies on a suitable platform within the first year of receiving a new award. There are several options for preregistration including but not limited to the Registry of Efficacy and Effectiveness Studies (REES; <https://sreereg.icpsr.umich.edu/sreereg/>), the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://osf.io/>), The American Economic Association's Registry for Randomized Controlled Trials (AEA RCT Registry; <https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/>), Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP; <https://egap.org/registry/>), Uri Simonsohn's *AsPredicted* (<https://aspredicted.org/>), and trial registries in the WHO Registry Network (<https://www.who.int/ictrp/network/en/>).

(c) 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.

(d) Attendance at the Annual IES Principal Investigators Meeting

The 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.

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 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 panel and to secure a sufficient number of reviewers to handle

the anticipated number of applications.

Elements for the LOI:

- Descriptive title
- Brief description of the proposed R&D Center
- Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number, and email of the PI and any co-PIs
- Name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators and contractors
- Duration of the proposed R&D Center (attend to the duration maximum)
- Estimated total budget request (attend to the budget maximum)

2. Multiple Submissions

You may submit applications to more than one of the FY 2024 IES grant programs. However, you may submit a given application only once for the FY 2024 grant competitions, meaning you may not submit the same application or similar applications to multiple grant programs. 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 January 11, 2024 through the internet using the software provided on Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>). You must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in the IES Application Submission Guide (https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp) and on Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>).

After applications are fully uploaded and validated at Grants.gov, the U.S. Department of Education receives the applications for processing and transfer 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 one to two 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/submission_guide.asp) 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) by a panel of experts who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and Request for Applications (<https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/reviewers.asp>).

Each compliant and responsive application is assigned to an IES review panel. 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 they believe 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

IES expects reviewers for all applications to assess the following aspects of an application. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is described in [Part II](#).

(a) Significance of the Focused Program of Research

Does the proposed research address significant special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies and have the potential to inform policy and practice? Is the proposed dataset(s) sufficiently described and appropriate for examining the identified special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies? Does the applicant thoughtfully address the recommendations described in the Significance section?

(b) Research Plan for the Focused Program of Research

Do the setting(s) and sample(s) and research design, methods, and data analysis plan for each study align with the research questions posed in the Significance section and indicate that the R&D Center will be able to answer those questions with sufficient rigor? Does the applicant thoughtfully address the recommendations described in the Research Plan section?

(c) National Leadership Activities

Will the proposed national leadership activities contribute to improved special education teacher workforce data collection and infrastructure, promote awareness of the R&D Center's activities and findings, and build the field's capacity to conduct research on the K-12 special education teacher workforce? Does the applicant thoughtfully address the recommendations described in the National Leadership section?

(d) Personnel

Does the project team possess the appropriate skills and qualifications to carry out the proposed research and national leadership activities? Do the principal investigator and other key personnel possess the appropriate training and experience for their roles and responsibilities, and will they commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed research and national leadership activities? Does the applicant thoughtfully address the recommendations described in the Personnel section?

(e) Management and Institutional Resources

Do the plans and procedures for the overall management of the R&D Center indicate that the applicant can complete the proposed research and national leadership activities efficiently and successfully? Is there sufficient organizational infrastructure, institutional capacity, and access to resources across the primary applicant institution and any subaward institutions to carry out the proposed activities? Does the applicant thoughtfully address the recommendations described in the Management and Institutional Resources section?

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 RFA
- Ability to carry out the proposed research within the maximum award and duration requirements
- Availability of funds

Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist

Only compliant and responsive applications will be peer reviewed. Use this checklist to better ensure you have included all required components for compliance and that you have addressed all general and R&D Center narrative requirements for responsiveness. See the IES Application Submission Guide (https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp) 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.

Compliance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you included an R&D Center narrative?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the R&D Center narrative and other narrative content adhere to all formatting requirements?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the R&D Center narrative and other narrative content adhere to all page maximums?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you included Appendix A: Data Sharing and Management Plan?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you included Appendix C: Letters of Agreement?
General Requirements for Responsiveness	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the research use statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) from at least one state?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the research focus on and include outcomes for K-12 special education teachers?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does at least one study include an academic outcome for students with or at risk for disabilities?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the research relevant to education in the U.S. and does it address factors under the control of U.S. education systems? settings?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the application conform to the duration and cost limits?
Required R&D Center Narrative Elements for Responsiveness	
Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education teacher workforce issues, problems, programs, and/or policies that will be studied • Research questions that will be addressed • Dataset(s) to be used and variables that will be examined
Research Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of the setting(s) and sample(s) • Research design, methods, and data analysis plan for each study proposed
National Leadership Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to contribute to improved special education teacher workforce data collection and infrastructure • Dissemination plan of what the center is learning to various stakeholders • Plan to build capacity to conduct research on the special education teacher workforce
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team
Management and Institutional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational structure of the center • Plans and procedures for the overall management of the Center • Resources to conduct the work of the center