

How to Apply to IES Like a Pro: Tips on Navigating the Application Process With a Focus on 84.305B and 84.305D

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Program Officers

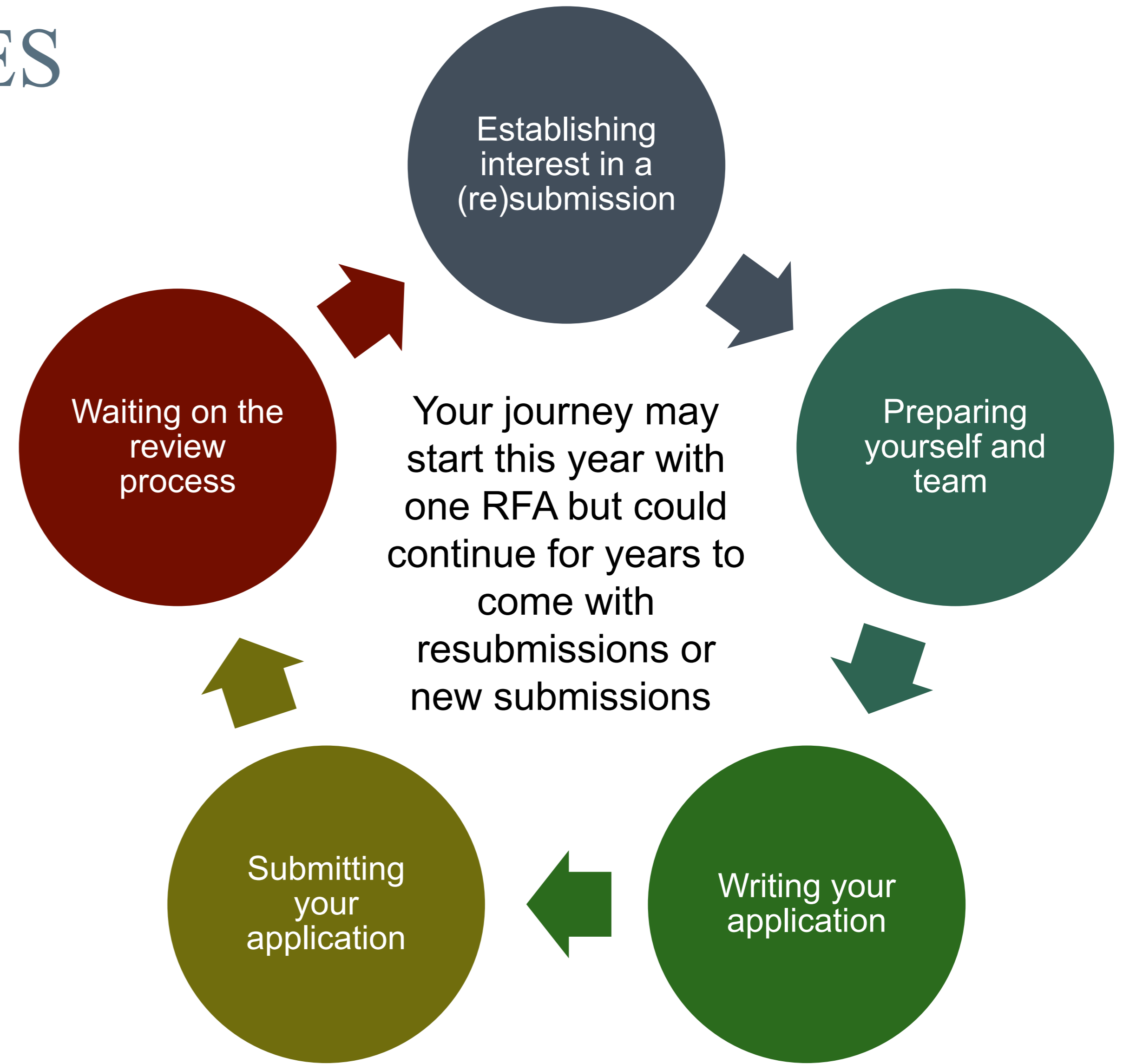
National Center for Education Research

Mapping Your Journey With IES

You have found a RFA or topic you're interested in but now what?

How do you connect with IES?
How can you apply like pro?
What happens after you apply?
What if you need to reapply?

You have questions.
We have answers!



Start by contacting an IES program officer (and/or submitting a letter of intent).

If You Remember Only One Thing

Contact the IES program officer associated with the RFA or topic you're interested in. We are here to help you!

For this fall's NCER RFAs and topics:

Charles Laurin (Charles.Laurin@ed.gov) – Statistical and Research Methodology in Education (84.305D)

Jennifer Schellinger (Jennifer.Schellinger@ed.gov) – Early Career Development and Mentoring Program for Education Research (84.305B)

Katina Stapleton (Katina.Stapleton@ed.gov) – Early Career Development and Mentoring Program for Faculty at Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) (84.305B)

Lara Faust (Lara.Faust@ed.gov) – Methods Training for Education Research (84.305B)

Establishing Contact With IES

There are two primary ways to initiate contact with IES, and we encourage both:

1. Contact IES program staff associated with the competition.
2. Submit a letter of intent.

Letters of intent are not required, but we request you submit them because

- IES uses them for internal planning.
- IES program staff use them to identify applicants, ensure they find the right contact person/people, and track interests.

A letter of intent does not require extensive citations or thorough documentation. They should be short (~1 page) and summarize your interests and the project design and goals.

Meanwhile...you should also be gathering and digesting all the materials you and your team will need to prepare and submit your application.

Preparing Yourself and Your Team: Finding Documents

The request for applications (RFA) – <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/24rfas.asp>

- Download a copy, noting any “*”, which denote version updates. This document will help you prepare the various sections of your application.

The IES Application Submission Guide – https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp

- This includes information on the technical steps you and your institution will need to take to submit your application in Grants.gov.

You may also want to explore abstracts from previously awarded grants:

<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/>

Pro Tips for Using Abstracts

- ✓ If there’s a project you’re curious about, consider emailing the PI or an IES program officer to learn more about the project.
- ✓ If you can’t find a project similar to yours, that doesn’t mean that IES couldn’t or wouldn’t fund the work. It means only that IES hasn’t yet.

Preparing Yourself and Your Team: Ensuring Access to Systems

Your institution will need to help with the final submission and will need to ensure that there is an organizational account in Grants.gov.

Talk to your institution now about

- Grants.gov registration
- The System for Award Management (SAM) registration
- Your institution's UEI (Unique Entity Identifier)
- The designated E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC)

Anyone who wants to apply **under 84.305B** should flag the **8% cap on indirect costs**. Some institutions may have restrictions on such caps.

Where to Start on Grants.gov

Navigate to the For Applicants page on Grants.gov
(<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>)

From here, there are two pages that may be especially important:

1. Get Registered

(<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>)

2. Apply for Grants

(<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>)

Most of the pre-submission work needs to be done by your institution. Your job is to support them and give them advanced notice that you intend to apply.



Preparing Yourself and Your Team: Time Management

IES **will not** send late applications forward to review.
Being on time is essential.

- Check the deadlines that are listed on the RFA and online: <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/futureComp.asp>
- Check with your institution now regarding internal deadlines.
- Plan on uploading all documents days prior to the deadline in case there are glitches.
- If you need letters of support, give people plenty of time to write and send them.

Applications for 305D
and 305B
are due by
11:59:59 pm
Washington DC time
on
January 11, 2024

Now that you have all the raw materials, and your institution and team are aware of the funding opportunity, it's time to start writing!

Writing Your Application: Using the Request for Applications (RFA)

Although the number and naming of sections may vary slightly across RFAs, most have six major sections, each of which is relevant to you.

We encourage you to review each part.

Part I: Overview and General Requirements

- Describes purpose, general requirements and eligibility, and changes
- Helps you determine your interest and possible fit and how to get assistance

Part II: [name of section varies]

- Describes the different topics or strands of the competition and each one's goals, requirements, and recommendations
- Helps you identify tips for writing a strong proposal

Part III: Preparing Your Application

- Describes formatting requirements and recommendations, required and optional appendices, and other narrative content necessary
- Helps you plan all the crucial supporting documents for your full proposal

Part IV: Competition Regulations and Review Criteria

- Describes the IES competition process, federal requirements and regulations, and the review process
- Helps you understand the “bigger” picture and the overarching timeline

Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist

- Includes a quick checklist to help you make sure you have all the pieces your application needs to be compliant and responsive and sent forward to peer review

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

- Provides the necessary short-hand for filling in your application correctly

Using the RFA: Understanding the Requirements and Recommendations

The RFA includes general requirements as well as topic-specific requirements (in Part II) under **Requirements**.

- Denoted by the word *must*
- If your application does not include a required element, it will not be reviewed.

The RFA includes **recommendations** that are intended to improve the quality of your application.

- See the “**Recommendations for a Strong Application**” section.
- IES strongly encourages you to address the recommendations to the extent possible.
- Peer reviewers will use these recommendations in their evaluation of your application.

Don't forget:
IES program
officers are
here to help

Using the RFA: Checking All the Boxes

IES sends only compliant and responsive applications forward for scientific peer review. If you forget something, it could mean your application will not be reviewed.

Pro Tips for Ensuring You Have Everything You Need –

- ✓ Review the checklist at the end of the RFA to give you a quick overview of the different required elements (**Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist**).
- ✓ Don't forget the appendices – use them to help reviewers visualize content in your application narrative AND to make sure you include the required elements.

Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist

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 training program 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			
	Have you included a training program narrative?		
	Do the training program narrative and other narrative content adhere to all formatting requirements (Part IV.B)?		
	Do the training program narrative and other narrative content adhere to all page maximums as described in the RFA? IES will remove any pages above the maximum before forwarding an application for scientific peer review.		
	Have you included the following required Appendices? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix A: Dissemination Plan • Appendix B: Response to Reviewers if you are resubmitting an application • Appendix C: Summary of Research and Training Projects • Appendix D: Letters of Agreement from Training Partners 		
Responsiveness			
	Have you identified a single Training Program for your application?		
	Have you meet the general requirements for your chosen topic?		
	Does your training program narrative include the required sections? Did you describe the elements required for each section as listed below?		
Required Training Program Narrative Elements			
	Early Career Program	Early Career MSI Program	Methods Training Program
Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for further career development • Overview of the proposed research project and research questions • Research topic(s) • Project type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the MSI requirement • Need for further career development • Overview of the proposed research project and research questions • Research topic(s) • Project type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The specific methodologies that will be the focus of our training program and the intended participants
Research Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design, sample, key outcome measures, and data analysis procedures • Measures of academic outcomes of learners or measures of how statistical and/or research method works as intended and can be used by education researchers • Plan for developing a longer-term research agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design, sample, key outcome measures, and data analysis procedures • Measures of academic outcomes of learners or measures of how statistical and/or research method works as intended and can be used by education researchers • Plan for developing a longer-term research agenda 	N/A

Writing Your Application: Engage Your Readers

Always think of the peer reviewers' experience.

Try to create an easy-to-follow, engaging story.

You will have interdisciplinary reviewers, so be careful about over-reliance on jargon and acronyms.

Pro Tips to Keep in Mind

- ✓ Use clear headings and/or numbering to help people navigate the document.
- ✓ Present a clear story about the issue your research or your training aims to resolve and why you and your team are best positioned to address the issue you identified.
- ✓ For Early Career Program applicants, show how you could continue to grow as a researcher if provided additional support for training and mentoring.
- ✓ Use your space wisely and consider using the appendices.
- ✓ Avoid overuse of formatting such as underlying, **bolding**, *italics*, font changes, **color**, or combinations to convey meaning.
- ✓ Because reviewers may use screen readers or other assistive technologies, consider opting for simple formatting (e.g., left-justification, consistent font).

Writing Tips for Resubmissions

- Identify your application as a resubmission.
 - If you previously submitted this or a similar application to the same topic, it will be considered a resubmission.
 - If you have submitted a similar application to a different topic or RFA, it will be considered a resubmission.
 - If you have any questions about whether your application would be considered a resubmission, contact an IES program officer for feedback.
- Contact an IES program officer for feedback about your resubmission
 - Discuss reviewer comments
 - Discuss your plan to respond to reviewer comments
 - Share draft application materials with the program officer for feedback on how you addressed reviewer comments
- Respond to reviewer's comments in Appendix B (required)
 - Should describe how the revised application is responsive to prior reviewer comments
 - Should be 3 pages or less

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While you're working on your narrative, you also need to be working in the application system itself...

Writing Your Application: Using Your Team Wisely

Most projects require multiple individuals with varying areas of expertise. Sometimes, these team members assist with writing or developing the application.

- Make sure that every component of your work has at least one person whose expertise in that component is clearly stated in the Personnel section.
- It is common for applied research applications to have different people are helping to write sections.
- Team meetings to discuss the overarching theoretical model, analyses, training/mentoring plans, etc. will help create a consistent flow.
- Early Career Program applicants should have their mentor(s) read drafts.

Pro Tip for Collaboration

- ✓ If you delegate writing or editing responsibilities, be sure to have enough time to consolidate and ensure the narrative (and appendices) make sense when read together.
- ✓ If you have enough time, IES program officers may be able to read sections of your narrative and meet with you for feedback.

Submitting Your Application

You will be submitting your application through Grants.gov.

Generally, different individuals will upload different components:

- The PI will write and be responsible for the narrative sections.
- The institution may be responsible for budget forms and agreements, but this can vary.
- Always build in sufficient time to upload and confirm the different components.
- Use Grants.gov's Applicant FAQs:
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>

Remember: IES will not send late applications forward for review.

If you have trouble completing the forms or submitting your application through Grants.gov, **contact Grants.gov:**
1-800-518-4726
support@grants.gov
IES staff do not operate Grants.gov and cannot help you effectively.

Submitting Your Application: Your Workbench

You and your team will use the Grants.gov Workbench to get, fill in, and upload your application components and ultimately to submit application components.

- Multiple people may simultaneously access and fill out the mandatory and optional forms within an application.
- The **Participants** tab lists the members of a workspace who work as a team to complete the required forms for a federal grant.
- The **Actions** options allow you to access forms, upload items, etc.

The screenshot displays the 'MANAGE WORKSPACE' interface on Grants.gov. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs: HOME, LEARN GRANTS, SEARCH GRANTS, APPLICANTS (selected), GRANTORS, SYSTEM-TO-SYSTEM, FORMS, CONNECT, and SUPPORT. Below this, the breadcrumb path is 'GRANTS.GOV > Applicants > Manage Workspace'. The main heading is 'MANAGE WORKSPACE' with a progress indicator showing 'Created' (checked), 'Fill Out Forms' (unchecked), 'Complete and Notify AOR' (unchecked), 'Submit' (unchecked), and 'Agency Received' (unchecked). The workspace details include: '09212017-SA-WS-1 - PKG00035576 Multiple Forms Versions - Reuse', 'Application Filing Name: Example Workspace [Edit Name]', 'Workspace ID: WS00014392', 'Workspace Status: In Progress', 'Opening Date: Oct 09, 2017', 'AOR Status: Active', 'Last Submitted Date: ---', 'Closing Date: Oct 09, 2018', 'Workspace Owner: James Madison', 'SAM Expiration Date: Aug 20, 2020', and 'DUNS: 00000000000000'. A tabbed interface below shows 'FORMS', 'PARTICIPANTS' (highlighted with a red box), 'ACTIVITY', 'DETAILS', 'GRANTOR IMAGE', and 'PREVIEW GRANTOR VALIDATION'. Under 'Workspace Actions', there are buttons for 'Preview Application Forms', 'Check Application', 'Sign and Submit', and 'Delete'. A blue banner reads 'Application Package Forms - Users are encouraged to follow antivirus best practices when Downloading Instructions and Forms:' with a 'Download Instructions >' button. Below this is a table with columns: 'Include in Package', 'Form Name (Click to Preview)', 'Requirement', 'Form Status', 'Last Updated Date/Time', 'Locked By', and 'Actions'. The first row is highlighted with a red box in the 'Actions' column, showing 'Unlock | Download | Upload | Reuse | Webform'. The table data is as follows:

Include in Package	Form Name (Click to Preview)	Requirement	Form Status	Last Updated Date/Time	Locked By	Actions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SF424 (R & R) [V2.0]	Mandatory	In Progress [Locked]	Nov 15, 2017 04:13:37 PM EST	James Madis	Unlock Download Upload Reuse Webform
<input type="checkbox"/>	PHS Fellowship Supplemental Form [V4.0]	Optional	---	---	---	Lock Download Upload Reuse Webform
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research And Related Other Project Information [V1.4]	Optional	---	---	---	Lock Download Upload Reuse Webform

See also: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Upon Submission: Emails to Look for

1. First e-mail confirms that you have attempted to upload an application into the Grants.gov system
 - Application tracking number assigned (e.g., GRANT00234567)
2. Second e-mail indicates...
 - EITHER application successfully validated by Grants.gov
 - OR application has been rejected due to errors
3. Third e-mail indicates...
 - U.S. Department of Education has retrieved application from Grants.gov.
4. Fourth email (from the U.S. Department of Education) contains an 11-digit PR/Award number unique to your application. Use this number to track your application from this point forward.

Post-submission: Where Your Application Goes Next

After you fully upload your application and Grants.gov validates it...

- ❑ The U.S. Department of Education receives the applications for processing and transfer to the IES Peer Review Information Management Online (PRIMO) system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov/>).
- ❑ Once in PRIMO, you can track the progress of your application via the **Applicant Notification System (ANS)**.
- ❑ Approximately 1 to 2 weeks after the application deadline, IES sends invitation emails 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 4 to 6 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.

And now you wait (and possibly prepare for a resubmission).

Waiting on the Review Process: General Process

1. IES assigns all compliant and responsive applications to an IES review panel according to the match between the overall expertise of reviewers on each panel and the content and methodological approach proposed in each application (see <https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/reviewers.asp>).
2. These experts review and score your proposal, and if your application scores well enough, your application will go to the full panel.
3. The full panel discusses and scores your application, if forwarded to the full panel.
4. IES begins the “Award Decision” process and considers the following:
 1. Scientific merit as determined by scientific peer review
 2. Performance and use of funds under a previous federal award
 3. Contribution to the overall program of research (or training) described in this request for applications
 4. Ability to carry out the proposed research (or training) within the maximum award and duration requirements
 5. Availability of funds (See the procedures: https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/application_review.asp)

Note: The program officers are not involved in the review process or choice of reviewers.

The Review Process: More About the Reviewers

Here are some basic steps the reviewers take:

- At least two primary reviewers will complete written evaluations of your application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria.
- These reviewers assign a score for each criterion and an overall score.
- IES averages your reviewers' overall scores to calculate an average overall score.
- IES prepares a preliminary rank order of applications.
- The full panel considers and scores only those applications deemed to be the most competitive and to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order.

NOTE: A reviewer may nominate any application for consideration by the full panel that the reviewer believes merits full panel review but that would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

Pro Tip: Notes on Reviewer Comments

- If your application is sent for review, you will get the reviewers' comments.
- You will get scores (for the criteria and overall) only if your application goes to the full panel.
- The program officers can help you interpret the feedback and comments you get.

(See list of panels and reviewers: <https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/reviewers.asp>).

Review Process: Waiting to Hear Back and What to Do Afterwards

Keep in mind that the total review process will take months. You can track your application in the PRIMO system, but the IES staff will not have additional information for you during this time.

- ❑ If you hear back from IES after panels requesting additional information, you may contact the IES staff who emailed you for clarification about any of the questions, but you should respond in the given timeframe.
- ❑ If you learn that your application was not recommended for consideration of funding, you should review the comments and contact the IES program officer for the competition or topic to discuss the advisability of and strategy for undertaking a resubmission.
- ❑ If you learn that your application was deemed non-compliant or non-responsive and was not forwarded for review, you may also contact the IES program officer for the competition or topic to discuss a possible resubmission.

Resubmissions are common for IES. If IES recompetes the RFA or topic, we encourage you to resubmit.

Your Journey With IES: You Are Not Alone

