FY2021 Basic Overview of Research Grant Programs

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Transcript

Transcription is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.

(Slide 1)

Welcome to the IES Basic Overview of Research Grant Programs webinar. I am Jackie Buckley, a program officer in the National Center for Special Education Research and joining me is James Benson, a program officer in the National Center for Education Research.

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Here's the agenda for today's webinar. We will introduce IES and its research grants program and discuss how you can identify the right IES grant program for your research.

We will then discuss what you need to know to apply to our research programs and discuss the application submission and review process.

This webinar is intended to be an overview of our grant programs. It is not intended to be a substitute for reading the Request for Applications for your intended competition in the IES Grant Submission Guide.

IES strongly recommend that you read the Request for Applications to ensure that you are familiar with all the requirements and recommendations as you write your grant application. IES also recommend you read the Grant Submission Guide to ensure you are familiar with all the accompanying documents that must be submitted and the procedures for submitting your grant application.

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Let's get started with an introduction to IES and the Research Grant Program.

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This graphic represents the organizational structure of IES. We are led by a Director, who is advised by the National Board for Education Sciences.

Our Science Office oversees the scientific peer review process for IES grant applications and IES reports. IES has four centers:

The National Center for Education Statistics is a primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education.

The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance conducts unbiased large-scale evaluations of education programs supported by federal funds. They provide technical assistance and support the development and use of research and evaluation.

The National Center for Education Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) award research grants.

The grant programs we are discussing today are managed by NCER and NCSER.

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The objectives of our grant programs are to develop or identify education interventions - the term interventions refers to practices, programs, policies, and approaches - that enhance education outcomes and can be widely deployed.

Identify what does not work and thereby encourage innovation and further research, understand the processes that underlie the effectiveness of education interventions and the variation in their effectiveness. Develop measures of academic achievement and progress and support research and national leadership on core issues.

Another way of thinking about the objectives for the research grant programs is to provide answers to three questions.

What works to improve student education outcomes?
What doesn't work?
How do interventions improve education outcomes, including for whom do they work and under what conditions?

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To encourage rigorous education research that is transparent, actionable, and focused on meaningful outcomes, all applications to the Education and Special Education Research Grant Program are expected to incorporate the principles outlined in the IES-wide Standards for Excellence in Education Research as applicable.

The principles are listed on this slide.

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Collectively, IES-funded research should yield outcomes and products that are meaningful, inform stakeholders about the cost and practical benefits and effects of interventions on relevant outcomes for learners, and contribute to scientific knowledge and theory of teaching, learning, and organizing education systems.

Researchers receiving funding through this program are to disseminate evidence in a way that is useful to and accessible by educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public.

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Why would you apply to IES?

You would apply to IES if you are interested in working in education settings, you're interested in improving student education outcomes, and you are committed to sharing your research findings with education practitioners.

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What makes us different from other funding programs within the Department of Education?

Our grant funds are used to cover research, not program support or service provision. A good application is a good application, we don't have priorities or competitive preferences that result in extra points for applicants.

Reviewers have flexibility to assign points based upon overall scientific merit, we don't ask reviewers to use a rubric as they score. For example, other programs may assign a maximum number of points that you can obtain for your significance section. We allow our reviewers flexibility to weight each section as they see fit on determining the overall scientific merit of your application.

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How does IES compare to other agencies? Similar to other federal funding agencies, IES supports rigorous research at all stages including basic research, iterative research to inform research and development of new interventions or refine existing interventions, pilot studies, and larger rigorous studies to determine efficacy or effectiveness of interventions.

This chart lists the three major federal funders of education research – IES, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health. IES and NIH are similar in that we have independent scientific review offices that are separate from the program offices.

Because of this, we are allowed to provide technical assistance to applicants. At NSF, the program officers manage the review process, so this limits the amount of technical assistance they can give applicants since they are directly involved in the review process. IES is considered as competitive or even more competitive than other federal funding agencies.

In terms of the types of things we fund, there is some overlap and certainly complementary research happening among agencies but there are key differences. For example, NSF is more STEM-focused than IES though we both fund science, technology, engineering, and math grants.

NIH, specifically the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute of Mental Health supports more foundational research, such as brain-related research and genetics research that we don't fund at IES. Results from this work, however, could certainly inform the work that we do at IES and could guide researchers in developing a grant to IES.

So, that was a quick overview of IES and now we will turn to talking about our current funding opportunities.

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Let's move into the nuts and bolts of getting started with an IES application. First you need to identify which competitions are open for Fiscal Year 2021.

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To identify open opportunities, we have a suggested set of steps to follow.

If you haven't already signed up, you should sign up for the IES Newsflash. The Newsflash is an email-based alert service designed to inform you about all the new content posted to the IES website, including new funding opportunities when they become available.

All of our funding opportunities are announced in "The Federal Register." "The Federal Register" is the official journal of the federal government of the United States that contains the government agency rules, proposed rules, and public notices, including agency funding announcements. IES maintains a funding opportunities page on the IES website.

Once you are on the IES funding page, navigate to the Request for Applications page and review current Request for Applications, which is our notice that grant funding is available. Most importantly of all but only after you've read the relevant RFAs, contact the relevant program officers for the topic or topics of interest in the relevant research Center.

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As you're reading through the RFAs, make sure you review the current list of research topics and any methodological requirements. If you still need help narrowing down your list of possible topics in our RFAs, it can often help to review the abstracts of previously funded projects.

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IES is holding 10 separate research and research training competitions in Fiscal Year 2021.

We are going to describe the general focus of each of these competitions. Again, be sure to read the full Request for Applications for more detailed description of each competition.

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So, why should you read the RFA carefully? First, the RFA is your guide to preparing high quality applications. We provide a great deal of amount of detail in our RFAs about the requirements you must meet, as well as recommendations for how to write a high quality application.

Second, reviewers use RFAs to evaluate your application for its scientific merit. RFAs have sections to walk you through what you need to know and include in your application, these sections include (1) overview in general requirements, which includes a summary of changes to

the RFA from the previous competition, (2) topics, (3) project type requirements and recommendations, (4) appendices and other narrative content, (5) competition regulations and review criteria, and (6) compliance and a responsiveness checklist.

IES has developed a separate submission guide, which contains important information about submission procedures and IES specific guidance and recommendations to help you ensure your application is complete and received on time without errors through Grants.gov.

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In this section of the presentation, we will introduce our primary grant programs, the topics and project types within them, key parameters for project types, and submission dates for applications to each of the programs.

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Our primary grant programs are CFDA numbers 84.305A and 84.324A. These are our education research grants and our special education research grants. We recommend that all applicants familiarize yourselves with the requirements and recommendations of either 305A or 324A even if you intend to apply to another program.

With the "A" RFAs, you will need to apply under a topic and project type combination. Over the next few minutes, we will provide a high level summary of the topics and project types we are competing in Fiscal Year 2021.

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NCER and NCSER use a topic structure to encourage focused programs of research and to provide opportunities for applicants to consult with program officers who oversee each topic while preparing their applications.

Your application must be directed to one of the topics. The topics are intentionally broad to encourage a wide range of innovative ideas and research questions. Applications to NCSER may also indicate a secondary topic if applicable.

NCER's Education Research Grant Program includes 11 topics and NCSER's Special Education Research Grant Program includes 9 topics.

The RFA for the Education Research Grant program provides a discussion of the purpose and needed research under each topic. The RFA for the Special Education Research Grant program does not have additional descriptive information beyond the title to allow for and encourage a broad range of research under these general topics.

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IES encourages focused research along a continuum of research, development, and evaluation activities necessary for building a scientific research enterprise. For all applications, in addition to identifying a research topic, you must also identify your project type.

The four project types being competed in FY2021, which are the same across the research centers, are Measurement, Exploration, Development and Innovation, and Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up. For those of you who are familiar with the IES project types, you will notice that IES is not accepting projects to carry out replication studies under the "A" RFAs.

Rather, applicants interested in carrying out a replication study should consult the Research Grants Focused on Systematic Replications program discussed later in this webinar for funding for replication studies.

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Measurement supports both the development and validation of new or modified instruments for use by educators or education researchers.

Some Measurement projects will result in instruments that have been validated for use with specific populations in specific contexts to support education practice and policy. Other Measurement projects will result in instruments for use by education researchers. Both types of instruments are needed to ensure that high quality measurement tools are available to support rigorous, exploratory development and efficacy research.

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Exploration supports projects that identify relationships between learner-, educator-, school-, and policy-level characteristics in meaningful education outcomes. Findings from Exploration projects point out potentially fruitful areas for further investigation from researchers, policymakers, and practitioners rather than providing strong evidence for adapting specific interventions or measurement tools.

Exploration projects should inform future work to determine what works for whom and under what conditions.

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Development and Innovation projects focused on the development and pilot testing of new or modified education interventions that are intended to produce beneficial impacts on learner outcomes.

A Development and Innovation project will result in a fully developed version of the intervention with clear specifications of core components and all procedures and materials, including fidelity measures and evidence of usability and feasibility to support testing and scaling of promising

results. Pilot data that speak to the intervention's promise for generating meaningful outcomes and information about the costs associated with implementing the fully developed intervention.

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Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up supports initial efficacy studies of education interventions predicted to have a meaningful effect on important education outcomes using designs that meet the IES What Works Clearinghouse design standards and longer term follow up studies of rigorously evaluated interventions.

Initial Efficacy projects test interventions that have not been rigorously evaluated previously to examine the intervention's beneficial impact on education outcomes in comparison to an alternative practice, program, or policy. Follow-Up projects test the longer term impact of an intervention that has been shown to have beneficial impacts on education outcomes in a previous or an ongoing evaluation study.

Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up projects should provide practical information about the benefits and cost of specific interventions to inform the intervention's theory of change, its implementation, its usefulness, and its contribution to future research.

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The award parameters including the maximum duration and the maximum award vary by Project Type. Please do not go beyond the maximum duration and award as doing so may prevent your application from being reviewed. Also refer to the RFA for other information about how the funds requested under certain Project Types should be allocated.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.305A and 84.324A. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than August 20th, 2020 at 11.59:59 Eastern Time.

Letters of Intent are due June 11, and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on June 11th as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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84.305B: NCER is competing three research training grant programs in FY2020. The Pathways Training grant program grants will be awarded to minority serving institutions (MSIs), and other institutions of higher education in partnership with MSIs.

The goal is to provide undergraduate students especially students from historically underrepresented groups with an introduction to education research and scientific methods, meaningful opportunities to participate in education research studies, professional development, and mentoring that leads to doctoral study.

Postdoctoral Training programs support the training of fellows who have a doctoral degree and high potential for success in research but may need more research experience and mentoring in the education sciences before launching their careers. The Methods Training program supports training of current education researchers to expand and upgrade their methodological skills.

Education researchers include individuals located in colleges and universities as well as individuals working in state and local education agencies, education-focused organizations, and companies that have developed and deployed education-related products and services.

84.324 B: The Research Training Programs in Special Education include the Early Career Development and Mentoring program, which is intended to support researchers to conduct rigorous and relevant early intervention and special education research.

Early Career is defined as an investigator within three years of receiving their PhD or completing a postdoctoral program at the time of applying. Methods Training is a program intended to support the training of current education researchers to maintain and enhance their research and data analysis skills in order to conduct rigorous and relevant research focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities.

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These are the award parameters for the Research Training Programs, including the maximum durations and the maximum award amounts.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.305B and 84.324B. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than August 20, 2020 at 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Letters of Intent are due on June 11 and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on June 11th as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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For FY2021, the institute is competing one Research and Development Center through the Education Research and Development Center Program listed as a topic within the RFA for this program. For this topic, "Improving Teaching and Learning in Post-Secondary Institutions," our goal is for the center to examine instructional innovations for improving post-secondary student learning outcomes.

We are particularly interested in supporting research that is looking at how open and broad access institutions of post-secondary education are leveraging technologies to personalize instruction in credit-bearing courses and to simultaneously build the capacity of administrators,

instructors, developers, and researchers to create, implement, and evaluate the instructional interventions they have chosen.

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This slide includes the award parameters for the Research and Development Centers program, including the maximum duration of five years and the maximum award amount of $10 million for the Teaching and Learning In Post-Secondary Institutions topic.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.305C.

Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 20, 2020 at 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern time. Letters of Intent are due on June 11 and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on June 11th as well.

The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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The Methods program supports the development of a wide range of methodological and statistical products, including new or improved methods, guidelines, and software to better enable applied education scientists to conduct rigorous education research.

Researchers should plan to disseminate their products to applied researchers who may use them in their own work as well as to methods researchers who may further develop or make use of them. IES is interested in the development of practical statistical and methodological products and software to improve study designs, data analyses, and interpretations of findings.

These products should be designed for use by applied education researchers. IES established the Early Career Grants to encourage a new generation of education researchers to address methodological issues and challenges and to develop statistical and methodological products that will benefit the education sciences. Applicants to the Early Career Grants topic must have received their doctorate on or after April 1, 2016.

Early Career Grants are intended for applicants proposing high quality work of the type conducted under regular grants but that can be done over a shorter period and with less funding.

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These are the award parameters for the Statistical and Research Methodology in Education Grants.

For regular grants, there is a maximum duration of three years and the maximum award amount of $900,000. For Early Career Grants, there is a maximum duration of two years and a maximum award amount of $225,000.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.305D. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than July 30th, 2020 at 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Letters of Intent are due on May 28th and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on May 7th. The possible start dates for the award are between March 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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This year, NCSER has a new competition, 84.324P. In this RFA, IES invites applicants to conduct research focused on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Process Data for Learners with Disabilities.

The goal of this competition is to use data from the 2017 eighth grade NAEP mathematics assessment to generate evidence that improves our understanding of the link between test taking behavior and mathematics performance for learners with disabilities and contributes to the larger body of evidence on improving mathematics outcomes for these learners.

Results are expected to improve the future development and administration of digital learning assessments, identify needed enhancements to mathematics instruction, and highlight areas where further research is needed.

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This slide presents the award parameters for the NAEP Process Data Grant program. The maximum award duration is 30 months and the maximum award amount is $700,000.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.324P. Applications must be received in grants.gov no later than August 20, 2020 at 11:59:59 Eastern time. The Letters of Intent are due on June 11, and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on June 11th as well.

The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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Starting in FY2020, IES moved Replication projects out from under the primary grant programs and no longer accepts applications to conduct them through those programs. Systematic replication studies that vary one or more aspects of a previous study contribute to a better understanding of what interventions improve education outcomes and the conditions under which they will likely work and for whom.

In FY2021, IES invites applications using one of two different approaches: (1) Systematic Replications. These projects will systematically replicate an intervention by varying at least one aspect of a prior impact study. For example, researchers could vary the geographical location, the population of learners, educators, and/or schools, and/or features of the intervention implementation and delivery.

(2) Systematic Replications Using Digital Platforms. These projects will systematically replicate an intervention that is either currently available through a widely used digital platform where it can readily be embedded within such a platform prior to the evaluation.

These replications will involve varying at least one aspect of a prior impact study such as the geographical location, the population of learners, educators, and/or schools, and/or the intervention implementation. Under both approaches, IES will support replication studies that evaluate an intervention when implemented onto routine conditions, these are Effectiveness Replications, and evaluations that provide more support than is typically provided under routine conditions, these are Efficacy Replications.

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These are the award parameters for the Systematic Replication program. For Efficacy Replications, the maximum duration is five years and the maximum award is $4.0 million. For Effectiveness Replications, the maximum duration is five years and the maximum award is $4.5 million.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.305R and 84.324R. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than August 20, 2020 at 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Letters of Intent are due on June 11th, and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on June 11th as well.

The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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Through the Using Longitudinal Data to Support State Policymaking (Using Data) grant program, IES seeks to expand state education agencies' use of their state longitudinal data systems, their SLDSs, to provide evidence for use when making policy decisions.

The Using Data Grant program emphasizes using SLDSs to examine longer term student pathways and outcomes. The proposed research should be aligned with what the SEA wants to know about the issue, program, or policy, and the findings should have practical implications for the SEA's decision making.

However, the type of research to be supported by the Using Data grant program may take different forms. For example, retrospective analyses of the progress of students in previous

cohorts may identify factors or pathways that could predict successful student outcomes for future cohorts.

Current outcomes of students who took part in a program in the past could be examined to help assess the longer term results of the program. Students recently or currently involved in a program could be followed through the life of the project to check their future outcomes, cohorts from before and after a policy was implemented could be compared to see if their longer-term impacts differed.

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An applicant must be a U.S. state education agency (SEA), defined as a state or territory's K-12 authority, alone or in conjunction with research organizations such as universities and research firms and/or with other appropriate organizations, such as other state agencies or local education agencies.

The SEA will be the grantee and must provide the principal investigator. However, the SEA applying for funding must designate a single staff person as PI for the project and the other person sharing responsibilities should be listed as co-principal investigators.

Multiple persons on the grant from the SEA or other collaborating organizations may share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the research project intellectually and logistically.

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This slide includes the award parameters for the Using Data Grant program, including the maximum duration of three years and the maximum award amount of $1.0 million.

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This slide includes important dates for 84.305S. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than July 30th, 2020 at 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Letters of Intent are due on May 28th, and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on May 7th.

The possible start dates for the award are between March 1, 2021 and September 1, 2021.

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Now we will discuss some quick advice for you as you prepare your application and an overview of the submission and review process.

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Each year, there are changes made to the RFAs. The RFA will include a summary of those changes.

We urge you to pay careful attention to these changes, particularly if you have applied to IES in the past and you may be resubmitting an application.

You should also review other relevant funding webinars, such as the IES Grant Writing Workshop and the IES Application Process webinars. These and other webinars will be posted on the IES Funding Opportunities page.

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For example, one change this year is that the peer reviewers will now consider Dissemination as a separate review criterion.

Applications that do not contain a Dissemination History and Plan in Appendix A will not be peer reviewed. Reviewers will consider team members' experience disseminating research findings and products from past projects through a range of audiences in addition to applicant's plans for disseminating the findings of the proposed study.

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In addition, all applicants must adhere to the IES Public Access Requirements. All awardees will be required to submit their accepted peer reviewed manuscripts to ERIC, the Department of Education's online library in order to ensure that the findings of federally funded research are available to the public.

And all applicants who are seeking funding under Exploration and Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up must include a data management plan, which specifies how the data collected with federal funds will be made available at the conclusion of the study to allow independent replication of findings and/or to explore other research questions.

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There is an IES application process webinar and in that webinar, IES staff will go into more detail about the application process. You need three things to apply. First, you need the RFA which contains information for writing your project narrative.

Second, you need the IES Application Submission Guide which describes information related to submitting your application and provides an overview of the funding process. Lastly, you need the application package, which can be found on Grants.gov. In terms of registration for Grants.gov, the first tip and perhaps the most important is to start this process early.

Initial registration could take more than five business days and even if you're already registered, the annual update that you have to complete could take more than three days. It's your institution that needs to register. All applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov, applications received by Grants.gov are date and time stamped to the second, so your application must be fully uploaded and submitted by the date and time specified in the RFA, IES will not accept late applications.

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All applications must be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website. Grants.gov requires applicants to use the workspace interface. Grants.gov marks alerts in red and these should be attended to as failure to follow the Grants.gov requirements will result in an unsuccessful application.

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Now let's talk about what happens once you successfully submit an application.

Applications are first reviewed for compliance and responsiveness to the requirements set out in the Request for Applications. Applications that are compliant and responsive are assigned to a review panel. Two or three panel members conduct a primary review of each application.

The most competitive applications are reviewed by the full panel. As a result, applicants whose applications were triage which are not reviewed by the full panel, receive the review comments from the primary reviewers but no scores. Applicants whose applications go to full panel receive the review comments from the primary reviewers, the full panel's review scores, and a summary of the panel's discussion of the application.

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So, how are funding decisions made? The following will be considered in making award decisions for responsive and compliant applications; (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 described in this request for applications, (4) ability to carry out the proposed research within the maximum award and duration requirements, (5) availability of funds.

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IES uses a system for the scientific review of grant applications that is similar in many ways to the process of grant application peer review at the National Institutes of Health. Standards and Review Office staff identify and recruit highly qualified reviewers primarily on the basis of the quality of the research they have conducted and published in scientific peer reviewed journals and the degree to which they are in depth experts in the relevant research methods and subject matter.

Applications are assigned to panel according to the match between the overall expertise of reviewers on each panel and the content and methodological approach proposed in each application. More detailed information about the peer review process can be found on our website.

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The Applicant Notification System (ANS) is housed at iesreview.ed.gov. After you receive an email notification, you may sign into the ANS to view the reviews of your application and your award status and if your application went to full panel, the review scores and panel discussion summary. We encourage you to discuss your reviews with the program officer and consider reapplying if your application is not funded.

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Along with the resources just described, program officers are another resource you should use, so please contact us. Email your initial research idea to a program officer. As you develop your application, program officers can comment on your content and framing of the research.

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For additional information, please refer to the RFAs and reach out to the program officers listed in the relevant RFA. Please feel free to reach out to one of us as well, our emails are listed here. Best of luck to you all and happy writing!