

IES Basic Overview of Research Grants and Information for New Applicants to IES

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Transcript

(Slide 1)

Hello. This webinar was a live webinar held June 18th, 2018, and led by Liz Albro, from the National Center for Education Research, and Jackie Buckley, from the National Center for Special Education Research. My name is Sarah Brasiel, and I'm a Program Officer at the National Center for Special Education Research.

I'm providing this on-demand webinar, covering the same information that was presented in a live webinar for you to access at your convenience on the IES website. The IES website webinar page will also provide a copy of the PowerPoint presentation used for this webinar, a transcript of the webinar, and a link to the video of this webinar. In the webinar today, I'll provide an overview of IES for those who are not familiar with us.

I will discuss current fiscal year 2019 funding opportunities and talk briefly about our grant application and peer review process.

(Slide 2)

IES is the independent research arm of the U.S. Department of Education authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002. We are non-partisan.

We are charged with providing rigorous evidence to inform education practice and policy, and sharing this information with educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public. The overall mission of IES is to describe the condition and progress of education in the United States, identify education practices that improve academic achievement and access to education opportunities, evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

(Slide 3)

This graphic represents the organizational structure of IES. We are led by a director who receives advice and consultation from the National Board for Education Sciences. The board consists of 15 voting members who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Our Standards and Review Office oversees the scientific peer review process for IES grant applications and IES reports. We also have four centers within IES. The National Center for Education Statistics is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education. Within NCES, you may be familiar with the NAEP assessment, the National Assessment of Educational Progress

Under NCES, you'll also find many large national longitudinal data sets, including, for example, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance conducts unbiased large-scale evaluations of education programs supported by federal funds, provides technical assistance and supports the development and use of research and evaluation throughout the United States.

In NCEE, you will find the What Works Clearinghouse, WWC, and the Regional Educational Labs or RELs. The two centers that award grants are highlighted here in blue, the National Center for Education Research, referred to as NCER, and the National Center for Special Education Research or NCSEER.

The grant opportunities that we will be talking about today are managed through these two research centers. You'll notice here that the research centers are separate from the Standards and Review Office, meaning that we program officers are not involved in the peer review process. So this allows us to work closely with you, providing technical assistance to you on your applications.

We will discuss more about that later in this webinar.

(Slide 4)

This bridge graphic represents how we think about the infrastructure at IES to support our overall mission. We intend for our work to form a bridge from research to practice and back again, recognizing the critical linkage and interplay between research and practice.

So how do we do this? We provide data that describes how well the United States is educating its students. We conduct surveys and sponsor research projects to understand where education needs improvement and how these improvements might be made. We fund development and rigorous testing of new approaches for improving education outcomes for all students.

We conduct large-scale evaluations of federal education programs and policies, and we provide resources to increase use of data and research in education decision-making. We also support advancement of statistics and research through specialized training and development of methods and measures.

(Slide 5)

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

(Slide 6)

What makes us different from other funding programs within the Department of Education? Grant funds are 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 significant section. We allow reviewers flexibility to weigh each section as they see fit on determining the overall scientific merit of your application. IES is unique because it supports rigorous research at all stages of a project, including basic research, iterative research to inform research and development, pilot studies and larger studies to determine efficacy.

(Slide 7)

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, or programs, policies, or practices

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. 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 as competitive or even more competitive than other federal funding agencies. In terms of the types of things we fund, there's some overlap and, certainly, complementary research happening among agencies. But there are key differences. For instance, NSF is more STEM-focused than IES, but 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, like brain-related genetics, 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 to develop a grant to IES

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

(Slide 8)

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 2019.

(Slide 9)

To identify open funding opportunities, we have a suggested set of steps to follow. First, begin at the IES website. If you aren't already signed up, you should sign up for the IES Newsflash. All of our funding opportunities are announced in the Federal Register.

Once you are on the funding page, navigate to the Requests for Applications page and view current requests for applications. Most importantly of all, but only after you have read the relevant RFAs, contact relevant Program Officers for the topics of interest in the relevant center.

(Slide 10)

As you are reading through the RFAs, make sure to review the current list of research topics and any methodological requirements.

If you still need help narrowing your list of possible topics and our RFAs, it can often help to review the abstracts of previously funded projects.

(Slide 11)

So why should you read the RFAs carefully? First, it is your guide to preparing high-quality applications.

We provide a great deal of detail in our RFAs about requirements and recommendations. Second, reviewers use RFAs to evaluate your application for its scientific merit. Third, the application submission process information is included in every RFA. RFAs have sections to walk you through what you need to know and include in your application: overview and

general requirements, topic requirements, research goals, competition regulations and review criteria, preparing your application, and submitting your application.

See Part 1.E. of the fiscal year 2019 RFAs for a summary of changes to the RFA from the previous competition.

(Slide 12)

Our primary grant programs are CFDA numbers 84.305A and 84.324A. We recommend that all applicants be familiar with either 305A or 324A, even if you don't intend to apply under that competition.

With the A RFAs, you will need to apply under one topic and goal combination. Over the next few minutes, we will provide a high-level summary of the topics and goals being competed in fiscal year 2019.

(Slide 13)

The Education Research Grants Program has 12 standing topics and the Special Education Research Grants Program has 11 standing topics, some of which mirror each other.

You must select one that identifies your field of research. In addition, both centers are competing special topics in fiscal year 2019. Certain topics have special requirements. For instance, the grade range varies by topic. There are also recommendations for student outcomes to address as well as considerations or research gaps under each topic. The special topics are intended to encourage research in understudied areas that appear promising for improving student education outcomes and that are of interest to policymakers and practitioners.

NCER is competing two special topics in FY 2019, Foreign Language Education and Social Studies. NCSER is competing three special topics, Career and Technical Education for Students with Disabilities, English Learners with Disabilities, and Systems-Involved Students with Disabilities.

(Slide 14)

The Institute uses a goal structure to encourage 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 one research topic, you must also identify one research goal.

The five research goals, which are the same across the research centers, are: Goal one, exploration; Goal two, development and innovation; Goal three, efficacy and follow-up; Goal four, replication: efficacy, and effectiveness; and Goal five, measurement. For those of you who are familiar with the IES goals, you will notice that we have made changes to both goal three and goal four.

All initial tests of the efficacy of an intervention must now be submitted under goal three, efficacy and follow-up, and all replication projects, including effectiveness studies, should be submitted under goal four.

(Slide 15)

The exploration goal supports the identification of malleable factors associated with student education outcomes, and/or the factors and conditions that mediate or moderate that relationship.

By doing so, exploration projects are intended to build and inform theoretical foundations for the development of interventions, or the evaluation of interventions, or the development and validation of assessments.

(Slide 16)

The development and innovation goal supports the development of new interventions and the further development or modification of existing interventions that are intended to produce beneficial impacts on student education outcomes when implemented in authentic education settings.

(Slide 17)

The efficacy and follow-up goal supports the initial evaluation of fully-developed education interventions with evidence of promise for improving student education outcomes, as well as education interventions that are widely used, but not yet rigorously tested, to determine whether they produce a beneficial impact on student education outcomes relative to a counterfactual when they are implemented in authentic education settings.

The efficacy and follow-up goal also supports follow-up studies of students or education personnel and retrospective studies.

(Slide 18)

The replication: efficacy and effectiveness goal supports replication research under two broad categories, efficacy replications, and effectiveness studies. Under this goal, the Institute supports effectiveness studies which carry out the independent evaluation of fully-developed education interventions with prior evidence of efficacy to determine whether they produce a beneficial impact on student education outcomes relative to a counterfactual when they're implemented by the end-user under routine conditions in authentic education settings.

In addition, under this goal, the Institute will now also support efficacy replications and re-analysis studies. The main difference between efficacy and follow-up, goal three, and replication: efficacy and effectiveness, goal four, are that under goal four, the intervention must already have been found to have beneficial impacts on student education outcomes by at least one prior causal impact study, and the research plan must include a plan to conduct analysis of implementation and factors that moderate and are mediate the impacts of the intervention.

(Slide 19)

The measurement goal supports the development of new assessments or refinement of existing assessments, development, refinement projects, or the validation of existing assessments for specific purposes, contexts, and populations, validation projects.

(Slide 20)

In addition to the changes in goal three and four that we have already discussed, there are several other changes that I'd like to draw your attention to.

An additional information is available in Part 1.E. of the RFA. First, there are revised requirements for cost analysis, adding expectations to goal two for assessing cost during the pilot study. Second, there have been some revisions to the standing and special topics. In the Education Research Grants Program, CTE is now a standing topic, and the arts and highly-mobile special topics are no longer offered as special topics.

If you're planning to resubmit an application submitted under one of those two special topics, please reach out to the relevant program officers that they can help you select where best to submit your application in FY 2019. Third, all pre-kindergarten research in NCER must be submitted to the Early Learning topic. Neither the Cognition Student Learning nor the Education Technology Program are accepting applications focused on pre-kindergarteners this year.

Fourth, employment and earnings outcomes are now considered to be student education outcomes for appropriate topics. And finally, reviewers will evaluate the contributions of the proposed dissemination plan to the significance of the project and whether there are sufficient resources available to fully implement the proposed plan.

(Slide 21)

We want to emphasize, dissemination is something to think about at the time of application, not after you have completed your studies. In addition, all applicants must adhere to the IES Public Access Requirements. All awardees will be required to submit their accepted peer review 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 to test the causal impact of an intervention under goal three or goal four 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.

(Slide 22)

The award parameters, including the maximum duration and the maximum award, vary across goals. Please be sure to refer to the RFA for other information about how the funds requested should be allocated.

(Slide 23)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305A and 84.324A. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 23rd, 2018, at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on June 21st, 2018, and the application will be posted to grants.gov on June 21st as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1st, 2019, and September 1st, 2019.

(Slide 24)

NCSEER is offering one research training program this year, the Early Career Development and Mentoring Research Training Program, or Early Career Program, which supports grants that prepare researchers to conduct independent, rigorous, and relevant early intervention in special education research. The intention is to support researchers who are addressing issues that are important to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with or at risk for disabilities, their families, special education practitioners, and policymakers. And whose research contributes to the advancement of knowledge and theory in special education.

Early Career is defined as an investigator within three years of receiving their PhD or completing a post-doctoral program. The principal investigator must hold a tenure-track position, for example, assistant professor or a research scientist position, for example, not a visiting faculty or adjunct position, at an institution of higher education, or must have accepted an offer for such a position to begin before the start of the award.

The program requires you to have a mentoring plan and a research plan. The narrative should clearly demonstrate the integration of your research and career plans. Please note that the research and career plans may influence one another bi-directionally as the proposed research conducted may inform which skills need enhancement, just as a training and mentoring will provide these needed skills to conduct successful research.

(Slide 25)

These are the award parameters for the Early Career Grant, including the maximum duration of 4 years and the maximum award amount of \$500,000.

(Slide 26)

This slide includes important dates for 34.324B. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 23rd at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on June 21st, 2018, and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on June 21st as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1st, 2019, and September 1st, 2019.

(Slide 27)

For FY 19, the Institute is competing two new research and development centers through the Education Research and Development Center Program, 84.305C. The Improving Rural Education Center will examine how to build the capacity of rural schools and post-secondary institutions to use high-quality scientific research to improve student education outcomes.

The Writing in Secondary School Center will conduct research on how students develop writing skills across secondary school and how to best support or measure writing skills in this population.

(Slide 28)

These are the award parameters for the research and development centers, including the maximum duration of 5 years, and the maximum award amount of \$10 million for Improving Rural Education, and \$5 million for Writing in Secondary Schools.

(Slide 29)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305C. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 9th, 2018, at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on June 21st, 2018, and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on June 21st as well. The possible start dates for the award are between January 17th, 2019, and March 17th, 2019.

(Slide 30)

85.305D, Statistical and Research Methodology in Education. The goal of this research program is to provide a wide range of methodological and statistical products.

The Institute defines products to include new or improved methods, guidelines, or other methodological resources and software that will better enable applied education scientists to conduct rigorous education research. The Institute is interested in the development of practical, statistical, and methodological products, new or improved methods, guidelines, or other methodological resources and software that can be used by most education researchers rather than only by statisticians and researchers with highly sophisticated statistical skills to improve the designs of their studies, analysis of their data, and interpretations of their findings.

Some current identified methodological needs include understanding variability and effects, ascertaining methods and procedures to increase the generalized ability of findings, improving methods used to support single-case designs, analyzing big data, improving ways to reduce selection bias effects in quasi-experimental designs, tools to help policymakers and practitioners to interpret impacts reported from evaluation studies, and increasing our ability to address sources of missing data, especially to the degree that the data is not missing at random.

(Slide 31)

These are the award parameters for the Statistical and Research Methodology in Education Grants. For Regular Grants, there's a maximum duration of 3 years and the maximum award amount of \$900,000. For Early Career Grants, there's a maximum duration of 2 years and the maximum award amount of \$225,000.

(Slide 32)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305D. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 23rd, 2018, at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time.

Letters of intent are due on June 21st, 2018, and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on June 21st as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1st, 2019, and September 1st, 2019.

(Slide 33)

The Partnerships and Collaborations Program is intended to support research that is carried out by research institutions and U.S. state and local education agencies working collaboratively on problems or issues that are high priority for the education agencies. The research may focus on students within a wide range of education settings, from pre-

kindergarten through post-secondary and adult education, and may focus on typically developing students and/or students with or at risk for disability.

The goal of this research grant program is the improvement of education outcomes for all students, particularly those at risk of failure. For the FY 2019 competition, the Institute is accepting applications for the Research Collaborations Program under two topics. First, Research Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research, and second, Evaluation of State and Local Education Programs and Policies.

The Institute believes that education research must address the interests and needs of education practitioners and policymakers, as well as students, parents, and community members. Under the Research Collaborations Program, the Institute encourages the development of partnerships between researchers and education agencies to advance the relevance of education research and the accessibility and usability of these findings for the day-to-day work of education practitioners and policymakers.

These partnerships are intended to increase the relevance of the research through the required inclusion of education agencies as partners from the start of the work with the identification of the research questions and design of a project to carrying out the research and adoption and dissemination of the results.

(Slide 34)

These are the award parameters for the Partnerships and Collaborations Grants. For Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships Grants, there's a maximum duration of 2 years and a maximum award amount of \$400,000. For Evaluation of State Education Programs/Policies Grants, there's a maximum duration of 5 years and a maximum award amount of \$5 million.

(Slide 35)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305H. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 23rd, 2018, at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on June 21st, 2018, and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on June 21st as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1st, 2019, and September 1st, 2019.

(Slide 36)

The next opportunity is the Low-Cost, Short-Duration Evaluation of Education or Special Education Interventions, identified as CFDA 84.305L or 84.324L.

This grant program supports rigorous evaluations of education or special education interventions, broadly defined as practices, programs, and policies that state or local education agencies expect to produce meaningful improvements in education outcomes within a short period of time.

These evaluations are to be conducted for \$250,000 or less and completed within 2 years. The Institute views Low-Cost Evaluation projects as a means to obtain rigorous evidence of impact that state and district education agencies can use in making timely decisions regarding the scaling up or revision of interventions.

To meet these goals, the evaluations are carried out by research institutions and state or local education agencies working together as partners on a topic of high importance to the agency.

(Slide 37)

The evaluations will rely primarily on administrative data or other sources of secondary data to provide measures of the student outcomes.

The evaluations will use randomized controlled trials, or regression discontinuity designs, or experimental single-case designs for special education research only to determine the impact of interventions on student education outcomes.

(Slide 38)

These are the award parameters for the Low-Cost, Short-Duration Evaluation Grants. The maximum duration is 2 years and the maximum award amount is \$250,000. Funds must be used solely for evaluation purposes. Funds must not be used to support implementation of the intervention. These costs are to be covered by the state or local agency.

(Slide 39)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305L and 84.324L. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than March 7th, 2019, at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on January 10th, 2019, and the application packages will be posted on grants.gov on January 10th as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1st, 2019, and September 1st, 2019.

(Slide 40)

This next funding opportunity is for NCSE only, and it is the Research Networks Focused on Critical Problems of Education Policy and Practice in Special Education.

The topic being competed is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or MTSS at the elementary school level. This program is intended to focus resources and attention on high-priority issues in special education, and to create both the structure and process for researchers who are working on these issues to share ideas, build new knowledge, and strengthen their research and dissemination capacity.

MTSS are frameworks that provide multiple levels of support through coordinated evidence-based practices, strategies, and structures to meet the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all learners. For this topic, MTSS must occur at the elementary school level, integrate both academic and behavior supports, and address the needs of children with or at risk for disabilities.

Applicants may apply to be one of the research teams who'll carry out their own research projects and participate in collaborative activities with other teams in the network. The network will support up to five research teams.

(Slide 41)

The MTSS network will support up to five research teams to conduct research, at minimum, on the key components of MTSS and the outcomes of students with or at risk for disability.

(Slide 42)

The award parameters for the MTSS Network Grants are a maximum duration of 5 years and a maximum award amount of \$4 million.

(Slide 43)

This slide includes important dates for 84.324N. Applications must be received at grants.gov no later than August 9th, 2018, at 4:30:00 p.m. DC Time or Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on June 21st, 2018, and the application package will be posted on grants.gov on June 21st as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1st, 2019, and September 1st, 2019.

(Slide 44)

All applications must be submitted electronically through the grants.gov website.

This year, there have been several changes in grants.gov, including a requirement for all applicants to use the workspace interface. As you can see, alerts are marked in red and should be attended to as failure to follow the grants.gov requirements will result in an unsuccessful application.

(Slide 45)

Applications are reviewed for compliance and responsiveness to the RFA. Applications that are compliant and responsive are assigned to a review panel. Two or three panel members conduct a primary review of each application. Then there's a triage process so that the most competitive applications are reviewed by a full panel.

(Slide 46)

You can find more about our peer reviewers by going to our IES website. There's a page on the Standards and Review Office that includes a list of prior peer reviewers.

(Slide 47)

All applicants will receive an e-mail notification that the following information is available via the Applicant Notification System, ANS: status of award, reviewer summary statements.

If you are not granted an award the first time, plan on resubmitting and talk to your program officer.

(Slide 48)

There are a few things I want to leave you with before we finish this webinar. First, read the Request for Applications. There's a lot of detail and important detail in the RFA.

IES has spent a great deal of time over the years making the RFA user-friendly guide to developing a high-quality application. So be sure you know those requirements, recommendations for the topic, and goal to which you're submitting. Browse through the posted abstracts for our funded grants on our website. Our abstracts are fairly detailed so they give you a good sense of the quality and type of grant that may be typically funded by IES.

IES will also post an on-demand webinar covering a wide range of topics, including a grant-writing workshop or webinars about specific funding competitions. Those will be posted in the coming weeks. We also have a Resources for Researchers page with grant information for you, including methodological resources to assist in preparing an IES research grant application, videos from past IES Training Institute's information about available data sets and tools, among other things.

(Slide 49)

Despite all the great resources I just described, program officers really are your best resource, so please contact us. Discuss your research idea with a program officer, email them a synopsis and schedule a time for a call, and email short questions.

You'll hear from us if you submitted a letter of intent. We will review draft applications, given we receive the drafts with sufficient time. We are available for discussion after you receive your reviews. And we really want to hear from you, so it's always a great idea to reach out to us.

(Slide 50)

This is the contact information for Liz Albro and Jackie Buckley, who gave the live webinar. But, again, I encourage you to reach out to the program officer that's in the Request for Applications as the contact for the grant competition you're interested in, and also follow us on Twitter and Facebook.