

NCSER Webinar
Researcher/Practitioner Partnerships in Education Research
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ONLY

Now who can be additional partners?

Partnerships may include more than one state or local education agency if they share similarities and interests; non-education state and local agencies may be partners as long as there is an education agency as a partner. Partnerships may include more than one research institution if they have shared interests and will make unique contributions to the partnership, and partnerships may include other non-research organizations. Maybe there are issue oriented or stakeholder groups involved that will contribute to the partnership and the work.

Again, one research Institute and one state or local education agency is the minimum requirement for the partnership, but we would suggest including additional partners. They will increase the quality of the research but, again, be sure to show that the additional partners have similar interests, and they have a purpose for participating in this partnership. For example, several education agencies may face a similar problem or agencies located in a region, especially small districts, may share common interests. So it may make more sense to have a group of them come in together. Having multiple education agencies also increases the significance of the proposed work.

Non-education state and local agencies may be partners as long as the education agency is also a partner. If you're looking at a specific population, say you wanted to look at foster children; you would have your education agency but you might also want to have your social service agency that works with foster children. For example, a project that combines Connecticut Department of Education and Department of Justice and a university center on children are examining education of poor, involved youth.

You can also include more than one research institution. Again, the point is to argue that they have shared interests and will make unique contributions to the work, and non-research organizations are often part of partnerships for many reasons, including the interest in an issue, access to data, provider of services, links to community and other organizations, et cetera. So one example is a project seeking to link early childhood education with kindergarten has the United Way as a partner because of its role in supporting early childhood education in the district, and its link to stakeholders.

One type of partnership that I would not recommend is the inclusion of multiple education agencies whose only similarity is that they have worked with the same research institution, rather than they all share a common education issue or problem.

So what is required for the initial research?

Research partnership projects are to carry out research on the education issue: one, having implications for student achievement and, two, identified by the education agency as being a high priority. The research is termed initial because it's not expected to fully answer the research question but to begin to address them, as well as to help lead to a future research agenda on them. IES's theory of change is that by jointly carrying out research by identifying the research questions of high importance to the agency, to developing a future research plan, a project will both strengthen the partnership and increase the agency's capacity to take part in research, and then to use research in decision-making, as they move forward.

The initial research is to prepare the partnership to carry out the types of research that IES supports under our main research program; so the education research grant programs and the special education research grant programs, which is divided into four categories, the four types of research that we fund: exploration research, such as descriptive and correlational work to identify factors that might be associated with student education outcomes; things that we can change and that are under the control of the education system. These factors then may become targets for the next category of work. So as the results of the partnership: you may think of exploration grant ideas and could submit for grants as a result of the partnership work. We support work on the development of new or revising existing interventions to improve student education outcomes, and then piloting those. We also support work to rigorously evaluate education intervention's impact on student education outcomes, as well as have a growing portfolio in measurement work; so developing a new measure, revising an existing measure, and validating it or -- validating an existing measure for its different populations.

And we talked about this capacity building through the partnership from the perspective of the LEAs and the SDAs, and capacity building may come from the research activity. If the agency is interested, the project may also include specific activities that the partners will agree or agree to -- will build the agency's capacity to propose, take part in, and use research.

So then one question is thinking about the balance of the partnership in the research work in an application.

So IES is a science agency, but considered the research in these programs of equal importance as the partnership development. So the research should be a value to both the agency and to building knowledge in the education sciences, and this balance may vary by the individual partnership. So a new partnership may need more attention to building that partnership versus an established partnership that may be able to do more on the research side. So we will return to these points and initial research in the discussion about project narrative.

So one thing that you really need to do is check the fit of your research in the research partnership grant topic, and this is not an appropriate topic for you if you're not looking at student outcomes. Please don't view the research practitioner partnership grants as an easier way to get funding to do work that falls under one of our education research grant

programs or the special education research grant program. So if you are already at a stage where you're ready to do one of those exploration, intervention, development, efficacy, or measurement grants that I mentioned and there isn't necessarily a need for the partnership work, then this is not an appropriate outlook for you. So in the partnership grant you can do some initial research in preparation for any of the type of work that IES traditionally supports, the exploration, development, and so on. But if you are past that stage, you really need to apply under the regular grants program. This is especially true for some of the development and for the evaluation projects. So if you're at that stage, you're ready to develop a program, or really just want to evaluate an intervention, then you might want to consider those under the CFGA numbers of our 305, 84305A or 324A, the education, special education research grant program, and as program officers we can help you can make some of those decisions. In some cases, an SEA or an LEA is not willing to or not interested in being a full partner so providing the level of involvement that's really needed for this type of project, but is still interested in the research. In that case, we would recommend applying under 305 or 324A with that state education agency or local education agency providing a letter of agreement to support the research.

So in thinking about the research partnership and the purpose, we really want to support partnerships of research institutions and state or local education agencies, again to identifying education issue or problem of high priority for the education agency. And the education issue that you're interested in exploring has important implications for improving student education outcomes. We want you to carry out the initial research on the education issue. We want you to develop a plan for future research on the education issue, and increase the education agency's capacity for taking part in research in using research results as they move forward with all the work in the education agency.

So what are some expected products of the grant?

We're going to help you think about -- think about the requirements for the grants, and as you put to -- a grant together, here's what we would expect by the end of the partnership grant. One is that we have a really clear description of the partnership that has developed over the course of the grant. We want a clear description of the education issue that has been addressed by the partners. We want findings from that completed initial research on that education issue. We also want to see a really concrete and clear plan for the partnership to carry out future research so what are some of the next steps? A description of the agency capacity building activities so how are you building capacity in that agency to, as we mentioned before, to understand, to use research? We'd also like to see recommendations for how the partnership could be maintained over the longer term as well as lessons learned from developing the partnership that could be used by others in forming similar partnerships.

So there was a question about the length, and we'll get into that, but it is two years. There was confusion of whether or not it was four years.

Okay, so someone else has asked about our both quantitative and qualitative required and the answer is no. I was trying to give examples of projects that did only quantitative, or you could do qualitative only, but there should be enough qualitative to actually analyze it in a qualitative manner. You don't want to be proposing, let's say, an ethnography with three teachers, because that probably won't be enough to address the education issue for the whole district. You want to have a large enough sample involved that the district feels confident you're helping to answer the education question that you've set.

Someone else has asked whether I was talking about the research practitioner partnership topic, or the evaluation programs and policies topic: this webinar is only for the researcher/practitioner partnership topic, next week we will be having another webinar that addresses the evaluation programs and policies topic.

So some important dates, and we had some questions related to this, one -- well the first important date is the application deadline, which is August 4th this year at 4:30 sharp, and we mean sharp, we don't mean 4:30 and 1 second. It is, again, a hard deadline of 4:30 pm on the 4th. And we really suggest that you upload your application several days before that deadline, don't start doing it at 4:00. One, you need to allow for slowness of the server on deadline date, or dates close to the deadline. It can slow down. And you need to allow time if a mistake is made, that you can correct that mistake and upload it again. It could be something very simple as you didn't check a box, or something very minor, but it will trip you up if you try to submit very close to that deadline and you might not be able to resolve it in time.

The letter of intent date, as you see has passed, May 19. Letters of intent are requested from IES but they are not required. And a letter of intent is really just to give us a heads up of the partnership that you are interested in submitting a grant for, and it allows us to be able to get in contact with you to talk through the different ideas that you have and your proposed partnership plan. That said, letters of intent are not required. They also help us in planning, so if you haven't written a letter of intent I would suggest you get in contact with Alan or myself and go ahead and submit us a letter of intent or a short description of the work you are pursuing under the partnership grant, and we can use that as a launching pad for discussions with you about the appropriateness, any questions you have any work towards the application process.

The application package is posted on Grants.gov, so it is available to you now to be able to download and start filling in information. And if you are awarded a grant from IES you have the ability to start that grant anywhere from July 1st and September 1st of 2017. The earliest start date is July 1st, but sometimes that isn't the best start date depending on the work that you are proposing. But you have that flexibility between July and September.

Okay so we have two questions about student outcomes: one is do student outcomes have to be measured in the initial research, and the answer is yes; all IES research has to include student outcomes and that includes these projects as well. And the other question is we have a state that cares more about attrition matriculation and selection in the teacher

pipeline, but from IES' point of view that's not enough. If you want to know attrition or selection and teach pipeline affects student outcome, because that's our final measure of any kind of policy or program: what's the effect on outcome. So if your state is only interested in keeping teachers, teacher retention, this probably isn't the right place to apply for a grant. Another question is, please distinguish again between appendix B and C.

So b really is the materials that support the measures and materials that you are using in your research in the partnership. So things that supplement that project narrative. Timelines for your research in the partnership, if you're going to be using some measures within that research, surveys, etc. The management structure of the partnership, so understanding you described it in the project narrative, but there might be a diagram that would help support what you had in the narrative related to how you would work together in the partnership: all those kinds of materials belong in appendix B. And appendix C is really focused more on the issue that you're trying to address. So if you're trying to study a particular program and trying to understand it, you can put curriculum materials in there, assessment items for understanding whether or not that program is -- how it is evaluated, etc.

So one is to help explain your research, the other is to help explain the education issue that you are doing research on.

And again, if you have questions about that as you are putting things together that is where we can provide some feedback, looking specifically at what it is. If you're confused of whether something should go to b or c we can help you out.

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