The Education Research & Development Centers Competition: Improving Opportunities and Achievement for English Learners in Secondary School Settings

Christina Chhin, Ph.D.
National Center for Education Research

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 Overview webinar for the Education Research and Development Centers Competition, which is CFDA number 84.305C. This is Christina Chhin from the National Center for Education Research. This year, the National Center for Education Research is competing three research and development centers, or R&D centers. In this webinar, I will go over the general requirements of your application to the R&D Center topic focused on Improving Opportunities and Achievement for English Learners in Secondary School Settings.

(Slide 2)

In this webinar, I will provide an overview of IES and the R&D centers, followed by information on the Secondary School R&D Center topic. I will then wrap up by providing information on the next steps for applying.

(Slide 3)

Before launching into the FY 2020 R&D center competition, I will briefly describe the core purpose of IES.

(Slide 4)

As you probably know, the U.S. Department of Education, or ED, aims to promote student achievement and preparation. The Institute of Education Sciences is the independent research arm of ED, as authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002. We are non-partisan, and 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 educational practices that improve academic achievement and access to education opportunities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of Federal and other education programs.

(Slide 5)

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 Science Office oversees the scientific peer-review processes 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 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Within NCES, you may also find many large, national longitudinal datasets, 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 also find the What Works Clearinghouse and the Regional Educational Labs.

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 (NCSER). The grant opportunities that we will be talking about today are managed through NCER. You will also notice here that the research centers are separate from the Science Office and Standards and Review staff, meaning that we, program officers, are not involved in the peer-review process. 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 6)

NCER supports field-initiated, innovative solutions to improve education research. The end goal of such research is to support policymakers, practitioners, researchers, learners, and the public in their work. Thus, IES strives to support rigorous and relevant research, disseminate the findings from education research, and train researchers to conduct high-quality research and disseminate it appropriately.

We have separate Requests for Applications (RFAs), for the research and training activities. Our largest competition, CFDA 84.305A (called "305A" for short), covers the Education Research activities, whereas the competition we are discussing today, CFDA 84.305C, covers the education research and development centers.

(Slide 7)

The National Research and Development Centers supported by IES are responsible for contributing to the solution of a specific education problem and generating new knowledge and theories relevant to the focus of the center. The Centers are also responsible for providing national leadership within the Center's topic by disseminating research and engaging in dialogue with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

And finally, the Centers are also responsible for conducting relatively rapid research and scholarship on supplemental questions that emerge within the Center's topic area. This supplemental work will vary depending on the needs of the field and IES input.

IES R&D Centers are cooperative agreements in which the institution that holds the grant and IES work together to ensure a successful project. This means that, during the life of a Center, IES will provide input and guidance on the Center's activities.

(Slide 8)

For FY2020, IES has identified a need for a large-scale, coordinated research effort to explore and advance the available knowledge and tools related to English learners' learning opportunities in secondary school settings and how these learning opportunities affect outcomes. So, under the Improving Opportunities and Achievement for English Learners in Secondary School Settings R&D Center, researchers will conduct studies to identify systemic and instructional influences, including policies, rules, and processes that affect ELs' access to the general curriculum and its relation to education outcomes.

(Slide 9)

The Secondary School ELs Center will engage in a focused program of research to examine the instruction that secondary school English learners receive. Specifically, the Center will carry out two lines of research.

First, the Center will identify and describe the policies and system-level practices that are associated with secondary ELs' access to the general curriculum and their relation to education outcomes. If possible, the Center will test the link between these policies and practices and ELs' access to the general curriculum.

Second, the Center will identify, with some development, if necessary, at least one approach to improving secondary school ELs' access to and ability to learn from instruction in general education courses where English is the language of instruction. Observe and test, where possible, the links between these practices, ELs' access to the general curriculum, and ELs' education outcomes.

Since the two components of the focused program of research require different types of expertise, applicants should consider collaborative partnerships to ensure that the Center's key personnel reflect the diverse knowledge and skills necessary to carry out this work. Applicants may propose to carry out these two major activities either sequentially or simultaneously.

(Slide 10)

When preparing your application, you must attend to both the requirements and recommendations listed in the RFA. For your application to go forward to peer review, you must meet the general requirements for an application, along with the specific requirements for the R&D Center topic. These requirements will be the primary focus of today's webinar, but you should also read the details about all of the requirements in the RFA.

In addition to the requirements, there are additional recommendations in each Center topic area to help you write the project narrative. We strongly encourage you to incorporate the recommendations into your Project Narrative and relevant appendices. IES reviewers will use the recommendations to help guide them as they score applications, and applications that attend to all of the recommendations are more likely to be funded.

Where appropriate, the recommendations are aligned with the new IES Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER) Principles to ensure that research is transparent, actionable, and focused on meaningful outcomes that have the potential to improve education.

(Slide 11)

The general requirements specific to the Secondary School ELs Center include:
1) The sample must focus on students in grades 6 to 12 who are currently identified as English learners by their education agency's definitions.
2) The research must include measures of academic outcomes. IES supports research on a diverse set of academic outcomes across development that fall under two categories. The first category includes academic outcomes that reflect learning and achievement in academic content areas. The second category includes academic outcomes that reflect learners' successful progression through education systems. You may also include measures of social-behavioral competencies and employment and earnings, in addition to academic outcomes, if they are relevant to the research you are proposing. We define social and behavioral competencies as the social skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are important to learners' success in school and beyond. In addition, we define employment and earnings outcomes as things such as hours of employment, job stability, and wages and benefits.
3) The setting requirement. Please note, all proposed research must be relevant to education in the United States and must address factors under the control of the U.S. education system. For the Secondary Schools EL Center, the research must be conducted in education settings that include grades 6 to 12 or on data collected from such settings, and you must plan to conduct research in at least two states or territories.

(Slide 12)

The Proposal Narrative is the heart of your application. It is where you set out your plan of research and the justification for it. The Center Narrative is composed of five sections, and we recommended that it be no more than 35 pages. The five sections are Significance, the Research Plan, the National Leadership and Outreach Activities, Management and Institutional Resources, and Personnel. In the RFA, you will find a list of requirements and recommendations for each of these sections.

There are also a series of appendices you will need to submit with your proposal. Some are required, but others are optional. For information about these, you should refer to the RFA and discuss any questions or concerns with the program officer listed in the RFA.

(Slide 13)

Now, I'm going to highlight some specific requirements and recommendations for each section of the Center Narrative.

The Significance section is the first section of the narrative and should set the stage for your proposed work. Here, you should explain why it is important to study the policies, system-level

practices, and approaches you have identified as critical to improving secondary school ELs' access to the general curriculum and education outcomes. In doing so, you must describe this conceptual framework that will guide your work; the policies, system-level practices, and approaches you will study; and the research questions you will address.

(Slide 14)

Under the Research Plan section, you will describe your research designs and methods for your focused program of research and demonstrate how they will allow you to address your research questions.

Items you must describe under the Research Plan include the characteristics of your sample; research design and methods for each study proposed; power analysis, if a causal study is proposed; and the data analysis plans. Given the amount of information you need to include, the Research Plan may be the longest section of the Center Narrative.

It is also recommended that you organize the Research Plan into two subsections, one for each of the components of the Secondary School ELs Center's focused program of research, and explain how the two components of the focused program of research are complementary.

(Slide 15)

The Secondary School ELs Center is also expected to provide strong national leadership, capacity building, and outreach activities. In your proposal narrative, when you discuss leadership and outreach activities, you should make sure to discuss the audiences you intend to reach and how you will reach them.

(Slide 16)

Here are some examples of the activities that the Secondary School ELs Center can engage in. We do expect each Center to have a website where they share information with multiple audiences. Also, make sure you identify the researchers and practitioners you intend to work with while engaging in your leadership and outreach activities.

(Slide 17)

Under the Management and Institutional Resources section, you will need to demonstrate that you have the organizational structure, institutional capacity, and access to the resources needed to manage the project, to conduct the project, and to disseminate the results of the project.

You will want to make it clear that you have people and resources available to do the work you have discussed in the previous sections. If you plan to work in schools or other education delivery settings in the first year, you should include letters of agreement from education organizations. Also, if the developer or distributer of a program or intervention is working as part of or with the Center, describe their role and how you will maintain objectivity.

(Slide 18)

Under the Personnel section, you want to demonstrate that your team possesses the appropriate training and experience to carry out the focused program of research and national leadership activities and will have sufficient time to commit to the project. In particular, for key personnel involved in the project, you should identify and describe their:

- qualifications to carry out the proposed work;
- roles and responsibilities within the project;
- percent of time and calendar months per year to be devoted to the project;
- past success at disseminating research findings to policymaker and practitioner audiences and in peer-reviewed scientific journals;
- experience that is relevant to national leadership activities, and
- experience and capacity to manage a project of this size and type.

(Slide 19)

Finally, the Secondary School ELs Center is also expected to conduct supplemental activities, such as meetings and smaller-scale studies that speak to other issues that are important within the context of EL education in secondary settings. The Secondary School ELs Center will work cooperatively with IES to select and design these supplemental activities to respond to pressing policy and practice needs within the topic covered by the Center. For this reason, IES does not expect a detailed plan for these supplemental activities in the application but does expect the grantee to set aside five percent of the maximum grant award or approximately $500,000 for supplemental activities.

(Slide 20)

The RFA highlights specific recommendations under each section of the Center Narrative to improve the quality of your application. I've highlighted here some of those recommendations.

First, I want to mention that IES expects your application to include at least two studies to address the focused program of research for the Secondary School ELs Center. One study should identify barriers to EL's access to the general curriculum, and a second study should examine an approach to overcoming those barriers.

Each study should address the requirements and recommendations under the five sections of the Center Narrative.

Also, as appropriate to your research questions, IES recommends that you refer to the Recommendations for project types in its Education Research Grants Program to make sure your Research Plan is complete. For instance, if you're proposing to conduct an Exploration type study as part of the Center's focused program of research, you may want to refer to the recommendations outlined under that project type in the Education Research Grants RFA.

(Slide 21)

The Secondary Schools ELs Center awards will be limited to a maximum of five years duration and 10 million dollars across the five years. In terms of budget allocations, please note that no more than 75 percent of the budget should be allocated for the focused program of research, and at least five percent of the budget should be allocated for the supplemental studies.

(Slide 22)

Now that you know what needs to be done in your application, what should you do next?

(Slide 23)

As mentioned earlier, you should carefully read the full RFA; this webinar only includes highlights. See Part 1 of the RFA for a summary of changes from the previous year.

Of note, we have a separate Application Submission Guide this year. Since it is now a separate document from the RFA, you will need to access and download it separately. Read it carefully, as there are many instructions that will help you submit your application correctly and on time. You may need to set up accounts ahead of the time of deadline, so don't wait until the last minute!

(Slide 24)

Letters of Intent are strongly encouraged, but not required, so you may still submit an application even if you did not submit an LOI on time. Listed here is the information you should include as part of your letter of intent.

(Slide 25)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305C, the R&D Center competition. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than September 26, 2019 at 11:59:59 PM Eastern Time. The Letters of Intent are due on July 11, 2019, and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on July 11 as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2020, and September 1, 2020.

(Slide 26)

There are a few things we want to leave you with before we finish this webinar. First, read the Request for Applications. There is a lot of important detail in the RFA. IES has spent a great deal of time over the years making the RFA a user-friendly guide to developing a high-quality application, so be sure you know those requirements and recommendations for the Center topic to which you are submitting.

Browse through the posted abstracts of our funded Center grants on our website. Our abstracts are fairly detailed so that they will give you a good sense of the quality and type of grant that may typically get funded by IES.

IES will also post on-demand webinars –webinars that you can access at your convenience– 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 institutes, information about available datasets and tools, among other things.

(Slide 27)

The best way to develop a competitive application is to discuss your idea with and receive feedback from a program officer. So, discuss your Center idea with a program officer by emailing a project synopsis or short questions, or schedule a time for a call.

You will hear from us if you submit a letter of intent. Time permitting, we will also review draft applications. And finally, we are available for discussion after you receive your reviews.

(Slide 28)

If you have any questions about submitting an application to the Secondary School ELs Center competition, please feel free to reach out to me for assistance. Thank you.

The Education Research & Development Centers Competition: Postsecondary Center

Meredith Larson, Ph.D.
National Center for Education Research

Transcript

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

(Slide 29) – New Webinar begins #2

Welcome to one of three webinars for the Education Research and Development Centers Competition, CFDA number 84.305C. My name is Meredith Larson, and I'll be leading you through this webinar, in which, we will go over the general requirements for your application for the Improving Teaching and Learning in Postsecondary Institutions Center, or the Postsecondary Center.

(Slide 30)

In this webinar, I will provide an overview of IES, its research centers, and the R&D centers. Then, I will discuss the Postsecondary Center, followed by the next steps you should take.

(Slide 31)

So, who are we? And what do we do here at IES?

(Slide 32)

As you probably know, the U.S. Department of Education, or ED, aims to promote student achievement and preparation. The Institute of Education Sciences, or IES, is the research branch of ED, as authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002. We are non-partisan, and 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, and evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

(Slide 33)

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 Science 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 National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP assessment. Within NCES, you will also find many large, national longitudinal datasets 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 (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 N-C-S-E-R or NCSER. The grant opportunities that we will be talking about today are managed through NCER.

You will also notice here that the research centers are separate from the Science Office and Standards and Review staff, meaning that we, program officers, are not involved in the peer-review process. 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 34)

NCER supports field-initiated, innovative solutions to improve education research. The end goal of such research is to support policymakers, practitioners, researchers, learners, and the public in their work. Thus, IES strives to support rigorous, relevant research, the dissemination of findings from education research, and the development of researchers prepared to conduct high-quality research and disseminate about it appropriately.

We have separate Requests for Applications (RFAs), for the research and training activities. Our largest competition, CFDA 84.305A (called "305A" for short), covers the Education Research activities, whereas the competition we are discussing today, CFDA 84.305C, covers the education research and development centers.

(Slide 35)

The R&D centers are responsible for contributing to the solution of a specific education problem and generating new knowledge and theories relevant to the focus of the center. The Centers are also responsible for providing national leadership within the Center's topic by disseminating research and engaging in dialogue with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. And finally, the Centers are also responsible for conducting relatively rapid research and scholarship on supplemental questions that emerge within the center's topic area. This supplemental work will vary depending on the needs of the field and IES input.

IES R&D Centers are cooperative agreements in which the institution that holds the grant and IES work together to ensure a successful project. This means that, during the life of a Center, IES will help provide input and guidance on the Center's activities.

(Slide 36)

And now for the main topic of today: The Postsecondary Center. The Postsecondary Center will examine instructional innovations for improving postsecondary student learning outcomes. In particular, the Postsecondary Center will examine instructional innovations that open- or broad-access institutions are or could be using to improve postsecondary student learning outcomes.

(Slide 37)

Broadly speaking, the purpose of this Center is to help improve teaching and learning at the postsecondary level.

Postsecondary institutions, from community colleges through research universities, are innovating ways to help improve the classroom experience and to ensure that students are learning the skills and knowledge they will need to thrive. However, it is unclear what innovations work, for whom, and under what conditions. It is also unclear how to help improve the pipeline that connects basic research, developers, the market, and the institutions and practitioners that need the innovations.

This Center aims to address these gaps in knowledge and help improve the ability of all stakeholders to collaborate with and learn from one another and to perform their jobs better, whether that job is designing an innovation, choosing the appropriate innovation, or determining whether the innovation is having the desired outcome.

Of particular concern to IES is addressing the needs of open- and broad-access institutions, which include community colleges and four-year institutions that accept at least 75 percent of applicants. IES is also concerned about the teaching and learning outcomes in credit-bearing courses.

IES is also interested in learning about how institutions and/or instructors are leveraging technology to improve teaching and learning. Thus, the Center could consider focusing on one or more technology-based innovations, which we will talk about a bit more shortly.

IES does not have a preference for the particular learning outcome. It could be a single outcome, such as improved reading, writing, or math, or even credit accumulation or it could be a combination of outcomes.

(Slide 38)

Postsecondary institutions and faculty have been creating and adopting various types of innovations, and researchers have been creating innovations for these users.

Some innovations are implemented at the institutional or department level. For example, some universities or colleges have made large investments to redesign how instruction takes place by creating units to design, implement, and improve online-course options, such as fully online, hybrid, or blended options for courses or programs of study.

Faculty have also been innovating their own classes and programs, building off their experience and leveraging the tools they have on hand. For example, instructors may have innovative ways of using Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis or discussion boards, to get students engaged, give them more practice, or otherwise improve the learning experience.

Developers, both those at postsecondary institutions and those outside of the system, have also been creating innovative tools and approaches. Some of these are already being integrated into classes. These innovations include a wide range of things, from interactive tutoring systems and artificial intelligence to eTextbooks.

Your Center can focus on any innovation, from the large investments to the more classroom-level ones. You'll just want to make a case for why the one or ones that you've selected are significant.

(Slide 39)

Before moving into what IES hopes the Center will achieve, I'd like to mention a few things that make this Center different from previous postsecondary centers and from the other Centers in this year's RFA.

First, there is a strong connection between the focused program of research and the national leadership activities, and this is echoed throughout the topic description. In fact, the Significance section should help build a case for not only the Research Plan, but also the leadership activities.

Because of this strong connection, this Center is allowed to allocate more resources for national leadership activities than is typical. In fact, there is a lower limit on the percent you can allocate for the research activities than in other centers.

Finally, it's worth noting that unlike previous postsecondary centers, this Center must focus on credit-bearing courses and cannot focus exclusively on developmental education.

(Slide 40)

Now that we have outlined some of the things that make this Center special, let's go through some of the requirements and expectations for the Center. Like all Centers, this one will have to conduct a focused program of research, national leadership capacity building and outreach activities, and supplemental activities. Combined, these must address the research gaps in what we know about teaching and learning in postsecondary education.

Also, like every other Center, you must have a plan for sharing your data. For postsecondary innovations, especially those that use technology, there is a need for non-proprietary data to be available to others so that they can form theories about what works for whom and under what conditions.

(Slide 41)

The Postsecondary Center's focused program of research will address fundamental questions about innovations that may improve postsecondary learning outcomes and the conditions under which they may be most beneficial and for whom.

The goal of this work is two-fold. First, IES hopes this research will help the community of postsecondary stakeholders, including researchers, developers, administrators, and instructors, better understand the opportunities for and the benefits and limitations of technology-supported instructional innovations.

Second, IES hopes this work will lead to improved theories of change, practical guidance, and training materials that various stakeholders can use to strengthen their work.

IES does not have a particular research project type in mind. That is, the focused program of research may include exploration, development, evaluation, and/or measurement work, depending on how you envision the problems and the solutions. The important thing will be figuring out the types of questions you want to address and then aligning the correct methods. Ideally, your Center's questions will provide answers that could move theory and practice.

(Slide 42)

The Center's national leadership, capacity building, and outreach activities should build off of and/or feed into the aforementioned focused program of research and should address the hurdles the field, which includes everyone from faculty through researchers, faces when trying to innovate.

IES encourages applicants to consider the following three hurdles facing the field and align its activities to addressing these hurdles.

First, the field and public may face the lack of clear, objective information about the benefits, costs, and implications of such innovations and, thus, not knowing what to do. We call this the information hurdle.

Second, administrators and faculty may struggle to choose the most appropriate innovation or innovations to meet their needs for a range of reasons, and they may have difficulty evaluating whether their investments are working as intended. We call this the adoption and implementation hurdle.

Finally, there may be a lack of coordination among researchers, developers, and the market. We call this the research to market pipeline hurdle.

(Slide 43)

The Center should identify the audiences it intends to focus on and how it could best meet their needs. These strategies may include a range of activities, from social media campaigns to hands-on training. Here are a few examples presented for each hurdle.

To address the information hurdle, you could create a website with links and documents; write working papers, journal publications, and briefs; conduct a social media campaign; and present at professional conferences, among other things.

To address the adoption and implementation hurdle, you could create toolkits and rubrics, conduct workshops and trainings, or host other activities designed for institutional staff, such as instructional developers and institutional researchers.

To address the research-to-market pipeline hurdle, you could develop research toolkits, host workshops on moving to market, or conduct other training activities, such as training people to use the Center's data or give them hands-on experience conducting research.

One thing to note is that you must host a yearly convening of IES-funded researchers and developers. We ask that you hold this at the annual PI meeting.

(Slide 44)

The final major set of activities are the supplemental activities, such as meetings or smaller-scale studies. These activities will support the focused program of research activities and/or the national leadership and outreach activities. The Postsecondary Center will work cooperatively with IES to select and design these activities in response to policy and practice needs relevant to the Center's topic. For this reason, IES does not expect a detailed plan for these supplemental activities in the application but does expect a budget set aside of five percent of the maximum grant award ($500,000) for them.

In your application, you will want to demonstrate that you have the staff and capacity to conduct these activities, and you could provide a few examples of what you might do.

(Slide 45)

Here is a summary slide of the award maximums that you must keep in mind when preparing your proposal. Note that no more than 60 percent of your budget should go to the focused program of research.

(Slide 46)

Now let's look at how to prepare the narrative section of your proposal. This is the heart of your application and the part reviewers will pay close attention to.

(Slide 47)

When reading the RFA, one of the first things you will encounter in the topic section are the requirements. For your application to go forward to peer review, you must meet the general requirements for an application, along with the specific requirements for your topic area.

In addition to the requirements, there are additional recommendations in each Center topic area to help you write the project narrative. We strongly encourage you to incorporate the recommendations into your Project Narrative and relevant appendices. IES reviewers use the recommendations to help guide them as they score the applications, and applications that attend to all of the recommendations are more likely to be funded.

Where appropriate, the recommendations are aligned with the new IES Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER) Principles to ensure that research is transparent, actionable, and focused on meaningful outcomes that have the potential to dramatically improve education.

(Slide 48)

For your application to be sent forward, you must meet the sample, outcomes, and setting requirements.

For this Center, the sample requirements are that your research focus on postsecondary learners. Postsecondary students with or at risk for disabilities may be included in your proposed research activities and could be the primary focus.

The outcome requirements are that your research must include measures of academic outcomes. You may also include measures of social-behavioral competencies and employment and earnings, if these are relevant to the research you are proposing. For postsecondary work, academic outcomes include access to, persistence in, progression through, and completion of postsecondary education, which includes developmental education courses and bridge programs, as well as programs that lead to occupational certificates, associate's, or bachelor's degrees; and learning, achievement, and higher-order thinking in postsecondary courses.

Finally, for this Center, the setting requirements are that your research must be conducted in open- or broad-access postsecondary education settings, which may include online institutions of higher education or with data from such settings. Your research may include other postsecondary education settings as well.

(Slide 49)

In your application, you must submit a proposal narrative. As I mentioned earlier, this is the heart of your application where you set out your plan of research and the justification for it. The peer reviewers focus on this narrative.

The Center Narrative is composed of five sections, and we recommended that it be no more than 35 pages.

The five sections are Significance, the Research Plan, the National Leadership and Outreach Activities, Management and Institutional Resources, and Personnel. Each of these will have a set of requirements and a list of recommendations.

There are also a series of appendices you will need to submit with your proposal. Some are required, but others are optional. For information about these, you should refer to the RFA and discuss any questions or concerns with me, the program officer.

(Slide 50)

The first section of your Center Narrative focuses on the significance of your Center.

In this section, you will discuss the topic and primary purpose of your Center, why your Center would be important, and what important questions and/or needs your Center would address. This is where you're building your case for why your work would be valuable.

In this section, you must describe the conceptual framework that will guide the Postsecondary Center's work, including the national leadership, capacity building and outreach activities; the innovation or innovations that will be the focus of the research; and the research questions the Postsecondary Center will address.

(Slide 51)

The second section, the Research Plan, should link to the Significance section and clearly align with it. In this section, you're providing details about the way you would answer the questions or needs you raised in the Significance section. You will provide specific details about how you would conduct this work, including things such as the setting, sample, methods, measures, analysis plan, and other elements that you will use.

You must describe the characteristics of your sample, research design and methods for each proposed study, power analyses for each study, the cost analysis plan for implementing the innovation or innovations the Postsecondary Center is focusing on, and data analysis plans for each study.

(Slide 52)

In the third section, when you discuss leadership and outreach activities, you should make sure to discuss the audiences you intend to reach and how you will reach them. Be sure to align these activities with the requirements and recommendations within the Postsecondary Center topic.

In this section, you must describe how you will disseminate what the Postsecondary Center is learning to technical and nontechnical audiences; build capacity to leverage teaching and learning technologies; and improve the pipelines connecting research, development, and the postsecondary market, including plans for a yearly convening with IES-funded researchers and developers.

(Slide 53)

In the fourth section, the Management and Institutional Resources area, you should describe plans and procedures for overall management of the Center and its activities and demonstrate that you have the capacity to conduct the supplemental activities and leadership and outreach. You will want to make it clear that you have people and resources available to do the work you have discussed in the previous sections. If you plan to work in schools or other education delivery settings in the first year, you must include a letter of agreement from the education organization or organizations. If the developer or distributor of a program or intervention is working as part of or with the Center, describe their role and how you will maintain objectivity.

In this section, you must describe the organizational structure of the Center, plans and procedures for the overall management of the Center, and resources to conduct the work of the Center.

(Slide 54)

The final section is the Personnel section. Here, you should describe the key personnel at your institution and, if applicable, at other subaward institutions. You should describe their training, experience, and role and their time on the project, so it is clear that they will be committing sufficient time to the project. This is where you demonstrate your overall team's expertise in the relevant content areas or your team's methodological and dissemination expertise.

(Slide 55)

So, what are your next steps?

(Slide 56)

As mentioned earlier, you should carefully read the full RFA. This webinar only includes highlights.

This year we have a separate Application Submission Guide. Since it is now a separate document from the RFA, you will need to access and download it separately.

Read it carefully, as there are many instructions that will help you submit your application correctly and on time. You may need to set up accounts ahead of the deadline, so don't wait until the last minute.

(Slide 57)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305C, the R&D Center competition. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than September 26th, 2019, at 11:59:59 PM Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on July 11, 2019, and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on July 11 as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2020, and September 1st, 2020.

(Slide 58)

We ask that you submit an LOI. This is a non-binding document, and we use it to determine the types of reviewers we may need and other logistical concerns. Also, I will respond to all LOIs I receive, so it's a nice way to make sure you're on my email list.

(Slide 59)

There are a few other things I want to leave you with before we finish this webinar. I suggest you review some of the other Center grants so that you can get a sense of their size and scope, keeping in mind that this Center will be different from previous ones. Our abstracts are fairly

detailed so they will give you a good sense of the quality and type of grant that might typically get funded by IES.

IES will also post on-demand webinars, webinars that you can access at your convenience, 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. I especially recommend the Basic Overview webinar.

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 institutes, information about available datasets and tools, among other things.

(Slide 60)

The best way to develop a competitive application is to discuss your idea with and receive feedback from a program officer. My email is listed here on the slide.

If you have an idea, feel free to email me a synopsis or short questions or set up a time for a call. If you submit an LOI, I will reach out to you. I can even read through sections of or drafts of proposals, if I have time.

Thank you for coming to this webinar and for considering this opportunity. I look forward to hearing from you!

The Education Research & Development Centers Competition: Improving Access, Instruction, and Outcomes in Gifted Education

Corinne Alfeld, Ph.D.
National Center for Education Research

Transcript

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

(Slide 61) – New Webinar begins #3

Welcome to the third webinar for the Education Research and Development Centers Competition, CFDA number 84.305C. This year, the National Center for Education Research is competing three Research and Development Centers, or R&D centers.

This webinar is tailored for the third Center topic being competed for FY 2020: Improving Access, Instruction, and Outcomes in Gifted Education.

Separate webinars are also available for the other two R&D Center topics. Those webinars go over the same general information but include specific information about the relevant Center.

My name is Corinne Alfeld, and I am the program officer for the Gifted R&D Center topic in the National Center for Education Research. Let's get started.

(Slide 62)

In this webinar, I will first provide an overview of IES. Next, I will talk about both general requirements for R&D Centers and specific requirements for the Gifted Education Center. Finally, I will provide information on next steps for R&D Center applicants.

(Slide 63)

Before launching into the FY 2020 R&D Center competition, I will briefly describe the core purpose of the Department of Education and IES.

(Slide 64)

As you probably know, the U.S. Department of Education aims to promote student achievement and preparation. The Institute of Education Sciences is the research arm of the Department, as authorized by the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002.

(Slide 65)

IES is non-partisan. It is charged with providing rigorous evidence to inform education policy and practice, 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, and evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

(Slide 66)

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 Science Office oversees the scientific peer-review processes 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 National Assessment of Educational Progress, or the NAEP assessment. Within NCES, you will also find many national large longitudinal datasets, including, for example, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study.

The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, or NCEE, 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 (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 N-C-S-E-R, NCSER. The grant opportunities that we will be talking about today are managed through NCER.

You will also notice here that the research Centers are separate from the Science Office and Standards and Review staff, meaning that we, program officers, are not involved in the peer-review process. This allows us to work closely with you, providing technical assistance to you on your applications. I will discuss more about that later in this webinar.

(Slide 67)

NCER supports field-initiated, innovative solutions to improve education research and inform policy and practice.

This includes rigorous, relevant research, the dissemination of findings from education research to various stakeholders, and the development and training of researchers prepared to conduct high-quality research and disseminate their findings.

We have separate Requests for Applications (RFAs), for the research and training activities. The competition we are discussing today, CFDA 84.305C, covers Education Research and Development, or R&D, Centers.

(Slide 68)

The R&D Centers contribute to solving U.S. education problems and generating new knowledge and theories relevant to the focus of the Center. The Centers also provide national leadership within the Center's topic by disseminating research and engaging in dialogue with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. And finally, the Centers are responsible for conducting research

on supplemental questions that emerge within the Center's topic area. This supplemental work will vary depending on the needs of the field and IES input.

IES R&D Centers are cooperative agreements in which the institution that holds the grant and IES work together to ensure a successful project. This means that, during the life of a Center, IES will help provide input and guidance on the Center's activities.

(Slide 69)

For the FY 2020 Education Research and Development Center competition, you must submit your application to one of the three R&D Center topics listed below.

Topic 1 is Improving Opportunities and Achievement for English Learners in Secondary School Settings, called the Secondary School ELs Center for short.

Topic 2 is Improving Teaching and Learning in Postsecondary Institutions, called the Postsecondary Center for short.

Topic 3 is Improving Access, Instruction, and Outcomes in Gifted Education, called the "Gifted Center" for short. That's the one we've been talking about on this webinar. You should indicate which Center you are applying to on your application. See the Submission guide for more information about this.

(Slide 70)

In this webinar, I am only providing information about the National Research and Development Center on Improving Access, Instruction, and Outcomes in Gifted Education (the Gifted Center).

The Gifted Center will examine how state, district, and school leaders and educators can implement policies and practices to better identify and serve gifted learners from all demographic backgrounds and improve student outcomes through gifted education.

Other Centers have separate webinars that cover much of the same information as this one, with the exception of some Center-specific requirements.

(Slide 71)

The Gifted R&D Center is being competed by IES in fulfillment of the requirement in the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program, in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), for a National Research Center for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth.

(Slide 72)

When preparing your application for any of the Centers, make sure you attend to both the Requirements and the Recommendations in the RFA. You must meet the minimum requirements

in order for your application to be sent forward for peer review. Make sure you read these carefully.

In addition to the requirements, the RFA provides additional recommendations in each Center topic area to help you write a competitive application. These are what the reviewers will focus on when scoring applications. The recommendations include suggestions and guidance that applicants should keep in mind when preparing their application narratives and relevant appendices.

Where appropriate, the recommendations are aligned with the new IES Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER) Principles, to ensure that research is transparent, actionable, and focused on meaningful outcomes that have the potential to dramatically improve education.

(Slide 73)

In order for your R&D Center application to be reviewed, you must meet the requirements in the RFA for education outcomes, education settings, the focused program of research, other Center activities, and award limits. We will talk about each one of these in this webinar.

Note that the RFA contains different requirements and recommendations for each R&D Center. Because each Center is different, it is important that you attend to your topic's requirements and recommendations closely and not assume that they are the same as the other Centers in this year's competition or to other Centers in other years.

(Slide 74)

Each R&D Center has a different focused program of research. In the focused program of research for the Gifted Center, IES expects applicants to propose several research projects that, together, have the potential to improve access, instruction, and student outcomes for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The prior Gifted Center discovered that very few districts offer programs to identify and recruit potentially gifted students and that English learners, free- or reduced-lunch recipients, and Hispanic and Black students are less likely to be identified as gifted, even if they have the same reading and mathematics achievement as students not from these groups. The new Gifted Center will be expected to build on the findings from the prior Gifted Center.

The RFA includes several project ideas, but IES also welcomes and encourages other project ideas developed by the field.

(Slide 75)

All research supported under the R&D Centers program must measure academic outcomes. These vary by topic, age, and setting; reflect learning and achievement and/or successful progression through the education system; and may include social/behavioral competencies or employment or earnings outcomes, as relevant.

For the Gifted R&D Center, you may also include other outcomes, which I'll talk about momentarily.

(Slide 76)

All proposed research must also be relevant to education in the United States and must address factors under the control of the U.S. education system.

Education in the U.S. is delivered in a wide range of formal settings. In addition, there are also formal programs under the control of education agencies that take place out of school, including after-school, distance learning, and online programs.

IES does not support research that occurs in informal contexts outside of education systems and outside the control of education agencies. Contact an IES Program Officer if you have questions about the education setting or settings that you have identified for your proposed research. Please note that the setting requirements vary by Center topic.

(Slide 77)

For the Gifted Center, your sample must focus on students in the K-12 age range. You can include some or all of those grades.

For your outcomes, your research must include academic outcome measures, as I mentioned previously. You may also include measures of social-behavioral competencies and post high school outcomes, if these are relevant. You may also include milestones and achievement metrics that are specific to gifted learners, such as grade acceleration and special honors, or alternate measures of giftedness.

For your research settings, your research must be conducted in K-12 schools or use data collected from K-12 schools. You must plan to conduct research in at least two states or territories.

Please read the Gifted Center topic in the RFA carefully so that you can include information specific to the Gifted Center in your application. I'm highlighting some of the important unique parts, but please read all of the requirements and recommendations for each section for the project narrative under the Gifted Center topic.

(Slide 78)

Each Center will also be responsible for two types of other activities: National Leadership and Dissemination Activities and Supplemental Studies. First, we will discuss National Leadership and dissemination.

There are a few general elements that all Centers should include in this section of the narrative. All Centers are responsible for engaging with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

You'll need to have a website to post information about the Center, resources, and reports. You'll need to think about how to use technology in innovative ways to disseminate your findings to various audiences. You'll also need to make your final research data available for others to use, and you'll need to submit final manuscripts for papers to the Education Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC).

In your application, you should describe the audiences your Center will intend to reach and the activities you will use to engage those audiences. Finally, you should show your capacity for leadership and outreach. Note that expectations and recommendations for leadership and dissemination vary by topic.

(Slide 79)

I mentioned earlier that each Center has its own unique requirements and recommendations. As an example, for a competitive Gifted Center application, in the Leadership and Outreach section you should (1) describe how the Center's work will build the capacity of local and state education agencies to address the problem of underrepresentation to ensure all gifted students' access to effective gifted education and (2) describe how you will involve other Javits-funded researchers, for example, by coordinating and communicating, hosting meetings, and conducting joint conference presentations to share research and findings.

Once again, please refer to the RFA for a full list of recommendations an application for the Gifted R&D Center topic.

(Slide 80)

Each Center is also responsible for supplemental activities. These can be meetings or smaller-scale studies. The Center will work cooperatively with IES to select and design these supplemental activities. Therefore, in your application, there is no need to provide a detailed plan for the supplemental activities. You should instead show your capacity for conducting supplemental activities and set aside at least five percent of your total budget for these activities.

(Slide 81)

The final requirement that you must attend to is the overall limits for the Center. Each R&D Center can last for up to five years. Please note that the maximum grant amount for the Gifted Center is $5 million. At least five percent of each Center's budget, which is $250,000 for the Gifted Center, should be reserved for supplemental activities to be designed in collaboration with IES.

(Slide 82)

Now let's review the general elements of preparing the narrative for your proposal.

(Slide 83)

The Proposal Narrative is the heart of your application where you set out your plan of research and the justification for it. The peer reviewers focus on the Center Narrative, which is composed of five sections, and we recommended that it be no longer than 35 pages.

The five sections are Significance, Research Plan, National Leadership and Outreach Activities, Management and Institutional Resources, and Personnel. In the RFA, you will find a list of requirements and recommendations for each of these sections. Note that both the requirements and recommendations vary by topic, so you will want to read them closely.

There are also a series of appendices you will need to submit with your proposal. Some are required, but others are optional. For information about these, you should refer to the RFA and discuss any questions or concerns with the program officer for your topic.

(Slide 84)

The first two sections of your Center Narrative focus on the significance of your Center and the focused program of research that I mentioned earlier. In the Significance section, you will discuss the topic and primary purpose of your Center, why your Center would be important, and what important questions and/or needs your Center would address. This is where you're building your case for why your work would be valuable.

The Research Plan should link to the Significance section and clearly align with it. In this section, you're providing details about the way you would answer the questions or needs you raised in the Significance section. You will provide specific details about how you would conduct this work, including things such as the setting, sample, methods, measures, analysis plan, and other elements that you will use.

(Slide 85)

In your proposal narrative, when you discuss leadership and outreach activities, you should make sure to discuss the audiences you intend to reach and how you will communicate with them. IES expects that each Center will have a website where they share information with multiple audiences. Make sure you identify the researchers and practitioners you intend to work with while engaging in your leadership and outreach activities. Be sure to align these activities not only to the topic you have chosen, but also the requirements and recommendations within that topic, as stated in the RFA.

In the fourth section, the Management and Institutional Resources section, you should describe the organizational structure and management of the Center and its activities and demonstrate that you have the capacity to conduct the supplemental activities and leadership and outreach. You will want to make it clear that you have people and resources available to do the work you have discussed in the previous sections. If you plan to work in schools or other education delivery settings in the first year, you must include letters of agreement from those educational organizations. If the developer or distributer of a program or intervention is working as part of or with the Center, describe their role and how you will maintain objectivity.

(Slide 86)

The final section is the Personnel section. Here, you should describe the key personnel at your institution and, if applicable, at other subaward institutions. You should describe each person's training, experience, and role and their time on the project so that it is clear that they will be committing sufficient time to the project. This is where you demonstrate your overall team's expertise in the relevant content area or areas and your team's methodological and dissemination expertise.

(Slide 87)

One or more research teams may be involved in the different proposed studies. The proposed studies can be of any of the IES project types. Across the studies, IES expects the successful applicant to conduct their research in multiple settings that systematically vary across different populations and learning contexts. Such variations should improve our ability to identify what interventions work for whom and under what conditions.

(Slide 88)

Now that you know what needs to be in your application, what should you do next?

(Slide 89)

As mentioned frequently in this webinar, you should carefully read the full RFA; I have only included highlights here. This, year, we have a separate Application Submission Guide. Since it is now a separate document from the RFA, you will need to access and download it separately. Read it carefully, as there are many instructions that will help you submit your application correctly and on time. You may need to set up accounts ahead of the deadline, so don't wait until the last minute!

(Slide 90)

This slide includes important dates for 84.305C R&D Center competition. Applications must be received at Grants.gov no later than September 26, 2019, at 11:59:59 PM Eastern Time. Letters of intent are due on July 11, 2019, and the application package will be posted on Grants.gov on July 11 as well. The possible start dates for the award are between July 1, 2020, and September 1, 2020.

(Slide 91)

A Letter of Intent (LOI) is expected, but not required or binding. You can submit online at this web address. Your LOI should include the following: a descriptive title; the R&D Center topic that you will address; a brief description of the proposed R&D Center; name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and email address of the Principal Investigator and any Co-Principal Investigators; name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators and

contractors; the duration of the proposed R&D Center; and the estimated total budget request. Please attend to the budget maximums for your R&D Center topic.

(Slide 92)

There are a few things I want to leave you with before we finish this webinar. First, read the Request for Applications. There is a lot of detail and important detail in the RFA. IES has spent a great deal of time over the years making the RFA a user-friendly guide to developing a high-quality application, so be sure you know those requirements and recommendations for the Center topic to which you are submitting.

Browse through the posted abstracts of our funded Center grants on our website. Our abstracts are fairly detailed so they will give you a good sense of the quality and type of grant that may typically get funded by IES.

IES will also post on-demand webinars, webinars that you can access at your convenience, covering a wide range of topics, including a grant-writing workshop or webinars about specific funding competitions, as this one is. 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 institutes, information about available datasets and tools, among other things.

(Slide 93)

The best way to develop a competitive application is to discuss your idea with and receive feedback from a program officer. You may discuss your Center idea with a program officer by emailing a short description of your ideas and scheduling a time for a call or emailing short questions. With time permitting, I will review draft applications. Note that the earlier you send a draft, the more likely you are to receive comprehensive feedback. I am the program officer for the Gifted Education R&D Center, and here is my email address. I'd be happy to schedule a time for a call, if you email me.