

Early Career Development & Mentoring Program



Jennifer Schellinger and Katina Stapleton

Program Officers

National Center for Education Research

ALN 84.305B Research Training Programs in the Education Sciences

Agenda

- Overview of the IES NCER Early Career Development and Mentoring Program (Early Career Program)
- Eligibility requirements
- Narrative requirements
- Tips and technical assistance
- Q & A

The NCER Mission

- Established by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA – P.L. 107-279).
- Supports field-initiated research to:
 - Expand understanding of learners from PreK through postsecondary and adult education.
 - Improve academic achievement and attainment and access to educational opportunities for all learners, with a particular focus on low-performing learners and those lacking access to high-quality educational opportunities.



Goals of the Early Career Programs

- To prepare and support early career researchers to conduct high-quality education research.
- To increase the diversity of researchers and institutions funded by IES.

Structure of the Early Career Programs

Each award will provide an early career faculty member or researcher with funding to:

- Conduct research.
- Establish a longer-term research agenda.
- Obtain career development guidance and support, including training under the direction of an experienced mentor or mentors.

Serves all early career applicants including early career faculty at Minority Serving Institutions.*

Types of Research Funded

- Exploratory research to examine the links between student education outcomes and factors under the control of the education system to guide future applied research.
- The development and pilot testing of innovative practices, programs, and policies.
- Impact studies to determine the effects of programs, practices, and policies on learner education outcomes.
- The development and validation of assessments to support education research and practice.
- The development or improvement of statistical and research methods used by education researchers.

Tip - Requirements vs. Recommendations

Requirement = Must

The RFA includes general requirements as well as program-specific requirements. If your application does not include a required element, it will not be sent forward for scientific review.

Recommendations for a Strong Application = Strongly Encouraged

The RFA includes recommendations that are intended to improve the quality of your application, and the peer reviewers will use these recommendations in their evaluation of your application.

Education Research Requirements

Proposed research:

- Must be relevant to education in the U.S.
- Must address factors under the control of U.S. education systems or must propose to improve education statistical and/or research methods.
- Cannot focus primarily on students with or at risk for disabilities (except for learners in adult education/adult literacy programs).

NCER Early Career Eligibility Requirements

- Institutional
- Principal Investigator
- Mentors
- Award and Budget Parameters



Eligible Applicant & Principal Investigator Requirements

**Eligible
Applicant**

The institution that is
applying for the grant

**Principal
Investigator
(PI)**

The early career
researcher works at the
institution or
organization applying for
the grant

Applicant Requirements

The Early Career Program **requires a research institution (academic or non-academic) to be the applicant.**

- Institutions that have the ability and capacity to conduct rigorous research are eligible to apply. (Non-academic institutions are eligible to apply).
- Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities.
- The application's resource section should include a description of the institution's capacity to conduct rigorous research.

PI Eligibility Requirements

IES provides funds to the institution or organization of the early career faculty/researcher (referred to as the principal investigator) who is named in the application. In addition to the institutional employment requirements, the principal investigator (PI):

- Must have completed a doctoral degree or postdoctoral position **no earlier than April 1, 2017** and no later than the start of the award period.*
- Cannot have received tenure by the application deadline (March 7, 2025).*
- Must be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States.
- Must not have served or be serving at the time of award as a IES research grant PI or co-PI, except for a grant awarded under the Special Education Dissertation Research Fellowship Program (84.324G).
- Must have a persistent identifier (e.g., ORCID iD).

The PI's doctorate may be in any field and should align with the knowledge and skills necessary for the proposed research, with the support of the PI's mentor(s).

Mentor Requirements

- Mentors may be from academic or nonacademic institutions, such as nonprofit and for-profit organizations or public and private agencies that conduct rigorous education research.
- You must designate one primary mentor.
- You may have multiple additional mentors (co-mentors). However, at least one must be at your home institution.
- Your mentors may not include your graduate school advisor, dissertation advisor, or postdoctoral supervisor.
- A dissertation committee member may be a mentor provided you did not have a direct advisor-advisee relationship in graduate school.

Award & Budget Parameter Details

Provides up to **\$400,000** (in direct and indirect costs) to support research and career development over no more than 4 years and no less than 2 years.

Funding includes:

- Costs of conducting the proposed research and executing the career development plan
- Up to 50 percent of the PI's salary
- Up to \$20,000 per year for mentors*
- Travel
- Reasonable accommodations (if needed)

Faculty at R2 institutions can request **up to \$200,000 (\$50,000/year) in optional additional support** for (direct and indirect) costs of grant administration and management.*

Indirect Cost Limits

The Early Career Program is considered a training grant.

The U.S. Department of Education policy (34 CFR 75.562 (c)(2)) limits indirect cost reimbursement on a training grant to the recipient's actual indirect costs, as determined by its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or **8 percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less.**

More information is found in the RFA. Questions about indirect cost rates should be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Indirect Cost Group

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/fipao/icgindex.html>.



305B has an **8% cap on indirect costs**. Some institutions may have restrictions on such caps.

Training Program Narrative



- Significance
- Research Plan
- Career Development Plan
- Resources
- Personnel

Significance Requirements

All Early Career applicants must:

- Describe your need for further career development.
- Provide an overview of the proposed research project and your research questions.
- Describe how addressing your research questions will contribute to education practice and/or policymaking or improve education research.

Research Plan Requirements

Research plans must describe the research design, sample, key measures, and data analysis procedures. In addition,

- if you are proposing to do research that will build evidence about how to improve learners' academic outcomes, describe how you will measure the academic outcomes of learners, which can reflect **learning and achievement** in content domains and/or learners' **successful progression** through education systems.
- if you are proposing to develop a statistical or research method or product, you must describe how you will determine whether your proposed statistical or research product works as intended and can be used by education researchers.

You should also describe your plans for developing a longer-term research agenda building on your proposed research.

Tips for Developing Your Research Plan

Read the Research Plan requirements and recommendations very closely. Also remember:

- Your research plan should be feasible and appropriate for addressing your research questions.
- The scope and scale of your research is expected to be smaller and reflect the award limits, max duration, and expectation that time will be divided between research and training.
- Your research plan should help motivate your career development plan.
- You do not need to be an expert in every aspect of the proposed research – this is a learning experience. Note areas lacking detail where you will develop expertise and articulate how you will develop these expertise in your Career Development Plan.
- You can refer to other RFAs for ideas about education research (84.305A Education Research Grants) or research methods and statistics (84.305D Stats and Research Methodology in Education).
- We encourage you to contact an Early Career program officer to discuss your application.

Career Development Plan Requirements

Career Development Plans must describe the mentoring and other educational opportunities you will participate in to extend your expertise.

Examples of educational opportunities include:

- IES-funded methods trainings, such as the RCT, implementation science, or cost analysis trainings
- Grant-writing workshops
- Advanced statistical workshops or courses to learn new analysis skills
- Science communication and dissemination training

Career Development Plan Tips

Read the Career Development Plan requirements and recommendations very closely. Also remember to:

- Address gaps in your knowledge and training.
- Align your career development plan to your research plan.
- Include mentoring in support of goals and your development as a scholar (e.g., regular meetings, guidance on the research and career development plans, and support related to your development as a researcher).
- Include specific training activities aligned with goals (e.g., coursework, IES methods training, stats workshops, grant-writing seminars, dissemination training).

Personnel Requirements

The purpose of this section is to describe the relevant expertise, responsibilities, and time commitments of the PI, your mentor(s), and any other personnel.

The personnel sections must describe:

- Discuss how you meet the PI eligibility requirements.
- Your experience and expertise.
- Date you received your doctorate (or completed your postdoctoral position).
- Names of your dissertation or academic advisor, and your postdoctoral supervisor (if applicable).
- Experience and expertise of all mentors and other personnel.

Tips for Selecting Personnel

- Mentors:
 - No cap on the number.
 - One must be from your home institution.
 - Should have unique and complementary expertise.
 - Should expand your perspective.
 - Can be chosen to support your research, career development, or both.
- Other personnel, like consultants, can be included to support a specific part of the research or to fill gaps in your mentorship.
- The combined expertise of you, your mentors, and any additional personnel should reflect the project's content area and methods.

Resources

The purpose of this section is to describe the institutional resources to support you in successfully completing this project.

You must describe the resources to support you in conducting the proposed project. This may include:

- Resources to carry out both the research and training plan.
- Resources to carry out your plans to disseminate results.
- Your institution's capacity to support early career researchers in managing grants and monitoring spending.
- Your institution's experience supporting early career researchers.
- Your plans for acquiring any resources that are not currently accessible, will require significant expenditures, and are necessary for the successful completion of the project, such as equipment, test materials, curricula, or training materials.

R2 Institutions Only: If you are requesting any optional funds for costs of grant administration and management, you must also describe how those funds will be used.

Appendices

- **Appendix A:** Engagement and Dissemination Plan (required)
- **Appendix B:** Response to Reviewers (required for resubmissions)
- **Appendix C:** Table of your and your mentors' ongoing and recently completed education research projects (required)
- **Appendix D:** NA
- **Appendix E:** Letters of agreement from all mentors, your institution, school partners, data sources, and consultants (required)
- **Appendix F (optional):**
 - Examples of materials that support your career development plan.
 - Examples of materials to be used in the intervention or assessment.
 - Figures, charts, and tables that supplement the project narrative; examples of measures to be used in the project.
- **Appendix G:** Data Sharing and Management Plan (required)*

Tips – Where to start....

Tips for Early Career Applicants

- Start the process early.
- Contact your sponsored program office to let them know you are interested in applying to IES and to learn your institution's internal procedures for applying for federal grant funding.
- Get copies of funded applications (check out the [abstracts](#) on the IES website).
- Discuss your research idea with a program officer.
 - Submit an official letter of intent.
 - Email a short synopsis and schedule a time for a call.
 - Email short questions.
- Attend additional [Virtual Office Hours](#) if you have questions or to learn more about the application process.



The Strongest Training Program Narratives

Reflect the PI's passion and potential as a future researcher, if provided additional training.

Describe a research component that is:

- Based on strong theoretical or empirical research.
- Clearly described and justified.
- Feasible in the time and budget constraints.
- Practical for the non-researchers involved (e.g., students, practitioners, schools).
- Important for the field of education sciences and addresses issues important to education policymakers and practitioners.

The Strongest Training Program Narratives Also

Describe a career development plan that:

- Has clear, achievable goals.
- Is aligned with the PI's overarching career trajectory and needs of PI's research.
- Is integrated with or reflective of the research plan (and is not an afterthought!).

Include mentor(s) with the relevant knowledge and experience and enough time to devote to mentoring.

Contact your proposed mentor(s) to discuss your research and career development plans, to receive their feedback on draft application material, and to write a letter of agreement to be your mentor for inclusion in the application.

Know Yourself

- Preparing a grant application is part of building your program of research.
- Be planful – think about how your proposed work fits into your past, present, and future program of research.
- Does this work connect to the IES mission of supporting the building of evidence for learners from early childhood to postsecondary and beyond?

Role of Program Officers

- We can discuss research ideas and help applicants identify appropriate grant competitions.
- We respond to letters of intent.
- We can provide feedback on drafts of applications.
- We can also discuss peer reviewer comments and provide feedback on how to respond to reviewers if resubmitting.
- You can contact us at any time of year to discuss your project idea (then you will have a head start when a new RFA is released).

Contact Us

If You Remember Only One Thing

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

Jennifer Schellinger (Jennifer.Schellinger@ed.gov)

Katina Stapleton (Katina.Stapleton@ed.gov)

Time for Q & A

Dates to note

Request for Applications

Letter of Intent	December 12, 2024	https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit
Application Package Available	November 14, 2024	https://www.grants.gov
Application Deadline	11:59:59 Eastern Time on March 7, 2025	https://www.grants.gov