

NATIONAL CENTER FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

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Assistance Listing Number (ALN): 84.324G

# Special Education Dissertation Research Fellowship Program

## Request for Applications

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<b>Letter of Intent</b>	September 19, 2024	<a href="https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit">https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit</a>
<b>Application Package Available</b>	August 29, 2024	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/">https://www.grants.gov/</a>
<b>Application Deadline</b>	11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 14, 2024	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/">https://www.grants.gov/</a>
<b>Possible Start Dates</b>	June 1 – July 1, 2025	

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# Part I: Program Overview

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The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) provides scientific evidence to improve education practice and policy and shares that evidence in ways that can be used by educators, parents, policymakers, researchers, and the public. Within IES, the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE) supports research to

1. Expand knowledge and understanding of the needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities in order to improve the developmental, education, and transition outcomes of such individuals
2. Improve services provided under, and support the implementation of, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.)

## A. Purpose and Components

NCSE invites applications for the Special Education Dissertation Research Fellowship Program (ALN 84.324G; <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/program.asp?ID=2134>) in this Request for Applications (RFA).

The Special Education Dissertation Research Fellowship (Dissertation) program will support advanced doctoral students conducting research in understudied areas related to learners with or at risk for disabilities, their families, practitioners, and policymakers. Under the Dissertation program, doctoral students will receive support to conduct their dissertation research and participate in related training, with guidance from a sponsor at their institution. The fellowship is designed to broaden opportunities for emerging researchers to engage with IES and to conduct high-quality education research focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities.

Each dissertation fellowship will provide up to \$50,000 in funding for one year to support an eligible doctoral student in completing the following activities:

1. Dissertation research that involves the collection and analysis of primary data or the analysis of existing (secondary) data, and that meets the Dissertation Focus Research Requirements (see [Part 1.B](#)), including that it (1) focuses on learners with or at risk for disabilities, (2) is relevant to U.S. education and addresses issues under the control of U.S. education systems, (3) includes measures of learner education outcomes, and (4) addresses one or more of the following research areas:
  - Education Systems
  - Education Technologies
  - Low-Incidence Disabilities
  - Postsecondary Education
2. IES training and mentoring, including participation in the IES Principal Investigators (PI) Meeting and other IES-sponsored events focused on topics such as writing grant applications, disseminating research findings, and engaging communities in the research process.

## B. Dissertation Research Focus Requirements

Applications to the Dissertation program **must meet the requirements** set out in this section to be sent forward for scientific peer review.

### ***1. Learners With or At Risk for Disabilities***

**Requirement:** Dissertation research **must** focus on learners with or at risk for disabilities (any age from infancy through postsecondary education) and/or families, educators, or other professionals who support the development and education of these learners.

- For research in early childhood and K-12 settings, disability is defined in Public Law 108-446

(<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-I/1401>). For research focused on learners at risk for disabilities, the application should present research-based evidence of an association between risk factors in the proposed sample and the potential identification of a specific disability or disabilities.

- For research in postsecondary settings, disability is described in the *qualified students with a disability* provision in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html#protected>) and the *qualified individual with a disability* provision in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-28/chapter-I/part-35>).

## 2. Education Setting

**Requirement:** Dissertation research **must** be relevant to education in the United States and address issues under the control of U.S. education systems.

## 3. Education Outcomes

**Requirement:** Dissertation research **must** include measures of one or more education outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities. Education outcomes support success in school and afterwards and may include developmental, school readiness, literacy, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics), social/emotional/behavioral, functional, secondary/transition, or postsecondary outcomes.

Outcomes may be at the individual student level or aggregated at the school or district level, as appropriate for the proposed research questions.

## 4. Research Areas

**Requirement:** Dissertation research **must** be related to one or more of the following research areas:

- **Education Systems.** Research in this area focuses on how to improve the structure and function of education systems at the school, district, state, or national level (including early intervention, early childhood education, public and private K-12, alternative education, and postsecondary education systems). For example, research may focus on how to improve or leverage the organizational features of these systems (such as funding and other resources, policies and priorities, leadership, and staffing) to improve the coordination of activities across systems and better meet learners' needs.
- **Education Technologies.** Research in this area focuses on the uses and limitations of technology tools in education environments to improve learner outcomes. Technology tools that rely on advances made available through artificial intelligence and machine learning are of particular interest.
- **Low-Incidence Disabilities.** Research in this area focuses on the experiences and/or outcomes of learners with low-incidence disabilities as defined in IDEA, 20 U.S.C. §1462(c)(3) (<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-iv/part-b/1462/c/3>).
- **Postsecondary Education.** Research in this area focuses on students' readiness/preparation for postsecondary education and/or their experiences and outcomes in postsecondary education settings, such as community colleges, technical colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities.

## C. Roles and Eligibility Requirements

IES anticipates that the doctoral student will serve as the principal investigator (PI) for the dissertation fellowship. If institutional policy prohibits students from serving as PIs for a dissertation fellowship, the doctoral student should alert the IES program officer about the plan for alternate arrangements. The doctoral student will complete the dissertation fellowship under the guidance of a faculty sponsor at their institution who will serve as the Co-PI. IES anticipates that the sponsor will be the doctoral student's advisor or dissertation chair. In other circumstances, the doctoral student should alert the IES program

officer and the sponsor should discuss in their letter of support in [Appendix A](#) how they will provide guidance to the student and coordinate with the student's advisor or dissertation chair.

During the application preparation process, IES expects the doctoral student to independently write the project narrative and to collaborate with their sponsor to prepare the budget and other application content, such as appendices. During the award period, as the PI, the doctoral student will carry out the dissertation research. The sponsor will provide guidance to the doctoral student as they complete this work and will also work with the doctoral student to ensure the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports.

The authorized organization representative (AOR) at the doctoral student's institution is responsible for submitting the application on behalf of the institution. The doctoral student's institution is the recipient of funding and is therefore the applicant.

Applications to the Dissertation program **must meet the following eligibility requirements** to be sent forward for scientific peer review.

## ***1. Applicant Institution***

**Requirement:** Applicants **must** be institutions of higher education that confer doctoral degrees, such as colleges and universities, in the United States and its territories.

IES is interested in broadening institutional participation in its grant programs.<sup>1</sup> Doctoral students at Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, and Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions are encouraged to apply to this program.

## ***2. Doctoral Student***

**Requirement:** The doctoral student **must** be currently enrolled in a research-focused doctoral program in special education, education, or a related field. Related fields may include, but are not limited to, psychology, economics, social work, and sociology.

The doctoral student may have received or be currently receiving fellowship and/or grant support through their institution or another federal or non-federal funding agency (such as IES, the Office of Special Education Programs, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, or the Spencer Foundation). However, the student must make clear in the application how funds from this dissertation fellowship would support work that complements, but does not duplicate, work that another fellowship and/or grant supports. The doctoral student must report any current or prior fellowships and/or grants in [Appendix C](#), along with any applications for dissertation awards that are pending. See [Part IV.B.1](#) for additional information on multiple submissions.

The doctoral student may have a research or teaching assistantship in addition to the dissertation fellowship. If this will be or may be the case, the doctoral student should describe in the Management Plan section of the Project Narrative the employment or support and how the student will complete the project on schedule, given these other commitments.

By the time of award, the doctoral student must:

- Be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 114 of the Education Science Reform Act of 2002 charges IES with undertaking "initiatives and programs to increase the participation of researchers and institutions that have been historically underutilized in Federal education research activities of the Institute, including historically Black colleges or universities or other institutions of higher education with large numbers of minority students."

- Have completed all program-specific requirements to be at the dissertation stage, including coursework and a comprehensive exam or qualifying paper.
- Have a dissertation proposal that has been approved by their committee.

### 3. Sponsor

**Requirement:** The application **must** include a faculty sponsor at the doctoral student's institution.

## D. Award Duration and Cost Limits

**Requirement:** Applications to the Dissertation program may not exceed the following limits on duration and cost:

- The maximum duration is 1 year.
- The maximum cost is \$50,000 (total cost = direct + indirect).
  - Funds can cover the doctoral student's stipend, fringe, dissertation research costs (such as research assistants, statisticians, supplies, travel for data collection, and software), and professional development costs (such as travel to the annual IES PI Meeting and travel and registration costs for another training workshop or conference).
  - Funds cannot cover tuition and fees. NCSEER encourages cost sharing from academic institutions to cover these costs. In addition, funds cannot cover sponsor support.
  - Subawards are not allowed for the Dissertation program.
  - For dissertation fellowships, indirect costs are limited to 8% of a modified total direct cost (MTDC) base (See [Part IV.A.3.a](#)).

## E. Getting Started

### 1. Understanding the RFA and the IES Application Submission Guide

Only applications that are received and validated by Grants.gov by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 14, 2024 and deemed by IES to be compliant and responsive to the requirements of this RFA are sent forward for scientific peer review.

- A compliant application includes the required project narrative (see [Part II](#)) and appendices (see [Part III.C](#)) and adheres to all formatting requirements and page limit maximums (see [Part III.B](#)). Any pages above the maximum will be removed before forwarding an application for scientific peer review.
- A responsive application adheres to the requirements for the dissertation research focus (see [Part I.B](#)) and eligibility (see [Part I.C](#)), and addresses all the required elements of the project narrative (see [Part II.A](#)).

To submit a timely, compliant, and responsive application, applicants will need to review two documents:

1. This RFA provides information on how to prepare an application that is compliant and responsive to the requirements. [Part I](#) of the RFA provides an overview of the competition, including the purpose and components of the program; requirements related to the focus of the dissertation research and eligibility; award duration and cost limits; and tips for starting the process of preparing and submitting an application. [Part II](#) describes the required and recommended elements for the project narrative. [Part III](#) provides information on formatting, the appendices, and other narrative content. [Part IV](#) describes competition regulations and the review process. [Part V](#) provides a checklist to help ensure applicants include all required application elements to advance to scientific peer review.
2. The IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) provides important information about submission procedures and IES-specific guidance and recommendations to help ensure applications are complete and received without errors on time through Grants.gov.

IES strongly recommends that the doctoral student, their sponsor, and the institution's AOR read both of these documents closely.

## ***2. Registering in Federal Systems and Preparing for Online Submission***

IES requires electronic submission of applications through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>). To ensure that applications can be submitted through Grants.gov, the doctoral student and their sponsor should work with the AOR to ensure that the applicant institution is registered in the required government systems, including the System for Award Management (SAM) and Grants.gov.

**It is critical that applicants allow enough time to register in various government systems, as some registrations may take multiple weeks to complete.**

- For more information on how to register in these systems and prepare for online submission, see the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)).

## ***3. Getting Support in Preparing an Application***

### ***(a) Submitting a Letter of Intent***

IES encourages doctoral students who are considering applying to submit a letter of intent by September 19, 2024. The letter of intent is non-binding and optional but strongly encouraged. IES does not use letters of intent in the scientific peer review process. IES staff use letters of intent to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer review panels and to secure a sufficient number of reviewers for the anticipated number of applications. If you (the doctoral student) submit a letter of intent, a program officer will contact you to provide feedback on the dissertation research idea and career plan you describe in the letter of intent.

Doctoral students may submit letters of intent online at the IES Peer Review Information Management Online (PRIMO) system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit>). Select the form for the Special Education Dissertation Research Fellowship Program. Use the fields in the online submission form to provide the information for each of the following elements:

- Descriptive title
- Brief description of the research and career plans (see [Part II](#); single-spaced, no more than one page or about 3,500 characters)
- Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number, and email address of the doctoral student
- Name, institutional affiliation, and email address of the sponsor
- Duration of the proposed project, up to one year
- Estimated total budget request, up to \$50,000

### ***(b) Working with the IES Program Officer***

Program officers contact doctoral students who submit letters of intent to provide feedback and share resources to support the application preparation process. Doctoral students can also contact the NCSER program officer at any point in the application preparation process, whether or not they submit a letter of intent, to discuss their application. The program officer can provide feedback on the appropriateness of the project idea for this competition and other methodological and substantive issues concerning the dissertation research and career plans.

- The program officer for this competition is Courtney Pollack ([Courtney.Pollack@ed.gov](mailto:Courtney.Pollack@ed.gov); 202-987-0999).

IES encourages doctoral students to visit <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/> for additional resources that address a variety of issues related to application preparation, submission, and peer review.



# Part II: Project Narrative Requirements and Recommendations

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## A. Project Narrative Requirements

The project narrative **must** adhere to the formatting guidelines (see [Part III.B](#)) and must be no more than 8 pages. If the narrative exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages above the maximum before forwarding an application for scientific peer review.

The project narrative **must** include four sections – Significance, Research Plan, Career Plan, and Management Plan – that address the required elements below.

See the recommendations in [Part II.B](#) for additional guidance on what to include in the project narrative. Recommendations reflect what IES expects as part of high-quality applications and what reviewers use to evaluate applications. It is your responsibility to clearly address the recommendations in the application.

### 1. Significance

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the dissertation research and explain why it is important. IES suggests this section be approximately 2 pages.

The application **must**

- Discuss the specific issue or problem that the dissertation research will address and why it is important to education.
- Provide an overview of the dissertation research project.
- Identify one or more of the required research areas (see [Part I.B.4](#)) that align with the focus of the dissertation research.

### 2. Research Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe the aims and methodology for the dissertation research. IES suggests this section be approximately 4 pages.

The application **must**

- Specify the research question(s).
- Describe the research design, sample, measures of learner outcomes, and data analysis plan.

### 3. Career Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe how your prior academic and research experiences have prepared you to complete the dissertation research, how the dissertation research relates to your future plans to conduct research in special education, and the opportunities this dissertation fellowship would provide to support your transition to your next career stage. IES suggests this section be approximately 1 page.

The application **must**

- Describe the experiences that have prepared you to complete the dissertation research.
- Describe your future research and career plans.

### 4. Management Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe how you will manage your time on the project and coordinate with your sponsor and any other personnel to complete the research. IES suggests this section be approximately 1 page.

The application **must**

- Describe how much time you will devote to the dissertation research.
- Describe how you will coordinate with the sponsor.

## **B. Project Narrative Recommendations**

The following recommendations will support you in preparing an application and guide reviewers in evaluating applications that align with IES's expectations of high-quality projects. Reviewers will evaluate the quality of the application using these recommendations (see also [Part IV.B.4](#)) and their professional judgment and expertise.

### **1. Significance**

Reviewers will evaluate the degree to which the application addresses a significant challenge in education, provides a compelling theoretical and empirical rationale for the work, and whether the proposed dissertation research would further knowledge and/or practice in education.

The application should

- Discuss the specific issue, problem, program, and/or policy that the dissertation research will address.
- Describe the population of learners with or at risk for disabilities that is affected by the issue, problem, program, and/or policy you plan to study. Describe how the dissertation research will consider the perspectives of this population of learners.
- Provide a theoretical and empirical rationale for the dissertation research, by discussing the relations between the issue, problem, program, and/or policy and learner education outcomes, and citing literature that provides empirical support for these relations. You may include in [Appendix D](#) a theory of change figure that depicts the relations.
- Describe how successful completion of the dissertation research would advance knowledge and/or practice in education.

### **2. Research Plan**

Reviewers will evaluate the degree to which the research design and methods, sample and setting, and data analysis plans align with the research questions and will allow you to answer those questions.

The application should

- Specify research question(s) and hypotheses.
- Describe the setting where the research will take place.
- Describe the sample, the population it represents, and its size. Describe the disability or disabilities the sample of learners has or is at risk for as well as any inclusion or exclusion criteria.
- Describe the research design with enough detail to demonstrate that it will address the research questions.
- If the research will involve primary data collection, describe the methods and procedures for collecting data and whether you have access to the education settings.
- If the research will involve analysis of existing (secondary) data, describe the dataset(s), the key variables for the analysis, and whether you have access to the data.
- Describe the measures you will use to assess key variables, including measures of learner education outcomes.
- Explain how you will analyze the data to answer each research question. As applicable, describe any analyses you will conduct to examine variations based on the characteristics of learners in the sample (such as disability type, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status).
- Provide a timeline of the dissertation research activities in [Appendix D](#).

### **3. Career Plan**

Reviewers will evaluate the degree to which your academic and research experiences have prepared you to conduct the dissertation research and the degree to which the fellowship will support your future research and career goals and impact in the field of education research.

The application should

- Describe how your prior academic and research experiences have prepared you to conduct the dissertation research.
- Discuss the opportunities this fellowship would provide for you to further your research and career goals.
- Discuss how completion of the dissertation research relates to your future research and career goals.

#### ***4. Management Plan***

Reviewers will evaluate the degree to which your time commitment and plan to collaborate with the sponsor and other personnel are sufficient for carrying out the dissertation research.

The application should

- Specify the number of hours per week that you will devote to the dissertation research.
- Discuss whether you have received or are currently receiving any other doctoral fellowship and/or grant. If so, explain how this dissertation fellowship would support work that complements, but does not duplicate, work that other fellowships and/or grants support. As [Part I.C.2](#) describes, you must also include information about current or prior fellowships and pending applications for dissertation awards in [Appendix C](#).
- Briefly describe any concurrent employment or support you have or anticipate having, such as teaching and/or research assistantships, and justify the feasibility of your time commitment given these other work activities.
- Describe how you will collaborate with the sponsor to ensure the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports.
- If applicable, describe any other personnel, such as research assistants or statisticians, who will help you complete the research plan.

# Part III: Preparing Your Application

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## A. Overview

The application contents—individual forms and their PDF attachments—represent the body of an application to IES. IES encourages you to refer to the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) for additional information about preparing to submit your application and ensuring your application is sufficient.

## B. General Formatting

To ensure that reviewers can read your application and that all applicants have similar expectations for length and space, IES specifies the following formatting conventions. Adherence to type size and line spacing requirements is necessary so that no applicant will have an unfair advantage by using small type or by providing more text in their application. These requirements apply to the PDF file as submitted, unless otherwise specified. In order for an application to be compliant and sent forward for review, the applicant should ensure that each narrative section follows both the page limit maximums and the formatting guidelines below unless otherwise specified.

### 1. Page Limits

All applications must adhere to the page limit specifications for (1) the project narrative ([Part II.A](#)) and (2) the appendices ([Part III.C](#)).

### 2. Page and Margin Specifications

For all IES grant applications, a “page” is 8.5 in. x 11 in. on one side only with 1-inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

### 3. Page Numbering

Add page numbers using the header or footer function and place them at the bottom or upper right corner for ease of reading.

### 4. Spacing

Text must be single spaced.

### 5. Type Size (Font Size)

Type must conform to the following three requirements:

- The height of the letters must not be smaller than a 12-point type size.
- Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch (cpi). For proportional spacing, the average for any representative section of text must not exceed 15 cpi.
- Type size must yield no more than 6 lines of type within a vertical inch.

You should check the type size using a standard device for measuring type size, rather than relying on the font selected for a particular word processing/printer combination. The type size used must conform to all three requirements. Small type size makes it difficult for reviewers to read the application; consequently, the use of small type will be grounds for IES to return the application without scientific peer review.

As a practical matter, if you use a 12-point Times New Roman font without compressing, kerning, condensing, or other alterations, and use footnotes sparingly, if at all, the application will typically meet these requirements. Readability should guide your selection of an appropriate font and your use of footnotes.

## 6. Citations

Use the parenthetical author-date style for citations (see for example the American Psychological Association, 2019) rather than numeric citations that correspond to the reference list.

## 7. Graphs, Diagrams, and Tables

IES encourages you to use black and white in graphs, diagrams, tables, and charts. If you use color, ensure that the material reproduces well when printed or photocopied in black and white.

Text in figures, charts, and tables, including legends, may be in a type size smaller than 12-point but must be readily legible.

## C. Required and Optional Appendices

The required project narrative (see [Part II](#)) is followed by several appendices. Some of these appendices are required and some are optional. When you submit your application through Grants.gov, you will create a single PDF file that contains the project narrative and all appendices and include it as an attachment in the application package. Include appendices in alphabetical order and simply skip an appendix if it is not required for your application or if you choose not to include an optional appendix. See the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) for more information about preparing and submitting your application using the required application package for this competition through Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

The project narrative and appendices are critical parts of the IES application because they include the substantive content that reviewers will evaluate for theoretical and practical significance and scientific merit.

### 1. Appendix A: Letter of Support From Sponsor (Required)

Appendix A must include a letter of support from the sponsor and must be no more than two pages. If Appendix A exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the appendix before forwarding the application for scientific peer review. In this letter, the sponsor should address the following:

- **Student Qualifications.** Discuss the academic and research experiences that have prepared the student to complete the proposed dissertation research, their commitment to education research and improving outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities, and the timeline and feasibility of the research plan. Discuss the opportunities this dissertation fellowship would provide for the student to further their research and professional goals.
- **Student Progress.** Briefly confirm that the student is on track to have an approved dissertation proposal by the time of award and describe the student's anticipated time to degree completion. The letter may also include if the student has an approved dissertation proposal, if applicable, though this approval is not required at the time of application. The letter should also confirm that the student will complete course requirements, comprehensive exams or a qualifying paper, and additional program-specific requirements by the time of award.
- **Concurrent Commitments.** Briefly describe any concurrent employment or support the student may have and how those commitments will be distinct from the activities in the research plan.
- **Sponsor and Institutional Supports.** Discuss the sponsor's support of the research and the available institutional resources to support the research plan. If the sponsor is someone other than the doctoral student's advisor or dissertation chair, discuss how the sponsor will provide guidance to the student and coordinate with their advisor or dissertation chair.

This is the only material that may be included in Appendix A; IES will remove all other material prior to review of the application.

## **2. Appendix B: Transcript (Required)**

Appendix B must include the doctoral student's transcript from their doctoral program. There is no recommended page length for Appendix B.

This is the only material that may be included in Appendix B; IES will remove all other material prior to review of the application.

## **3. Appendix C: Prior, Current, and Pending Fellowships (Required)**

Appendix C must include a table describing any prior and/or current fellowships and grants from the doctoral students' institution or other federal or non-federal funding agencies (such as IES, the Office of Special Education Programs, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, or the Spencer Foundation) as well as any applications for dissertation support that are pending. It must be no more than 2 pages. If Appendix C exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the appendix before forwarding the application for scientific peer review. The table should include the type of fellowship/grant, funder, amount of funding, length of funding, and specific activities the fellowship/grant supports.

If you (the student) are submitting the same dissertation application to another agency or agencies, you must note it under Item 8 of the Application for Federal Assistance SF 424 (R&R) form. See [Part IV.B.1](#) for more information on multiple submissions.

This is the only material that may be included in Appendix C; IES will remove all other material prior to review of the application.

## **4. Appendix D: Supplemental Information (Optional)**

Appendix D may include supplemental information and must be no more than 5 pages. If Appendix D exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 5<sup>th</sup> page of the appendix before forwarding for scientific peer review.

Appendix D may include figures, charts, tables (such as a theory of change or timeline for the research plan), or measures (such as items, tests, surveys, and/or observation and interview protocols) that are part of the research plan.

These are the only materials that may be included in Appendix D; IES will remove all other material prior to review of the application.

## **D. Other Narrative Content**

In addition to the project narrative ([Part II](#)) and required and optional appendices (see above), you will also prepare a project summary/abstract, a bibliography and references cited, an exempt or non-exempt research on human subjects narrative, and biographical sketches for key personnel to include as file attachments in your application. See the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) for more information about preparing and submitting your application using the required application package for this competition on Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>).

### **1. Project Summary/Abstract**

You must include the project summary/abstract as a separate PDF file attachment to the Research & Related Other Project Information form (see the IES Application Submission Guide; [https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)). If IES funds your fellowship, they will use this abstract as the basis for the online abstract IES posts when they announce new awards (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/>). IES recommends that the project summary/abstract be no more than one page and include the following information.



- **Title.** Distinct, descriptive title for the project
- **Purpose.** A brief description of the purpose and significance of the dissertation research project
- **Research Plan.** A brief description of the dissertation research project including research questions/hypotheses, sample, research design, measures, and data analysis plan
- **Career Plan.** A brief description of how the fellowship will support your future research and career goals and impact in the field of education research

## ***2. Bibliography and References Cited***

You must submit the bibliography and references cited as a separate PDF file attachment to the Research & Related Other Project Information form (see the IES Application Submission Guide; [https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)). There is no recommended page length for the bibliography and references cited. You should include complete references for all citations in the project narrative, including the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), year of publication, titles of relevant elements such as the article/journal and chapter/book, page numbers, and digital object identifier (DOI), if available.

## ***3. Research on Human Subjects Narrative***

You must submit an exempt or non-exempt human subjects narrative as a separate PDF file attachment to the Research & Related Other Project Information form (see the IES Application Submission Guide; [https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)). There is no recommended page length for the human subjects narrative. The exempt or non-exempt narrative addresses the U.S. Department of Education's Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/humansub.html>). If you indicate that the project is exempt from federal regulations, you must provide an Exempt Research Narrative. If some or all of the planned research activities are covered by (not exempt from) the Human Subjects Regulations, you must provide a Non-Exempt Research Narrative.

- **Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative.** Provide sufficient information about the involvement of human subjects in the proposed research to allow the Department of Education (the Department) to determine that the designated exemption(s) are appropriate. The six categories of research that qualify for exemption from coverage by the regulations are described on the Department's website (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/fund/guid/humansub/overview.html>).
- **Non-Exempt Research on Human Subjects Narrative.** Describe the characteristics of the subject population, the data to be collected from human subjects, recruitment and consent procedures, any potential risks, planned procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks, the importance of the knowledge to be gained relative to potential risks, and any other sites where human subjects are involved.

The U.S. Department of Education does not require certification of Institutional Review Board approval at the time you submit an application. However, if an application involving non-exempt human subjects research is recommended for funding, the designated U.S. Department of Education official will request that you obtain and send certification within 30 days of the formal request.

## ***4. Biographical Sketches for Key Personnel***

You will include biographical sketches as separate PDF file attachments to the Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) form (see the IES Application Submission Guide; [https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)). Applications must include biographical sketches for you (the doctoral student) and the sponsor. Each biographical sketch **must be no more than five pages in length. For the doctoral student, the five page limit includes an abbreviated CV. For the sponsor, the five page limit includes an abbreviated CV and current and pending support information.** If a biographical sketch exceeds the page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 5<sup>th</sup> page before forwarding for scientific peer review.

IES strongly encourages you to use SciENcv (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/>) where you will find an IES biosketch form. After logging in to SciENcv, you will be able to select the IES Biosketch format after selecting the “Create a New Document” option. You can download your IES Biosketch as a Word document to allow you to change the formatting to meet the general formatting guidelines. You may also develop your own biosketch format. If your sponsor uses SciENcv, the information on current and pending support will be entered into the IES biosketch template. If your sponsor uses their own format, they will need to provide this information in a separate table.

The biographical sketch should show how personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their proposed responsibilities. The current and pending support information for the sponsor should include a list of their current and pending grants along with the proportion of their time, expressed as percent effort over a 12-month calendar year, allocated to each project. This dissertation fellowship application should be included as a pending grant in the list.

While not required at the time of application, all key personnel (the doctoral student and their sponsor) must have a persistent identifier (PID), such as an ORCID iD (Open Researcher and Contributor ID; <https://orcid.org/>), at the time of award. For all key personnel who have a PID at the time of application, include the PID in the biosketch and in the “Credential, e.g., agency login” field on the Research and Related Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) form in the application package (see the IES Application Submission Guide; [https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)).

If key personnel do not yet have a PID, IES encourages establishing one as soon as possible, given the requirement that all key personnel are required to have a PID in place before an award will be made.



## Part IV: Competition Regulations and Review Process

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### A. Funding Mechanisms

#### 1. Mechanism of Support

IES intends to award grants pursuant to this Request for Applications (RFA).

#### 2. Funding Available

Although IES intends to support the program described in this announcement, all awards pursuant to this RFA are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of meritorious applications. IES makes its awards to the highest quality applications as determined through scientific peer review.

Please attend to the duration and budget maximums in [Part I.D.](#)

IES intends to award up to eight grants, pending the results of scientific peer review. However, should funding be available, IES may consider making additional awards to high-quality applications that remain unfunded after IES awards eight grants.

#### 3. Special Considerations for Budget Expenses

##### (a) Indirect Cost Rate

U.S. Department of Education policy (34 CFR 75.562 (c)(2)) limits indirect cost reimbursement on a training grant, including the dissertation fellowship, 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 (MTDC), whichever amount is less. MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

##### (b) Meetings and Conferences

If you are requesting funds to cover expenses for hosting meetings or conferences, please note that there are statutory and regulatory requirements in determining whether costs are reasonable and necessary. Please refer to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance), 2 CFR, §200.432 Conferences ([https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=dcd3efbcf2b6092f84c3b1af32bdcc34&node=se2.1.200\\_1432&rgn=div8](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=dcd3efbcf2b6092f84c3b1af32bdcc34&node=se2.1.200_1432&rgn=div8)).

Federal grant funds, including for this fellowship, cannot be used to pay for alcoholic beverages or entertainment, which includes costs for amusement, diversion, and social activities. In general, federal funds may not be used to pay for food. A grantee hosting a meeting or conference may not use grant funds to pay for food for conference attendees unless doing so is necessary to accomplish legitimate meeting or conference business. You may request funds to cover expenses for working meetings, such as working lunches; however, IES will determine whether these costs are allowable in keeping with the new OMB Uniform Cost Principles. Grantees are responsible for the proper use of their grant awards and may have to repay funds to the Department if they violate the rules for meeting- and conference-related expenses or other disallowed expenditures.

#### 4. Program Authority

20 U.S.C. 9501 et seq., the “Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002,” Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

## **5. Applicable Regulations**

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) codified at CFR part 200. The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 77, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. In addition, 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.100, 75.101(b), 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.211, 75.217(a)-(c), 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, 75.230, 75.250(a), and 75.708. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. The Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3474.<sup>2</sup>

## **B. Overview of Application and Scientific Peer Review Process**

### **1. Multiple Submissions**

The applicant institution and doctoral student may submit applications to more than one of the FY 2025 research and research training grant programs offered through the Department, including those offered through IES and other offices and programs within the Department, as long as the applications are substantively different. Applicant institutions may submit multiple applications to the Dissertation program as long as they specify different doctoral students and dissertation research. However, a given application can be submitted only once for the IES FY 2025 grant competitions, meaning the same application or similar applications may not be submitted to multiple grant programs within IES, to multiple topics within a grant competition, or multiple times within the same topic. If the applicant submits multiple similar applications, IES will determine whether and which applications will be accepted for review and/or will be eligible for funding.

In addition, if the applicant institution or doctoral student submits the same or similar application to IES and to another funding entity within or external to the Department and receives funding for the non-IES application prior to IES scientific peer review of applications, they must withdraw the same or similar application submitted to IES, or IES may otherwise determine the application is ineligible for funding. If reviews are happening concurrently, IES staff will consult with the other potential funder to determine the degree of overlap and which entity will provide funding if both applications are being considered for funding.

If the applicant institution or doctoral student submits the same or similar application to IES and to another funding entity as described above, indicate this on the Application for Federal Assistance SF 424 (R&R) form in the application package in the “Submission to Other Agencies” field by checking “Yes” and including the name of the other agency or agencies (see the IES Application Submission Guide; [https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)).

### **2. Application Processing**

**Applications must be submitted electronically and received no later than 11:59:59 p.m., Eastern Time on November 14, 2024** using the Grants.gov Workspace

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<sup>2</sup> The open licensing requirement in 2 CFR 3474.20 does not apply to this competition.

The Department will implement the provisions in the OMB final rule OMB Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance, which amends 2 CFR parts 25, 170, 175, 176, 180, 182, 183, 184, and 200, on October 1, 2024. Grant applicants that anticipate a performance period start date on or after October 1, 2024 should follow the provisions in the OMB Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance (89 FR 30046) when preparing an application. For more information about these updated regulations please visit: [www.cfo.gov/resources/uniform-guidance/](http://www.cfo.gov/resources/uniform-guidance/).

(<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview>). The doctoral student and authorized organization representative (AOR) at their institution must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) and on Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants>).

After applications are fully uploaded and validated at Grants.gov, the U.S. Department of Education receives the applications for processing and transfer to the IES PRIMO system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov>). PRIMO allows applicants, specifically principal investigators (PIs) and AORs, to track the progress of their application via the Applicant Notification System (ANS).

Approximately one to two weeks after the application deadline, invitation emails are sent to applicants who have never applied to IES before to create their individual PRIMO ANS accounts. Both the PI and the AOR will receive invitation emails. Approximately four to six weeks after the application deadline, all applicants (new and existing ANS users) will begin to receive a series of emails about the status of their application. See the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) for additional information about ANS and PRIMO.

**Once an application has been submitted and the application deadline has passed, you may not submit additional materials or information for inclusion with your application.**

### ***3. Scientific Peer Review***

IES will forward all applications that are compliant and responsive to this RFA for peer review of scientific and technical merit. Scientific reviews are conducted in accordance with the review criteria in [Part IV.B.4](#) and the review procedures on the IES website ([https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/application\\_review.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/application_review.asp)) by a panel of experts who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and RFA.

At least two primary reviewers will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria: Significance, Research Plan, Career Plan, and Management Plan. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion as well as an overall score for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, IES calculates an average overall score for each application and prepares a preliminary rank order of applications before the full peer review panel convenes to complete the review of applications. The full panel will consider and score only those applications deemed to be the most competitive and to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order. A panel member may nominate for consideration by the full panel any application that they believe merits full panel review that would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

### ***4. Review Criteria for Scientific Merit***

Information pertinent to each of these criteria is described in [Part II.B](#).

#### ***(a) Significance***

Does the application address a significant challenge in education? Does the application provide a compelling theoretical and empirical rationale for the work? Would the proposed dissertation research further knowledge and/or practice in education?

#### ***(b) Research Plan***

Do the research design and methods, sample and setting, and data analysis plans align with the research questions and will they allow the doctoral student to answer their research questions?

#### ***(c) Career Plan***

Have the doctoral student's academic and research experiences prepared them to conduct the dissertation research? Will the fellowship support the doctoral student's future research and career goals and impact in the field of education research?

#### *(d) Management Plan*

Is the doctoral student's time commitment sufficient for carrying out the dissertation research? Is the plan to collaborate with the sponsor on the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports, and to collaborate with other personnel (if needed), sufficient for carrying out the dissertation research?

### **5. Award Decisions**

IES will consider the following when making award decisions for responsive and compliant applications:

- Scientific merit as determined by scientific peer review
- Performance and use of funds under a previous federal award
- Contribution to the overall program of research training described in this RFA
- Ability to carry out the proposed dissertation research within the maximum award and duration requirements
- Availability of funds

## **C. Additional Award Requirements**

### **1. Pre-Award**

IES uses the scientific peer review process as the first step in making funding decisions. If your application is eligible for potential funding based on the outcome of scientific peer review, a program officer will contact you and your sponsor to discuss and verify the following award requirements.

#### *(a) Clarification and Budget Questions*

An IES program officer will contact you to clarify any issues that were raised during scientific peer review and to address whether the proposed budget adequately supports the scope of work and meets federal guidelines. The program officer will confirm that the activities and requested stipend support do not overlap with other research duties and associated funding.

#### *(b) Approval of Dissertation Proposal*

Prior to the release of funds, IES will verify that you have an approved dissertation proposal and that the approved dissertation research project is not substantially different from the project proposed at the time of application.

#### *(c) Access to Data and Education Settings*

The research you propose may require access to education settings, such as classrooms, schools, districts, and colleges/universities; secondary datasets; or studies currently under way. If so, you may be required to provide evidence of access to these resources prior to the release of funds. You may need supporting evidence of partnership or access if you are doing any of the following:

- **Conducting research in or with education settings.** If your research requires access to education settings, you may need to provide documentation of access to these settings prior to the release of funds.
- **Using secondary datasets.** If your research relies on access to secondary datasets (such as federally collected datasets, state or district administrative data, or data collected by you or other researchers), you may need to provide IES with documentation of access to the necessary datasets prior to the release of funds.

- **Building on existing studies.** If your research requires access to participants and/or data from an ongoing study, you may need to provide documentation of approval from the PI of the study prior to the release of funds.

#### *(d) Past Performance*

IES considers the applicant's performance and use of funds under a previous federal award as part of the criteria for making a funding decision. Performance on previous Department of Education awards is considered as is additional information that may be requested from the PI, including compliance to the IES Public Access Policy (applicable for all grants funded from 2012 to present; <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>).

#### *(e) Persistent Identifiers (PIDs) for Key Personnel*

All key personnel (the doctoral student and their sponsor) must have a persistent identifier (PID), such as ORCID iD (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification; <https://orcid.org/>) prior to receiving an award.

## **2. Post Award**

#### *(a) Compliance with IES Policy on Public Access to Results*

IES requires all grantees, including fellowship recipients, to submit the electronic version of peer-reviewed scholarly publications to ERIC (<https://eric.ed.gov/>), a publicly accessible and searchable electronic database of education research that makes available full-text documents to the public for free. This public access requirement (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>) applies to peer-reviewed, original scholarly publications that have been supported, in whole or in part, with direct funding from IES, although it does not apply to book chapters, editorials, reviews, or non-peer-reviewed conference proceedings. As the designated representative for the grantee institution, IES holds the PI responsible for ensuring that authors of publications stemming from the grant comply with this requirement.

The author's final manuscript is defined as the final version accepted for journal publication and includes all modifications from the peer review process. Submission of accepted manuscripts for public accessibility through ERIC must occur immediately upon acceptance for publication.

The ERIC website includes a homepage for the Grantee and Online Submission System (<https://eric.ed.gov/submit/>), as well as a Frequently Asked Questions page (<https://eric.ed.gov/?granteefaq>). During the submission process, authors will submit bibliographic information from the publication, including the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), title, authors' names and persistent identifiers (PIDs such as ORCID ID), publication date, journal title and International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), and associated IES award number(s).

#### *(b) Special Conditions on Grants*

IES may impose special conditions on a grant, including a fellowship, if the grantee is not financially stable, has a history of unsatisfactory performance, has an unsatisfactory financial or other management system, has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant, or is otherwise not responsible.

#### *(c) Attendance at the Annual IES Principal Investigators Meeting*

IES expects the doctoral student to attend the Annual Principal Investigators Meeting (for 4 days and 3 nights) in Washington, DC with other IES grantees and IES staff. The project's budget should include this meeting.

## Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist

Only compliant and responsive applications will be peer reviewed. Use this checklist to better ensure the application includes all required components for compliance and addresses all requirements for responsiveness. This checklist does not include project narrative recommendations, which are IES's expectations of high-quality projects and which reviewers use, in conjunction with their professional judgment and expertise, to evaluate applications. See [Part II.B](#) for project narrative recommendations.

See the IES Application Submission Guide ([https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission\\_guide.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/funding/submission_guide.asp)) for an application checklist that describes the forms in the application package that must be completed and the PDF files that must be attached to the forms for a successful submission through Grants.gov.

Have you addressed the following requirements for compliance?	
	Have you (the doctoral student) included a project narrative? ( <a href="#">Part II</a> )
	Do the project narrative and other narrative content adhere to all formatting requirements? ( <a href="#">Part III.B</a> )
	Do the project narrative and other narrative content adhere to all page maximums? IES will remove any pages above the maximum before forwarding an application for scientific peer review ( <a href="#">Part II.A</a> and <a href="#">Part III.C</a> )
	Have you included the following required appendices ( <a href="#">Part III.C</a> )? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appendix A: Letter of support from sponsor</li> <li>• Appendix B: Transcript</li> <li>• Appendix C: Prior, current, and pending fellowships</li> </ul>
Have you addressed the following requirements for responsiveness?	
	Have you met the following requirements for the dissertation research focus ( <a href="#">Part I.B</a> ): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the research focus on learners with or at risk for disabilities?</li> <li>• Is the research relevant to education in the U.S. and does it address issues under the control of U.S. education systems?</li> <li>• Does the research include measures of learner education outcomes?</li> <li>• Is the research related to one or more of the following research areas: Education Systems, Education Technologies, Low-Incidence Disabilities, or Postsecondary Education?</li> </ul>
	Have you met the following eligibility requirements ( <a href="#">Part I.C</a> ): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the applicant an institution of higher education in the U.S. and its territories that confers doctoral degrees?</li> <li>• Are you currently enrolled in a research-focused doctoral program in special education, education, or a related field?</li> <li>• Does the application include a faculty sponsor at your institution?</li> </ul>
	Does your project narrative include the required sections? Did you describe the elements required for each section as listed below? ( <a href="#">Part II.A</a> )
Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue or problem that the dissertation research will address and why it is important to education</li> <li>• Overview of the dissertation research project</li> <li>• One or more research areas that align with the focus of the dissertation research</li> </ul>
Research Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research question(s)</li> <li>• Research design, sample, measures of learner outcomes, and data analysis plan</li> </ul>
Career Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The experiences that have prepared you to complete the dissertation research</li> <li>• Your future research and career plans</li> </ul>
Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time you will devote to the dissertation research</li> <li>• How you will coordinate with the sponsor</li> </ul>