

NATIONAL CENTER FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): 84.324B

Research Training Programs in Special Education

Request for Applications

Letter of Intent	September 3, 2026	https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit
Application Package Available	August 6, 2026	https://www.grants.gov/
Application Deadline	11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 1, 2026	https://www.grants.gov/
Possible Start Dates	July 1 – September 1, 2027	

See the companion IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>) for guidance on preparing and submitting applications through Grants.gov.

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Part I: Overview

A. Introduction

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. IES was established by the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA – P.L. 107-279), in part to improve academic achievement and attainment and access to educational opportunities for all learners (ESRA, § 111.b.1.B), with a particular focus on low-performing learners (ESRA, § 115.a.1) and those lacking access to high-quality educational opportunities (ESRA, § 115.a.2.A and 115.a.2.B).

In carrying out its mission, IES must ensure that our work and the work we fund is objective, secular, neutral, and nonideological; free of partisan political influence; and free of racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias (ESRA, § 111.b.2).

Within IES, the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER) 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.)

In this Request for Applications (RFA), NCSEER invites applications for the Research Training Programs in Special Education (ALN 84.324B). For FY 2027, NCSEER is accepting applications under two programs:

- [Early Career Development and Mentoring](#) (Early Career)
- [Methods Training for Special Education Research](#) (Methods Training)

NCSEER training programs prepare individuals to conduct special education and early intervention research that advances knowledge within the field and addresses issues important to education policymakers and practitioners.

NCSEER aims to fund rigorous research that helps solve significant education problems and that is relevant to the needs of the population of learners with or at risk for disabilities in the United States. NCSEER's ability to support high-quality research depends on the ability to train and support talented researchers who bring different backgrounds, perspectives, interests, and experiences to address complex education problems. NCSEER also seeks to broaden the special education research workforce by offering professional development and training opportunities for individuals at multiple career stages in a variety of institutions and education settings across the country.

IES expects all IES-funded research to implement the Standards for Excellence in Education Research, or SEER (<https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/standards-excellence-education-research-seer>). The 2027 Standards (SEER 27) are organized into 4 domains.

- Domain 1. Objectivity and Scientific Integrity
- Domain 2. Relevance
- Domain 3. Open Science
- Domain 4. Intervention Research

Each application for IES funding is required to describe how their project is aligned with applicable SEER Standards. Appendix F outlines which Standards are applicable to each type of project.

B. Overview of the Training Programs

Your application **must** be directed to one of the two training programs listed below and meet the requirements set out for the relevant program as described in [Part II](#) in order to be sent forward for scientific peer review.

The **Early Career** program provides support for an integrated research and career development plan for early career investigators at institutions of higher education or non-academic research organizations who have established an interest in special education research and are developing research careers focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities. The awards provide support for research and career development (including salary for protected time to conduct research and engage in career development activities) that includes training under the guidance of an experienced mentor or mentors. The Early Career program also offers the option for early career investigators employed by institutions of higher education not classified as R1 to request additional funding for grant administration and management.

The **Methods Training** program funds training to help current education researchers, including state and local education agency research staff, maintain and enhance their research and analysis skills in order to conduct rigorous and relevant research focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities. For FY 2027, NCSEER is only accepting applications for Methods Training focused on analyzing large administrative datasets to address research questions related to learners with or at risk for disabilities.

C. Getting Started

1. Technical Assistance for Applicants

NCSEER strongly encourages applicants to submit a letter of intent on the IES Peer Review website (<https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit>). IES will offer virtual office hours (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/help>) for general guidance on grant writing and submitting your application and choosing the appropriate competition and project type.

The program officer for this competition is Dr. Katherine (Katie) Taylor (Katherine.Taylor@ed.gov).

2. RFA Organization and the IES Application Submission Guide

To submit a compliant, responsive, and timely 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** provides an overview of the competition and training programs. **Part II** provides detail on the requirements and recommendations for each training program. **Part III** provides information on formatting, the appendices and other narrative content for the application. **Part IV** describes competition regulations and review criteria. **Part V** provides a checklist to help ensure the inclusion of all required application elements needed to advance to scientific peer review. **Part VI** provides the program codes that you must enter in Item 4b of the SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance form.
2. **The IES Application Submission Guide** (<https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>) provides important information about how to find, complete, and submit an application package in Grants.gov and IES-specific guidance and recommendations to help ensure applications are complete and received without errors on time through Grants.gov.

We strongly recommend that both the principal investigator (PI) and the authorized organization representative (AOR) read both of these documents, whether submitting a new or revised application.

3. Ensuring Your Application is Forwarded for Scientific Peer Review

Only compliant and responsive applications received before the date and time deadline are peer reviewed for scientific merit. The PI and the AOR should work together to ensure that the application meets these criteria.

(a) On-time submission

- Received and validated by Grants.gov no later than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 1, 2026

(b) Compliance

- Includes the required training program narrative (see [Part II](#))
- Adheres to all formatting requirements (see [Part III.B](#))
- Adheres to all page limit maximums for the training program narrative and appendices. IES will remove any pages above the maximum before forwarding an application for peer review
- Includes all required appendices (see [Part III.C](#))
 - [Appendix A: Engagement and Dissemination Plan](#)
 - [Appendix B: Response to Reviewers](#) (Resubmissions only)
 - [Appendix D: Letters of Agreement](#)
 - [Appendix E: Data Sharing and Management Plan](#) (Early Career applications only)
 - [Appendix F: Alignment with SEER Standards](#)

(c) Responsiveness

- Meets the general requirements for the selected training program (see [Part II](#))
- Meets the training program narrative requirements for the selected training program (see [Part II](#))

D. Changes in the FY 2027 RFA

Everyone involved in preparing and submitting an application, whether new or revised, should carefully read all relevant parts of this RFA. Major changes to the Research Training Programs in Special Education for FY 2027 are listed below and described fully in relevant sections of the RFA.

- **Training Programs.** For FY 2027, NCSER is accepting applications under two programs: Early Career and Methods Training.
- **Guidance on Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).** IES added guidance on the use of AI in preparing grant applications (see [Part III.A](#)). The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the development of grant applications is allowable. Applicants submitting a grant application must certify on the standard application form to the “true, complete, and accurate” nature of all of the contents of their grant application, regardless of whether it is generated by AI (<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2025-16571>).
- **Changes to Appendices.**
 - IES added a new appendix, Alignment with SEER Standards, that is required for all applications. Appendix F must include information about how the project aligns with the current Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER; <https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/standards-excellence-education-research-seer>).
 - Appendix C, Summary of Research and Training Projects, is no longer required. Instead, Appendix C is optional and should be used to include supplemental materials. Applications to the Methods Training program should describe prior methods training projects in the personnel section of the training program narrative.
 - The page limit for Supplemental Materials (now Appendix C) has been reduced from 10 pages to 5 pages.
 - Appendix D should include all letters of agreement, including those from mentors, institutions, consultants, and data sources.
 - For Early Career applications, Appendix E is a new required appendix and must include a Data Sharing and Management Plan.
- **Page Limits.** The page limits for the training program narrative were reduced from 25 to 22 pages for the Early Career program and 20 to 15 pages for the Methods Training program.
- **Pre-Award Requirements.** IES added two new pre-award requirements.
 - If your application is being considered for funding, IES program officers will review the completeness and acceptability of the information in [Appendix F: Alignment with SEER Standards](#) prior to making the new award.
 - All recipients of IES research and research training funds are required to be in compliance with the research security requirements described in [Part IV](#) prior to receiving IES funding.
- **Early Career PI Eligibility.** There are several changes to the eligibility criteria for Early Career applicant institutions and PIs. (1) Early Career PIs at academic or non-academic research

institutions are eligible to apply as long as they meet other eligibility criteria. (2) The eligibility window was extended, such that PIs must have completed a doctoral degree no earlier than April 1, 2019 and no later than the start of the award period. (3) PIs who are faculty at academic institutions must not have received tenure from their institution by the application submission deadline.

- **Early Career Required Outcomes.** In addition to the requirement to measure one or more learner education outcomes, if you are examining the role of educators in improving learners' education outcomes, you must propose to measure educator knowledge, skills, beliefs, behaviors, and/or practices, in addition to the required measures of learners' education outcomes.
- **Early Career Research Topics.** NCSER removed the requirement to identify a research topic from a pre-specified list.
- **Early Career Research Project Types.** Impact studies are no longer allowed under the Early Career program. Applicants may propose to conduct Measurement, Exploration, or Development and Innovation projects.
- **Early Career Award Limits.** The maximum award for Early Career grants has been reduced to \$500,000. However, Early Career PIs at institutions that are not R1 institutions may request, with justification, up to an additional \$200,000 (maximum of \$50,000 per year) to support the costs of grant administration and management.
- **Early Career Mentor Stipends.** Early Career budgets may include up to \$20,000 per year across all mentors.
- **Methods Training Focus.** Methods training applications must focus on analyzing large administrative data to address research questions related to learners with or at risk for disabilities.

Part II: Program Requirements and Recommendations

For the FY 2027 Research Training Programs, you **must** submit your application to one of the two programs described in this section. You must identify your chosen program on the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance form (Item 4b) in the application package using the appropriate code (see [Part VI](#) for a list of program codes; for more information on the SF-424 form, see the IES Application Submission Guide at <https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>).

The training programs differ by eligible applicants, trainees, types of training opportunities, and expected outcomes. For each training program, refer to the following:

- The **Purpose** section for the types of research training supported under each program.
- The **General Requirements** section for the requirements an application must meet in order to be sent forward for scientific peer review.
- The **Training Program Narrative Requirements** section for the specific content that you must address in the training program narrative in order to be sent forward for scientific peer review.
- The **Recommendations for a Strong Application** section for recommendations to improve the quality of your application. The recommendations are included to support (1) applicants in writing proposals and (2) reviewers in evaluating proposals that align with IES's expectations of high-quality research that has scientific merit and practical significance. IES asks reviewers to use these recommendations, in conjunction with their professional judgment and expertise, to determine application quality.

IES encourages applications from all eligible institutions with the capacity to provide high quality education research training, including non-R1 institutions that have not previously received funding from IES to conduct research training.

A. Early Career Development and Mentoring

1. Purpose

The Early Career program (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/research/programs/research-training-programs-in-special-education/early-career-development-and-mentoring-in-special-education>) supports grants that prepare early career researchers at research institutions (academic and non-academic) to conduct high-quality research that addresses issues important to learners with or at risk for disabilities, their families, practitioners, and policymakers. Under the Early Career program, investigators complete an integrated research and career development plan with guidance from experienced mentors. The research and career development plans should be complementary, in that the proposed research may inform which skills need enhancement just as the training and mentoring will provide those needed skills to successfully conduct the research.

The purpose of this program is to prepare investigators to conduct the type of research that NCSEER funds. Research under the Early Career program must align to one project type (see [Part II.A.3](#)). NCSEER expects the scope of Early Career projects to align with the award limits, the requirement for the early career researcher to be the sole PI, and the need for the PI to balance the goals of the research with the career development plan. Relatedly, NCSEER does not expect the PI to be an expert on all aspects of the proposed research. The proposed mentoring and training activities should support the PI in carrying out the aspects of the research with which they are less experienced. The sections below on the [Training Program Narrative Requirements](#) and [Recommendations for a Strong Application](#) specify the level of detail expected in the training program narrative.

Early Career PIs are expected to (a) complete research similar to the type supported by NCSEER; (b) obtain the skills necessary to carry out this type of research as part of a longer-term research agenda; (c) develop the ability to communicate their research findings effectively to researchers, education policymakers, practitioners, and the public; and (d) develop grant and research project management skills including preparing future grant applications and research projects. In addition, Early Career PIs are expected to build professional skills and networks that support working with researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and other education stakeholders.

2. General Requirements

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

(a) Eligible Applicants

For the Early Career program, IES provides funds to the institution of the PI who submitted the application for their research and career development. Applicants to the Early Career program **must** be a research institution (academic or non-academic). Institutions located in the territorial United States that have the ability and capacity to conduct rigorous research 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.

(b) Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI has the authority and responsibility for the proper conduct of the research, including the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports, and is the primary point of contact with IES. The PI is designated by the institution submitting the application.

The early career researcher **must** be the sole PI. No other PIs or Co-PIs may be identified.

The PI **must** have completed a doctoral degree no earlier than April 1, 2019 and no later than the start of the award period. IES will use the date on which the University granted the PI's doctoral degree. For example, if the PI defended their dissertation on March 25, 2019, but the university granted the degree on

April 2, 2019, the PI would be eligible to apply.

For PIs at academic institutions, the PI **must** hold a faculty position or research scientist position¹ that includes research as a major component of their position at the applying academic institution or must have accepted an offer for such a position to begin before the start of the award. Visiting faculty, those in adjunct positions, or those in positions that focus on training/teaching (e.g., postdoctoral fellows, teaching-only positions, lecturers) are not eligible. The PI **must not** have received tenure by the application submission deadline. For PIs at non-academic organizations, the PI **must** hold a non-temporary research position with a research career track inside the organization or must have accepted an offer for such a position to begin before the start of the award. If the PI has accepted an offer from an academic or non-academic institution, the PI **must** include a letter of support in [Appendix D](#) from the future home institution or organization that indicates they made an offer and that the PI has accepted it.

The following eligibility criteria will not be used in determining responsiveness, but if an application is recommended for funding, the PI must meet the following criteria:

- The PI **must** be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States.
- The PI **must not** have served as a PI or Co-PI on a research grant from IES.

The PI's doctorate may be from special education or another relevant discipline, provided that the focus of their research and mentoring is on learners with or at risk for disabilities. Such fields may include, but are not limited to, economics, human development, political science, psychology, sociology, and statistics.

(c) Mentors

Training **must** be provided under the guidance of at least one mentor. The PI may have co-mentors depending on their training needs and location. One mentor should be designated as the primary mentor. The term “mentors” includes both primary and co-mentors.

At least one mentor (primary or co-mentor) **must** be at the PI's home institution.

Mentors **must not** include the PI's primary graduate school advisor, dissertation advisor, or postdoctoral supervisor. A faculty member who served on a dissertation committee but did not have a direct advisor-advisee relationship with the PI is eligible to serve as a mentor.

Mentors may be from academic or non-academic institutions, such as nonprofit and for-profit organizations or public and private agencies, that conduct rigorous special education or early intervention research.

(d) Learners With or At Risk for Disabilities

Research supported under the Early Career program **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 focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities 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>). Risk for a disability is identified on an individual basis. You (the PI) should clearly identify the disability or disability categories that your sample is at risk of developing and present research-based evidence of an association between risk factors in your proposed sample and the potential identification of specific disabilities. The determination of risk may include, for example, factors used for moving learners to higher tiers in a Response to Intervention model. Evidence consisting only of general population characteristics, such as labeling learners as “at risk for disabilities” because they are from low-income

¹ Research scientist titles vary across institutions; for example, research associate, research analyst, research investigator, research professor, etc., and may include “assistant” or “associate” in the title.

families or are English language learners, is not sufficient for this purpose.

For research focused on students with disabilities in postsecondary settings, disability is described in the *qualified students with a disability* provision in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (<https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/disability-discrimination/frequently-asked-questions-section-504-free-appropriate-public-education-fape>) 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>).

Although the focus of your research must be on learners with or at risk for disabilities, learners without disabilities may be included in your sample if appropriate for your research questions. For example, learners without disabilities may be part of the comparison population or part of your research sample for assessment development and validation. If your research is (1) primarily focused on learners without disabilities prekindergarten through postsecondary or (2) primarily focused on adult education (including learners with or without disabilities) you **must** apply to the separate grant program run by the National Center for Education Research (NCER: <https://ies.ed.gov/about/national-center-education-research-ncer>; <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grants/2027/research-training-programs-education-sciences-84-305b>). Such applications will be deemed nonresponsive to this competition and will not be forwarded for peer review.

(e) Education Settings and Outcomes

Proposed research **must** be relevant to education in the United States and **must** address factors under the control of U.S. education systems.

Proposed research **must** measure 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, district, or state level, as appropriate for the proposed research questions. In addition, if you are examining the role of educators in improving learners' education outcomes, you **must** propose to measure educator knowledge, skills, beliefs, behaviors, and/or practices, in addition to the required measures of learners' education outcomes.

Education for learners with disabilities in the U.S. is delivered in a wide range of settings, including homes, natural settings for early childhood special education services, childcare centers, preschools, public and private K-12 schools and alternative schools and settings (such as juvenile justice and residential treatment facilities), community colleges, technical colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities. In addition, there are also formal programs under the control of education agencies that take place outside of school including after-school, distance learning, or online programs. IES does not support research that occurs in informal contexts outside of U.S. education systems.

(f) Award Limits

Applications **must** conform to the following limits on duration and cost:

- The maximum duration is 4 years.
- The maximum cost is \$500,000 (total cost = direct + indirect). See the discussion of indirect cost rate in [Part IV](#).
- Faculty and research scientists at institutions that are not R1 institutions may request, with justification, up to an additional \$200,000 (maximum of \$50,000 a year) to support the costs of grant administration and management. Funds for grant administration may support a grant and/or budget manager or assistants to carry out such tasks as overseeing the budget and invoices or working with or for the other offices at the university involved in grant management (e.g., Office of Sponsored Projects). The IES program officer will review your request for these additional funds as part of the pre-award process. See [Part IV.A.3](#) for information on what to include in the budget you submit with your application. This competition will use the 2025 Carnegie Classifications to determine eligibility for the additional \$200,000. R1 Doctoral

Universities – Very High Research Activity are ineligible. For more information, see <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/institutions/?inst=&research2025%5B%5D=2&research2025%5B%5D=3>.

3. Training Program Narrative Requirements

The training program narrative **must** include five sections – Significance, Research Plan, Career Development Plan, Personnel, and Resources. The five sections **must** include the content described below to be considered responsive to the requirements of this RFA. Applications lacking this specific content will not be forwarded for peer review.

The training program narrative **must** adhere to the formatting guidelines (see [Part III.B](#)) and be **no more than 22 pages**. If the narrative exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 22nd page of the narrative.

See the [Recommendations for a Strong Application](#) for recommendations to improve the quality of your application. The recommendations are included to support (1) applicants in writing proposals and (2) reviewers in evaluating proposals that align with IES's expectations of high-quality research that has scientific merit and practical significance. IES asks reviewers to use these recommendations, in conjunction with their professional judgment and expertise, to determine application quality.

The narrative should clearly demonstrate the integration of your research and career development plans. The research and career development plans may influence one another bi-directionally, as the proposed research may inform which skills need enhancement just as the training and mentoring will provide those needed skills to successfully conduct the research.

(a) Significance

The purpose of this section is to explain why the proposed research and career development plans are important.

You **must**

- Describe your need for further career development.
- Provide an overview of the proposed research project.
- Identify a project type that reflects the type and purpose of the work you will do from the list below.
 - Measurement projects develop, refine, and/or validate assessments for use by educators or education researchers.
 - Exploration projects examine relations between malleable factors at the learner, educator, education setting, and/or policy level and meaningful education outcomes. A variety of approaches are appropriate under Exploration, including primary data collection and analyses, secondary data analyses, meta-analyses, or some combination of these approaches.
 - Development and Innovation projects develop or modify and pilot test new or modified interventions (programs, practices, or policies) that are intended to produce beneficial impacts on learner education outcomes.

(b) Research Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe the aims and methodology for the proposed research.

IES anticipates that certain aspects of the research plan will be less detailed than others based on your current level of experience and training, and when this is the case, you should describe how these aspects will be further developed through the proposed training and mentoring.

You **must**

- Describe the research you intend to do, including the research design, key outcome measures, and data analysis procedures.
- Describe how you will measure one or more education outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities and, if relevant, educator outcomes.

(c) Career Development Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe your training goals, the proposed mentoring and additional training activities, and how those activities will help you reach your goals.

This plan should describe how the proposed training and mentoring will provide the skills to successfully conduct the research.

You **must**

- Describe the mentoring and additional training activities in which you intend to participate.

(d) Personnel

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

You **must**

- Describe your expertise as well as the expertise of your mentor(s) and other personnel.
- Describe how you meet the eligibility requirements to be the PI of an Early Career grant.
- Specify the date on which you were granted your doctoral degree.
- Identify your mentors, including at least one mentor at your institution.
- Specify the names of your dissertation or graduate school advisor and (if relevant) your postdoctoral supervisor.

(e) Resources

The purpose of this section is to describe the institutional resources to support you in successfully carrying out the proposed research and career development plans.

You **must**

- Describe the resources to support you in conducting the proposed project.

4. Recommendations for a Strong Application

IES provides these recommendations to improve the quality of your application. The recommendations are included to support (1) applicants in writing proposals and (2) reviewers in evaluating proposals that align with IES's expectations of high-quality research that has scientific merit and practical significance. IES asks reviewers to use these recommendations, in conjunction with their professional judgment and expertise, to determine application quality.

(a) Significance

Briefly describe and justify your career development goals, including why you need additional training and mentoring in these areas. Describe why these goals are important for helping you accomplish the proposed research activities and preparing you to conduct high-quality and meaningful education research going forward.

Describe the progression from your prior research to the research that will occur over the award period to the line of research that you will develop in the future.

Describe the research study, including its theoretical and empirical rationale.

Justify the need for the research and how the results will inform education practice and/or policy related to learners with or at risk for disabilities.

Address the following recommendations for your proposed project type.

Project Type	Significance Recommendations
Measurement	Describe the assessment, including the construct(s) it will measure as well as its intended use and population.
Exploration	Describe the malleable factors you propose to study and the relations you expect them to have with learner education outcomes.
Development and Innovation	Describe the intervention, its implementation, and the population intended to benefit from it. Describe the theory of change for the intervention. The theory of change should make clear why the intervention is expected to change learner outcomes, based on theory and prior research. You may include a visual representation of your theory of change in Appendix C. This visual representation should specify intervention components, mechanisms of change, proximal outcomes, and distal outcomes (as applicable). Describe the intervention's potential uptake by educators and feasibility of implementation in the proposed settings.

(b) Research Plan

The level of detail provided in this section should align with your expertise and proposed training activities. You may provide less detail on those aspects of your proposed research for which you intend to receive additional training and mentoring and you should note this intention. You should propose a research plan that is feasible to carry out within the context of an Early Career grant (which is expected to be smaller and narrower than a research plan proposed under other NCSER research grant programs).

Describe the aims of the research project, including your specific research question(s) and hypotheses.

Justify the feasibility of the research plan.

Provide a timeline for each step in your project, including research and career development activities. The timeline may be discussed in the training program narrative and/or presented in Appendix C.

(1) Sample and Setting

Describe your sample, what population it represents, its size, and its relation to addressing the overall aims of the project. IES does not expect you to provide a power analysis in your application; however, you should describe and justify the expected sample size, including the implications of the sample size for statistical power and the ability to draw conclusions from statistical analyses.

Describe your criteria for defining disability or risk for disability.

Describe the setting where your research will take place.

(2) Research Design

Describe your research design with enough detail to demonstrate that it will address each of your research questions. IES encourages the use of mixed methods research, defined as the integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in a single study, for all project types. Results obtained from mixed methods studies have the potential to enrich our understanding of education research questions, issues, and outcomes.

Address the following recommendations for your proposed project type.

Project Type	Research Plan Recommendations
Measurement	Describe the iterative assessment development process (if applicable). Describe the types of validity evidence you will collect and the procedures for doing so.
Exploration	For primary data collection and analyses, describe the procedures for collecting and scoring data, and (if applicable) any qualitative data collection and coding protocols. For secondary data analyses, identify the datasets you will use and the key variables you will examine. Discuss any limitations of the dataset(s). If applicable, note whether you already have access to the data or whether you will need to request access. For meta-analyses, describe the study inclusion and exclusion criteria and procedures for searching for, coding, and extracting data from studies. Demonstrate that there are enough studies available with the relevant information to allow an adequate dataset to be constructed.
Development and Innovation	Describe how you will iteratively develop the intervention, evaluate its usability and feasibility, determine needed improvements, and make necessary adjustments. Describe the pilot study to determine the intervention's promise for improving learner education outcomes.

(3) Measures

Describe the measures you will use to assess variables of interest, including the required learner education (and educator) outcomes, and discuss their reliability and validity for the intended purpose and population.

(4) Data Analysis

Explain your proposed analyses and how they will address your research questions.

(c) Career Development Plan

The career development plan should include training and mentoring on the aspects of your research plan that you are less familiar with and are described in less detail in the application.

Describe three to four overarching training goals and how they support or complement your research plan, address gaps in your knowledge and training, and contribute to your longer-term research agenda. Training goals may focus on expanding your content-area knowledge, methodological skills, and/or development as a scholar.

Specify how the mentors will help you reach your training goals, guide you through the process of refining and implementing your research plan, and guide your development as a scholar. Mentoring activities may include regular meetings to discuss the research plan and progress (primary mentors are expected to communicate with PIs at least once per month); review of your career development plan and suggestions for particular activities or directed readings; and additional guidance that will be useful for your development as a scientist, including reviews of manuscripts for publication, products, and grant applications.

Describe a plan for coordinating mentoring activities among the mentors if there are co-mentors.

Describe your planned training activities and how they will help you reach your training goals. For each activity, specify what it entails, with which training goal(s) it is aligned, the timing, and whether it is campus-based or external to your home institution. Training activities could include, but are not limited to, courses offered by your institution, IES-funded methods trainings, grant-writing seminars, and statistics workshops. Training activities may also include, but should go beyond, typical career development activities expected of all early career researchers, such as attending and presenting at conferences.

Describe how the content and timing of activities in your career development plan are integrated with the research plan. For instance, if you propose to participate in a training related to designing and conducting Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), you should demonstrate how that will be completed prior to conducting an RCT as part of your research project. A timeline may be discussed in the training program narrative and/or presented in [Appendix C](#).

(d) Personnel

Describe your experience conducting and disseminating education research.

Specify the percent of time and calendar months per year (academic plus summer) you will devote to the project. Explain how you will have time to conduct your proposed research and accomplish your training plan given your other responsibilities. IES anticipates that you will allocate a minimum of 20% and maximum of 50% of your 12-month calendar year time to your research training project, with the specific amount depending on other duties and commitments such as your course load, other faculty responsibilities, and other sources of salary funding.

Describe the qualifications of your mentors, their proposed roles in training, and how their experience and expertise align with the proposed research project and career development plan.

- If proposing multiple mentors, identify which is the primary mentor and include mentors with a variety of areas of expertise. For instance, one mentor may have expertise in the relevant content area and the other may have expertise in another aspect of your proposed research or career development plan, such as the research methods.
- Specify a mentor at your home institution who can help guide your career development there (for example, by helping you navigate the institution's procedures for grant submission and grant management) as well as provide additional content and/or methodological expertise.
- Describe your mentors' prior experiences mentoring early career researchers, including faculty or postdoctoral fellows.
- Describe your mentors' experience engaging relevant communities throughout the research process, from conceptualization through dissemination.

Describe the time commitments of your mentors for your project.

- Describe the anticipated number and length of meetings per month as well as the amount of time to be devoted to other mentoring activities.
- Specify their percent effort for each year of the project. Their effort should be commensurate with the mentoring activities and reflect the time they will devote to the project, including any donated time. IES anticipates that your mentors' combined time commitment to the project will be at least 5% per calendar year.

Describe other personnel, including their proposed roles, qualifications, and time commitments. For example,

- Personnel such as research assistants and a project manager can provide support for coordinating and/or conducting research activities, such as recruitment and data collection.
- Personnel such as consultants, advisory board members, or statisticians can provide support on specific aspects of your research plan or fill gaps in your mentorship and training (for example, by providing consultation on statistical analyses). These personnel should have unique and specific roles that are different from those served by the mentors.

(e) Resources

Describe your institution's capacity to support early career researchers in managing grants and monitoring spending. If applicable, non-R1 applicants should discuss the additional grant management support they are requesting as part of the grant and explain why it is necessary.

Describe your institution's experience supporting early career researchers through training workshops, seminars, and/or discussion groups with senior researchers.

Describe any facilities, such as computers or labs, and resources provided by your institution that are relevant for the successful completion of the project. Describe your access to resources available at your mentor's institution, if different from your own, to support your research, your training, or both.

Describe 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.

Describe your resources, including access to specific offices and organizations, to carry out your plans to disseminate results as described in the required Engagement and Dissemination Plan in [Appendix A](#).

5. Additional Budget Parameters

The following requirements for Early Career applications will not be used in determining responsiveness to the RFA, but applications recommended for funding will be required to adjust their budgets, if necessary, to meet these requirements before receiving grant funds.

The budget should include the costs of conducting the proposed research and career development plans. These may include such costs as research and administrative staff salary, consultants, research supplies (e.g., software, assessments), participant compensation, statistical services (including personnel and computer time), local travel for data collection, and registration for training workshops or conferences.

The budget may also include the following:

- Salary to cover up to 50% of the PI's time on the project and related fringe benefits.
- Up to \$20,000 per year across all mentors. If there are co-mentors, the \$20,000 must be divided among all the mentors based upon their role in the project. Institutions may have different ways of allocating \$20,000 to mentors. Mentors may be compensated using honoraria, salary including fringe benefits, or through cost sharing or in-kind contributions. Regardless of compensation method, the federal government contribution cannot exceed \$20,000 per year. In-kind contributions and cost sharing are allowed but are not required and they are not taken into consideration during the review of the application, nor do they influence the funding decision.
- Funding for graduate students, including stipends, fringe benefits, and tuition remission.
- Funding for travel, including to the annual IES PI Meeting, for the PI or mentor(s) to meet, for professional research conferences, and for specialized training workshops available through other entities (such as summer institutes in methodology or statistical analysis).
- Funding for any reasonable accommodations for the PI or research staff.
- For faculty at non-R1 institutions only, optional funding for grant administration (up to \$50,000 per year and \$200,000 total in direct and indirect costs) may be used to support a grant and/or budget manager or assistants to carry out such tasks as overseeing the budget and invoices or working with or for the other offices at the university involved in grant management (for example, Office of Sponsored Projects). See [Part IV.A.3](#) for information on what to include in the budget you submit with your application. The IES program officer will review your request for these additional funds as part of the pre-award process.

Grant funds **must not** be used for the following:

- Facility construction, renovation, or maintenance
- Support for graduate students beyond their direct work on the grant; for example, grant funds

- should not be used to support graduate student research or travel to conferences
- Mentors' research

B. Methods Training for Special Education Research

1. Purpose

The Methods Training program (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/research/programs/research-training-programs-in-special-education/methods-training-for-special-education-research>) supports training of current education researchers to expand and upgrade their methodological skills in order to conduct high-quality research focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities. Education researchers include individuals located in colleges and universities and research organizations and firms, as well as individuals working in state and local education agencies, education-focused organizations, and companies that have developed and deployed education related products and services. Supported training should respond to the ongoing development and adaptation of methods concerning the design of early intervention and special education studies, data collection, data analysis, and practical interpretation of the results of analyses.

For FY 2027, NCSER is only accepting applications for Methods Training focused on analyzing large administrative datasets to address research questions related to learners with or at risk for disabilities. The training should provide support to education researchers, including individuals working in state and local education agencies, in acquiring the skills necessary to clean, merge, analyze, and interpret data from large administrative datasets (e.g., statewide longitudinal data systems, data from digital learning platforms) for the purpose of better understanding outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities and/or informing policy and programmatic decisions related to these learners.

NCSER encourages you to provide methods training opportunities for researchers (including faculty, research staff, institutional researchers) at non-R1 institutions to increase their capacity to carry out rigorous education research and to prepare participants for more advanced training.

2. General Requirements

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

(a) Eligible Applicants and Key Personnel

Applicants located in the territorial United States that have the ability and capacity to conduct training in scientific research methods are eligible to apply. An applying institution may hold more than one Methods Training award and submit multiple applications to the Methods Training Program if they are substantively different from one another and have no overlaps in key personnel.

The PI has the authority and responsibility for the proper conduct of the research training, including the appropriate use of federal funds and the submission of required scientific progress reports, and is the primary point of contact with IES. The PI is designated by the institution submitting the application. Other personnel having authority and responsibility for the research training and use of grant funds should be designated as co-PIs. Even if two or more people will share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the proposed research training intellectually and logistically as Co-PIs, only one of them may be identified as the PI for the purposes of making a grant award.

All key training personnel **must** be named in the application. Applications proposing to identify experts to provide the training once the grant is received will not be accepted for review. Key personnel can be on only one Methods Training application for FY 2027, and IES will not fund Methods Training projects with overlapping key personnel.

(b) Training Focus

The proposed training **must** focus on analyzing large administrative data to address research questions related to learners with or at risk for disabilities.

(c) Award Limits

Applications **must** conform to the following limits on duration and cost:

- The maximum duration is 3 years.
- The maximum cost is \$800,000 (total cost = direct costs + indirect costs). See the discussion of indirect cost rate for training grants in [Part IV](#). Funds may be used to develop and disseminate training materials in addition to providing the training directly to participants.

3. Training Program Narrative Requirements

The training program narrative **must** include four sections – Significance, Research Training Plan, Personnel, and Resources. The four sections **must** include the content described below to be considered responsive to the requirements of this RFA. Applications lacking this specific content will not be forwarded for peer review.

The training program narrative **must** adhere to the formatting guidelines (see [Part III.B](#)) and be **no more than 15 pages**. If the narrative exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the 15th page of the narrative.

See the [Recommendations for a Strong Application](#) for recommendations to improve the quality of your application. The recommendations are included to support (1) applicants in writing proposals and (2) reviewers in evaluating proposals that align with IES's expectations of high-quality research that has scientific merit and practical significance. IES asks reviewers to use these recommendations, in conjunction with their professional judgment and expertise, to determine application quality.

(a) Significance

The purpose of this section is to describe the focus of your training related to analyzing large administrative data and why they are important for addressing research questions related to learners with or at risk for disabilities and informing policy and practice.

You **must** describe the

- Focus of your training related to analyzing administrative data.
- Intended participants.

(b) Research Training Plan

The purpose of this section is to describe the training to be provided, including recruitment for and outcomes of the training.

You **must** describe

- A recruitment plan.
- The training content, format, and activities.
- A plan for determining the success of the training program.

As a reminder, recruitment must be based on merit and qualification, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or proxies thereof unless an appropriate exception applies such as a religious organization or an organization engaged in remedial action.

(c) Personnel

The purpose of this section is to describe the relevant expertise of your training team, the responsibilities of each team member, and the time commitments of each team member.

You **must**

- Describe all key personnel, including the PI, any Co-PIs, and other trainers.
- Identify the experts who will provide the training.

(d) Resources

The purpose of this section is to describe both how you have the institutional capacity to complete a research training program of this size and complexity and your access to the resources you will need to successfully complete this research training program.

You **must** describe the

- Institutional resources of both the primary applicant institution and any subaward institutions.
- Resources to implement your engagement and dissemination plan.

4. Recommendations for a Strong Application

IES provides these recommendations to improve the quality of your application. The recommendations are included to support (1) applicants in writing proposals and (2) reviewers in evaluating proposals that align with IES's expectations of high-quality research that has scientific merit and practical significance. IES asks reviewers to use these recommendations, in conjunction with their professional judgment and expertise, to determine application quality.

(a) Significance

Detail the specific methods that the training will teach and their importance to analyzing large administrative datasets to address research questions related to learners with or at risk for disabilities and informing practice and policy.

Describe the type of participants you intend to recruit, noting their field of work and pre-existing skills and expertise related to using administrative data to inform special education policy and practice.

- Justify why this is an important group to train.
- Discuss the importance of these skills and expertise for the work of the expected participants.

Identify any existing sources from which potential participants could currently obtain the training you propose and how your training will be different from or supplement these resources.

Provide a conceptual framework that ties together the training needs of the participants to be recruited, the training to be provided, the specific skills and knowledge that participants will acquire, and how the skills and knowledge will improve participants' ability to analyze large administrative datasets to better understand outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities and inform special education policy and practice.

Methods Training projects should seek to increase the knowledge and skills of education researchers and practitioners to an extent that benefits the field. *IES does not expect that participants will become experts in the material taught.* Specify in the application the anticipated level of proficiency the participants will attain by the end of the training. Provide a rationale for that level of proficiency being both useful in the field and attainable through the proposed training.

(b) Research Training Plan

(1) Recruitment Plan

Describe the recruitment plan and how it will result in the type of participants you intend to recruit, including the following information:

- How you will announce the training opportunity and how you will reach potential participants who could benefit most from the training.
- The eligibility criteria for participants and the application process.
- The selection criteria, how these will be applied, and who will make the decisions regarding admission to the training. Discuss how you will make the selection process fair and avoid any appearances of conflict of interest.

Identify and justify the number of participants to be trained and the timing of their participation.

Provide a timeline (either in this section or [Appendix C](#)) delineating when the expected recruitment and training of the participants will take place.

(2) Training Activities

Describe the specific content to be taught and how it will develop the expected knowledge and skills in the participants.

Describe the training format and justify its cost efficiency and why it is the best format for providing participants with the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn and the practice necessary to use them. Methods Training projects can use a variety of in-person and/or virtual formats, including but not limited to

- One-time extended sessions
- Short courses
- Multi-year extended sessions
- Ongoing sessions
- Combinations of in-person extended sessions and ongoing virtual sessions
- Prework or pre-sessions to prepare some or all participants for the main training
- Ongoing opportunities for the participants to consult with training experts

Describe the specific training activities, the content to be taught by each activity, and how each activity will develop the participants' knowledge and skills. Describe how the activities are organized to reflect adult learning theories (such as participants engaging in activities that are relevant and timely, linked to their work, and applicable to the problems of their fields). NCSEER expects Methods Training projects to include opportunities for participants to engage in hands-on practice with the methods taught using real administrative data and project-focused learning. Examples of activity types include

- Preparatory work, homework, and long-term assignments
- Lectures and webinars
- Readings and discussion
- Demonstrations of applying a method
- Small group or individual assignment to apply a method
- Small group work led by trainers
- Participant application of a method to their own research with trainer's support
- Participants presenting their research to the group and receiving feedback
- Development of future research ideas and/or proposals

Note whether the format of the training is intended to build networks among the participants and, if so, how joint learning and collaboration will be encouraged both during and after the training.

Examples or supporting information regarding content, format, and activities can be provided in [Appendix C](#).

(3) Evaluation of Program Success

Discuss how you will assess the strengths and needs of participants upon their entry to the program and how you will tailor the training accordingly.

Describe how you plan to solicit and respond to feedback from participants.

Describe the measures you will use to determine that the training program is developing the intended knowledge and skills and that participants are able to apply them in their work.

Describe how you will estimate the cost of training per participant, including recruitment costs.

(c) Personnel

Describe the PI's qualifications and experience for managing a Methods Training grant.

Briefly describe the following for each key personnel:

- Qualifications and how these contribute to the focus of the Methods Training project, including prior experience analyzing large administrative datasets to inform education policy and practice, and in particular prior experience analyzing these data to better understand outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities.
- Roles and responsibilities on the training project.
- Percent of time and calendar months per year to be devoted to the training project.
- Previous experience providing training for education researchers.
- Expertise in disseminating information to a range of audiences. For example, if key personnel have previously received a Methods Training grant, discuss how training materials were made accessible to non-participants.

Discuss how the combined expertise of the key personnel reflects the methodological focus, format, and activities of the proposed training project.

(d) Resources

Describe your institutional capacity and experience to manage a grant of this kind.

Describe your access to resources available at the primary institution and any subaward institutions.

Describe your plan 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 software, equipment or training materials.

Include letters of agreement in [Appendix D](#) from all institutions and trainers that will take part in the training.

Describe your access to administrative datasets that you will require for training purposes. Include letters of agreement, data licenses, or existing memoranda of understanding (MOU) in [Appendix D](#) to document that you will be able to access the data for your proposed use.

Describe the resources you have and will obtain to implement your Engagement and Dissemination Plan, as described in [Appendix A](#), to provide opportunities for non-participants to have access to your training content and activities. For example, previous Methods Training projects have

- Made videos of key activities and posted them on the project's website or other platforms.
- Posted training activities or materials on the project's website.
- Released posts, briefs, monographs, working papers or published articles on key issues in using the methods aimed at the needs of the training participants.
- Developed training modules and made them freely available so that other qualified persons can teach with them.
- Developed an online course based on the training materials and open to a wide audience.
- Established an ongoing user group so that participants can continue to collaborate and allowing others with similar interests to join.

5. Additional Budget Parameters and Application Requirements

The following requirements for Methods Training applications will not be used in determining responsiveness to the RFA, but applications recommended for funding will be required to adjust their plans and budgets, if necessary, to meet them before receiving grant funds.

The budget **must** include funds allocated to (a) general accommodations (e.g., ensuring training

materials are 508 compliant) and (b) the specific needs of participants with disabilities (e.g., sign language interpreter and/or assistive listening devices). Costs to accommodate specific needs should be set aside until registration is completed and accessibility requirements are known. These estimated costs should be reasonable given the duration and format of the training and should be budgeted for each training.

Under the Methods Training program, you will have to certify that your training participants and your support of them meet the following requirements. Grant funds expended in ways that do not meet these requirements will be disallowed, and your institution will have to return such expended funds.

(a) Participant Characteristics

Training participants **must** be citizens or permanent residents of the United States.

Participants' work **must** be relevant to education in the United States.

(b) Participant Support Costs

Participant support costs include all direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees or similar expenses paid to or on behalf of trainees (but not training grant personnel) in connection with the training. They must be excluded from the indirect cost calculations.

Methods Training participants and their institutions cannot receive financial recompense for attending a training program.

Participants' lodging and per diem can be covered by the grant but must not exceed federal government reimbursement rates for place and time of year (see <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates?topnav=travel>). Grant funds cannot be used for lodging, travel, and per diem for local training project staff.

Participants are expected to cover their own transportation costs to and from training workshops and/or meetings with the following exceptions:

- Reasonable transportation costs for state and local education agency personnel attending the training may be covered by the grant.
- Training participants may have their transportation costs covered by the grant if they have been accepted to the training but lack travel funding. If your application is funded, you will need to work with your program officer to ensure reasonable and equitable provision of travel support.

In general, training grant funds may not be used to pay for food. However, under limited circumstances grant funds may be used to cover the costs of working lunches for attendees of training activities. If you are proposing to use grant funds for working lunches, you should include a clear description of the work to be accomplished during the meal as well as the per person cost. IES will determine whether these working lunch costs are allowable if the grant is awarded. If allowed, the cost of these working lunches must be subtracted from any per diem provided to participants. Grant-supported staff taking part in these working lunches must directly pay for them or have the cost subtracted from their per diem if they are receiving one. Other meals or snacks should not be included in the grant budget.

Part III: Preparing Your Application

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/application-submission-guide>) for additional information about how to find, complete, and submit an application package through Grants.gov (<https://grants.gov>).

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the development of grant applications is allowable. Applicants submitting a grant application must certify on the standard application form to the “true, complete, and accurate” nature of all of the contents of their grant application, regardless of whether it is generated by AI (<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2025-16571>).

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 applications. 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 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.

2. 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.

3. Spacing

Text must be single spaced.

4. Font and Type Size

Use a font that is 12-point.

Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial.

5. Citations

Use the parenthetical author-date style for citations rather than numeric citations that correspond to the reference list.

6. Accessibility

Meet or exceed standards for accessibility (including alternative texts for charts, figures, and graphs) in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For assistance with 508 compliance, please visit <https://www.section508.gov/create/>.

C. Required and Optional Appendices

The required training program narrative that is described in [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 training program 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/application-submission-guide>) 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 training program narrative and appendices are critical parts of the IES application because they include the substantive content that will be reviewed for practical significance and scientific merit.

1. Appendix A: Engagement and Dissemination Plan (Required)

You **must** include Appendix A after the training program narrative. Appendix A **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than three pages**. If Appendix A exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the third page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

The Engagement and Dissemination Plan is intended to demonstrate that the research (for Early Career projects) and training (for Methods Training projects) you are proposing to conduct will attend to and reach your intended audience. Your engagement and dissemination plan should include the following:

- Identify the audiences that you expect will most likely benefit from your research training project such as institutional researchers, state or local education agency staff, junior or senior researchers, education practitioners, parents and students and other stakeholders.
- For Early Career projects, discuss (1) how your proposed research reflects engagement with relevant stakeholders throughout the research process, including in the development of your application; (2) how your proposed approach is grounded in current needs; and (3) how you will, in practical and accessible ways, disseminate findings to relevant stakeholders.
- For Methods Training projects, discuss the different ways in which you intend to reach members of these audiences who will not be able to attend the training sessions you intend to hold. Describe how the materials, presentations, and products you expect to develop will be made more widely available. Note whether these materials will be updated on a regular basis.

The Engagement and Dissemination Plan is the only information that may be included in Appendix A; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application.

2. Appendix B: Response to Reviewers (Required for Resubmissions)

If your application is a resubmission, you **must** include Appendix B. If your application is one that you consider to be new but that is similar to a previous application, you should include Appendix B. Appendix B **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than three pages**. If Appendix B exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the third page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

Use Appendix B to describe how the revised application is responsive to prior reviewer comments. If you have submitted a somewhat similar application in the past but are submitting the current application as a new application, you should use Appendix B to provide a rationale explaining why the current application should be considered a “new” application rather than a “resubmitted” application.

This response to the reviewers is the only information that may be included in Appendix B; all other materials will be removed prior to review of the application.

3. Appendix C: Supplemental Materials (Optional)

Appendix C **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than five pages**. If Appendix C exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the fifth page of the appendix before it is

forwarded for scientific peer review.

Appendix C may include figures, charts, or tables with supplementary information that support the training program narrative. For example, for Early Career projects, you may include a project timeline, a theory of change figure, examples of measures used to collect data for your project, or a table showing the integration of your research and career development plans. For Methods Training projects, you may include a project timeline and training-related materials such as syllabi and training evaluation forms.

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

4. Appendix D: Letters of Agreement (Required)

You **must** include Appendix D. Appendix D **must** meet the general formatting guidelines. There is **no maximum page length** for Appendix D.

Include in Appendix D the letters of agreement from any institutional partners, mentors, and individual trainers who will take part in the training program as well as data providers.

(a) Early Career Program

IES requires including letters from the following:

- All mentors
 - Appendix D **must** include letters of agreement from the primary mentor and (if applicable) additional co-mentor(s). The letter(s) should include enough information to make it clear that the mentor understands the nature of the commitment of time, resources, and mentoring activities that will be required if the application is funded.
- All institutions/organizations that will take part in the training
 - Appendix D **must** include a letter of agreement from your institution. The letter should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands and agrees to the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources that will be required if the application is funded. If you have not yet started your faculty or research scientist position by the due date of the application, you must ensure that the letter of support from your future institution or organization clearly indicates that there has been an offer, an offer acceptance, and an agreed upon start date.
- Any partners, such as schools or districts; data sources, such as state agencies holding administrative data; and consultants (if applicable)
 - Letters should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the time commitment and timing of participation, as well as the space, personnel, and other resources the partner is prepared to contribute if the application is funded. Letters of agreement regarding the provision of data should make it clear that the author of the letter will provide the data described in the application for use in the proposed research and in time to meet the proposed schedule.

(b) Methods Training Program

IES requires including letters from the following:

- All key training personnel
- All institutions/organizations that will take part in the training
- Those who hold access to necessary data (you may include letters of agreement, data licenses, and/or the existing memorandum of understanding to document access to any data sets to be used in the training)

Ensure that the letters reproduce well so that reviewers can easily read them. Do not reduce the size of the letters. See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>) for guidance regarding the size of file attachments.

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

5. Appendix E: Data Sharing and Management Plan (Required for Early Career Applications)

All Early Career applications **must** include a Data Sharing and Management Plan (DSMP) in Appendix E. Appendix E must meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than five pages**. If Appendix E exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the fifth page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

See the IES Public Access Guidance (<https://ies.ed.gov/about/public-access-research>) for additional tools and materials to assist with developing a Data Sharing and Management Plan (DSMP) and adherence with existing policies.

The costs associated with implementation of the DSMP may be covered by the grant and should be included in the budget and explained in the budget narrative.

IES program officers will be responsible for reviewing the completeness of the proposed DSMP. The scientific peer reviewers do not evaluate the DSMP in their review of applications. If your application is being considered for funding based on the scores received during the scientific review process but your DSMP is determined incomplete or insufficient, you will be required to provide additional detail regarding your DSMP.

When you, the PI, and authorized organization representative (AOR) sign the cover page of the grant application, they will be assuring compliance with the IES Policy Regarding Public Access to Research (<https://ies.ed.gov/about/public-access-research>) as well as other policies and regulations governing research awards. This entails immediately uploading full text of accepted or published manuscripts to ERIC that are based on IES-funded data, as well as the sharing of data no later than either immediately upon publication or five years after the end date of the grant, whichever occurs first.

Once the DSMP is approved by IES, you and your institution are required to carry it out and to report progress and problems and requests to amend through the regular reporting channels. Compliance with IES data sharing requirements is expected even if the final dataset may not be completed and prepared for data sharing until after the grant has been completed. In cases of noncompliance, subsequent awards to individuals or institutions may be affected. By addressing the items identified below, your DSMP describes how you will meet the requirements of the IES policy for data sharing and adopt best practices for adherence to open science principles.

The DSMP should include the following:

- **Sharing Platforms**
 - The pre-registration repository where you will pre-register your study, and the timeline for preregistering (within the first year of the project).
 - The data repository where you plan to share your data, and an indication of the selected repository's adherence with the National Science and Technology Council document entitled "Desirable Characteristics of Data Repositories for Federally Funded Research" (<https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/113528>). IES discourages sharing on a personal/institutional website or by request.
 - If there are data that cannot be shared, the repository or location where you will share information about how you obtained or accessed the data source(s), along with codes and analytic approach utilized.
- **Data Description**
 - The type of data to be shared.

- Any data that will not be shared, and grounds for exclusions which may include privacy protections, proprietary data, and/or indigenous data sovereignty. See section 7.2 of the ED Public Access Plan (<https://ies.ed.gov/about/public-access-research>) for additional information regarding potential restrictions on data sharing.
- Procedures for managing and for maintaining the confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information.
- How the data set will be formatted and configured and your approach to curating, cleaning, and preparing data for sharing, taking into consideration guidance from IES's Sharing Study Data: A Guide for Education Researchers (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022004/https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/resource/tooltoolkit/sharing-study-data-guide-education-researchers>).
- Your dataset documentation including code books and any decisions made about the data that would be important for replicating the results.
- Your intentions to share statistical/analysis code to support reproducibility, including format and location.
- Administrative Plan
 - Management plan designating roles and responsibilities of project or institutional staff in the management and retention of research data, including a discussion of any changes that will occur should you and/or others with key responsibilities for data sharing and management leave the project or their institution.
 - Expected schedule for data sharing (no later than immediately upon publication or 5 years after the award end date, whichever is sooner), how long the data will remain accessible (available for at least 10 years), and acknowledgement that the timeframe of data accessibility will be reviewed at the annual progress reviews and revised as necessary.
 - Anticipated costs associated with implementing the DSMP (including resource and labor costs) that are reflected in the application's budget and budget justification.
 - Whether re-use of data will require a data use agreement and, if so, what conditions users must meet to access the data.
 - Approaches to disseminating the availability and location of data to support discoverability for reuse purposes.

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

6. Appendix F: Alignment with SEER Standards (Required)

In Appendix F, you **must** include a table describing the alignment of your application with the current SEER Standards (<https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/standards-excellence-education-research-seer>). Appendix F **must** meet the general formatting guidelines and be **no more than three pages** including the required table. If Appendix F exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the third page of the appendix before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

Fill in the table below with a high-level summary of how your proposed project aligns with each SEER domain/standard and refer back to the location in the narrative where additional details about project alignment are included.

<i>SEER Domain/ Standard</i>	<i>High-level summary of how your proposed project meets these standards</i>	<i>Pages in Narrative and/or Appendix</i>
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Domain 1	Objectivity and Scientific Integrity	
Theory and Hypotheses		
Research Design		
Communication of Uncertainty		
Integrity		
Conflicts of Interest		
Domain 2	Relevance	
Relevant and Student-Outcomes Focused		
Engagement		
Generalizability		
Design for Scale	<i>Note: Only complete this row if you are conducting a development study or impact evaluation.</i>	
Domain 3	Open Science	
Pre-registration		
Open Data		
Open Methods		
Open Access		
Domain 4	Intervention Research	
	<i>Note: Only complete Domain 4 if you are conducting an impact evaluation.</i>	
Core Components		
Implementation and Treatment Contrast		
High Quality Measures		
Distal Outcomes		

Cost and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis		
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This appendix will not be part of scientific peer review. IES program officers will be responsible for reviewing the information in this appendix.

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

D. Other Narrative Content

In addition to the training program 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/application-submission-guide>) 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** submit the project summary/abstract as a separate PDF attachment. If your project is recommended for funding, IES will use this abstract as the basis for the online abstracts that we post when new awards are announced (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/research-training>). We recommend that the project summary/abstract be one-page long and include the following information.

(a) Early Career Program

- **Title:** Distinct, descriptive title for the project
- **Purpose:** A brief description of the purpose and significance of the project that addresses the research and career development plans
- **Research Plan:** A brief description of the research plan including research questions, sample, intervention (if applicable), measures, and data analysis plan
- **Career Plan:** A brief description of the proposed training and mentoring activities

(b) Methods Training Program

- **Title:** Distinct, descriptive title for the training project
- **Purpose:** A brief description of the purpose and significance of the research training
- **Research Training Plan:** A brief description of the proposed training plan and the expected number of individuals to be trained

2. Bibliography and References Cited

You **must** submit the bibliography and references cited as a separate PDF attachment in the application package. There is no recommended page length for the bibliography and references cited. You should include complete citations, including the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), titles of relevant elements such as the article/journal and chapter/book, page numbers, and year of publication for literature cited in the training program narrative. As a reminder, you should use the author-date style for citations in the project narrative (see [Part III B.5](#)).

3. Human Subjects Narrative

You **must** submit an exempt or non-exempt human subjects narrative as a separate PDF attachment in the application package. There is no recommended page length for the human subjects narrative. See *Information About the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Supported by the Department of*

Education (<https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/manage-your-grant/protection-of-human-subjects-research/protection-of-human-subjects-human-subjects-research-narrative>) for a brief overview of principles, regulations, and policies which affect research involving human subjects in research activities supported by the Department of Education.

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 **must** submit a biographical sketch for each person named as key personnel in your application. You may also submit biographical sketches for consultants (optional). Each biographical sketch (an abbreviated CV plus current and pending support information) **must be no more than five pages in length, and this five page limit includes current and pending support information**. If a biographical sketch exceeds this page limit, IES will remove any pages after the fifth page before it is forwarded for scientific peer review.

Biographical sketches are submitted as separate PDF attachments in the application package. IES strongly encourages applicants 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 you use SciENcv, the information on current and pending support will be entered into the IES biosketch template. If you use your own format, you will need to provide this information in a separate table.

The biographical sketch for the principal investigator, each co-principal investigator, mentors, other key personnel, and consultants (if included) should show how personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their specified duties on the proposed project, for example by describing relevant publications, grants, training experience, and research experience, including experience working with the study population as applicable.

Provide a list of current and pending grants for the principal investigator, each mentor, and other key personnel, along with the proportion of their time, expressed as percent **effort over a 12-month calendar year**, allocated to each project. Include the proposed IES grant as one of the pending grants in this list.

While not required at the time of application, all key personnel must have a persistent identifier (PID), such as an ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification; <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/application-submission-guide>) for more information about this form in the application package.

If any 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 Criteria

A. Funding Mechanisms and Restrictions

1. Mechanism of Support

IES intends to award grants pursuant to this Request for Applications.

2. Funding Available

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.

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 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. MTDC is defined in [2 CFR §200.1](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-A/subject-group-ECFR2a6a0087862fd2c/section-200.1) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-A/subject-group-ECFR2a6a0087862fd2c/section-200.1>). Institutions, both primary grantees and subawardees, not located in the territorial United States cannot charge 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).

Federal grant funds 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.

(c) Optional Funding for Grant Administration (for Early Career Applications Only)

Early career faculty at non-R1 institutions may request additional funding for grant administration (up to \$50,000 per year and \$200,000 total in direct and indirect costs) to support a grant and/or budget manager or assistants to carry out such tasks as overseeing the budget and invoices or working with or for the other offices at the university involved in grant management (for example, Office of Sponsored Projects).

To request these additional funds, include up to \$50,000 per year under the Other Direct Costs section of the Research & Related Budget form (see the IES Application Submission Guide for more information on this form, <https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>). IES does not expect a detailed budget for these additional funds at the time of application. If your Early Career application is being considered for

funding, the IES program officer will work with you to clarify your plans for using these funds for grant administration and management.

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. Section 10634 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19234).

5. Applicable Regulations

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) codified at 2 C.F.R. Part 200. The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 C.F.R. parts 77, 81, 82, 84, 86 (part 86 applies only to institutions of higher education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition 34 C.F.R. 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, 75.219, 75.220, 75.221, 75.222, and 75.230. Please note that under ESRA section 191, these regulations are applicable only to the extent this RFA does not establish more specific requirements. If the RFA sets a different requirement, that requirement will take precedence.

6. General Terms and Conditions

If you are awarded a grant under this competition, you must ensure and may be required to demonstrate that federal funds will not be used under this project in any manner that violates the United States Constitution, Title VI or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq. or 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12131 et seq.), the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act of 2001 (20 U.S.C. 7905), section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1011f), or other applicable federal law. To the extent that any entity receiving grant funds under this grant uses those grant funds for such unallowable activities, IES reserves the right to take appropriate enforcement actions, including the recovery of grant funds or may pursue termination or non-continuation. The Grant Award Notification document accompanying your award may contain further terms and conditions, as necessary, to ensure grantee compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and administrative priorities.

7. Continuation Awards

In making a continuation award determination under 34 CFR 75.253, IES considers the following, among other things: whether a grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the project; whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget; or whether the grant continues to be in the best interest in the federal government.

In making a continuation award determination, IES also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the terms and conditions specified elsewhere in this notice and the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from IES (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23). In making any continuation award determination, IES may consider all relevant information.

B. Additional Award Requirements

1. Pre-Award

(a) Clarification and Budget Questions

IES uses the scientific peer review process as the first step in making funding decisions. If your application is recommended for funding based on the outcome of scientific peer review, an IES program officer will contact you to clarify (1) any issues of concern to IES or the peer reviewers, (2) your plans for sharing final data (for Early Career projects), and (3) the adequacy of the proposed budget to support the proposed scope of work within federal guidelines (see Uniform Guidance Cost Principles <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E>).

(b) Demonstrating Access to Data and Education Settings

If the research or training you propose to conduct requires access to data and/or education settings (such as classrooms, schools, districts, colleges/universities; secondary datasets; or studies currently under way) you will need to provide evidence that you have access to these resources prior to receiving funding. Whenever possible, include letters of agreement in [Appendix D](#) from those who have responsibility for or access to the data or settings you wish to incorporate when you submit your application. Even in circumstances where you have included such letters with your application, **IES will require additional supporting evidence prior to the release of funds**. If you cannot provide such documentation, IES may not award the grant or may withhold funds.

You will need supporting evidence of partnership or access if you are doing any of the following:

- **Conducting research in or with education settings:** If your application is being considered for funding based on scientific merit scores from the scientific peer review panel and your research relies on access to education settings, you will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary settings in order to receive the grant. This means that if you do not have permission to conduct the proposed project in the necessary number of settings at the time of application, you will need to provide documentation to IES indicating that you have successfully recruited the necessary number of settings for the proposed research and/or training before the full first-year costs will be awarded. If you recruited sufficient numbers of settings prior to the application, IES will ask you to provide documentation that the settings originally recruited for the application are still willing to partner in the research.
- **Using secondary datasets:** If your application is being considered for funding based on scientific merit scores from the scientific peer review panel and your research or training 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 will need to provide documentation that you have access to the necessary datasets in order to receive the grant. This means that if you do not have permission to use the proposed datasets at the time of application, you must provide documentation to IES from the entity controlling the dataset(s) before the grant will be awarded. This documentation must indicate that you have permission to use the data for the proposed research or training for the time period discussed in the application. If you obtained permission to use a proposed dataset prior to submitting your application, IES may ask you to provide updated documentation indicating that you still have permission to use the dataset to conduct the proposed research or training during the project period.
- **Building on existing studies:** You may propose studies that piggyback onto an ongoing study, which will require access to those participants and data. In such cases, the PI of the existing study should be one of the members of the research team applying for the grant to conduct the new project.

In addition to obtaining evidence of access, IES strongly advises applicants to establish a written agreement, within 3 months of receipt of an award, among all key collaborators and their institutions regarding roles, responsibilities, access to data, publication rights, and decision-making procedures.

(c) Compliance with Research Security Requirements

All recipients of IES research and research training funds are required to be in compliance with the research security requirements described below prior to receiving IES funding.

Research Security Assessment and Required Recipient Documentation

IES reserves the right to perform risk assessments, using analytical tools, of proposals and awards submitted to IES to assess nondisclosures of required information from senior/key personnel, and establish other policies and procedures for identifying, communicating, and addressing security risks that may threaten the integrity of IES-supported research and development.

IES applicants and recipients are required to maintain supporting documentation, including copies of contracts, grants, or any other agreements specific to foreign appointments, employment with a foreign institution, participation in a foreign talent recruitment program and other information reported as current and pending (other) support for all senior/key personnel that must be available to IES upon request. Applicants and recipients are expected to review requested supporting documentation for compliance with IES award terms and conditions.

Research Security Training

IES requires research security training certifications from applicants and individuals identified as senior/key personnel by the applicant. Applicants may utilize any training that addresses cybersecurity, international collaboration, foreign interference, and rules for proper use of funds, disclosure, conflict of commitment, and conflict of interest. The NSF-funded SECURE Center developed a condensed online research security training (RST) module (<https://www.secure-center.org/training>) designed to meet the government-wide RST requirement in Section 10634 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19234). To that end, IES recognizes completion of the condensed module as compliant with the RST requirements.

Research Security Training Requirement for Federal Award Personnel: In accordance with Section 10634 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19234), each individual identified as a senior/key person must certify that they have completed the requisite research security training that meets the requirements specified above within 12 months prior to application submission.

- *Certification Regarding Research Security Training for Federal Research Award Personnel:* In accordance with Section 10634 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19234), the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must certify that all individuals identified as senior/key personnel have completed the requisite research security training that meets the requirements specified above.
- *Certification Regarding Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) (Applies to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) Only):* The AOR is required to complete a certification that the institution has a plan to provide appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and other senior/key personnel who will be supported by IES to conduct research and that such training addresses mentor training and mentorship, training to raise awareness of potential research security threats, and Federal export control, disclosure, and reporting requirements.

Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program Prohibition (MFTRP)

IES requires MFTRP certifications from applicants and individuals identified as senior/key personnel.

Pre-Award Certifications:

- In accordance with Section 10632 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19232), the AOR must certify that all individuals identified as senior/key personnel have been made aware of and have complied with their responsibility under that section to certify that the individual is not a party to a malign foreign talent recruitment program.
- In accordance with Section 10632 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19232), each individual identified as a senior/key person must certify that they are not a party to a malign foreign talent recruitment program.

Post-award Certification: Individuals serving as a PI or co-PI on an active IES award made on or after October 1, 2027, must certify annually via their Annual Performance Report to their participation or non-participation in an MFTRP. Additional information regarding the annual certification process can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/research-security>.

Certification Regarding IHEs Hosting or Supporting Confucius Institutes

In accordance with Section 10339A of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19039), no IES funds may be awarded to an IHE that maintains a contract or agreement between the institution and a Confucius Institute. The IES Director, after consultation with the National Academies, may issue a waiver for an IHE that maintains such a contract or agreement between the institution and a Confucius Institute if such contract or agreement includes clear provisions that:

1. protect academic freedom at the institution;
2. prohibit the application of any foreign law on any campus of the institution;
3. grant full managerial authority of the Confucius Institute to the institution including full control over what is being taught, the activities carried out, the research awards that are made, and who is employed at the Confucius Institute; and
4. prohibit co-location with the institution's Chinese language, history, and cultural programs and require separate promotional materials.

Waiver: An IHE may submit a request for a waiver or a waiver renewal that includes a description of the Confucius Institute, including at a minimum how the contract or agreement provisions satisfy each of the four criteria above. Waiver requests must be sent to IES at IESDirector@ed.gov.

- IES encourages consideration of the following reports by the National Academies in preparing waiver requests: *Confucius Institutes at U.S. Institutions of Higher Education: Waiver Criteria for the Department of Defense and Foreign-Funded Language and Culture Institutes at U.S. Institutions of Higher Education: Practices to Assess and Mitigate Risk*. An IHE not granted a waiver will be provided a written explanation of the reason(s) for the denial.

Certification Regarding IHEs Hosting or Supporting Confucius Institutes: In compliance with Section 10339A of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19039), the AOR must certify that, absent a waiver granted by the IES Director, the IHE does not maintain a contract or agreement between the institution and a Confucius Institute.

(d) Assessment of 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. IES also determines the PI's compliance with the IES Policy Regarding Public Access to Research if they were the PI on previous IES grants awarded in 2012 or later (<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/researchaccess.asp>).

(e) Persistent Identifiers (PIDs) for Key Personnel

All key personnel are required to have a persistent identifier (PID), such as ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor Identification; <https://orcid.org/>) in place before an award will be made.

(f) Access to Final Research Data

If your Early Career application is being considered for funding, IES program officers will review the completeness and acceptability of the Data Sharing and Management Plan (DSMP) prior to making the new award.

(g) Alignment with SEER Standards

If your application is being considered for funding, IES program officers will review the completeness and acceptability of the information in Appendix F: Alignment with SEER Standards prior to making the new award.

2. Post Award

(a) Compliance with IES Policy on Public Access to Research

Public Access to Research

IES requires all grantees 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/about/public-access-research>) 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 (PIIDs such as ORCID), publication date, journal title and International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), and associated IES award number(s).

Public Access to Data

IES program officers will review Early Career DSMPs annually to ensure Early Career grantees are on track for being in compliance with this public access requirement.

(b) Pre-Registration

Early Career grantees must register their studies on a suitable pre-registration platform within the first year of receiving a new award. There are several options for pre-registration including but not limited to the Registry of Efficacy and Effectiveness Studies (REES; <https://sreereg.icpsr.umich.edu/sreereg/>), the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://osf.io/>), ClinicalTrials.gov (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/>), AEA Registry (<https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/>), AsPredicted (<https://aspredicted.org/>), and trial registries in the WHO Registry Network (<https://www.who.int/ictrp/network/en/>).

(c) Specific Conditions on Grants

IES may impose specific conditions on a grant pertinent to the proper implementation of key aspects of the proposed research design or to reaching data access goals, 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, is not compliant with a statutory or regulatory requirement or a requirement of this RFA or is otherwise not responsible.

(d) Attendance at the Annual IES Principal Investigators Meeting

The PI is required to attend one meeting each year (for up to 3 days) in Washington, DC with other IES grantees and IES staff. The project's budget should include this meeting. Should the PI not be able to attend the meeting, they may designate another person who is key personnel on the research team to attend.

C. Overview of Application and Scientific Peer Review Process

1. Submitting a Letter of Intent

Letters of intent are submitted online at the IES Peer Review Information Management Online (PRIMO) system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov/LOI/LOISubmit>). Select the letter of intent form for the grant program under which you plan to submit your application. The online submission form contains fields for each of the content areas listed below. Use these fields to provide the following information. The project description should be single-spaced and is recommended to be no more than one page (about 3,500

characters).

The letter of intent is non-binding and optional but strongly recommended. IES staff use the information in letters of intent to identify the expertise needed for the scientific peer review panels and to secure a sufficient number of reviewers to handle the anticipated number of applications.

Elements of the letter of intent:

- Descriptive title for the proposed project
- Type of training program you will propose (Early Career or Methods Training)
- Brief description of the proposed project
- New or resubmitted application
- Name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number, and email address of the PI
- Name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators
- Duration of the proposed project (attend to the duration maximum for each Training Program)
- Estimated total budget request (attend to the budget maximum for each Training Program)

2. Resubmissions and Multiple Submissions

(a) Resubmissions

If you intend to revise and resubmit an application that was submitted to a previous IES competition but that was not funded, you **must** indicate on the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance Form in the Application Package (see the IES Application Submission Guide; <https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>) that the FY 2027 application is a resubmission (Item 8) and include the application number of the previous application (an 11-character alphanumeric identifier beginning “R324” entered in Item 4a). Prior reviews will be sent to this year’s reviewers along with the resubmitted application.

You must describe your response to the prior reviews using [Appendix B](#). Revised and resubmitted applications will be reviewed according to this FY 2027 Request for Applications.

If you submitted a somewhat similar application in the past and did not receive an award but are submitting the current application as a new application, you should indicate on the application form (Item 8) that the FY 2027 application is a new application. In Appendix B, you must provide a rationale explaining why the FY 2027 application should be considered a new application rather than a revision. If you do not provide such an explanation, then IES may send the reviews of the prior unfunded application to this year’s reviewers along with the current application.

(b) Multiple Submissions

You may submit applications to more than one of the IES FY 2027 Research Training programs so long as you meet the requirements below.

- An institution may submit multiple applications to the Early Career Program as long as the PI is different for each application and there is no overlap in mentors.
- An institution may submit multiple applications to the Methods Training Program if they are substantively different from one another and have no overlap in key personnel.

If an institution submits multiple applications that violate one of the above conditions, IES will determine whether and which applications will be accepted for review and/or will be eligible for funding.

In addition, if you submit the same or similar application to IES and to another funding entity within or external to the Department and receive funding for the non-IES application prior to IES scientific peer review of applications, you must withdraw the same or similar application submitted to IES, or IES may otherwise determine you are ineligible to receive an award. 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 you submit 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/application-submission-guide>) for more information about this form.

3. Application Processing

Applications must be submitted electronically and received no later than 11:59:59 p.m., Eastern Time on October 1, 2026 using the Grants.gov Workspace (<https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview>). You must follow the application procedures and submission requirements described in the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>) 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 Peer Review Information Management Online (PRIMO) system (<https://iesreview.ed.gov>). PRIMO allows applicants 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/application-submission-guide>) 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.

4. Scientific Peer Review Process

IES will forward all applications that are compliant and responsive to this Request for Applications to be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Scientific reviews are conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below and the review procedures posted on the IES website (<https://ies.ed.gov/what-we-do/peer-review#peer-review-of-ies-research-grant-applications>) by a panel of experts who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and Request for Applications (<https://ies.ed.gov/what-we-do/peer-review#lists-of-peer-reviewers>).

At least two primary reviewers will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. 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 but that would not have been included in the full panel meeting based on its preliminary rank order.

5. Review Criteria for Scientific Merit

The purpose of IES-supported research is to help solve education problems by generating reliable information about education programs, practices, policies, and assessments that support learning and improve academic achievement and education access for all learners. The specific purpose of IES-funded training programs is to support this contribution by furthering the training of education researchers and

policymakers. In doing so, IES aims to increase the quality, accessibility, use, and relevance of education research. IES expects reviewers to assess the scientific rigor and practical significance of the research and research training proposed in order to judge the likelihood that it will make a meaningful contribution to the larger IES mission. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is described in [Part II](#).

(a) Significance

Does the applicant provide a compelling rationale for the significance of the training program as defined in the Significance section for the program under which the applicant is submitting the application? Does the application address the recommendations described in the Significance section for the training program under which the applicant is submitting the application? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

(b) Research Plan (Early Career Program)

Do the sample and setting, research design, and data analyses align with the research questions and indicate that the project will be able to answer those questions? Is the research plan integrated with the career development plan; for instance, are the aspects of the research plan that are described in less detail addressed in the proposed training and mentoring activities? Does the application address relevant recommendations described in the Research Plan section for the identified project type? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

(c) Research Training Plan (Methods Training Program)

Does the application address the recommendations described in the Research Training Plan section? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

(d) Career Development Plan (Early Career Program)

Do the career development goals address gaps in the PI's knowledge and training and will the mentoring and training activities help the PI reach those goals? Does the content and timing of the mentoring and training activities align with the research plan? Does the application address relevant recommendations described in the Career Development section? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

(e) Personnel

Does the description of the personnel make it apparent that the principal investigator and other key personnel possess appropriate skills and experience and will commit sufficient time to competently implement the proposed activities? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

(f) Resources

Does the applicant have the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources required to support the proposed activities? Do the commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

(g) Engagement and Dissemination

Does the application address pertinent recommendations described in [Appendix A: Engagement and Dissemination Plan](#)? Does the applicant present an engagement and dissemination plan that is tailored to audiences that will benefit from the findings and reflect the purpose of the project? For resubmissions, does the application adequately address the comments/concerns of prior reviewers?

6. Award Decisions

The following factors will be considered in making award decisions for responsive and compliant

applications:

- Alignment with SEER Standards
- Contribution to the overall program of research training described in this RFA
- Scientific merit as determined by scientific peer review
- Compliance with research security requirements
- Performance and use of funds under a previous federal award
- Ability to carry out the proposed research training within the maximum award and duration requirements
- Compliance with the IES Public Access Policy on previous IES awards
- Persistent identifiers (PIDs) for all key personnel
- Availability of funds

Part V: Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist

Only compliant and responsive applications will be forwarded for scientific peer review. Use this checklist to better ensure you have included all required components for compliance and that you have addressed all general and training program requirements for responsiveness.

See the IES Application Submission Guide (<https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>) 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.

Compliance		
	Have you included a training program narrative?	
	Do the training program narrative and other narrative content adhere to all formatting requirements?	
	Do the training program narrative and other narrative content adhere to all page maximums?	
	Have you included the following required appendices? • Appendix A: Engagement and Dissemination Plan (All Applications) • Appendix B: Response to Reviewers (Resubmissions Only) • Appendix D: Letters of Agreement • Appendix E: Data Sharing and Management Plan (Early Career Applications Only) • Appendix F: Alignment with SEER Standards	
General Requirements for Responsiveness		
	Have you identified a single Training Program for your application?	
	Have you met the general requirements for your selected training program?	
	Does your training program narrative include the required sections? Did you describe the elements required for each section as listed below?	
Required Training Program Narrative Elements for Responsiveness		
	<u>Early Career Program</u>	<u>Methods Training Program</u>
Significance	• Need for further career development • Overview of the proposed project • Project type	• Focus of your training program • Intended participants
Research or Research Training Plan	• Research design, key outcome measures, and data analysis procedures • Measures of education outcomes for learners with or at risk for disabilities and, if relevant, educator outcomes	• A recruitment plan • The training content, format, and activities • A plan for determining the success of the training program
Career Development Plan	• Mentoring and additional training activities	• n/a
Personnel	• Expertise of the PI, mentor(s), and other personnel • How you meet the eligibility requirements to be the PI • Date you were granted your doctoral degree • Names of your mentors • Names of your dissertation or graduate school advisor and (if applicable) your postdoctoral supervisor	• Key personnel on the project team, including the PI, any Co-PIs, and other trainers • Experts who will provide the training
Resources	• Resources to support you in conducting the proposed project	• Institutional resources of both the primary applicant institution and any subaward institutions • Resources to implement your engagement and dissemination plan

Part VI: Program Codes

Applications to the Research Training Programs in Special Education (ALN 84.324B) are submitted under a single training program.

You must enter the program code in Item 4b of the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance form (see the IES Application Submission Guide, <https://ies.ed.gov/application-submission-guide>, for more information about this form). For example, an application to the Research Training Programs in Special Education under the Early Career Development and Mentoring Program should have the code “NCSEER-Early Career” entered in the field for Item 4b.

Program	Code
Early Career Development and Mentoring	NCSEER-Early Career
Methods Training	NCSEER-Methods