**IES Grant Applications:**

**Tips for Preparing Effective Proposals**

***General***

∙ It is extremely important that you adhere to the IES RFA recommendations throughout your proposal. For example, some project types (e.g., Development and Innovation) include specific timelines and cost allowances that should be followed for various project activities.

∙ Describe how the proposed study meets Standards for Excellence in Education Research (SEER) <https://ies.ed.gov/seer/>

∙ Ensure that there is consistency between the study aims, theory of change, research questions, measures, and analyses. For example, ensure that all elements of the theory of change are measured and included in the data analyses.

∙ For analyses, be sure to consult IES’s methodological resources to ensure that appropriate guidelines are being followed. https://ies.ed.gov/funding/resources.asp

• Provide a project timeline that is sufficiently detailed and realistic to accomplish. Include sufficient time for analysis and dissemination of study findings.

∙ Make sure that % effort for key project personnel is adequate and realistic, especially PI and investigative team. PI time should be at least 10% FTE. Be specific about the amount of time that consultants will be devoted to the project.

∙ Consider including an aim to synthesize and disseminate findings across key stakeholder groups.

∙ Organize dissemination section to include history of prior dissemination efforts (e.g., prior grants, studies, or major projects) and group dissemination efforts by audiences targeted for dissemination (e.g., other educational researchers, policymakers, families/parents/caregivers, practitioners). Can also organize this section by categories such as “dissemination through traditional venues” (e.g., journals, research briefs, conference presentations) and “dissemination for practitioners through innovative means” (e.g., videos, social media/online, website). Consider including a “dissemination director” in your budget.

∙ Consider including “engagement with IES-funded centers, networks, and regional education laboratories (RELs)” in the dissemination plan (if it is relevant to do so).

∙ For resubmissions, do not assume that the revised proposal will be reviewed by the same reviewers as your prior submission. In fact, although IES aims for consistency of reviewers across submission cycles, they typically are only able to include one prior reviewer for a resubmission (i.e., other reviewers will be seeing the proposal for the first time). That said, reviewers are explicitly directed to note the degree to which resubmissions are responsive to prior reviewer feedback. Note: reviewers see the prior feedback in addition to the applicants’ response to reviews. As such, be very thorough in responding to prior reviewer points.

∙ Make sure that you are defining key terms as specifically as possible; don’t assume that reviewers will know terms that are very specific to your area of research. Consider including a “definition of terms” box at the beginning of the Significance section, especially if you are using jargon or terms that are very specific to your research area; or if you are using a lot of abbreviations or acronyms.

∙ Be clear about the population of interest and ensure that the Significance section provides a clear and compelling rationale for studying the specific population and age group (i.e., make sure that there is a clear rationale for the developmental context of the study). In addition, make efforts to include a diverse population in all phases of your project. For NCSER, be sure to clearly identify the population of children with disabilities and if applicable, why youth may be considered “at risk” for a disability.

∙ Make sure that letters of support are as specific as possible regarding school (or agency) activities if the grant is funded. For example, school letters should state that they understand they will be participating in a randomized controlled trial and half of the participants will be randomized to a control group that will not receive intervention. Make sure letters are provided by those who will be involved with intervention implementation. That is, it is not sufficient to have the State Director of Special Education agree to participate in your project. Instead, the letter should come from a principal. Also make sure that letters are individualized, not generic or a simple template across letters.

***Exploratory Proposals***

∙ If you are proposing to conduct a meta-analysis, include a power analysis to determine the requisite number of studies that will be needed to detect a statistically significant effect size.

***Measurement Proposals***

***Development and Innovation Proposals***

∙ The Significance section should end with a clear description of next steps once the development and innovation project has been completed. This would include a possible initial efficacy trial but should also focus on the marketability of the developed intervention as well as potential commercial viability of the intervention or product.

∙ The iterative development process should include input from as many relevant groups as possible; make sure this is a maximally inclusive process. Be cognizant of power dynamics in focus groups (e.g., if including students and teachers in the same groups).

-The iterative development process does not need to include an experimental design (e.g., single case design study); however, if you choose to use a single case design study, make sure the design meets quality criteria.

-Explicitly describe how data collected during the development phase will be used to refine the intervention.

∙ Include a power analysis for the pilot trial and make sure to address how you will interpret your findings in the context of limited statistical power. Make sure that power analysis is conducted for all proposed analyses (e.g., if you are proposing to examine mediation or moderation).

∙ If you are proposing a Pilot Study only (2-yr) project, make sure that you provide sufficient detail about the intervention development process you have already completed. In other words, you need to convince reviewers that you have a fully developed intervention (presumably based on an iterative development design process) that is ready for pilot testing.

∙ Consider including a measures table that clearly links each measure to theory of change constructs, rater/respondent, measurement time point, and psychometric properties. In particular, it is critically important that you include measures that reflect the putative mechanisms of action (in addition to proximal outcomes) in your theory of change. If you are not going to be able to measure distal outcomes (e.g., student achievement) in the pilot study time period, state that is the case and note how distal outcomes would be measured in a subsequent study.

***Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up Proposals***

∙ Include a power analysis for all proposed analyses (e.g., if you are proposing to examine mediation or moderation). If any analyses have limited power, describe how you will interpret findings in the context of limited power.

∙ Consider including a measures table that clearly links each measure to theory of change constructs, rater/respondent, measurement time point, and psychometric properties. In particular , it is critically important that you include measures that reflect the putative mechanisms of action (in addition to proximal and distal outcomes) in your theory of change.

-Consider who will be implementing the intervention. Reviewers may have problems with research staff implementing an initial efficacy trial, rather than school staff.

***Early Career Proposals***

-Clearly describe your training plan and consider embedding throughout the proposal.

-The significance section should not only describe your needed training, but also a literature review related to your topic of research.

-As IES describes, it is acceptable to not have fully developed research and analysis plans; however, you should specify each missing aspect of the research plan and indicate that it will be completed with support of your mentor.

-Attend to SEER principals.

-Make sure mentor time adheres to minimal required guidelines.

***Helpful IES resources***

This website provides more details regarding the IES grant review process as well as several videos that demonstrate that illustrate this process:

https://ies.ed.gov/director/sro/application\_review.asp