National Center for Education Research (NCER) FY 2020 RFA Survey
Accessible Online at: https://surveys.ies.ed.gov/?305_FY2020

IES revised the FY 2020 Request for Applications (RFA) for the Education Research Grants Program (CFDA # 84.305A) to make it clearer, shorter, less restrictive, and accessible to a wider range of potential applicants. As part of the revision, IES also released a new RFA for the Research Grants Focused on Systematic Replication (CFDA #84.305R). Both RFAs can be found at https://ies.ed.gov/funding/20rfas.asp. We would appreciate your voluntary feedback on the success of this revision and whether further changes are necessary.

If you need assistance completing this survey, please contact IES/NCER by sending an email to NCER.Commissioner@ed.gov .

The password for this survey is **2020RFA**.

Please enter the password to access this survey:

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1. Is this the first time you have applied to IES for a research grant?
   o Yes
   o No

2. How many IES grant applications have you submitted as the Principal Investigator? (Count previous submissions of the same application as separate applications.)
   o 1
   o 2-3
   o 4+

3. Have you previously been the PI or co-PI on a grant funded by IES?
   o Yes
   o No

4. Overall, did you find that the revised RFA made it easier or more difficult to apply to the Education Research Grants Program?
   o Easier
   o No different
   o More difficult
   o I have not applied before so I have no basis for comparison

5. How would you describe the length of the RFA?
   o Adequate
   o Too long
   o Too short

6. When <u>writing</u> your grant application how much assistance with understanding the RFA did you seek from others (for example, from IES program officers, researchers with more experience applying to IES, grant writers)?
   o A great deal
   o A moderate amount
   o A small amount
   o None

7. How useful was the Compliance and Responsiveness Checklist provided at the end of the RFA for <u>writing</u> your grant application in order that it would be accepted for review?
   o Very useful
   o Moderately useful
   o Somewhat useful
   o Not useful
   o I did not use the Checklist
   o I was not aware that there was a Checklist

8. When <u>submitting</u> your grant application on Grants.gov how much assistance with understanding the RFA and IES Application Submission Guide did you seek from others (for example, from IES program officers, Grants.gov representatives, office of sponsored research staff, researchers with more experience applying to IES, grant writers)?
   o A great deal
   o A moderate amount
   o A small amount
   o None

9. How useful was the IES Application Submission Guide (a separate document from the RFA) when <u>submitting</u> your grant application?
   o Very useful
   o Moderately useful
   o Somewhat useful
   o Not useful
   o I did not use the IES Application Submission Guide
   o I was not aware that there was an IES Application Submission Guide

10. How useful was the Application Checklist provided at the end of the IES Application Submission Guide when <u>submitting</u> your grant application?
    o Very useful
    o Moderately useful
    o Somewhat useful
    o Not useful
    o I did not use the Checklist
    o I was not aware that there was a Checklist

11. Please comment on how, overall, the RFA and the IES Application Submission Guide could be made more helpful to you for writing and submitting grant applications. Please note how the RFA and the IES Application Submission Guide made it easy or difficult for you (especially if you were a first-time applicant), including explaining your answers to the items above. The next three sections of the survey address the issues of Topics, Project Types, and technical assistance so you will be able to comment on them specifically below.

> Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

===========================Topics===========================

12. To which Topic(s) did you apply?
    o Career and Technical Education
    o Cognition and Student Learning
    o Early Learning Programs and Policies
    o Education Technology
    o Effective Instruction
    o English Learners
    o Improving Education Systems
    o Postsecondary and Adult Education
    o Reading and Writing
    o Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education
    o Social and Behavioral Context for Academic Learning

13. Are there any topics you feel are missing? If so, please specify.

> Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

14. Rate the usefulness of the Topic descriptions for focusing your research idea.
    o Very Useful
    o Useful
    o Marginally Useful
    o Not Useful

15. Did your project(s) seem to fit more than one Topic?
    o   Yes
    o   No

16. The Topics were revised and shortened for the FY 2020 RFA. In comparison to the RFA from previous years, how would you rate the clarity (how easy it was to determine whether your research issue would fit within a specific topic) of the revised Topics?
    o   Clearer
    o   Similar in clarity
    o   Less clear
    o   I am not familiar with the RFA from previous years

17. In previous years, the Topics included Sample, Setting, and Outcomes Requirements which had to be addressed in your application for it to be accepted for review. For the FY 2020 RFA, these Requirements were dropped from the Topics. How do you view this revision?
    o   I support this revision (for example, I was able to submit a stronger and/or more significant application because the Requirements were dropped).
    o   I am neutral about including these Requirements in the Topics.
    o   I don't support this revision (for example., I found the lack of Requirements made it more difficult to write my application and/or created uncertainty about what it should address).
    o   I am not familiar with the RFA from previous years.

18. While the Topics did not contain Sample, Setting, and Outcome Requirements, did you note that Setting and Outcome Requirements were described under the General Requirements section in Part I of the RFA?
    o   Yes
    o   No

19. Please comment on which learner education outcomes, <u>listed or not listed in the RFA</u>, are most important to your research. Under the General Requirements section in Part I of the RFA the following outcomes for learners from prekindergarten through adulthood are listed.
    • Academic outcomes which include
        o   Learning and achievement in academic content areas, such as reading, writing, STEM, and English language proficiency
        o   Learners' successful progression through education systems, such as course and grade completion; retention; high school graduation or dropout; access to, persistence in, progress through, and completion of postsecondary education or adult education programs.
    • Social and behavioral competencies, defined as social skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are important to learners' success in school and beyond
    • Labor market outcomes, such as hours of employment, job stability, and wages and benefits

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    │ Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer │
    │ responses may be truncated.   │
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20. For FY 2020, research on postsecondary and adult education was allowed under all the Topics as well as under the Postsecondary and Adult Education topic. How do you view this revision?
    o   I support this revision (for example, this revision gave me greater flexibility to choose the appropriate Topic for my application)
    o   I don't support this revision (for example., this revision was confusing and made it more difficult to know which Topic I should apply under and/or I prefer having a single Postsecondary and Adult Education topic)
    o   I am neutral about this revision
    o   I do not study postsecondary and adult education so I am not concerned about this revision

21. For FY 2020, the Topics included a section called "Needed Research". How did you interpret the research issues described in the "Needed Research" section?
    o   Applicants were required to address one of these issues
    o   Applicants were encouraged by IES to address one of these issues and would have a greater likelihood of receiving a grant if they did so
    o   Applicants were encouraged by IES to address one of these issues but would not be more likely to receive a grant if they did so (in other words., field initiated issues were just as welcome)
    o   I did not interpret the meaning of the "Needed Research" section

22. For FY 2020, the Education Leadership topic was dropped and research on leadership was accepted under the other Topics. How do you view this revision?
    o   I support this revision (for example, this revision gave me greater flexibility to choose the appropriate Topic for my application)
    o   I don't support this revision (for example., this revision was confusing and made it more difficult to know which Topic I should apply under)
    o   I am neutral about this revision
    o   I do not study education leadership so I am not concerned about this revision

23. For FY 2020, the Effective Teachers and Effective Teaching topic was renamed Effective Instruction. How do you view this revision?
    o   I found this name change helpful to understanding what research issues fit under this Topic
    o   I found this name change confusing and became less clear about whether my research fit under this Topic
    o   I am neutral about this name change
    o   I do not do this type of research so I am not concerned about this revision

24. Please comment on how the Topics could be made more helpful to you for writing and submitting applications. Also, if you would like to explain any of your responses regarding the above questions on the Topics, please use this space to do so.

Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

==========================Project Types==========================

25. For FY 2020, under each Project Type the Requirements for the 4 sections of the Project Narrative (Significance, Research Plan, Personnel, and Resources) were grouped together in one place and the Recommendations for the 4 sections were grouped together in another place. In prior RFAs, the discussion under each section included both the Requirements and the Requirements for that section. The purpose of this revision was to group together and make clearer what was required in an application for it to be accepted for review (Requirements) and what should be included to receive a high rating from peer review (Recommendations). How do you view this revision?
    o   I found this revision to be helpful
    o   I am neutral about this revision
    o   I found this revision to be unhelpful
    o   I don't have an opinion on this revision

26. For Exploration, how clear was the purpose and the types of projects that would be supported under this Project Type (for example, how clear were the types of factors that could be proposed for examination or when experimental studies could be proposed)?
    o   Clear
    o   Not clear
    o   I don't have an opinion on this

27. For Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up, was it clear what would qualify as an Initial Efficacy study based on the definition provided in the RFA ("Initial Efficacy projects test interventions that have not been rigorously evaluated previously to examine the intervention's beneficial impact on education outcomes in comparison to an alternative practice, program, or policy")?
    o   Clear
    o   Not clear
    o   I don't have an opinion on this

28. For FY 2020, replication studies were dropped from the RFA (in prior RFAs these were under both Efficacy and Replication and Effectiveness). Support for replications of an identified set of interventions was provided through the RFA for 84.305R. This decision was based on the argument that multiple replications are necessary to determine the impact of an intervention and are more likely to occur in a timely fashion when a limited set of interventions are centrally identified for replication. How do you view this revision?
    o   I think this revision has more benefits than drawbacks (for example, it will better focus replication research and will provide greater evidence regarding the impact of specific interventions and support better decision-making on them)
    o   I am neutral about this revision
    o   I think this revision has more drawbacks than benefits (for example, it will prevent interventions that need replication studies for decision-making from having them)
    o   I don't have an opinion on this revision

29. Please comment on how the Project Types could be made more helpful to you for writing and submitting applications. Also, if you would like to explain any of your responses regarding the above questions on the Project Types, please use this space to do so.

    Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

30. IES has been promoting the use of cost analysis. For FY 2020, cost analysis was required for Development and Innovation, Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up, and Measurement. In addition, cost-effective analysis was required for Initial Efficacy and Follow-Up. Did you find the RFA clear about the cost analysis and/or cost-effectiveness analysis required for your grant application?
    o   Yes
    o   No
    o   My application did not require a cost analysis

31. Please comment on how IES (including through the RFA) could be more helpful to you when developing your cost analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis.

    > Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

========================Technical Assistance==========================

32. Was it clear which IES program officer you should contact to discuss your grant application?
    o   Yes
    o   No
    o   I did not consider which IES program officer to contact

33. With how many IES program officers did you discuss (by phone or email) your grant application?
    o   None
    o   One
    o   Two
    o   More than two

34. Did the revisions to the RFA influence your decision to contact an IES program officer?
    o   I contacted one or more IES program officers to discuss the revisions in the RFA
    o   I contacted one or more IES program officers but only to discuss issues not related to the revisions in the RFA
    o   I did not contact an IES program officer because the revisions in the RFA were clear
    o   I did not contact an IES program officer because I received information about the revisions in the RFA from another source
    o   I did not contact an IES program officer for other reasons
    o   I did not know that I could contact an IES program officer

35. Please describe any contacts you had with an IES program officer, how helpful they were for you to understand the revisions to the RFA when writing and submitting your grant application, and how IES program officers could provide more useful assistance.

    > Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

36. How useful were the IES Funding Opportunity webinars for understanding the RFA, and writing and submitting your grant application?

- o Very Useful
- o Useful
- o Marginally Useful
- o Not Useful
- o I did not view any of the IES Funding Opportunities webinars

37. Please comment on the usefulness of any IES Funding Opportunities webinars you viewed, how helpful they were for understanding the revisions to the RFA, what subjects would be useful to include in future webinars, and any other ways IES should provide information on writing and submitting a grant application.

> Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.

38. Did you submit a Letter of Intent?
- o Yes, through the PRIMO website
- o Yes, through an email to an IES program officer
- o No

39. Please comment on the how to improve the usefulness of the Letter of Intent and the response from the IES program officer to your Letter. If you did not submit a Letter of Intent, please describe why you did not do so and how the process might be revised to better encourage you to do so.

> Text Box – Maximum 4,000 characters (about 500 words). Longer responses may be truncated.