



November 5, 2019

Dr. Mark Schneider  
Director  
Institute of Education Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education  
550 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Re: Feedback on Proposed Off-Cycle Requests for Applications and IES Research Topics

Dear Dr. Schneider,

On behalf of the Friends of IES (FIES), a coalition of organizations committed to supporting the essential role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), thank you for soliciting our collective feedback on proposed off-cycle competitions and research topics at IES. We appreciated your discussion with us in July and asking coalition members to provide input on the portfolios of the National Center for Education Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER).

We value your collaboration with the broader research and education communities to ensure that IES has the flexibility to support innovative, rigorous research to improve both academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students. Several of our coalition members will be sending individual comments based on their organizational areas of expertise. Given the range of interests across the coalition, we urge your sharing the feedback IES receives and updating the stakeholder community on next steps.

We support your aspiration that IES should align its research portfolio to include emerging challenges and cross-cutting activities alongside the core research areas that support the IES mission. As you review feedback and continue planning for the FY2021 requests for applications (RFAs), we recommend three actions:

**1. Use evidence and data to inform future RFAs.**

Along with comments from the IES stakeholder community, we urge looking at data on each vertical – such as number of applications, awards, success rates, and overall impact – to inform future competitions. We also encourage looking back at verticals that were not competed in the FY 2020 cycle assess their potential and whether they should be integrated into future competitions.

**2. Communicate widely the rationale and transition plan for any reorganization of topics.**

In previous outreach on requests for information outside of the Federal Register process, IES provided summaries of public comments from calls in 2014 on [NCER and NCSEER Research Programs](#) and in 2017 on [Efficacy, Replication, and Effectiveness Studies](#). We ask that IES provide a similar summary of the comments received and indicate how the public response will inform future planning. Any significant changes made to the RFA structure and proposed timing for the changes should be clearly communicated with the grantee and stakeholder communities along with a crosswalk of affected and new topics.

### **3. Indicate how changes to future competitions align with the updated priorities for IES.**

We appreciated having the opportunity to comment on the proposed priorities for IES earlier this year. We look forward to seeing a revised version of the priorities that respond to the public comments, and encourage any changes to off-cycle and FY 2021 competitions to be consistent with the updated priorities.

We want to conclude by underscoring our availability as a coalition and as individual organizations to work with you during this process. We also will continue our efforts to ensure that IES has the necessary funding to award high-quality and rigorous education research projects both in core and emerging areas.

Thank you again for your consideration and for providing the opportunity to comment on future IES activities.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
EDGE Consulting Partners  
ETS  
Knowledge Alliance  
LEARN Coalition  
Lehigh University  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
University of Florida  
University of Oregon  
Vanderbilt University