

National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

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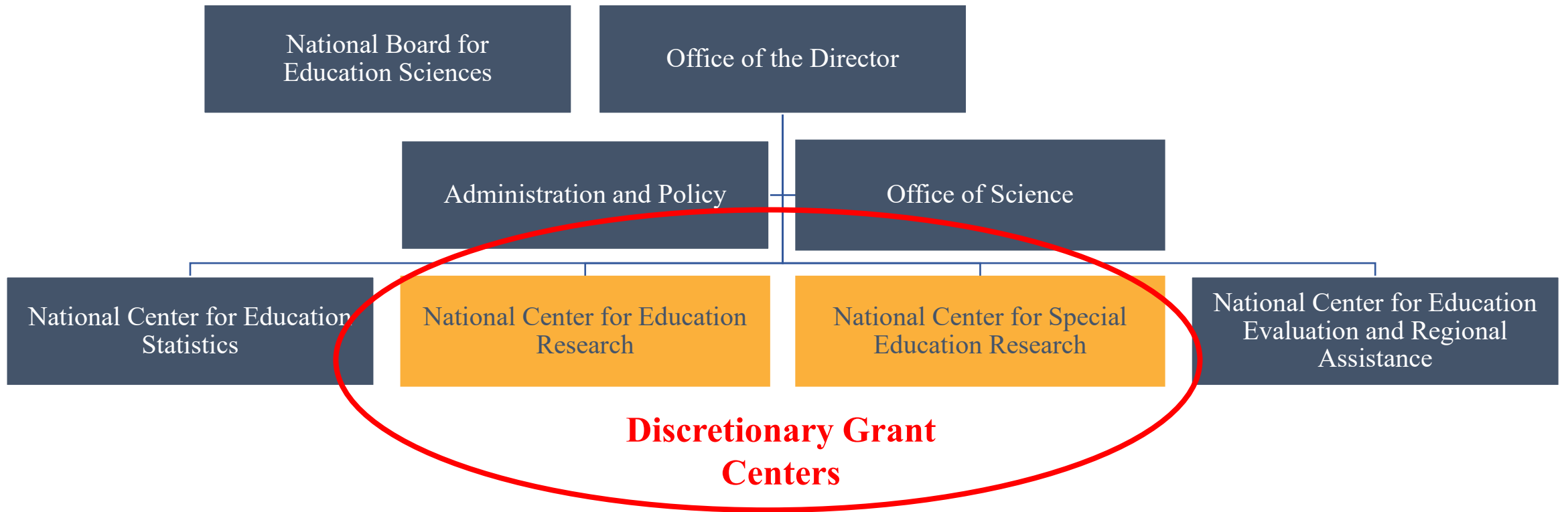
IES and NCSEER

IES

- Research arm of the U.S. Department of Education
- Independent, non-partisan by law
- Legislative mission is to...
 - Describe the condition and progress of education in the U.S.
 - Identify practices that improve academic achievement and access to education opportunities and close the achievement gap
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of federal and other education programs



IES Organizational Structure



National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER)

- Supports research to expand knowledge and understanding of the needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities in order to improve their developmental, educational, and transitional results



NCSEER Research Topics

- Cognition and Student Learning
- Early Intervention and Early Learning
- Educators and School-Based Service Providers
- Families of Learners with Disabilities
- Reading, Writing, and Language
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Competence
- Systems, Policy, and Finance
- Transition to Postsecondary Education, Career, and/or Independent Living

Project Types

- **Measurement:** develop/refine and/or validate a new or existing measure
- **Exploration:** identify relationships between learner-, educator-, school-, and policy-level characteristics and meaningful education outcomes
- **Development and Innovation:** develop/modify an intervention and test its feasibility and promise for improving learner outcomes
- **Impact:** evaluate whether an intervention that hasn't been tested prior shows efficacy, conduct longer-term follow-up of a rigorously-evaluated intervention, or conduct replication studies that systematically vary one or more aspects of a previous study (e.g., geographical location, population) and contribute to a better understanding of what works, for whom, and under what conditions

NCSER's Early Career Development and Mentoring Program

Purpose

- To support new investigators in conducting an *integrated* research and training plan focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities under the guidance of experienced researcher mentors
- To prepare researchers to conduct the type of research that NCSEER funds and submit competitive proposals that address issues that are important to policymakers and practitioners
- To jumpstart independent research careers



Principal Investigator (PI) Eligibility

- Completed a doctoral degree or postdoc no more than 5 years prior to the time applying and no later than the start of the award
- In a tenure-track faculty or research scientist position at an institution of higher education or have accepted an offer for such a position to begin before the award starts
- Citizen or permanent resident of the U.S.
- Have not previously served as a PI or Co-PI on an IES grant

Research Project

- Focused on learners with or at risk for disabilities
- Aligned with 1-2 research topics and 1 project type
- Smaller in scope than a Special Education Research grant – it must be feasible!
- Maximum of 4 years and \$700,000
- PI/you do not need to be an expert in every aspect of the proposed research – it is meant to be a learning experience
- Should be a balance of things you know how to do/have experience doing and things that are new to you and part of your career development plan
- NCSER expects the research plan to develop as you receive mentoring and training

Career Development Plan

- Centered around 3-4 goals that are aligned with the research project and address gaps in your knowledge and training/areas the PI wants to grow
- Mentoring in support of goals and PI's development as a scholar (e.g., regular meetings, guidance on the research and career development plans, and support related to your development as a researcher)
- Additional training activities aligned with goals (e.g., coursework, IES methods training, stats workshops, grant-writing seminars)

Mentors and Other Personnel

- Mentors:
 - No cap on the number, but 3 is the average
 - One must be from your institution
 - Should have unique and complementary expertise
 - Should expand your perspective
- Other personnel, like consultants, can be included to support a specific part of the research or to fill gaps in your mentorship
- The combined expertise of you, your mentors, and any additional personnel should reflect the project's content area and methods



The strongest projects are those that...



- Are important for education practice and for improving outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities
- Reflect an understanding and passion for the topic, but could benefit from more training
- Are well-described and justified (don't assume the peer reviewers have expertise in your area of research)
- Are feasible for the PI to accomplish and feasible and practical for the districts, schools, educators, families, and students involved
- Have the potential to lead to a strong line of research that would fit within IES's priorities
- Include clear and thoughtful career development goals and training activities that are integrated with the research plan (and are not an afterthought!)
- Include mentors with the relevant knowledge and experience and enough time to devote to mentoring

Example Early Career Projects focused on Early Childhood



- Development and testing of an intervention for improving the implementation of communication support strategies among teachers and communication skills of preschoolers who use AAC
- Cultural adaptation and testing of a caregiver-mediated social communication intervention that addresses the needs of Latine transborder caregivers and improves the social communication outcomes of their children with ASD



- Development and testing an intervention process to teach caregivers to implement problem behavior interventions for their young children with developmental delays
- Development and testing of an app-based intervention to improve caregivers' use of naturalistic language intervention strategies and communication outcomes for young dual language learners with language delays

Resources and Supports

Tips for Applying to an Early Career Grant

- Start the process early and persevere!
- Get copies of funded Early Career applications (you can see abstracts at <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/index.asp>)
- Read the request for applications (RFA) for the Research Training Programs in Special Education (84.324B) closely (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/projects/program.asp?ProgID=79>)
- Identify potential mentors early on
- Have your mentors and colleagues give you feedback on your ideas and your application
- Talk to me early on and as needed about your application



Program Officers

- We can discuss research ideas and help applicants identify appropriate grant competitions
- We respond to letters of intent
- We can provide feedback on drafts of applications
- We can also discuss peer reviewer comments and provide feedback on how to respond to reviewers if resubmitting



Resources for Early Career Researchers/Potential Applicants

- IES Virtual Office Hours: <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/technicalassistance.asp>
- Resources for implementing the SEER Standards: <https://ies.ed.gov/seer/index.asp>
- IES Methods Trainings: <https://ies.ed.gov/newsflash/#ies>
- What Works Clearinghouse design standards online trainings:
 - Group design: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/GroupDesign5>
 - Advanced group design: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/AdvancedTraining>
 - Single-case design: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/SingleCaseTraining5>

Other Ways to Get Involved With/Learn About IES Research

- NCSER-funded Postdoctoral Research Training: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncser/projects/program.asp?ProgID=57>
- IES Newsflash: <https://ies.ed.gov/newsflash/#ies>
- IES blog: <https://ies.ed.gov/blogs/>
- IES Twitter: @IESResearch
- IES Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IESResearch/>

Questions?