

Increasing Diversity and Representation of IES-funded Education Researchers

Technical Working Group Summary | December 2, 2020

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Increasing Diversity and Representation of IES-unded Education Researchers

Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting

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National Center for Education Research
Institute of Education Sciences
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This meeting summary was prepared by Christina Chhin and Katina Stapleton of the National Center for Education Research (NCER), Institute of Education Sciences (IES). The summary draws from the slide presentations, notes prepared and taken by Robin Pu Yigh (under JDC Events' contract ED-IES-D-0003), and notes taken by IES program officers – Corinne Alfeld (NCER), Sarah Brasiel (NCSER), and Katherine Taylor (NCSER). The views expressed in this document reflect individual and collective opinions and judgments of the presenters and participants at the meeting and are not necessarily those of IES or the U.S. Department of Education.

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Introduction

On December 2, 2020, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) convened a technical working group (TWG) to discuss strategies for increasing diversity among IES-funded education researchers and grantee institutions. This TWG is part of IES leadership's ongoing commitment to broadening participation within IES grant programs and the education sciences. The TWG included researchers with expertise in outreach, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Representatives from IES and other federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, also participated in the discussion. The goal of this TWG meeting was to advise IES's National Center for Education Research (NCER) and National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) on strategies to increase the diversity and representation of the researchers and institutions funded by IES. The meeting focused on four topics (see Appendix A for the full meeting agenda):

1. Reducing barriers to participation in IES research
2. Expanding outreach
3. Increasing outreach
4. Increasing research capacity

Prior to the meeting, IES provided TWG members with discussion questions and prompts and requested that members submit initial responses in writing. IES staff reviewed and compiled responses to identify themes and inform discussion facilitation. IES requested that TWG members focus on practical recommendations for actions IES can take. This TWG summary shares key discussion themes and remarks, along with specific action recommendations for IES (see Appendix B for a summary table of recommendations and actions). Where possible, IES has organized the comments made during the general discussion thematically.

Diversity and Inclusion at IES

IES Director Mark Schneider welcomed TWG members to the meeting and discussed IES's intent to identify opportunities for growth and change in education research and IES's ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion. Katina Stapleton provided overviews of the diversity language within the Education Science Reform Act of 2002, the IES Diversity Statement, IES participation in U.S. Department of Education-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives, the new IES Diversity and Inclusion Council, and broadening participation in IES-funded training programs. This section summarizes the information shared with the TWG.

Education Science Reform Act of 2002

IES was established by the [Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002](#) (ESRA – P.L. 107-279) in part to improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students. ESRA charges the IES Director with the responsibility for ensuring that IES's work is conducted in a manner that is “objective, secular, neutral, and nonideological and free of partisan political influence and racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias.” ESRA further charges the Director to undertake “initiatives and programs to increase participation of researchers and institutions that have been historically underutilized in Federal education research activities of the Institute, including historically Black colleges or universities or other institutions of higher education with large numbers of minority students.”

U.S. Department of Education Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

As part of the U.S. Department of Education (Department), IES participates in department-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives. The Department's mission for diversity and inclusion is to “promote an inclusive work environment that ensures equal employment opportunities, values diversity, and empowers individuals so that they may participate and contribute to their fullest potential in support of the Department's mission.”

The Department's Diversity and Inclusion Council (Council) was established in 2012 and includes senior leadership from all principal offices as well as representatives from employee affinity groups and at-large representatives. The Council is charged with developing and executing department-wide strategies that lead to a diverse and inclusive environment and works with human resources and principal office leadership to achieve this goal. At the time of the TWG, IES had four voting members on the Council, including the IES Director, the Council Secretary, chair of the Council's Data and Measurement subcommittee, and an additional at-large member.

The Department also has a Diversity Change Agent (DCA) program to help foster an inclusive culture within the Department that respects individual talents, values, and differences. The Department has trained over 300 DCAs who serve as role models and lead efforts across the Department to educate and train the workforce on diversity and inclusion. At the time of TWG, IES had five DCAs located in the Office of the Director, the National Center for Education Research (NCER), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), and the National Assessment Government Board (NAGB).

IES Diversity Statement

In August 2020, IES published its first [Diversity Statement](#) affirming IES's commitment to diversity and to ensuring that our work is carried out in a manner that is free of racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias. The statement provides an overview of this commitment and then specific examples of how this commitment translates into action in four domains: preparing a diverse research workforce; grant making for diversity; research, data collection, and analysis; and hiring and staffing.

IES Diversity and Inclusion Council

At the time of the TWG, IES was developing its first Diversity and Inclusion Council to nurture a diverse and inclusive research environment within IES that supports our mission to provide scientific evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and to share this information broadly. The Council was formally launched in March 2021. While the exact role of the Council may change over time, the initial Council function is to help IES operationalize the principles of the IES Diversity Statement (and the corresponding emphasis on diversity in ESRA). The Council includes members of all IES offices and centers and is co-led by Craig Stanton, the IES Deputy Director for Administration and Policy, and Katina Stapleton, IES DCA.

Broadening Participation in IES Training Programs

Since IES launched its first training programs in 2004, IES has encouraged training programs to recruit fellows and participants from diverse backgrounds. IES funds undergraduate, predoctoral, and postdoctoral fellowship-based training programs as well as methods training programs for current researchers. In 2014, IES began strengthening requirements and now requires all training programs to develop recruitment plans that provide specific strategies for promoting diversity in their programs.

In 2016, IES developed the [Pathways to the Education Sciences Research Training Program](#) (Pathways) to develop a pipeline of talented education researchers who bring fresh ideas, approaches, and perspectives to addressing the issues and challenges faced by the nation's diverse students and schools. Pathways Training Program grants are awarded to minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and their partners to create education research training programs that prepare fellows for doctoral study. As of December 2020, IES had established six Pathways training programs.

Katina Stapleton presented demographic data on fellows funded from 2004-2020 through Pathways, the [Predoctoral Interdisciplinary Research Training Program in the Education Sciences](#) (Predoctoral), and the two IES Postdoctoral programs ([Postdoctoral Research Training Program in the Education Sciences](#) and [Postdoctoral Research Training Program in Special Education and Early Intervention](#)). The majority of fellows are female (69 percent of Postdoctoral, 66 percent Predoctoral, 78 percent Pathways).

Race and Ethnicity of Fellows in IES Pathways, Predoctoral, and Postdoctoral Training Programs (2004-2020)¹

Race/Ethnicity	Pathways (2016-2020) N=251	Predoctoral (2004-2020) n=1009	Postdoctoral (2005-2020) n=278²
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	4%	0%	0%
Asian	3%	9%	9%
Black/African American	45%	7%	5%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0%	0%	1%
Multiple/Multi-Racial	21%	4%	2%
White	14%	75%	74%
Not Reported	13%	6%	9%
Hispanic	37%	7%	5%

1 Race and ethnicity of fellows are separately reported to IES by the training programs. The category race includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiple/multi-racial, and Not Reported. The category ethnicity includes Hispanic and Non-Hispanic.

2 Postdoctoral includes data from both Postdoctoral programs in the Education Sciences and Special Education.

The other key demographic highlights were as follows:

- The majority of fellows in the Predoctoral (75 percent) and Postdoctoral (74 percent) programs are White.
- The Pathways program is more diverse than the Predoctoral and Postdoctoral training programs.
- The Predoctoral training program is becoming more diverse over time (e.g., 4 percent of fellows from 2004-2009 grants are African American compared to 12 percent of fellows from 2014-2020 grants).
- The programs fund very few American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander fellows (fewer than 20 fellows across all programs).

Reducing Barriers to Participation in IES Research

To set the stage for the discussion, Elizabeth Albro, NCER Commissioner, presented an overview of the IES research funding process, along with information about the number of IES grant applications reviewed and funded and applicant characteristics. Each year IES holds funding competitions for research and research training through the National Center for Education Research (NCER) and the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER).¹ Annually, NCER manages a grant portfolio of approximately \$156 million, and NCSEER manages a grant portfolio of approximately \$56.5 million. In an effort to assess diversity of its applicant pool, during the past two funding cycles, IES has begun collecting and analyzing data on the institutions that apply for IES funding.

As part of the grant application submission process, applicant institutions voluntarily provided demographic information of key personnel on grant applications (e.g., principal investigators, co-principal investigators). During the most recent round of grant applications (for funding in FY 2021), approximately 74% of applicants voluntarily answered a question about their race and 71% answered a question about their ethnicity (Hispanic/Non-Hispanic). As of December 2020, the data show that there are few key personnel that report being from racial and/or ethnic minority groups and that few applicant institutions are MSIs.

IES also has 2013 to 2020 data on the types of institutions that apply for funding. From 2013 to 2020, approximately 4 percent of applications to NCER and less than 1 percent of applications to NCSEER were from MSIs. For NCER, approximately 10 percent (n=24) of institutions that have received funding between 2013-2020 are MSIs, including 16 Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs), 9 Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), 1 historically Black college or university (HBCU), and 1 predominately Black institution (PBI).² In addition, NCER has awarded grants to 19 institutions of higher education that serve low-income students.³ For NCSEER, no minority-serving institutions have received funding between 2013-2020.

Given the limited diversity seen in the applicant pool for IES's grant programs, TWG panelists were asked

- What are the institutional/structural barriers that impede a diverse pool of applicants and principal investigators (PIs)?
- What steps can IES take to help reduce those barriers?

Perception that IES Funds Only "Certain Kinds" of Institutions and Individuals

Several TWG members suggested that many researchers do not believe IES supports diverse applicants to its grant programs, and this perception impacts who applies for

¹ Descriptions of IES funding opportunities are available at <https://ies.ed.gov/funding/>.

² Total exceeds 24 because some institutions qualified as more than one type of MSI.

³ Defined as institutions that have at least 50 percent of degree students receiving need-based assistance under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, or have a substantial number of enrolled students receiving Pell Grants, and have low educational and general expenditures (indicated by eligibility for the [Strengthening Institutions Program](#)). Four of the 19 institutions also qualify as MSIs.

funding. They specifically suggested that a major barrier to having a diverse applicant pool is that potential applicants think that IES does not fund researchers “like them.” There is a perception that the focus of their research, their research methods, their institutional affiliation, and/or their demographic backgrounds are at odds with IES’s priorities. TWG members suggested that IES address these perceptions by creating active, ongoing, targeted efforts to engage diverse researchers and institutions in the application process.

TWG members suggested that current IES communications and processes do not clearly convey that IES is committed to diversity and inclusion. Therefore, TWG members recommended that IES

- Implement communications strategies aimed at changing potential applicants’ misperception of IES as an organization that does not support diversity or inclusion, noting that at a minimum, this would include reviewing and updating competition announcements, application instructions, scoring criteria, and other messaging to make clear that IES seeks applications from a wide range of researchers and institutions
- Conduct targeted recruitment of researchers and institutions that have not been historically funded by IES in the past
- Conduct needs assessments with different groups (such as MSIs, the LGBTQ+ community, qualitative researchers, and researchers with disabilities) to identify their specific concerns and application barriers
- Convey a clear commitment to diversity and inclusion by
 - Reviewing and revising the language in the requests for applications (RFAs) so that it does not unintentionally exclude certain applicants
 - Reaching out to researchers that have not been previously funded by IES and showing how their work aligns with IES research priorities and encouraging them to apply
 - Explicitly inviting applicants from MSIs⁴ and PIs from underrepresented⁵ groups through funding priorities or special competitions
 - Explicitly supporting research related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within existing competitions
 - Developing special topics or competitions that are focused on equity and dismantling systematic inequality in education
 - Emphasizing the importance of researchers collaborating with and giving back to the communities that are involved in the research
 - Revisiting what knowledge is in educational research and what types of backgrounds and experience are important for researchers (e.g., emphasizing the role of qualitative research in educational research)

⁴ Section 114 of the Education Science Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA, Title I of P.L. 107-279) charges IES with undertaking “initiatives and programs to increase the participation of researchers and institutions that have been historically underutilized in Federal education research activities of the Institute, including historically Black colleges or universities or other institutions of higher education with large numbers of minority students.”

⁵ Although TWG members did not specifically define the term “underrepresented”, it may include racial/ethnic minorities, first in their families to graduate college, veterans, individuals from low-income backgrounds, individuals from rural settings, and individuals with disabilities.

- Sharing stories of successful applicants from underrepresented groups or institutions in order to encourage others from similar backgrounds to apply

Need for Additional Attention to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Application and Peer Review Process

TWG members recommended that IES examine its application materials, application process, and review process (including scoring criteria) to identify and mitigate potential sources of bias. As part of this process, TWG members suggested that IES

- Clearly state in announcements of funding opportunities and application guidance that IES considers diversity, equity, inclusion, and responsiveness to community needs to be core components of research quality
- Recruit reviewers from a wide variety of backgrounds and areas of expertise
- Recruit reviewers with specific expertise in education diversity, equity, and inclusion issues
- Train reviewers to assess the degree to which the proposed research supports IES's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals

Perceived Lack of Emphasis on Qualitative and Community-Based Research

Several TWG members mentioned that many researchers perceive that IES funds only large experimental or quasi-experimental studies that apply quantitative methods. TWG members stressed that answering many types of education research questions (including questions regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion) frequently require qualitative methods. The TWG emphasized that IES should

- Consider the value of qualitative research methods in conducting education research
- Recognize that conducting qualitative research often requires expertise other than academic credentials, such as understanding community values, norms, and needs
- Require all grant applicants to demonstrate how their research is relevant to and meets the needs of the communities involved in the research, including key stakeholders and the individuals or groups that the research is meant to address

TWG members emphasized that community engagement is necessary and must be authentic and meaningful, not mere statements of intent made in an application but not implemented during a project. They noted that often communities are only superficially engaged for the purpose of attaining research funding but then are not meaningfully included post-award in the research process, including implementation and dissemination decisions. TWG members theorized that by requiring accountability to communities and supporting researchers in building trusting relationships with the communities they aim to benefit, IES will attract more diverse applicants who propose projects that address education equity issues.

Lack of Resources to Submit Competitive Grant Applications

Another major barrier identified by TWG members is a lack of resources to submit competitive grant applications. TWG members emphasized that IES must focus not only on increasing the number of applications from individuals and institutions that are typically underrepresented in education science but also on applying strategies to support these

applicants in successfully competing for awards. Individuals and institutions typically underrepresented in education science frequently face structural and institutional barriers to developing successful research proposals. For example, MSIs and broad- and open-access institutions of higher education (IHEs) typically require faculty to carry a substantial teaching load, and this limits time available for faculty members to develop research proposals or conduct research projects. Faculty at these institutions may hesitate to invest the time necessary to compete for research grants if they believe their success rate to be low. Researchers at MSIs and broad- and open-access IHEs may be less likely to have administrative and staffing resources dedicated to grant development, and this makes preparing grant applications more challenging. In addition, many education researchers began their careers as educators or administrators and then turned to research as an approach for addressing issues they encountered in the field. As a result, they may require additional training specific to research methods and grant writing.

TWG members recommended that IES

- Develop and implement strategies to address these resource-related barriers, with the first step being to identify who needs help
- Analyze data on applicant demographics (and success rates) to identify which groups require outreach and/or technical assistance to submit competitive proposals
- Offer small grant award opportunities for early career applicants, thereby allowing early career researchers an opportunity to compete with peers rather than with established senior researchers who have extensive experience successfully competing for funding
- Support training of mentors for early career scholars

The TWG also suggested several strategies for increasing competitive applications from researchers and institutions that have not been historically funded by IES. They recommended that IES provide

- Focused outreach
- Grant writing workshops
- Training in education research methods
- Opportunities to observe IES PI meetings
- Opportunities to discuss research concepts with IES program officers
- Support for partnerships between institutions with less research infrastructure and institutions with the infrastructure necessary to develop competitive grant applications and IES-funded research projects
- Support for institutional infrastructure development

Why Reducing Barriers Matters

Throughout the discussion of barriers, TWG members stressed the importance of soliciting (and subsequently funding) proposals from a wide range of applicants. They argued that IES is losing out on valuable insights and contributions of many researchers who have not been typically funded by IES. In particular, TWG members argued that IES may be neglecting key questions, ignoring important education issues, and overlooking useful research methodologies. TWG members encouraged IES to solicit additional input from

researchers from underrepresented backgrounds and representatives of MSIs about the types of research IES should fund and about potential approaches for transforming education.

Expanding Outreach

As noted earlier by the TWG members, expanding and conducting focused outreach is needed in order for IES to diversify its pool of applicants and funded researchers. IES specifically requested TWG guidance on how to expand outreach by asked TWG members

- Are there specific groups or communities of researchers that are not represented in the IES research community? How might this impact the type and/or quality of IES-funded research?
- Which organizations/institutions/groups of researchers should IES reach out to with more or better targeted outreach?

Using an Expansive Definition of Diversity

In order to diversify the IES education research community, TWG members recommended that IES should first consider a broad definition of diversity. The TWG indicated that diversity should refer to several factors beyond binary gender, race, and ethnicity, to include (but not limited to) non-binary gender identity, sexual orientation, first-generation graduate students, urban and rural students, socioeconomic class, and people with disabilities. Some TWG members pointed out that efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion often focus on the needs of a single underrepresented group, while people often belong to more than one group. TWG members urged IES to be mindful of individual researchers' potential membership in multiple underrepresented groups when conducting outreach. Translated to the context of outreach, TWG members indicated that IES should

- Conduct more targeted outreach with researchers who are members of these multiple communities
- Conduct targeted outreach to MSIs

Expanding Outreach Through Professional Organizations

TWG members suggested that professional organizations could be valuable resources for outreach to diverse communities of researchers, and they provided a list of these organizations to IES. Some of these organizations have early career networks and prioritize career development for women and minority members, and some have caucuses that could facilitate IES outreach and provide IES with input on how to conduct respectful outreach to a wide range of communities. Many also have formal and informal mentoring networks that could support outreach and capacity building efforts. TWG members agreed that IES should

- Focus outreach efforts toward key leaders in the field who can disseminate IES's outreach messages
- Present at professional organization conferences to increase awareness of the value of education research as a tool to support the organization's mission

Increasing Outreach

Building on the prior discussion of which groups of researchers or organizations IES should target in their outreach, IES asked the TWG to recommend specific outreach activities and strategies for reaching underrepresented researchers and institutions (especially MSIs) who have not applied to nor received IES funding in the past. The specific questions asked of the TWG members were

- What specific types of outreach activities and strategies do you recommend for increasing outreach to underrepresented researchers?
- What specific types of outreach activities and strategies do you recommend for increasing outreach to institutions (e.g., MSIs, non-R1s)?

Outreach Strategies for Underrepresented Researchers

To increase outreach to underrepresented researchers, TWG members recommended that IES

- Examine the demographics of their researchers to identify which groups of researchers are not applying, not getting funded, and not serving as reviewers and then focus outreach efforts on those underrepresented groups
- Conduct needs assessments with communities of researchers to help determine what barriers or challenges they encountered when applying to or reviewing for IES, what resources would help to overcome these challenges, and what would encourage them to (re)apply for IES funding
- Ensure that outreach efforts express commitment to mutually beneficial relationships with researchers underrepresented in the education sciences.
- Invest early on in supporting the pipeline of the next generation of education researchers, thereby building a more diverse education research pipeline to begin with and increasing the probability that the researchers who apply and are funded are more likely to reflect that inherent diversity

TWG members noted that the recommendations provided earlier for overcoming the perception that IES does not prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion can also be applied as strategies for increasing outreach to underrepresented researchers. For example, revising and rewording funding announcements and application guidance to express IES's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion can be an important first step toward improving outreach. Similarly, prioritizing researchers that are currently underrepresented in the education research community (such as education researchers who study diversity, equity, and inclusion and researchers at MSIs) for grant funding may incentivize these researchers to apply for IES funding.

In addition, TWG members discussed how IES can build relationships between program officers and potential applicants. They recommended that IES

- Have IES program officers host events at IES, online, or at professional association conferences and convening professional networks of researchers
- Provide detailed, practical debriefings to unsuccessful applicants so that they can resubmit more competitive applications in the future

- Leverage scholars who have been successful in receiving IES grants to assist in outreach efforts, such as IES fellows and alumni, who can support IES work to increase diversity and inclusion by disseminating information about IES and serving as ambassadors to increase awareness

Outreach Strategies for Underrepresented Institutions (e.g., MSIs)

TWG members stressed the importance of IES developing long-term relationships with institutions that have not historically been funded by IES, especially MSIs. To improve outreach to underrepresented institutions, they recommended that IES

- Host webinars tailored for specific types of MSIs, such as HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities to inform potential grant applicants about the IES grant application and review process and also provide an opportunity for potential applicants to give IES feedback on this process
- Hold office hours with IES program officers to allow potential research grant applicants to make inquiries without an appointment
- Provide funding opportunities for smaller seed grants for research conducted at MSIs, with an emphasis on research that addresses local education issues and community needs
- Tailor outreach messages for specific audiences and learn which communication channels are most likely to reach these audiences

After IES has confirmed which strategies are effective, TWG members recommended that IES support sustained implementation by establishing formal policies.

Increasing Research Capacity

IES presented information on its current capacity building efforts, including its [Education Research training](#) and [Special Education Research training](#) programs, [funding opportunity webinars](#), and technical assistance activities. IES then requested TWG members' input on how IES can provide sufficient and equitable opportunities that increase education research capacity at the institutional and individual level, for individuals at different educational levels, for different types of institutions, and for different fields of discipline. The specific questions that the TWG members were asked to respond to include

- How can IES provide sufficient and equitable opportunities that increase the capacity of education researchers – whether novice or expert – to conduct rigorous and relevant research?
- What specific capacity building strategies are needed at the individual level at different points of the education research career pipeline?
- What specific capacity-building strategies are needed at the institutional level, especially for MSIs and non-R1 institutions?
- What specific capacity-building strategies are needed within the disciplines or for different communities of researchers?

Throughout the meeting, TWG members suggested that IES develop a diverse pipeline of education researchers from the K-12 to postdoctoral education levels. In particular, TWG members noted the importance of the pathway(s) from undergraduate to post-graduate training in education research. TWG members suggested that IES

- Provide mentoring support to prepare students for graduate school
- Provide fellowship support for undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate scholars
- Align and connect IES programs that offer undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate training
- Provide support for scholars transitioning from graduate school and postdoctoral programs to careers in the education sciences

TWG members noted that an important part of research capacity is building a research network and support system. Fostering relationships among researchers, and even with program officers, can help underrepresented researchers in the education community build their efficacy and a positive mindset about their effort and provide timely resources and information on the next steps in their research.

Several barriers discussed earlier in the meeting reemerged during the capacity-building discussion. Several TWG members again cited the time demands of grant applications and teaching responsibilities typical for faculty at MSIs and open-access IHEs. They suggested that IES provide grant support that protect these faculty's time to prepare research proposals through faculty development grants, planning grants, or early career awards.

Some TWG members noted the importance of institutional capacity to support research. They suggested that IES could issue grants to support MSIs in increasing research capacity and support efforts to build capacity across different types of institutions.

The TWG members noted that not all researchers are from academic institutions. Some conduct valuable education research in education and government agencies, professional associations, and private research organizations. TWG members indicated IES should also provide capacity building for researchers at non-academic institutions and make clear that it values researchers from these organizations.

Concluding Recommendations

To conclude the meeting, TWG members were asked how IES should define success in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion among IES-funded education researchers and institutions and how IES should measure the organization's progress toward achieving its goals. In addition, TWG members were asked to recommend specific short-term and long-term goals for IES to undertake to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion among IES-funded education researchers and institutions.

The detailed recommendations and feedback from the TWG reaffirmed IES's commitment to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in its education research grants program. IES leadership has already begun to address and implement some of the recommendations that were made by the TWG, but there is still much more that needs to be accomplished. Summarized below, these recommendations from the TWG outline the actions IES needs to implement to continue to be the nation's leader in providing high-quality, rigorous, and relevant research to inform education policy and practice.

Identify the Key Gaps and Barriers

As a first step, TWG members recommended that IES take a deeper look at the demographic and institutional data of applicants and identify which groups of researchers and institutions are underrepresented. From there, the TWG recommended that IES conduct a needs assessment with researchers and institutions that are underrepresented in the IES education research community to better understand what the barriers are to applying and receiving funding from IES. In addition, the TWG recommend that IES bring together a diverse group of education stakeholders to discuss how IES can better support the needs of underrepresented groups and communities (e.g., people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ community).

Develop an Action Plan

TWG members agreed that IES should develop a concrete action plan to implement TWG recommendations for improving diversity and inclusion, to monitor results, and to implement policies for sustaining effective strategies. Specifically, IES should develop a clear logic model of how inputs are expected to result in the targeted diversity and inclusion outcomes, as well as how the organization will collect and analyze evaluation data. Targeted outcomes should include relationship building, increased outreach, and an increase in funded applications from researchers from a wide range of demographic backgrounds, expertise, and different types of institutions. A person or team within IES should be designated to oversee and track IES's progress in meeting the identified short-term and long-term goals and outcomes. Importantly, the TWG also noted that IES should build on and institutionalize the programs and actions that are currently working well to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., Pathways Training program).

Revise Existing and Develop New Funding Opportunities

The TWG recommended that IES review the current language in the request for applications (RFAs) through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens to determine whether it may be excluding, intentionally or unintentionally, certain groups of researchers or

applicants. To increase the diversity of researchers and institutions that apply for funding, IES should consider providing special grant topics or competitions that are focused on equity and dismantling systematic inequality in education, along with prioritizing applicants from MSIs and PIs from underrepresented groups. The TWG also noted, however, that equity should be emphasized in every project, so a separate grant topic or competition would not be sufficient. They recommended that diversity, equity, and inclusion should be explicitly addressed in *every* grant application that is submitted and awarded by IES.

The TWG also emphasized the importance of collaborating with and giving back to the communities that are involved in the research, including disseminating and sharing the data with key stakeholders and the individuals or groups that the research is meant to address.

Attend to the Research Pipeline/Ecosystem

The TWG recommended that IES support early career researchers through smaller grant opportunities or mentoring supplements. IES should consider whether there are ways to reach out to students earlier on in their education (e.g., in PK-12) to get them exposed to and interested in education research. IES will need to pay attention to the education pipeline and ecosystem to support the next generation of education researchers at critical transitions (e.g., from high school to undergraduate, from undergraduate to graduate). Additionally, IES can help support the education research ecosystem by providing training and networking opportunities for researchers to make connections and build capacity.

Engage in Targeted Outreach

The TWG emphasized the importance for IES to build relationships and engage in targeted outreach with underrepresented researchers and institutions. It was noted that IES staff may need additional training on issues of equity and diversity in order to effectively build these relationships. TWG members also suggested that IES should learn which practices have worked for other organizations to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, and what resources these practices require. IES can also collaborate with national and local associations to amplify efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in education research.

Appendix A. Meeting Agenda

Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting: Increasing Diversity and Representation of IES-funded Education Researchers

December 2, 2020
9:30 AM – 5:00 PM Eastern Time
Virtual Meeting

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 9:30 - 10:15 AM | Welcome and Meeting Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to TWG meeting and logistics (Christina Chhin, STEM Program Officer)• Welcome (Mark Schneider, IES Director)• Diversity & inclusion at IES (Katina Stapleton, Diversity Change Agent)• Panel member introductions |
| 10:15am – 11:45am | Reducing Barriers to Participation in IES Research <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of IES research funding processes (Elizabeth Albro, NCER Commissioner)• Guiding questions and group discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What are the institutional/structural barriers that impede a diverse pool of applicants and principal investigators?○ What steps can IES take to help reduce those barriers? |
| 11:45am – 11:55am | Break |
| 11:55am – 12:25pm | Expanding Outreach – “Who’s not in the room”, and why does it matter? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guiding questions and group discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Are there specific groups or communities of researchers that are not represented in the IES research community? How might this impact the type and/or quality of IES-funded research?○ Which organizations/institutions/groups of researchers should IES reach out to with more or better targeted outreach? |
| 12:25pm – 1:00pm | Lunch Break |
| 1:00pm – 2:00pm | Increasing Outreach – Identifying strategies for increasing outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guiding questions and group discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What specific types of outreach activities and strategies do you recommend for increasing outreach to underrepresented researchers?○ What specific types of outreach activities and strategies do you recommend for increasing outreach to institutions (e.g., MSIs, non-R1s)? |
| 2:00pm – 3:15pm | Increasing Research Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of IES-funded training programs and technical assistance opportunities (Katina Stapleton)• Guiding questions and group discussion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How can IES provide sufficient and equitable opportunities that increase the capacity of education researchers – whether novice or expert – to conduct rigorous and relevant research?○ What specific capacity building strategies are needed at the individual level at different points of the education-research career pipeline? |

- What specific capacity building strategies are needed at the institutional level, especially for MSIs and non-R1 institutions?
- What specific capacity building strategies are needed within the disciplines or for different communities of researchers?

3:15pm – 3:30pm

Break

3:30pm – 5:00pm

Moving Forward & Final Thoughts

- What is success & how do we measure it? (Christina Chhin)
- Short-term and long-term suggestions for IES
- Opportunities for continued feedback (Katina Stapleton)
- Closing thoughts (Elizabeth Albro and Joan McLaughlin, Commissioner, National Center for Special Education Research)

Appendix B. Summary of TWG Recommendations and Suggested Actions for IES

Themes/Topics	Recommendations	Suggested Actions
Reducing barriers to participation in IES research	Address Perception that IES funds only “certain kinds” of institutions and individuals	Implement communications strategies aimed at changing potential applicants’ misperception of IES; Convey a clear commitment to diversity and inclusion; Conduct targeted recruitment of researchers and institutions that have not been historically funded by IES.
	Give Attention to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Application and Peer Review Process	Clearly state the importance of DEI and responsiveness to community needs to be core components of research quality in RFAs; Recruit reviewers from a wide variety of backgrounds and areas of expertise, including specific expertise in education DEI issues; Train reviewers to assess the degree to which the proposed research supports IES’s DEI goals.
	Better Support Qualitative and Community-Based Research	Stress the value of qualitative research methods in conducting education research; Recognize that conducting qualitative research often requires expertise other than academic credentials; Require all grant applicants to demonstrate how their research is relevant to and meets the needs of the communities involved in the research.
	Provide Resources to Submit Competitive Grant Applications	Analyze data on applicant demographics (and success rates) to identify which groups require outreach and/or technical assistance to submit competitive proposals; Develop and implement strategies to address resource-related barriers; Provide grants to support career development and mentoring.
Expanding outreach	Use an Expansive Definition of Diversity	Conduct targeted outreach with researchers, going beyond binary gender, race, and ethnicity categories, to include (but not limited to) non-binary gender identity, sexual orientation, first generation graduate students, urban and rural students, socioeconomic class, and people with disabilities.

	Expand Outreach Through Professional Organizations	Focus outreach efforts toward key leaders in the field who can disseminate IES's outreach messages; Present at professional organization conferences.
Increasing Outreach	Outreach Strategies for Underrepresented Researchers	Conduct needs assessments with communities of researchers to help identify barriers or challenges; Express commitment to mutually beneficial relationships with researchers underrepresented in the education sciences; Invest early on in supporting the pipeline of the next generation of education researchers; Build relationships between program officers and potential applicants; Leverage scholars who have been successful in receiving IES grants to assist in outreach efforts.
	Outreach Strategies for Underrepresented Institutions	Host webinars and office hours with IES program officers tailored for specific types of MSIs; Provide funding opportunities for smaller seed grants for research conducted at MSIs; Tailor outreach messages for specific audiences and learn which communication channels are most likely to reach these audiences.
Increasing research capacity	Develop a diverse pipeline of education researchers from the PK-12 to postdoctoral education levels	Provide mentoring and fellowship support to prepare undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate scholars; Align and connect IES programs that offer undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate training; Provide support for scholars transitioning from graduate school and postdoctoral programs to education careers.
	Build a research support system	Foster relationships among researchers and even with program officers.
	Address issues around resources needed to submit competitive grant applications	Provide grant support that protect faculty's time to prepare research proposals through faculty development grants, planning grants or early career awards; Provide grants to support MSIs in increasing research capacity and support efforts to build capacity across different types of institutions.