

AERA Grants Program

Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

Next Application Deadline: Friday, January 24, 2014 at 11:59PM Pacific Time. [To apply for an AERA Dissertation Grant, please click here.](#)

With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the AERA Grants Program announces its **Dissertation Grants** competition. The program seeks to stimulate research on U.S. education issues using data from the large-scale, national and international data sets supported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), NSF, and other federal agencies, and to increase the number of education researchers using these data sets. The program supports research projects that are quantitative in nature, include the analysis of existing data from NCES, NSF or other federal agencies, and have U.S. education policy relevance.

Description

AERA invites education-related dissertation proposals using NCES, NSF, and other federal databases. Dissertation Grants are available for advanced doctoral students and are intended to support the student while writing the doctoral dissertation. Applications are encouraged from a variety of disciplines, such as but not limited to, education, sociology, economics, psychology, demography, statistics, and psychometrics.

The Governing Board for the AERA Grants Program has established the following four strands of emphasis for proposals. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that:

- develop or benefit from new quantitative measures or methodological approaches for addressing education issues
- incorporate subject matter expertise, especially when studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning
- analyze TIMSS, PISA, or other international data resources
- include the integration and analysis of more than one data set

Research projects related to at least one of the strands above and to science and/or mathematics education are especially encouraged. Other topics of interest include policies and practices related to student achievement in STEM, contextual factors in education, educational participation and persistence (kindergarten through graduate school), early childhood education, and postsecondary education. The research project must include the analysis of data from at least one of the large-scale, nationally or internationally representative data sets such as those supported by NCES, NSF, and the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Institutes of Health. The data set(s) of interest must be available for analysis at the time of application (public- or restricted-use files are permissible). Additional data sets may be used in conjunction with the obligatory federal data set. If international data sets are used, the study must include U.S. education.

Eligibility

Applicants for Dissertation Grants may be U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents enrolled in a doctoral program. Non-U.S. citizens enrolled in a doctoral program at a U.S. institution are also eligible to apply. Applicants should be advanced doctoral students at the dissertation writing stage. Underrepresented racial and ethnic minority researchers are strongly encouraged to apply.

Awards

AERA Grants Program

Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

Awards for Dissertation Grants are up to \$20,000 for 1-year projects. Grants are not renewable. In accordance with AERA's agreement with the funding agency, institutions may not charge indirect costs on these awards.

In addition to the dissertation grant award, grantees will participate in a 2-day conference in Washington, DC. The conference will provide unique professional development experiences for grantees, including highly qualified speakers on topics of education policy and career development, presentations of dissertation research by former grantees, and interaction with the Governing Board and federal agency staff. This conference is specifically for AERA grantees, and travel expenses will be paid by AERA.

Grantees will present their research at a poster session during the AERA Annual Meeting and will participate in a one-day capstone workshop. Grantees must include travel funds (up to \$1,000) in their grant budget to attend the AERA Annual Meeting held in Spring.

Application Requirements

All applications for Dissertation Grants must include:

- Information on the applicant (contact and background information)
- Abstract of the proposed research project
- Statement of how this research advances the current state of knowledge in the field, substantively or methodologically
- Research proposal (limited to 4 single-spaced pages) that addresses the following:
 - Problem statement/policy issue and its importance
 - Theoretical or conceptual framework for the research
 - Brief review of relevant research/policy literature
 - Research questions, including justification for the use of the data set(s) to analyze the research question(s) of interest; hypotheses to be tested
 - Description of methodology including proposed data set and criteria for selecting data file, sample (e.g., groups used, exclusions to sample, and estimated sample sizes), selection of variables and rationale for using them, analytic techniques, and feasibility of the study
 - Connections between the potential findings and the policy issue
 - Brief dissemination plan for this research, including ways in which to make the research known to influence policy
- Conceptual or figural model depicting the design of the study
- Statistical model or formulas, appropriately defined, that are connected to the conceptual model, including justification for inclusion of variables into the model(s)
- Categorized list of variables from the NSF, NCES, or other federal data set(s) to be used
- References cited in the proposal narrative and models
- Proposed budget
- Applicant's curriculum vitae, no longer than two pages, to include the following:
 - Research and academic employment history
 - Relevant graduate courses in statistics and methodology
 - Relevant publications and presentations
 - Relevant professional affiliations and/or memberships
- Substantive letter of support from applicant's faculty dissertation advisor that includes an indication of the student's current progress toward the degree and expected date of completion, and of the student's potential for success in his or her anticipated career path. If the applicant is from a discipline other than education, a second letter of support from a faculty sponsor with an education research background is also required. Note that letters may be sent electronically to the

AERA Grants Program Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

AERA Grants Program Manager or in hard copy but must be received by the deadline. Applicants are encouraged to ask their advisors early for letters of recommendation.

Application Deadlines

Proposals for Dissertation Grants will be reviewed twice a year, once in the fall and once in the winter. The deadline for proposals for the current cycle is:

Friday, January 24, 2014 at 11:59PM Pacific Time

Funding decisions will be announced in March 2014. All applicants will be notified about the status of their application at this time. Due to the large volume of applications received, the AERA Grants Program is unable to provide individual feedback on unfunded proposals.

Application Submission

Proposals must be submitted electronically. Applicants should read carefully the entire **Call for Proposals** and the [Submission Instructions](#) prior to starting the online submission process. Applicants will be asked to enter specific information in text boxes and upload documents that have been saved in PDF. The deadline for submission is 11:59pm Pacific Time. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals in advance of the deadline. Submission must be made electronically on the AERA Dissertation Grant submission web page.

Contact grantsprogram@aera.net if you have questions regarding the application or submission process. NOTE: all awards are contingent upon AERA's receiving continued federal funding.

Important Additional Information Regarding Dissertation Grants

Considerations in the development of the proposal

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read *Estimating Causal Effects: Using Experimental and Observational Designs*, by B. Schneider, et.al. **prior to** submitting a dissertation grant proposal.

Selection bias is a recurring issue during the review process and should be addressed in the proposal.

All proposals must include the analysis of data from at least one of the large-scale, national or international data sets supported by NCES, NSF, or other federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Census Bureau, or the National Institutes of Health. Additional large-scale data sets may be used in conjunction with the obligatory federal data set. If international data sets are used, the study must include U.S. education. The data set(s) of interest must be available for analysis at the time of application (public- or restricted-use files are permissible).

Applicants should choose research topics that can be supported by the samples and variables contained in the proposed NCES or NSF data set(s). Applicants should also be familiar with the specific data set's User Guides and/or Manuals (e.g., use of design weights and design effects).

Applicants should be familiar with statistical methods and available computer programs that allow for sophisticated analyses of the selected data.

AERA Grants Program Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

The proposed topic must have education policy relevance, and the models to be tested must include predictor variables that are manipulable (e.g., course work in mathematics, instructional practices used by teachers, parental involvement).

Applicants who plan to model achievement test data should define the achievement construct and identify the kinds of items to be used to operationalize the research project. Also, when planning to use existing subscales, the applicant should describe why these subscales are appropriate and how they will be applied. Existing subscales provided by NCES may not be appropriate for the proposed construct.

Applicants should adequately deal with the curricular content when it applies.

Applicants are encouraged to capitalize on the capacity of large-scale data sets to look at diverse populations.

The AERA Grants Program has funded more than 400 grant proposals to date. Applicants are encouraged to review the lists of [Funded Research Grants](#) and [Funded Dissertation Grants](#) to ensure that their proposed project has not already been done.

A researcher may submit only one proposal to the AERA Grants Program for review at any one time.

Proposal narrative

The proposal narrative should be no more than four pages in length, single-spaced, in 12 point type with 1" margins. Approximately two pages should be devoted to the problem statement/policy issue, theoretical framework, current literature, and research questions. The remaining two pages should include the methodology, connection to policy, and dissemination plan.

The methodology section is very important and should describe the proposed data set and criteria for selecting the data file, the sample (e.g., groups used, exclusions to sample, and estimated sample sizes), the variables to be used and rationale for using them, and the analytic techniques. Applicants must present a clear and well thought out model that identifies variables and specifies the analysis to be done.

The brief dissemination plan should include an indication of the audience for whom the research findings would be suited (federal, state, or local government officials, school superintendents, parents, etc.), plus the relevant journals where the findings might be submitted for publication and professional meetings where the findings might be presented.

Research Question

The research question(s) should include a justification for using the particular data set(s) of interest.

Conceptual model

The conceptual or figural model is usually a boxes and arrows diagram of the framework or design of the study.

Statistical model

AERA Grants Program Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

The statistical model will include the formulas, appropriately defined, that are connected to the conceptual model and will be used in the proposed study. Please justify the inclusion of particular variables into the statistical model.

AERA Grants Program

Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

Variables list

Provide a one to two page, categorized list of the variables from the NCES, NSF, or other federal data set(s) that will be used in this research project. The variables should be generally discussed in the proposal narrative, including the selection criteria and rationale for using them. The specific variables should be included in the variables list.

Reference list

Provide a list of all references included in the text or in the models. Use complete citations, including titles and all authors.

Budget

There is no specific format for the budget section. Funds may be used for tuition and/or institutional fees, living expenses, equipment, professional travel, books, supplies, computing time, etc. The proposed budget must include travel funds to attend the next AERA Annual Meeting.

Institutions may not charge overhead or indirect costs on AERA Dissertation Grants.

Letters of recommendation

One substantive letter of support is required from the applicant's primary faculty dissertation advisor that includes an indication of the applicant's current progress toward the degree and expected date of completion, and of the student's potential for success in his or her anticipated career path. If the applicant is from a discipline other than education, a second letter of support from a faculty advisor who has an education research background is also required. Although this second letter should focus mainly on the applicant's qualifications, research experience and potential, it should also include a brief paragraph on the advisor's own education research experience. An exception to the second letter requirement will be made if the applicant's primary faculty dissertation advisor is very experienced in education research. In that case, one letter from the primary faculty dissertation advisor is required, and it should include a brief paragraph on the advisor's own education research experience.

Letters may be sent electronically to the [AERA Grants Program Manager](#) or in hard copy but must be received by the deadline. Letters sent electronically must be sent separately by the advisor or departmental staff, not by the applicant, and formatted in PDF. All letters must be on institutional letterhead with the author's signature. Note that applicants are responsible for making sure their letters of reference are received by the deadline.

Applicants are encouraged to ask advisors early for letters of reference.

Proposal dates

AERA is flexible on research project dates, depending on what is best for the applicant. The earliest date a grant may start is approximately three months following the application submission. Alternatively, an award start date of several months after the review date may be requested.

AERA Grants Program

Dissertation Grants: Call for Proposals

Funding restrictions

Dissertation Grantees may not accept concurrent grant or fellowship awards from another agency, foundation, institution or the like for the same dissertation project that is funded by the AERA Grants Program. If the awardee is offered more than one major grant or fellowship for the same project for the same time period, in order to accept the AERA Grants Program Dissertation Grant, the other award(s) must be declined. Awardees may accept RA or TA appointments at their doctoral institutions and may have additional employment.

If the applicant is employed by a contractor of NCES or NSF, the dissertation project must not be directly related to the applicant's work responsibilities. An additional letter from the applicant's employer is required as part of the application submission, stating that the dissertation project is separate from the applicant's job duties. This letter must be sent electronically or in hard copy by the deadline.

Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria will include the importance of the proposed policy issue, the strength of the methodological model and proposed statistical analysis of the study, and relevant experience and research record of the applicant. Additionally, the review criteria will include the following: Is the policy issue clearly defined? What is already known on the issue? How does the methodology relate specifically to the policy question? Does the applicant know the data set? Does the analytic plan fit the question and the data? Is the applicant qualified to carry out the proposed study? Reviewers will be members of the AERA Grants Program Governing Board. Due to the large volume of applications received, the AERA Grants Program is unable to provide individual feedback on unfunded proposals.

Reporting requirements

All Dissertation Grantees will be required to submit a brief (3-6 pages) progress report mid-way through the grant period. A final report will be submitted at the end of the grant period. The final report may be either a copy of the dissertation or an article based on the dissertation research. The article must be of the quality and in the format for submission to a journal for publication.

Funding disbursement

Funding will be linked to the approval of the progress report and final report. Grantees will receive two-thirds of the total award at the beginning of the grant period, one-sixth upon approval of the progress report, and one-sixth upon approval of the final report. In most cases awardees may choose whether to have funds sent directly to them or have the funds channeled through their institutions.

[Click here to apply for an AERA Dissertation Grant](http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram) or visit the [AERA Grants Program Website](http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram) at <http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram>