Call for Dissertation Grant Proposals

AERA Grants Program Seeks Proposals for Dissertation Grants

*Deadline: September 10, 2020*

With support from the National Science Foundation, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Grants Program seeks proposals for Dissertation Grants. The AERA Grants Program provides advanced graduate students with research funding and professional development and training. The program supports highly competitive dissertation research using rigorous quantitative methods to examine large-scale, education-related data. The aim of the program is to advance fundamental knowledge of relevance to STEM policy, foster significant science using education data, and build research capacity in education and learning. Since 1991, this AERA Program has been vital to both research and training at early career stages.

The Grants Program encourages the use of major data sets from multiple and diverse sources. It emphasizes the advanced statistical analysis of data sets from the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and other federal agencies. The program also supports studies using large-scale international data systems (e.g., PISA, PIRLS, or TIMMS) that benefit from U.S. federal government support. In addition, statewide longitudinal administrative data systems (SLDS) enhanced through federal grants are also eligible for consideration. The inclusion of federal or state administrative information that further expands the analytic capacity of the research is permissible. The thrust of the analysis needs to be generalizable to a national, state, or population or a subgroup within the sample that the dataset represents.

The Grants Program is open to field-initiated research and welcomes proposals that:

1. develop or benefit from advanced statistical or innovative quantitative methods or measures;
2. analyze more than one large-scale national or international federally funded data set, or more than one statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) or incorporate other data enhancements;
3. integrate, link, or blend multiple large-scale data sources; or
4. undertake replication research of major findings or major studies using large-scale, federally supported or enhanced data.

The Grants Program encourages proposals across the life span and contexts of education and learning of relevance to STEM policy and practice. The research may focus on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to such issues as student achievement in STEM, contextual factors in education, educational participation and persistence (pre-kindergarten through graduate school), early childhood education and development, postsecondary education, and the STEM
workforce and transitions. Studies that examine issues of specific racial and ethnic groups, social classes, genders, or persons with disabilities are encouraged.

**Applicant Eligibility**
Dissertation Grants are available for advanced doctoral students and are intended to support the student while analyzing data and writing the doctoral dissertation. Proposals are encouraged from the full range of education research fields and other fields and disciplines engaged in education-related research, including economics, political science, psychology, sociology, demography, statistics, public policy, and psychometrics. Applicants for this one-year, non-renewable award should be advanced doctoral students at the dissertation writing stage, usually the last year of study. Applicants 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 an U.S. institution are also eligible to apply. Underrepresented racial and ethnic minority researchers as well as women, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are strongly encouraged to apply.

**Data Set Eligibility**
The dissertation research project must include the analysis of large-scale data. The data set can originate from one or multiple sources, including (1) federal data bases, (2) federally supported national studies, (3) international data sets supported by federal funds, or (4) statewide longitudinal administrative data systems (SLDS) enhanced through federal grants. Although the emphasis is on large-scale education data sets and systems, other social science and health-related databases that can advance knowledge about education and learning are eligible for consideration.

Many national data resources, including important longitudinal data sets, have been developed or funded by NCES, NSF, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institutes of Health, or other federal agencies. International datasets such as PISA, PIAAC, TIMMS, and others are supported. If international data sets are used, the study must include U.S. education.

NCES has enhanced and improved SLDS through grants to nearly every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and America Samoa. This federal investment has produced state-level data from pre-K to grade 12, through higher education, and into the workforce. Many SLDS are available for analysis and can be used to address salient issues in education research or linked with other data sets.

**Data Set Access**
The data set(s) of interest must be available for analysis at the time of application. Use of public or restricted-data files is permissible. Prior to receiving funding, students must provide documentation that they have permission to use the data for the research project. In many cases, graduate students will gain access to restricted files through a faculty member or senior scholar.

**Data Sharing**
All data or data-related products produced under the AERA Grants Program must be shared and made available consonant with ethical standards for the conduct of research. Grantees are
expected to place article-related data, codebook or coding procedures, algorithms, code, and so forth in an accessible archive at the time of publication. Also, at a reasonable time after completion of the dissertation research, all data or data-related products must be archived at the AERA-ICPSR Data Sharing Repository supported by NSF and located at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan. AERA provides guidance to facilitate the data sharing and archiving process.

**Dissertation Grant Award**

**Award Component 1, $25,000 Stipend.** AERA will award each grantee up to a $25,000 stipend to study education, teaching, learning, or other education research topics using one or multiple large-scale databases. The funds can be used for research-related expenses such as tuition, living expenses, travel to secure data enclaves or scholarly conferences, books, computer equipment, and other expenses directly related to conducting this research. As part of the proposal, applicants provide a budget that outlines anticipated research-related expenses. AERA encourages cost sharing from universities in the form of tuition assistance, office space, university fees, and other expenses. In accordance with AERA’s agreement with NSF, institutions cannot charge overhead or indirect costs to administer the grant funds. In addition to the funding, grantees will be paired with a Governing Board member who will serve as a resource and provide advice and feedback to grantees and monitor grantees’ progress.

**Award Component 2, AERA Research Conference.** Grantees will participate in an AERA research conference held in Washington, DC. During this 2-day conference grantees will participate in seminar-type sessions on substantive, methodological, and professional issues. Also, they will have the opportunity to network and interact with the Grants Program Governing Board, senior scholars and researchers, other graduate students who use large-scale datasets in their research, and representatives from key federal agencies such as the National Center for Educational Statistics, the National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education. The award will cover all travel and lodging expenses for grantees to participate in the conference.

**Award Component 3, AERA Annual Meeting Capstone Research Institute.** Each spring AERA holds its Annual Meeting which brings together over 15,000 researchers, scholars, and policy leaders to present their research, share knowledge, and build research capacity through over 2,000 substantive sessions. Grantees will take a data analysis or appropriate methods course while attending the AERA Annual Meeting. The grantees will present their research in an invited poster session along with other graduate students who received dissertation support from AERA and other prestigious fellowship programs. Finally, grantees will participate in a Capstone conference directly after the Annual Meeting that will address issues such as building a research agenda, searching for a faculty appointment, and publishing research. Grantees must include travel and lodging expenses to the Annual Meeting in their budget.

**Informational Webinar**

Applicants are encouraged to watch the informational webinar to learn more about the AERA

---

1 Awardees with access to data under restricted access provisions are expected to archive a detailed specification of the data set so that others can request the same data under the same or similar restricted conditions.
Grants Program and discuss the application process. The recorded webinar is available through the AERA Virtual Research Learning Center.

**Project Dates**
AERA is flexible on research project start dates, depending on what is best for the applicant. The earliest date a grant may start is approximately three months following the application deadline. Alternatively, an award start date several months or more after that may be requested.

**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 Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant appointments at their doctoral institutions and may have additional employment.

If the applicant is employed by a contractor of NCES, NSF, other federal agency, state agency, or other entity that provides the dataset proposed for the project, the dissertation research must not be considered part of 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 by the deadline to grantsprogram@aera.net.

**Evaluation Criteria**
Evaluation criteria include the significance of the research question, the conceptual clarity and potential contribution of the proposal, the relevance to an important STEM education policy issue, the strength of the methodological model and proposed statistical analysis, and the applicant’s relevant research and academic experience. Additionally, the review criteria include the following: What is already known on the issue? How does the methodology relate specifically to the research 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**
Dissertation Grantees will be required to submit a brief (3-6 pages) progress report midway through the grant period. A final report will be submitted at the end of the grant period. The final report consists of an extended dissertation abstract (3-6 pages), a statement of research dissemination and communication activities and plans (1-3 pages), and the complete approved dissertation. It should be submitted electronically to grantsprogram@aera.net. All reporting requirements and deadlines are outlined in the award letter.

**Funding Disbursement**
Funding will be linked to the approval of the progress report and final report. Grantees will
receive one-half of the total award at the beginning of the grant period, one-quarter upon approval of the progress report, and one-quarter upon approval of the final report. Grants are awarded through the grantee’s institution. In accordance with AERA's agreement with NSF, institutions cannot charge overhead or indirect costs to administer the grant funds.

Considerations in the Development of the Proposal

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read Estimating Causal Effects: Using Experimental and Observational Designs, by Barbara Schneider, Martin Carnoy, Jeremy Kilpatrick, William H. Schmidt, and Richard J. Shavelson prior to submitting a dissertation grant proposal. Selection bias is a recurring issue during the review process and should be addressed in the proposal.

Applicants should choose research topics that can be supported by the samples and variables contained in the proposed data set(s). Applicants should also be familiar with the User Guides and/or Manuals (e.g., use of design weights and design effects) of the specific data sets. Applicants should be familiar with statistical methods and available computer programs that allow for sophisticated analyses of the selected data.

Applicants should explicitly address the curricular content when it applies. Applicants are encouraged to capitalize on the capacity of large-scale data sets to examine diverse populations, including racial, ethnic, social class, and gender groups. 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). Studies that model achievement test data should clearly define the achievement construct and identify the kinds of items to be used to operationalize the topic of interest. Also, when planning to use existing sub-scales, the applicant should describe why these sub-scales are appropriate and how they will be applied. Existing sub-scales provided by NCES or other agencies may not be appropriate for the proposed construct.
Dissertation Grant Application Guidelines
AERA Grants Program

Application Deadline
All applications for the AERA Grants Program must be completed using the AERA online application portal by 11:59pm Pacific time on September 10, 2020. An applicant may submit only one proposal to the AERA Grants Program for review at any one time. Due to the large volume of applications received, the AERA Program is unable to provide individual feedback on unfunded proposals.

Submission Information
Please enter the background information requested in the proposal submission portal. This includes the applicant’s contact and background demographic information. Also, enter the proposal title, amount of funding requested, and the start and end dates of the project.

Dataset(s) used: Name data set(s) used (e.g., ECLS-K, ELS:2002, IPEDS, CCD, AddHealth, SLDS-State, PISA, and so forth). Proposals must include the analysis of at least one large-scale federal, international, or state administrative data system.

Dissertation abstract
Enter the abstract of your proposed research project (250 words maximum).

Contribution to the field
Briefly describe the potential contributions this research will make to the field of education (250 words maximum). You may cut and paste or type into the text box.

Proposal
1. Narrative: Prepare a narrative (limited to 4 single-spaced pages) to include the following:
   - Statement of how this research advances the current state of knowledge in the field, substantively and/or methodologically
   - Theoretical or conceptual framework for the research
   - Brief review of relevant research/policy literature
   - Research questions, hypotheses to be tested
   - Description of methodology including the data set(s) and justification for selecting data file to address research question; any additional or supplemental data sample (e.g., groups used, exclusions to sample, and estimated sample sizes); rationale for variables used; and specification and clarification of variables and analytic techniques
   - Data analysis plan and/or statistical model or formulas, appropriately defined
   - Brief dissemination plan for this research including proposed conferences to present the findings and potential scholarly journals to publish the research

2. Variables list: A categorized list of the variables from the NCES, NSF, or other data set(s) that will be used in this research project. (2 single-spaced pages maximum)

3. References cited (not part of page limit)
4. **Budget.** Awards for Dissertation Grants are up to $25,000 for 1-year projects. The budget must include funds to attend the AERA Annual Meeting. The funds can be used for research-related expenses such as tuition, living expenses, travel to secure data enclaves or scholarly conferences, books, computer equipment, and other expenses directly related to conducting this research. AERA encourages cost sharing from universities in the form of tuition assistance, office space, university fees, and other expenses. In accordance with AERA’s agreement with NSF, institutions cannot charge overhead or indirect costs to administer the grant funds. There is no specific template for the budget. It may be a simple 2-column format or a more complex spreadsheet. (no page limit)

5. **Applicant’s curriculum vitae** (limited to 2 pages) that includes:
   - Research and academic employment history
   - Relevant graduate courses in statistics and methodology
   - Relevant publications and presentations
   - Relevant professional affiliations and/or memberships

*Please combine items 1-5 as one PDF document and upload on online application.*

**Letter(s) of support:** The letter(s) must be sent separately, by the faculty member. 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 if the primary faculty advisory does not specialize in education research. 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.

**Further Questions**
Contact George L. Wimberly, Co-Principal Investigator, AERA Grants Program (grantsprogram@aera.net) or 202-238-3200 if you have questions regarding the application or submission process. NOTE: All awards are contingent upon AERA's receiving continued federal funding.

Visit the [AERA Grants Program Website](http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram) at [http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram](http://www.aera.net/grantsprogram).