

Public Comment from the Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences (FABBS)

Re: [ED-2025-IES-0844 \("Request for Information; Feedback on Redesigning the Institute of Education Sciences"\)](#)

Date: October 15, 2025

The Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences (FABBS) represents 32 of the nation's leading scientific societies in the psychological, cognitive, and behavioral sciences that come together to advance our disciplines; promote evidence-based policymaking; and support the integrity and independence of the federal scientific enterprise.

FABBS appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Request for Information (RFI) regarding ways the agency can enhance its research, data collection, dissemination, and technical assistance to better serve states, districts, educators, and other stakeholders. For the record, FABBS members have a long history of competing for, often successfully, IES funding. While actively committed to continual improvement, the agency has historically supported invaluable education research, statistics, and evidence-based practices.

FABBS urges the Department of Education to ensure adequate staffing across IES centers is foundational for building on these strengths and implementing any recommended improvements effectively. FABBS also encourages IES to resume fiscal year 2025 (FY25) competitions that have been on pause since February due to the cancellation of the contract supporting peer review. Many grant applicants have not received updates on the status of proposals submitted in response to several FY25 Requests for Applications, and timely communication is essential.

Efforts to restructure IES to modernize grantmaking, peer review, and data systems would benefit from input and oversight of a fully operational National Board for Education Sciences (NBES). FABBS recognizes the long-overdue need to reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA). Nonetheless, Congress plays a critical role in providing priorities for the agency, drawing upon input from the broad research and practitioner stakeholder community to ensure that updates are feasible, effective, and aligned with the agency's statutory mission and ongoing research priorities.

FABBS strongly encourages IES to carefully consider recent reports and blueprints from the scientific community, including the 2022 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) titled [The Future of Education Research at the Institute of Education Sciences](#), which provides recommendations regarding agency restructuring. This report offers well-researched guidance on enhancing IES's efficiency, cohesion, and impact and serves as a solid foundation for informing restructuring efforts.

FABBS members are grateful for funding in areas of cognition, learning, literacy, language, and social-emotional development, and have extensive experience conducting education research and implementing evidence-based practices. FABBS offers the following recommendations aligned with the suggestions posed in the RFI:

Function more cohesively across its four centers to ensure shared goals drive data collection, research funding, and technical assistance.

FABBS sees value in the current four-center structure: National Center for Education Research (NCER), National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE). IES can strengthen the effectiveness of the agency by centralizing planning and coordination across its four centers. This may include aligning research priorities, data collection, and technical assistance around shared objectives, along with encouraging cross-center initiatives and ongoing communication to improve coordination and prevent duplication.

NCER and NCSER serve unique roles, not addressed by other agencies, in the education research ecosystem, supporting fundamental research in areas such as school-level effects and school personnel.

Better meet the needs of researchers in service to state and local leaders, educators, parents, and state education agencies.

FABBS encourages IES to provide flexible funding mechanisms that support rapid-response studies, replication efforts, and pilot programs, allowing researchers to respond effectively to urgent educational questions. FABBS members value and see an increased need for existing programs such as Early Career Development and Mentoring, predoctoral and postdoctoral training, and interdisciplinary skill-building to strengthen the pipeline of education researchers. States and districts would benefit from technical assistance to build capacity to use evidence effectively and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

FABBS members have driven researcher-practitioner partnerships to improve practitioner-relevant research that has both better served the needs of educators and administrators while strengthening the research questions.

Improve the timeliness, accuracy, and accessibility of its statistics and research products.

Robust, centralized data systems are critical for large-scale studies and provide evidence that states cannot generate independently and are necessary for state-to-state comparisons. Integration with national and administrative datasets will improve both research quality and efficiency. Using AI and data science to study learning and behavior has the potential to help researchers analyze complex patterns and generate insights that can inform education and policy decisions. The [National Secure Data Service Demonstration](#) (NSDS-D) informs a

government-wide effort on strengthening data linkage and data access infrastructure, and may be a valuable resource for IES. FABBS encourages open science practices and transparent data sharing – while protecting students’ and parents’ privacy to enhance the accessibility, reliability, and impact of research outputs.

Strengthen partnerships with other federal agencies or between state agencies to align data and reduce redundancy.

IES is already leading strong efforts in this area. For example, the NCER Using Longitudinal Data to Support State Policymaking program aims to be responsive to the needs of state policymakers by requiring partnerships between researchers and state education agencies. As another example, the School Pulse Panel Survey developed by NCES gathered near-real-time data from schools as they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has since been expanded to collect data on timely issues such as teacher shortages and chronic absenteeism.

IES has an opportunity to play a more central role in coordinating education-related research across federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Increased collaborations would reduce duplication and expand the impact of research on learning, development, and behavioral outcomes. IES might consider formalizing interagency data-sharing agreements and joint research initiatives focused on shared priorities such as early childhood development, learning recovery, and social-emotional well-being. Coordination with state longitudinal data systems should focus on making the systems work well together while minimizing the reporting burden on schools and districts.

Improve mechanisms for disseminating and scaling evidence-based practices, including the work of the RELs, WWC, and R&D Centers.

IES should continue supporting the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), and Research and Development (R&D) Centers to strengthen pathways for research findings to reach practitioners. Research on cognition, learning, literacy, language, and social-emotional development should be communicated in ways that are practical and applicable.

FABBS encourages sustained investment in core research programs – such as NCER’s Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Context for Teaching and Learning and Reading and Writing programs, and NCSE’s Reading, Writing, and Language Development and Cognition and Student Learning programs – to ensure continuity, equity, and effectiveness. Evaluation of dissemination and implementation efforts can identify strategies for scaling evidence-based practices, connecting high-quality research to practical outcomes for educators and students.

Modernize its peer review, grantmaking, and contracting processes to encourage innovation while maintaining rigor.

FABBS encourages IES to streamline transparent processes for grantmaking, peer review, and contracting to facilitate interdisciplinary proposals while maintaining rigor. IES may want to adopt a version of the NSF broader impacts criteria in the peer review process, which would support the above goal of better meeting the needs of policymakers, practitioners, and families.

FABBS and our member societies welcome any opportunity to serve as a resource to IES as it works to modernize the agency, improve data systems, and implement evidence-based practices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juliane Baron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Juliane" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Baron".

Juliane Baron
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