Association for Institutional Research

Grants Program: Research Grants
2012 Proposal Guidelines

Proposal Deadline:
January 10, 2012*
11:59 PM (EST)

Improving Institutional Research in Postsecondary Education Institutions

**The grant application system will be unavailable from 12/24 – 12/27 due to scheduled system upgrades. All proposals started before 12/24 will be accessible after 12/27.*

Introduction to AIR Grant Programs

With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC), the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) operates two grant programs that support research on a wide range of issues of critical importance to U.S. higher education.

The programs have two separate purposes:

- NSF and NCES support grants aimed to increase the number of researchers using national datasets and demonstrate the contribution that these datasets make to the national base of knowledge on higher education policy, theory, and practice.

- NPEC funding supports grants that increase the understanding and knowledge of a specific issue area identified by NPEC. This year's focus is, "Exploring Postsecondary Non-Degree Programs."

Two levels of grants are supported:

- Research Grants: Faculty and practitioners are eligible for research grants of up to $40,000 for one year of independent research. (Note: These research grants are not available to students). All grant recipients must be affiliated with a U.S. postsecondary institution or relevant non-profit higher education organization.

- Dissertation Grants: Doctoral students are eligible for dissertation grants of up to $20,000 for one year to support dissertation research and writing under the guidance of a faculty dissertation advisor.

To qualify for funding, proposal submissions must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Use data from one or more of the national datasets of NSF or NCES.** Research topics may cover a wide range of policy- or practice-related issues. For a list of previously funded topics visit www.airweb.org/grants. Applicants must include the analysis of data from at least one NSF or NCES dataset in the project. (See Appendix A for more information.) Additional large-scale, nationally representative datasets may be used in conjunction with the obligatory NSF or NCES dataset.

- **Address the NPEC focus topic: "Exploring Postsecondary Non-Degree Programs."** Proposals should focus on postsecondary non-degree programs, their role in higher education, and appropriate measures of student success and institutional effectiveness for these programs. The analyses can focus on federal, state, or regional data and does not require the use of NCES or NSF databases. Nonetheless, the results of the research should have some applicability to IPEDS data collection efforts. (See Appendix B for more information.)

Proposals may only be submitted electronically. The deadline for proposal submission is January 10, 2012 (11:59 p.m. EST). Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by March 23, 2012. Funding will be available starting May 1, 2012.

Research Grants Overview

The Research Grant Program provides grants to faculty and practitioners affiliated with a U.S. postsecondary institution or higher education association to conduct research on postsecondary education. The major portion of the research should be completed between May 1, 2012 and April 30, 2013. At the time of application, the proposed research should be in the early stage of development.

Note: A separate grant program is available to support doctoral dissertation research conducted under the guidance of a faculty dissertation advisor. See www.airweb.org/dissertationgrant for details.

The deadline for proposals is January 10, 2012 (11:59 p.m. EST). Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by March 23, 2012, and grants will commence May 1, 2012. AIR funding cannot duplicate or replace other funding from another source.

A complete application is comprised of seven major components:

1. Contact information: name, physical address, e-mail address, institutional affiliation of the Primary Investigator (PI) and secondary PI's (if applicable), and name of the official institutional financial representative
2. Project description: detailed description of the proposed research
3. Statement of Institutional Review Board approval or exemption
4. Statement of use of restricted datasets (if applicable)
5. Biographical sketch (one sketch per PI)
6. Budget
7. Statement of the applicant's prior, current, or pending funding

Applications must be submitted online. Assistance is available from the AIR grant staff at grants@airweb.org or 850-385-4155 x200.

5 Tasks to Complete Before Submitting Your Proposal

- ☐ Completely fill out all sections.
- ☐ Thoroughly explain how your research will use NSF or NCES datasets, or address the NPEC focus topic.
- ☐ Review the datasets you plan to use and make sure your research questions can be answered with the data.
- ☐ Review your methods and models to make sure they are appropriate.
- ☐ Review AIR's grading rubric for scoring proposals.

Application Process

STEP 1: Individuals are encouraged to begin the application process as soon as possible by providing initial contact information as the first step: name, e-mail address, physical address, and institutional affiliation. Providing this information assures that updates and deadline reminders will be sent to individuals at the e-mail address provided. Providing contact information does not commit an individual to submit a proposal. Go to http://applications.airweb.org/researchgrant to enter your contact information.

STEP 2: Complete the online application by following the Research Grant Guidelines. The application contains seven components. **It is recommended that applicants write each section using word processing software and when finalized, cut and paste the text into the online application.**

Note: Applicants can save their application and return later to add or edit their information until either they finalize the application or the application process closes on January 10, 2012 (11:59 p.m. EST).

STEP 3: Submit the online proposal by following the directions at the end of the online application. When a proposal is successfully submitted a confirmation email will be sent to the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit the final proposal and store the confirmation email as receipt of successful submission.

An application may be withdrawn at any time before the final funding decision is made. A request for withdrawal must be sent to grants@airweb.org. Confirmation of the withdrawal request will be sent to the applicant.

Selection Process
Applications are reviewed by a panel of national experts. A minimum of three panel members will read and evaluate each application. The panel will provide comments to applicants along with the final funding decision. The panel may recommend funding with revisions to the research plan. If changes are requested, a revised research plan must be submitted before the award can be made.

If any significant change in the research plan develops after the proposal application is submitted, the applicant is responsible for notifying AIR staff as soon as possible. AIR may allow a revision of the proposal after the application deadline, or the new information may be presented to the review panel as an addendum to the original submission.

Award Announcement
Applicants will be notified of the status of the proposed project by March 23, 2012. Institutional financial representatives will be copied on notices of funded projects. Grant recipient information, project titles, institutional affiliations, final reports, and presentation materials are part of the public record which is provided to NSF, NCES, and NPEC and listed on the AIR website.

Information for Funded Proposals

Withdrawal
Withdrawal of funded research projects must be coordinated with the AIR office. Requests should be sent to grants@airweb.org. Confirmations will be sent to the applicant and the institutional financial representative.

Disbursement of Funds
Research Grants are paid in two installments (May 1, 2012 and January 7, 2013). Checks are jointly issued to the grant recipient and authorized institutional representative and mailed to the institution for disbursement.

Mid-Year and Final Report
A mid-year progress report is due by December 14, 2012; the January 2013 payment will not be processed until the report is received. The progress report should be submitted via email to grants@airweb.org. Grant recipients should briefly describe (one to two pages) their progress to date on each deliverable and likelihood of successful completion of the proposed research by the close of the grant period.

A final report, including a one to two page executive summary, is due June 30, 2013, 60 days after the end of the grant period. The final report should be submitted via email to grants@airweb.org and be of scholarly quality (consistent with quality associated with peer-reviewed publications). In addition to information regarding dissemination of the research findings, grant recipients should briefly report the achievement of each of the deliverables and will submit a statement (signed by the financial representative) indicating that all grant funds have been disbursed. If a final report is not possible within 60 days of the end of the grant cycle, grant recipients should request a "No-Cost Extension."

No-Cost Extension
Grantees may receive a one-time extension on the expiration date of the grant for up to 12 months with no additional funding. Additional time beyond the established expiration date is available to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the original budget. Requests for a no-cost extension should be made to grants@airweb.org and should contain a revised completion date.

Acknowledgement of Support and Disclaimer
An acknowledgment of support must appear in publications of any material, whether copyrighted or not, resulting from an AIR funded project similar to the language below:

> *This material is based upon work supported by the Association for Institutional Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Science Foundation, and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative under Association for Institutional Research Grant Number_____ (grantee should enter AIR grant number.)*

Except for articles or papers published in scientific, technical, or professional journals, the following disclaimer must be included:

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association for Institutional Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Science Foundation, or the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Legal Rights to Intellectual Property

Grantees retain legal rights to intellectual property developed during grant funding. This policy provides incentive for development and dissemination of deliverables, but does not reduce the responsibility to make results available to the research community.

Research Grant Proposal Guidelines

1. Contact Information

Contact information is required for the:

a. Principal Investigator(s)
b. Authorized institutional financial representative (usually a staff member in the research grants office)

2. Project Title and Description

The project description must be submitted via AIR's grant submission website. It is recommended that applicants compose sections in their own word processor and then copy/paste to the online application. Please address all questions as they closely follow the scoring rubric used by the selection committee.

2a. Statement of the research problem and national importance (limit 750 words):

What is the research problem this proposal intends to address?

Why is this topic of national importance?

Why is it timely to conduct this research at this time?

2b. Review the literature and establish the theoretical grounding for the research (limit 1,000 words):

What has prior research found about this problem?

What is the theoretical/conceptual grounding for this research?

2c. Describe the research method that will be used (limit 1,000 words):

What are the research questions to be addressed?

What is the proposed research methodology?

What is the statistical model to be used?

2d. List the datasets that will be used and explain why they best serve this research (limit 250 words):

What NCES and NSF datasets are to be used, if any? Please include a variable list for each dataset used.

If applicable, how does the research address the NPEC focus topic?

2e. Timeline of key project activities (no word limit).

2f. List deliverables such as research reports, books, and presentations that will be developed from this research initiative (no word limit).

2g. How will you disseminate the results of this research (limit 250 words)?

Note: A presentation at the 2013 AIR Forum in Long Beach, California is required and should be considered when developing the grant budget.

2h. References cited (no word limit).

3. Statement of Institutional Review Board Approval or Exemption

As part of the online application, a statement outlining a plan for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. The statement should outline the applicant's timeline and plan for submitting the proposal to an IRB or explain why IRB approval is not necessary. Final IRB action is not necessary prior to submitting the application. The statement is limited to 250 words.

4. Statement of Use of Restricted Datasets

Applicants should provide a statement indicating whether the proposed research will require use of restricted datasets. If restricted datasets will be used, the plan for acquiring the appropriate license should be described. Please review the requirements for restricted use license at the NCES and NSF websites. The statement is limited to 250 words.

5. Biographical Sketch

A biographical sketch should include prior degrees earned, relevant professional work experiences, skills necessary for completion of the proposed study, and prior research experiences with national datasets. The biographical sketch is limited to 750 words.

6. Budget

The budget should include travel for the 2013 AIR Forum in Long Beach, California for a mandatory presentation of research findings. See Appendix C for the Budget Form. Answers to frequently asked questions are available on the AIR website at www.airweb.org/grants.

Miscellaneous expenses such as software, books, and supplies may also be included. Computer hardware, printing a stand-alone book, living expenses, overhead or indirect costs, and living expenses are not allowable.

7. Statement of Prior, Current, and Pending Funding

A statement of prior, current, and pending funding for the proposed research from all sources is required. The statement should also include a history of all prior funding from AIR to any of the PIs for any activity. Funding from other sources will not disqualify the application but may be considered in the funding decision. The statement is limited to 250 words.

Research Grant Rating Rubric

Section 1: Qualifying Criteria

Reviewers use the criteria below to rate proposals. Answers of "No" in this section may disqualify the application. Items that are "unclear or missing" must be resolved by AIR staff prior to funding but will not stop an application from being fully reviewed and considered.

Overall, demonstrates a reasonable and defensible research methodology	☐ Yes		☐ No
Uses required dataset(s) or addresses NPEC focus: (check all that apply)	☐ NCES dataset(s) ☐ NSF and/or dataset(s) or ☐ Addresses the NPEC Focus Topic on *Postsecondary Non-Degree Programs*		☐ No: Does not address necessary datasets or focus area
The selected data and variables are appropriate for the proposed research	☐ Yes	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No
Proposes a "doable" project within a one-year timeline	☐ Yes	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No
Proposes an acceptable plan for disseminating results	☐ Yes	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No
IRB plan is appropriate for the proposed research	☐ Yes ☐ N/A	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No
Plan for use of restricted dataset(s) is appropriate	☐ Yes ☐ N/A	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No
Biographical sketch displays appropriate level of expertise	☐ Yes	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No
Includes statement of prior, current, and pending funding	☐ Yes	☐ Unclear/Missing	☐ No

Section 2: Rating of the Proposed Research Project

Score

Importance & Timeliness:
Rate the proposed research on its national importance and timeliness. **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Excepti nally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

Literature Review:
To what degree does the literature review show a complete understanding of the issue and prior research on this topic? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

To what degree is the reference list complete and appropriate? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Research Method:
To what degree is the proposed research methodology appropriate for this project? **(10 points)**

Poor/Inappropriate	Adequate	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	4	7	10	☐

To what degree is the theoretical grounding for the proposed research appropriate and fully developed? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	2	3	4	5	☐

To what degree is the proposed analysis of data appropriate for the proposed research? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Deliverables:
Rate the degree to which deliverables are appropriate and will be an important new contribution to knowledge. **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Budget:
Rate the degree to which budget is adequate to ensure success without being excessive. **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	2	3	4	5	☐

Total Score: ☐

Section 3: Funding Recommendation

Should AIR fund this proposal?

☐ Fund
☐ Fund with Minor Revisions
☐ Do Not Fund

Section 4: Comments

Reviewer Comments: Please provide specific, constructive comments to help the applicant improve the quality of the proposed research. These comments will be shared with the applicant in the notification letter.

Appendix A

NCES/NSF SPONSORED RESEARCH

Applicants should choose research topics that can be supported by the samples and variables contained in one or more of the NCES or NSF dataset(s) listed below. Applicants should also be familiar with the specific dataset's survey methodology (including sample limitations when applicable), statistical methods, and available computer programs that allow for analyses of the selected data.

NCES DATASETS
Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B) and Transcript Data
Beginning Postsecondary Student (BPS) Longitudinal Study and Transcript Data
Career/Technical Education Statistics (CTES)
Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002)
High School and Beyond (HS&B)
High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09)
IPEDS 12-Month Enrollment (E12)
IPEDS Completions (C)
IPEDS Fall Enrollment (EF)
IPEDS Finance (F)
IPEDS Graduation Rate (GRS)
IPEDS 200% Graduation Rates (GR200)
IPEDS Human Resources (HR)
IPEDS Institutional Characteristics (IC)
IPEDS Student Financial Aid (SFA)
National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88)
National Household Education Survey (NHES)
National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)
National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF)

NSF DATASETS
Business R&D and Innovation Survey (BRDIS as of 2008, formerly SIRD)
Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) Survey
National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG)
National Survey of Recent College Graduates (NSRCG)
Scientists and Engineers Statistical Data System (SESTAT)
Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR)
Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)
Survey of Federal Funds for Research and Development
Survey of Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions
Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering (GSS)
Survey of Industrial Research and Development (SIRD, through 2007)
Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges (Academic R&D)
Survey of R&D Expenditures at Federally Funded Research & Development Centers
Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities
Survey of State Research and Development Expenditures

Appendix B

THE 2012 NPEC FOCUS TOPIC

The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) announces this year's focused grant program. This program, administered for NPEC by the Association of Institutional Research (AIR), is designed to increase understanding and knowledge of a specific issue area identified by NPEC as important to the postsecondary education community and data collection efforts. The program will award funds of up to $20,000 for dissertation grants and up to $40,000 for research grants focused on the topic of "Exploring Postsecondary Non-Degree Programs."

NPEC FOCUS TOPIC: "EXPLORING POSTSECONDARY NON-DEGREE PROGRAMS"

Grants may be used to analyze data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) or other data sources. IPEDS is the core postsecondary education data collection program for NCES. Data are collected from all primary providers of postsecondary education in areas including enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty, staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid. Other data sources may include: data from other NCES or U.S. Department of Education databases, state data systems, or an institutions' data. Researchers may also develop their own data collections. This program does not require the use of NCES or NSF databases.

Much of the research in postsecondary education focuses on degree-seeking students and degree programs. However, the recent political and regulatory climate has highlighted the importance of postsecondary non-degree programs while voicing concerns about the high student loan default rates affiliated with some of these programs. In remarks to a Joint Session of Congress, President Obama called upon every American to have at least one year of postsecondary education, highlighting the importance of the workforce preparation conducted at our nation's postsecondary institutions. Then more recently, the Obama Administration has sought to protect students from taking on unsustainable debt and protect taxpayers from high loan default rates through the so-called "gainful employment" regulations. To qualify for federal aid, the law requires that career colleges and training programs prepare students for gainful employment in recognized occupations.

In light of this unique political and regulatory climate, grant proposals should focus on postsecondary non-degree programs, their role in higher education, and appropriate measures of student success and institutional effectiveness for these programs. NPEC is interested in studies that focus on questions such as the following:

- How have the demographics of students enrolled in non-degree programs changed, if at all, over the years?
- What are the characteristics of these programs? Are they concentrated in particular fields? Do particular types of institutions offer these programs more than others? Are they offered predominantly online or in-person, or a mixture of both?
- How do institutions (or state agencies) determine the need for such programs? How do institutions design such programs?

- Who teaches in these programs?

- How do students typically fund their education in these programs? Without aid or any outside assistance? Federal and state aid? Institutional aid? Loans? Employer aid? Other? Does how they pay for their education impact their success in it?

- What is the return on investment for students completing non-degree programs? For the institutions offering these programs? For states and the federal government? How is return on investment in these programs defined by the different stakeholders?

- How are non-degree programs contributing to the workforce? How are these programs leveraged to respond to workforce needs both nationally and locally?

- What are appropriate measures of institutional effectiveness and student success for non-degree programs?

- What appropriate measures of student success in non-degree programs could be developed either with existing IPEDS data or by making additions to the current IPEDS institution-level data collections? For example, interim measures of success or post-completion outcomes.

The NPEC Focus Topic grants may support a variety of research activities focused on non-degree programs, including:

- Data synthesis or meta-analysis of research studies that address a specific question regarding non-degree programs and students;

- New analyses using national, regional, state, or institutional databases that focuses on non-degree students and/or programs;

- Literature review of available data, analyses, and research regarding non-degree student success measures or institutional effectiveness measures for institutions with differing missions;

- Case studies that focus on one or more issues related to non-degree programs or students;

- Studies that focus on identifying national or state level data that would be needed to help gain better insight into these programs; and

- Other creative and relevant studies.

Proposals that include the collection of data from individuals or groups or the observation of individuals or groups must include *Institutional Review Board* clearance to be considered.

Grant proposals are due by January 10, 2012 and grants will be awarded by March 23, 2012. Grant recipients will be expected to begin work in May 2012, and a final paper will be due to AIR in June 2013. As a condition of the grant, awardees will be expected to present their papers at the 2013 AIR Forum.

Appendix C

BUDGET FORM

Personnel- Time on Project		**Personnel- Salary & Benefits**	
Principal Investigator			
____ % (FTE) academic year		academic year	$ ____
____ % (FTE) summer		summer	$ ____
Second Principal Investigator			
____ % (FTE) academic year		academic year	$ ____
____ % (FTE) summer		summer	$ ____
Third Principal Investigator			
____ % (FTE) academic year		academic year	$ ____
____ % (FTE) summer		summer	$ ____
Fourth Principal Investigator			
____ % (FTE) academic year		academic year	$ ____
____ % (FTE) summer		summer	$ ____
Graduate Research Assistant			
____ % (FTE) academic year		academic year	$ ____
____ % (FTE) summer		summer	$ ____

Total Salary and Wages (calculated from above fields) $ ____

Travel

2013 AIR Forum (Presentation at 2013 Forum required): $ ____

Other research related travel: $ ____

(***Note***: other planned travel should be listed in part 2g of proposal)

Other research expenses*

(software, books, copying fees, etc.) $ ____

TOTAL REQUESTED $ ____

***** Costs for publishing articles in journals are allowed. The purchase of computer hardware, printing a stand-alone book, overhead or indirect costs, and living expenses are not allowable. If you have questions about specific expenditures please contact AIR.