



# Application Guidelines

## 2021 NCES Data Institute: Using Federal Datasets to Support Research on Postsecondary Education

**Application Deadline:**  
November 4, 2020 – 11:59 p.m. ET



ASSOCIATION  
FOR INSTITUTIONAL  
RESEARCH

## OVERVIEW

The *NCES Data Institute: Using Federal Datasets to Support Research on Postsecondary Education* (Institute) provides an intensive introduction to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) datasets<sup>1</sup> and research methodologies. The training is supported by NCES and is developed and operated by the Association for Institutional Research (AIR).

## PURPOSE

The three major objectives of the Institute are to:

- stimulate interest in and use of NCES datasets to address current and future research questions in higher education;
- provide instruction for the use of NCES datasets to conduct analyses; and
- enhance understanding of methodological and technological issues relevant to NCES data collections.

## STRUCTURE

The Institute uses a “flipped classroom” model and is comprised of three components: (1) a 5-week online course and (2) a 15-week group capstone project, both of which participants complete prior to (3) a 3-day face-to-face meeting in Washington, D.C. Each of these components build on one another to create a holistic learning experience.

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### <sup>1</sup> NCES datasets featured in the Institute

Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B)  
Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (BPS)  
Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002)  
High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS)  
National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)  
Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS):

**IPEDS Fall Collection**

Institutional Characteristics (IC)  
12-Month Enrollment (E12)  
Completions (C)

**IPEDS Winter Collection**

Student Financial Aid (SFA)  
Graduation Rates (GR)  
200% Graduation Rates (GR200)  
Admissions (ADM)  
Outcome Measures (OM)

**IPEDS Spring Collection**

Fall Enrollment (EF)  
Finance (F)  
Human Resources (HR)  
Academic Libraries (AL)

**5-Week NCES Data Institute Online Course:** This course provides participants with base-level training on NCES datasets and research methodologies appropriate for large-scale national data sources. Participants are assigned to research groups prior to starting the online course and move through the content, assignments, and exercises together. Each week, participants receive assignments through AIR's learning portal; activities include reading papers, watching videos, and completing exercises that apply new knowledge gained during the course.

**15-Week NCES Data Institute Capstone Project:** This group research project begins immediately following completion of the online course. Participants work together—with guidance from mentors—to apply the foundational knowledge gained during the online course to explore potential research topics, conduct a literature review, develop a group research question, identify relevant NCES datasets, perform analyses using public-use data, write an executive summary, and develop a PowerPoint presentation. Each group submits an executive summary and PowerPoint presentation prior to arrival at the face-to-face meeting.

**3-Day NCES Data Institute Face-to-Face Meeting:** This collaborative and interactive experience builds on the knowledge participants gained in the online course and capstone project. The meeting takes place in Washington, D.C. and features panel discussions, speaker presentations, and personalized guidance from NCES staff. Each activity provides opportunity for participants to ask questions, and the mixture of large-group, small-group, and one-on-one conversations helps ensure that participants' goals are attained. Example meeting content covers topics such as higher education research, publishing, the role of the higher education community, and policy. The event also provides orientation to the U.S. Department of Education, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), NCES, and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC). In addition, groups present their research projects to - and receive critical feedback from - NCES staff and fellow participants. Lastly, groups spend time together refining projects based upon the feedback received, developing plans to complete the projects, and discussing the potential for dissemination of results after the Institute through conference presentations and/or publications.

## PARTICIPATION

This educational opportunity is limited to 30 participants. It is ideal for graduate students and early to mid-career IR professionals, faculty, and staff from state and federal agencies and higher education organizations who would like to:

- increase their knowledge of IPEDS and other NCES datasets;
- apply their new knowledge of IPEDS and other NCES datasets in a group setting;
- understand how federal data are utilized in postsecondary education research; and
- form their own higher education research agendas.

Participants must be affiliated with a U.S. postsecondary education institution, U.S. state or federal agency, or U.S.-affiliated higher education association or non-profit entity. In addition, participants must have basic knowledge of statistical methods and experience using statistical software (e.g., SPSS, SAS, or STATA).

**Participant Commitment:** Participants are required to participate in and complete all elements of the Institute:

Required Activity	2021 Dates	Estimated Time Commitment
1. <b>Online Course</b>	January 19 – February 19	5 hours per week, 5 weeks
2. <b>Capstone Project</b>	February 22 – June 4	4 hours per week, 15 weeks
3. <b>Research Group Office Hour Conference Calls with Mentor</b>	February – June	45 minutes per call, 15 weeks
4. <b>Face-to-Face Meeting in Washington, D.C.</b>	June 8–10	Full days, business hours
5. <b>Post-Meeting Evaluation</b>	Mid-June	10-20 minutes
6. <b>Post-Meeting Conference Call</b>	Late-June	45 minutes
7. <b>Share with AIR information regarding any dissemination (presentations, publications, and reports) of the research that results from participation in the Institute.</b>		

**Cost:** While there is no charge for any component of the Institute, participants are responsible for the cost to attend the face-to-face meeting (travel, lodging, and meals).

## APPLICATION

**Application Deadline:** November 4, 2020 by 11:59 PM (ET).

**Process:** Applications are submitted online via the AIR website.

A preview of the application is provided on page 4 and is followed by the evaluation used to review applications.

**Selection:** Applicants will be notified of selection decisions via email from AIR on January 4, 2021.

For questions and assistance, please contact Tinsley Smith, Director of Contracts, AIR, at [NCESDataInstitute@airweb.org](mailto:NCESDataInstitute@airweb.org) or 850-391-7109.

# Preview of NCES Data Institute Application

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## 1. **Contact Information**

## 2. **Statement of Interest and Learning Goals** (limit 3900 characters)

Describe your (1) interest in and (2) learning goals for participation in the Institute. If selected, AIR will team you with other participants based upon common research interests.

## 3. **Statement of Current Research Interests** (limit 3900 characters)

Describe a topic you would like to explore using NCES public-use data and the ways in which the topic will advance higher education research, inform decision making at your institution/organization, or contribute to a specific project or initiative.

## 4. **Self-Assessment of Research Skills** (limit 3900 characters)

*Given the use of large datasets, the Institute focuses on quantitative research. Individuals with limited quantitative skills are welcome to submit applications, but it is expected that all participants have baseline quantitative research skills at minimum.*

Describe your research experience, including your skills related to inferential and descriptive statistics, and your use of statistical software. If you have limited quantitative research experience, please explain how participation in the Institute will contribute to your plan for skill development in this area.

## 5. **Abbreviated Resume** (no more than 3 pages)

Please provide, in PDF format, an abbreviated resume/curriculum vita that lists your degrees (completed and in-progress), and summarizes your work experience, professional accomplishments, and any relevant presentations and publications. (This information will be used to provide context for your application and expressed research interests; the Institute is not limited to individuals with extensive experience or publication records.)

# NCES Data Institute Application Evaluation

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*Each application will be reviewed by three former Institute participants.*

*Reviewers will use the criteria below to evaluate applications.*

1. To what degree are the applicant's learning goals clear?

Not at all	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

2. To what degree are the applicant's learning goals achievable?

Not at all	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

3. To what degree will the applicant's research topic contribute to the advancement of higher education research? If not applicable per the applicant's description, skip question.

Not at all	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

4. To what degree will the applicant's research topic be relevant for practitioners (e.g., inform decision making or contribute to a specific project or initiative)? If not applicable per the applicant's description, skip question.

Not at all	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

5. To what degree do the applicant's quantitative research skills, as described in his/her self-assessment, meet baseline expectations for participation in the Institute?

Not at all	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5