



US Department of Education Proposals: Preparing for the New Normal

Florida Research Administration Conference

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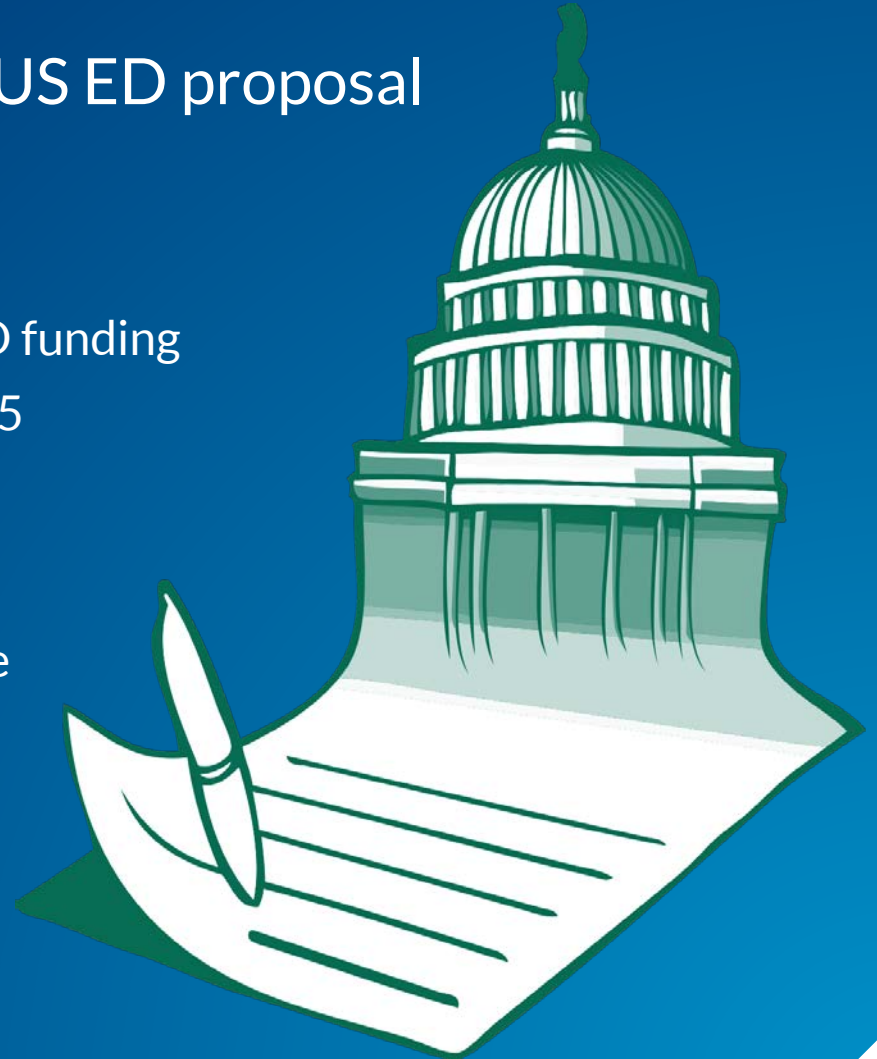
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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Prepare for adjustments made to US ED proposal standards and components

- Describe changes that took place in US ED funding opportunities in FY2014 and early FY2015
- Delineate changes that can be made at institutions to successfully prepare for the altered expectations of US ED



BACKGROUND OF PRESENTATION

Personal:

- Eight years of proposal development experience for dozens of institutions
- Administered two multi-million dollar US ED funded projects
- Currently external evaluator for US ED project
- Higher education specialist with an EdD and administrative, faculty and research administration experience


US ED Competitions:

- FY 2014 and FY 2015 Title III and V
- First in the World
- GEAR UP, FY2014
- TRiO SSS, FY 2015



TIMELINE OF OPPORTUNITIES CONSIDERED



 = Funding announcement made



PERCEIVED PATTERN OF CHANGE

- Title V, FY2014 – opening salvo
- First in the World – disruptive change
- GEAR UP – application of the FITW pattern
- TRiO SSS, FY2015 – continuing FITW pattern
- Title III and V, FY2015 - next round of change



GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CHANGES

- Higher standards of evidence
- Documentation of economic impact
- Elevating role of, standards for external evaluation
- Tiers within competitions
- New patterns of proposal review



TITLE V, FY2014

Adjustments to Competitive Preference Priorities

- Priority #2 – Data-driven decision making eliminated
- Standards of evidence increased for the two remaining CPPs



TITLE V, FY2014 – CPP #1

New standards for increasing post-secondary success

“...identify the specific interventions...to implement...
provide documentation (in the form of research, data, or studies) that
the planned activities have, in other circumstances, improved
student persistence and completion, and demonstrate that the
applicant has systems in place to track the activities and their effects
on student persistence and completion.”



TITLE V, FY2014 – CPP #2 (former #3)

New standards for increasing productivity

*“...identify the specific outcomes to be measured and demonstrate...
ability to collect accurate data on...
project costs
and desired outcomes....”*

In addition...include a discussion of the expected cost-effectiveness of the practice compared with current practices.”



FIRST IN THE WORLD – THE TRICKY COMBINATION

- Innovation
- Strong theory
- Evidence of Promise at What Works
Clearinghouse standards
- Publicly accessible sources



FIRST IN THE WORLD - INNOVATION

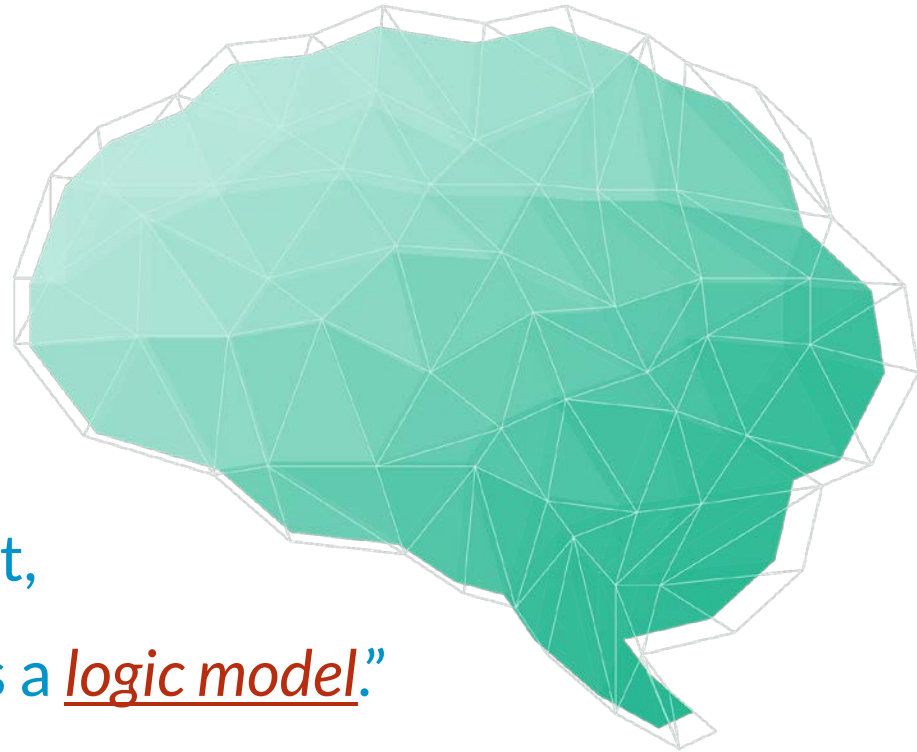
- “...most innovative and creative thinking to significantly expand postsecondary opportunity for all students, especially those who are low-income, underprepared for, or underrepresented in higher education.”
- **Innovation** means a process, product, strategy, or practice that improves (or is expected to improve) significantly upon the outcomes reached with status quo options and that can ultimately reach widespread effective usage.



FIRST IN THE WORLD – STRONG THEORY

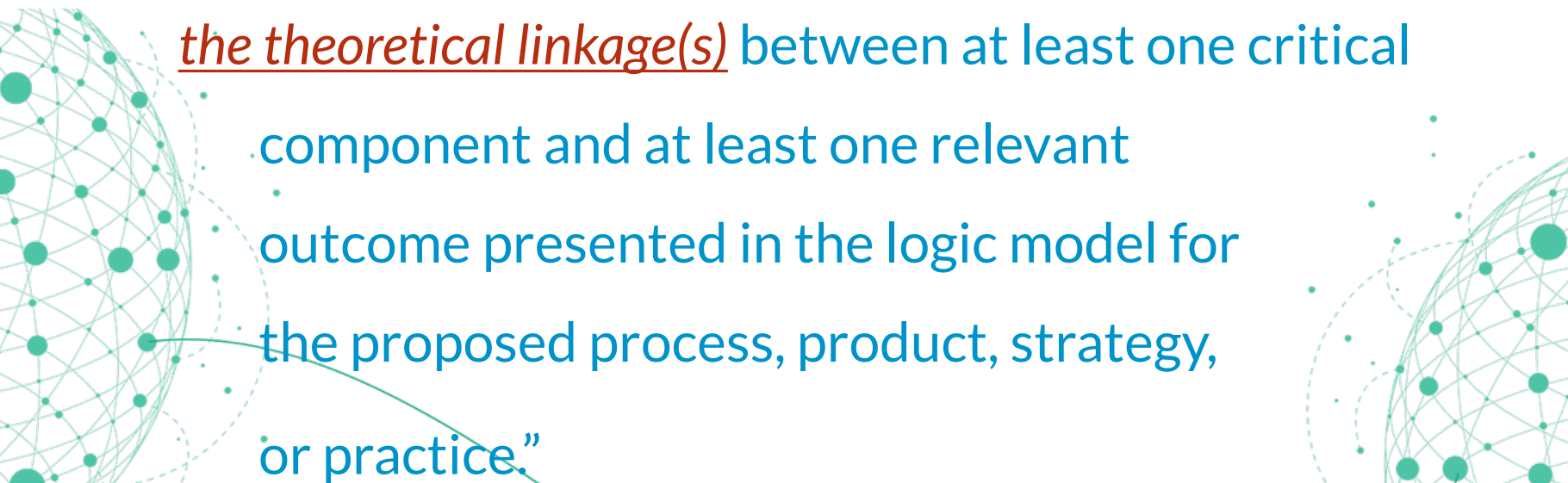
- “A project design supported by Strong Theory”

Strong Theory means a rationale for the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice that includes a *logic model*.”



FIRST IN THE WORLD – EVIDENCE OF PROMISE

“Evidence of Promise means there is empirical evidence to support
the theoretical linkage(s) between at least one critical
component and at least one relevant
outcome presented in the logic model for
the proposed process, product, strategy,
or practice.”



FIRST IN THE WORLD – EVIDENCE OF PROMISE: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

“...at least one study that is either a

- (1) correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias;
- (2) a quasi-experimental design study...that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations; or
- (3) a randomized controlled trial ...that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with or without reservations; and

(b) the study referenced in (a) found a statistically significant or substantively important...favorable association...

between at least one critical component and one relevant outcome presented in the logic model...”



FIRST IN THE WORLD – EVIDENCE OF PROMISE: PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE

“Applicants must specify on the Abstract and Information page the findings within the studies that are cited as Evidence of Promise for the proposed project and ensure that the citations and links are from publicly or readily available sources.”



FIRST IN THE WORLD – RESEARCH EMPHASIS

- Evidence from external evaluation

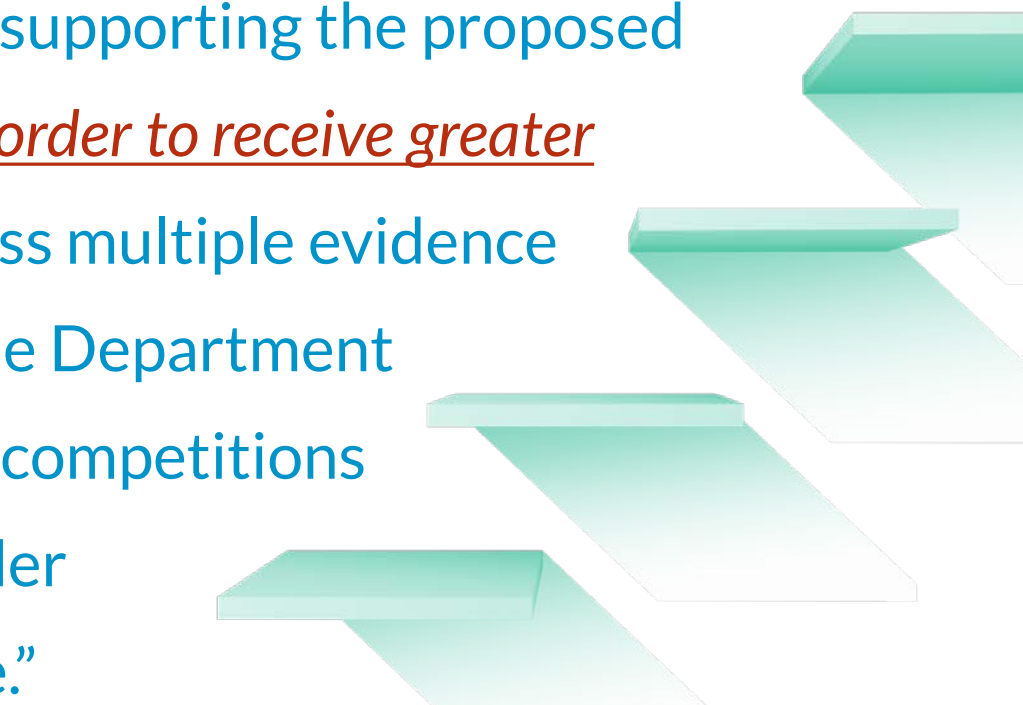
“The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project’s effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.”

- Inform future competitions

“A key goal of FITW Development grants is to expand the research on innovative practices that can be used to support future competitions with higher evidence standards.”

FIRST IN THE WORLD – TIERED EVIDENCE COMPETITIONS

“FITW is designed as a tiered evidence grant program in which higher levels of evidence supporting the proposed projects are required in order to receive greater amounts of funding across multiple evidence tiers. In future years, the Department anticipates conducting competitions to support projects under higher tiers of evidence.”




FIRST IN THE WORLD – OTHER NEW WRINKLES

- “...a data collection plan”
- “...replicable and scalable reform strategies”
- “...a strategy for improvement of postsecondary productivity and effectiveness that holds steady or decreases costs for students.”
- MSI filter and set aside
- IES/WWC part of review process (T V, FY2014)



GEAR UP – NEW PATTERNS APPLIED

- Changes to CPPs
- Strong theory
- Evidence of promise

- *Economic impact continued from prior GEAR UP competitions*



GEAR UP – NEW CONCEPTS

- Non-cognitive skills

“Invitational Priority—Development of Non-Cognitive Skills: For FY 2014 and any subsequent year.... encourage applicants to incorporate strategies and interventions to strengthen traditionally underserved students’ non-cognitive skills.... including academic mindset, perseverance, motivation, and mastery of social and emotional skills that improve student success.”

TRiO SSS – CONTINUING TRENDS

- Evidence-based approach
 - “...placed an increasing emphasis on promoting evidence-based practices through our grant competitions.”
 - Additional competitive preference to applications that submit Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness (see FITW)



TRiO SSS – CONTINUING TRENDS

- Review of Evidence
 - Reviewed to determine if they meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards (see FITW, GEAR UP).
- Cost and return on investment consciousness
 - “cost per successful outcome”
- “Non-cognitive factors”
- Moderate evidence of effectiveness found in “publicly or readily available source”



TITLE III/V, FY2015 – CHANGE IN THE WIND

- CPPs altered in FY2014
- New eligibility calculation used in FY2015
 - “Core Expenses per FTE student” versus
“Educational & General Expenditures”
- Anticipated changes
 - Cost consciousness
 - WWC standards
 - Increased evaluation rigor
 - Non-cognitive skills (?)



AN OUNCE OF PREPARATION

- Elevate standards of evidence
 - Says who?
 - Based on what evidence?
- Plan evaluation at research level
- Initiate cost analysis discussion
- Prepare template language about institutional systems tracking and analyzing data



AN OUNCE OF PREPARATION...(2)

- Begin applying NSF thinking to US ED
 - Intellectual merit (standard of evidence)
 - Broader impact
 - Replicable and scalable
 - Data gathering plan
- Expect Competitive Preference Priority points with US ED and look for them to follow White House policy statements



AN OUNCE OF PREPARATION...(3)

- Methodology consultancy
- Learn some basic research methodology and statistical concepts
- Encourage use of ResearchGate or similar platforms



QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS



THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SESSION

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