

## **Day 6: The 12 Days of TRIO Christmas: EO-Safe Writing for TRIO Projects**

If you've been following along this week, you already know we've been building a set of gifts to help TRIO Projects step confidently into the new year. Today's gift is one that every Project Director and grant writer needs to take seriously, because it affects *everything* you submit to the Department of Education (ED).

**Executive Orders 14151 and 14173, along with ED's DEI clarifications, have permanently changed how TRIO Programs must now frame their proposal and budget narratives, CPPs, GEPA statements, websites, and Project forms.**

This isn't a theory, and it isn't seasonal. This is the new operating landscape.

Now is the time, while things are still relatively calm, to go back through your current proposals and clean up language that could trigger unnecessary review. And with Talent Search (TS) and Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) proposals on the horizon, nobody should be waiting until January to fix the problem.

The truth is simple: grant writers across the country are already adapting, because DEI-framed wording is no longer safe ground. Even *mainstream federal contractors and higher-ed advisory firms* are publishing updated lists of "trigger words" that may lead to deeper scrutiny, automated flags, or requests for revision.

And your TRIO Project is not immune.

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### **Today's Gift: Your EO-Safe Writing Toolkit**

These four documents help you understand exactly what to look for, what to replace, and how to reframe your narrative without compromising the heart of your mission.

#### **1. Overview of Executive Orders & ED Clarifications**

This is the plain-English explanation of what the EOs actually require, plus what ED has publicly stated about terminology, cultural events, and instructional content. It tells you where the true boundaries are so you can adjust safely.

#### **2. EO Compliance Review: Key Terms, Phrases, and Activities to Monitor**

This is the NEC version we use internally during proposal reviews. It tells you exactly where TRIO projects get into trouble, from hiring language to bilingual service framing to event descriptions and financial aid prioritization.

#### **3. NCCEP's "Words to Review" (June 2025)**

A sweeping list of potential trigger words and phrases that have been noted across federal education spaces this year. You'll recognize many of these terms because TRIO proposals use them routinely. This list is your reminder to slow down, reread, and revise.

#### **4. TRP's "Grant Writing Under Trump 2.0" Trigger Word Alternatives**

This national guidance explains how specific terms are flagged across federal programs and provides alternatives that still convey your intent without triggering automated screens. The rephrase and reframe lists are especially useful when you're updating narrative language.

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#### **Where TRIO Projects Need to Revise Immediately**

Before the new year starts, you should review and adjust:

- All narrative sections in current TRIO proposals
- TS and EOC proposals being drafted for 2026
- All Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs)
- GEPA statements (previous versions are not EO-safe)
- Budget narratives currently under review
- Project forms, websites, and outreach materials
- Job descriptions, hiring language, and personnel qualifications
- Any activity or service descriptions that sound like they were designed exclusively for certain groups

If your wording implies preferential treatment, DEI-based justification, or identity-based selection, it needs to be corrected.

Good writing wins grants. EO-safe writing keeps them eligible.

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#### **If This Feels Overwhelming... It Shouldn't**

This is exactly why NEC has been preparing EO-compliant templates, reviews, and narrative support since March. You don't need to navigate this alone, and you don't need to guess. We already know the pressure points and how to fix them quickly. If you want support revising your proposals, CPPs, GEPA statements, or budget narratives before they're submitted, our team is ready to walk through them with you, building confidence rather than confusion. Contact us at [info@nosotrosexdu.org](mailto:info@nosotrosexdu.org) for more information.