

**I. Significance.** Research clearly points to third grade as a watershed moment in children’s education. Third grade reading fluency is highly predictive of children’s long-term school success, including high school performance and college enrollment (Lesnick, Goerge & Smithgall, 2010). Yet many children are not meeting proficient reading levels by the end of third grade, especially among students from low-income families (Feister, 2010). Likewise, a high proportion of children entering kindergarten lack the reading skills necessary for school success, according to data from the National Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Flanagan, McPhee & Mulligan, 2009).

Parents and other primary caregivers are an often under-utilized but instrumental resource in fostering language, reading, and literacy skills essential for school success (e.g., Caspe, Lopez & Wolos, 2007). Specifically, the provision of a literacy-rich home environment—including ample books, frequent and interactive shared reading between parents and children, and rich and frequent discussions with children—predicts language and literacy gains in the early years and early grades (Hart & Risley, 1995; Senechal, 2002).

Research shows that involvement in children’s literacy development remains crucial regardless of the home language or reading ability of their parents and family (Dearing, et al 2006; Kreider, Morin, Miller & Bush, 2011; Lin, 2003). In fact, positive literacy outcomes from family engagement tend to be most amplified for children at greatest educational risk, including those from low-income families, those with parents who have low levels of formal education, and children for whom initial literacy levels are below grade level (e.g., Dearing et al, 2006).

Fortunately, innovative and successful interventions have emerged that promote family engagement and reading outcomes. Foremost, shared reading programs that support parents and other primary caregivers to read with their children—for example through book access, parent

training, and library connections –have been shown to increase vocabulary and early literacy skills (National Institute for Literacy, 2008; Senechal, 2002).

Other research sheds light on *how* early childhood agencies and LEAs can support shared reading at home and other family engagement practices critical to children’s literacy outcomes. National intermediaries play an important role in developing the individual, relational, and organizational capacity of schools and other local agencies for carrying out family engagement practices and programs (Lopez, Kreider & Coffman, 2005). At the school level, action teams focused on family-school partnerships ensure quality engagement programs and that engagement is integrated with other academic efforts leading to positive student outcomes (Sheldon, 2005).

**II. Project Design.** *Project Goal, Objectives, and Outcomes.* The overall goal of the proposed project is to engage high-need children and their families in a regular routine of shared book reading at home. This goal will be accomplished through the delivery of Raising A Reader (RAR), an evidence-based early literacy and family engagement program. Objectives are to: 1) Deliver high-quality RAR to 20,000 children in prekindergarten (preK) and Kindergarten (K), ages 4-6, in or near high-need LEAs with enhancements to support school libraries. 2) Coordinate/align RAR with existing resources and plans at the school, LEA, and state level. 3) Evaluate RAR’s effects on family literacy behaviors and children’s early literacy outcomes and measure and improve effectiveness of RAR delivery. Table 2 details the activities and timeline associated with achieving these objectives. The expected outcomes of the project are increased access to books at home, increased frequency and interactivity of shared reading at home, increased family library-going behaviors, and gains in children’s oral language skills.

*Alignment with application priorities.* The proposed project directly addresses the FY 2012 IAL Program absolute priority of providing a high-quality plan for an innovative approach

to literacy, including both book distribution and child literacy activities, and supported by at least one study that meets the definition of scientifically-based research. Specifically, the project will deliver RAR, which exposes each child to over 100 books in a typical program cycle, engages children and families in a daily routine of book sharing at home, and concludes by connecting children and families to local public and school libraries to maintain literacy habits developed through the program (see Program Background below for more details). These activities are intended to promote early literacy and prepare young children to read, with a focus on children in preK and K in high-need LEAs (see Table 1 for details).

The program is also evidence based, in that a four-year randomized controlled trial conducted by the University of Texas Health Sciences Center and sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation found significant positive language outcomes for English and Spanish-speaking low-income 4 and 5-year olds with an augmented version of RAR (this same version is proposed in the current project). The 4-year study concluded in 2010 and an article based on its results is currently under review in a peer-review journal. However, 4-year results have already been presented at two academic conferences, both of which involved peer review (Anthony, Anthony & Williams, 2011; Anthony & Williams, 2011). In addition, twenty other independent evaluations of RAR over the past decade have shown positive parent and child outcomes from the program (see Appendix A for papers reporting these findings) (Kreider, 2011). The augmented version found to be impactful in the RCT above is the version proposed for this project (see Appendix B for parent training augmentation to the model).

In addition, the project addresses several competitive preference priorities: (1) Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Performing Schools, (2) Technology, and (3) Improving Early Learning Outcomes.

First, one persistently low-performing school, the Commodore J. Rogers Elementary School within Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), will be among those served through the proposed project, and will receive special focus. Specifically, through RAR, the project will provide early literacy and family engagement services to kindergarten students enrolled in the school, as well as prekindergarten students who feed into the school. As school readiness and early literacy are predictive of longer-term student achievement, the ultimate goal will be to contribute to improved student achievement at this school. We will work with BCPS to track students attending this school during and beyond the life of the IAL grant, comparing the academic performance of RAR students and non-RAR students over time on key academic outcomes (e.g., grades and state-measured language art scores) measured by the school district.

The project will also utilize technology in several ways: 1) to augment in-person training and technical support of school librarians and classroom teachers with an online learning community (e.g., quarterly best practice webinars), 2) to facilitate process and outcome evaluation with an online performance management system and survey scanning technology, respectively (see Management Plan for details), and 3) via assistive technologies to support equal access for children with learning disabilities, using Universal Design for Learning as a framework to adapt RAR (e.g., with recording devices).

RAR will focus on improving early learning outcomes through the high fidelity implementation of the program and augmented Family Nights parent training as indicated by RAR's recent experimental study results. RAR's training gives parents the opportunity to learn and practice 'family-friendly' versions of research-based practices (i.e. dialogic reading and critical thinking skills). The pairing of these strategies with home literacy habits developed through RAR's bag rotation meaningfully engages parents as partners in improving early

learning outcomes. Added supports for typically underserved populations (via specialized book collections and the application of universal design for learning principles in the adaptations of books for children with disabilities) is intended to ensure that all children have access to the highest quality books, meaningful home-based literacy support, and the means to develop strong relationships with schools critical for school success.

Finally, the project and its key partners meet eligibility requirements for the grant, with RAR's nonprofit and national status and partners' high-need LEA status verified in eligibility documents (see Other Attachments).

*Program Background.* The project goals and objectives above will be realized through implementation of Raising A Reader (RAR), an evidence-based early literacy and family engagement program founded in 1999 with demonstrated capacity to increase home literacy behaviors, language skills, and access to books among high-need children and families. RAR's research-based program is delivered through local LEAs, early childhood education systems, and other community agencies serving children and families. Implementing agencies rotate bright red bags filled with award-winning books, available in multiple languages, into children's homes on a weekly basis. Local implementers are trained in research-based interactive "read-aloud" book sharing techniques meant to stimulate cognitive, language, and socio-emotional development. Implementers, in turn, train parents and caregivers. A DVD, translated into fourteen languages, is also available in each book bag to support parents' literacy practices with their children. Finally, through the program, families are connected with their local public and school library. At the culmination of the program, children receive a blue library bag to keep and continue the practice of borrowing books and book sharing.

RAR's theory of change is the logic model on which the training and program activities are based (Appendix C). The theory centers on the child, builds on their natural excitement about books to lead to children making direct requests of caregivers to share books with them daily. The child-centered focus has been demonstrated to be critical to realizing stated outcomes of the project. The theory also argues the centrality of parent and educator training in book sharing strategies. RAR's training provides particular support to parents for whom English is not the first language and/or who are themselves reluctant readers. Scalability is also incorporated in the theory through the packaging of 'turnkey' materials that include affordable and high quality children's books, which has a special coating to add durability, and standardized coordinator and implementer manuals for those serving 0-5 and 5-8 year old children. Finally, the maintenance of the behaviors created through RAR is supported through activities that connect families to the local library and encourage its use for continued book borrowing and book sharing.

Since its inception, RAR has reached over 900,000 children and families across the nation. The majority of children served by RAR are members of high-need and typically underrepresented populations. In 2011, more than 68% of the children lived at or below the poverty level; 64% were children of color, 52% had a home language other than English. Also, 22% of affiliates reported delivering RAR through teen parent programs.

*Program operations and curricular integration.* RAR operates on an affiliate model. In 2011, 162 agencies in 32 states and via over 2,500 implementing sites delivered RAR to nearly 118,000 children and their families. Agencies that implement RAR (affiliates) receive initial training from the National Office, then go on to train site-based implementers (e.g., classroom teachers, home visitors and other child- and family-serving professionals). In the current proposal, implementing *teams* at each school and agency will participate in coordinator training, as RAR's recent

expansion with school-age populations and prior research suggest for stability, effective delivery of services, and coordination across preK and K systems. Training will be supplemented with ongoing technical support from RAR National and performance feedback gathered through an annual affiliate survey that measures affiliates' performance on core aspects of the program. The annual individualized scorecards sent back to affiliates draws from their survey results; compares their results with performance requirements set by RAR National, the affiliate's own prior year's performance, and average performance levels by other affiliates; and provides a snapshot of areas of strength and in need of improvement. In addition, affiliates are trained in how to use a validated site rubric to insure fidelity of implementation at the local level (site visits are a required part of the program model). Finally, augmentations to this system of continuous improvement, including an integrated online performance management system, will be a major part of this project proposal, as detailed in the Management Plan and Evaluation Plan below.

At the state and federal level, RAR aligns closely with Common Core Standards (see Appendix D), as well as preK and K state regulations in states of focus (AZ, MA and MD) (see Appendix E). Likewise, RAR directly addresses Title I requirements that schools and LEAs must jointly provide "materials and training to help parents to work with their children at home to improve their children's achievement" (Public Education Network, 2004). The action team approach described above, will encourage integration with school and district efforts on literacy, family engagement, and library science, and will, as possible, include at least one member of the school's site-based management council for further coordination of efforts.

**III. Project Services.** The proposed project will bring RAR to 20,000 preK and K children in and near high-need LEAs in three communities across the United States. Strategic partnerships and high-quality programming will ensure intended outcomes, as described below.

*Local partnerships for program delivery.* The three communities involved in the proposed project currently have a local RAR affiliate agency (i.e., a high-need LEA or early childhood agency whose children feed into a high-need LEA). See Table 1 below for details. Each community also has a community partner that has agreed to provide in-kind technical assistance throughout the project (See Other Attachments for letters of support from all partners).

<b>Table 1: Local Partners and Children Served</b>					
<b>Location</b>	<b>Current Affiliate Partner</b>	<b>LEA Poverty Percent</b>	<b>Year 1 Children Served</b>	<b>Year 2 Children Served</b>	<b>Community Partner</b>
Baltimore, MD	Baltimore City Public Schools	30.15%	5,250	5,500 new (5,250 existing seats)	Kennedy Krieger Institute
Greater Boston, MA	Raising A Reader MA (implementing sites in Chelsea and Revere Public Schools )	32.87% 26.26%	1,500	(1,500 existing seats)	Greenlight Fund
Phoenix, AZ	Balsz School District Southwest Human Development	46.55%	500	(500 existing seats)	Piper Charitable Trust

	(w/ feeder preKs)				
			7,250	5,500 new (7,250 existing)	<b>TOTAL children served: 20,000</b>

*RAR program services.* The strategies used to deliver RAR will ensure equal access to services among high-need children and families, tailor program materials to community interests and needs, and create maximum opportunity for impact through quality, intensity and duration.

First, RAR's long-standing policies and practices were established to ensure equal access to the program. School selection criteria (including child poverty rates and literacy performance indicators) and a competitive RFP process in which schools apply to the LEA to participate are used to ensure services are delivered to the intended audience. In addition, when implementing sites are selected, *all* classrooms serving children in the designated grade (preK and/or K) receive the program so that no children or families are left out. Also, sites will be trained to deliver parent workshops at convenient times, with adequate notice, and with supports to remove parent barriers and increase attendance at trainings.

Second, RAR is highly adaptable to the needs of its participants. Standard book collections are grouped developmentally so that titles are appropriate for children of those ages/grades. For example, a new school-themed preK/K collection focuses on issues related to children's transition to kindergarten. Special language and culture collections also exist, such that children and families can share books in their home language and see greater representation of their culture and experiences in storybook actors and plots. Adaptations are also available for children with disabilities. Included in RAR's current collection are titles in Chinese, Vietnamese, Somali,

Portuguese, Burmese, Braille, ASL, and other languages relevant to the communities we serve. RAR National's production department works with each community partner agency to create a complete book collection that meets the cultural, linguistic, and developmental needs of participating children and families. Likewise, RAR's award-winning parent DVD offering book sharing strategies to parents is translated into fourteen languages, as is RAR's parent survey. To enhance our already strong library connection we propose to include a library collection for each participating school's library. In doing so, RAR hopes to not only enhance each library's collection but to encourage book borrowing as children find familiar loved titles.

Third, RAR has secured the support of well-respected local community partners (see Table 1) who will provide direct technical support in each community. Each partner was carefully selected because of their commitment to the particular community and its highest risk community members. Each partner will join RAR National in hosting two gatherings per year through which local team support and sustainability can be developed. These agencies also offer a means for independent consultation on topics relevant to the project. For example, Kennedy Krieger Institute will provide technical support to effectively serve children and families in Baltimore and to address the needs of children with disabilities across sites.

Finally, the program will be delivered with the highest possible fidelity, intensity and duration. Fidelity of implementation is a primary focus of this project (see Management Plan for details). Program intensity will be ensured via an augmented version of RAR shown to impact children's language outcomes (see Alignment section). As for duration, the program will be implemented as soon as possible after receiving notice of the grant award such that in the first wave, children will receive the program for a full semester (Jan-May 2013) and in the second

wave, a full academic year (Oct 2013-May 2014). The duration of the second wave of RAR programming will expose each child children to over 100 books.

**IV. Adequacy of Resources.** RAR's roots in social innovation are deep and its model reflects its commitment to innovation in both programming and in funding. RAR's cost for materials includes all program costs. Doing so enables the National Office to provide unlimited technical, programmatic, and fundraising support for all affiliates. Feedback from RAR's current funders about the model (e.g., WK Kellogg Foundation, Target Corporation, Bank of the West) and many long-time affiliates who use programmatic funds to support the program is universally positive.

A typical program implementation requires approximately [REDACTED]/child for books and materials to start the program. As the books and materials last 5-7 years on average, the average cost per child per year over the life of the materials is approximately [REDACTED]. Affiliates contribute in-kind personnel costs and additional support comes from RAR National to support program-related costs. Because this project adds school library book sets and a large-scale implementation, per child costs are higher (see Budget Narrative for detail). However, because the materials will last well beyond the terms of this proposed project and participating LEA partners will have the capacity to sustain the program beyond the terms of the proposed grant, we conservatively estimate that we will reach an additional 10,000 children each year the materials are in use. A conservative estimate of the total number of children reached over the life of the materials is 50,000.

Participating LEAs will receive stipends to offset some staff costs associated with this project, but will contribute most personnel costs in-kind. Direct technical support from each of the community agencies will also be contributed in-kind. Staff associated with this project will

be responsible for insuring high-quality implementation across all sites, coordination and support for the independent evaluation, and grant administration and compliance.

**V. Management Plan.** Key tasks for the proposed project, aligned with project objectives and the 2-year timeline, are described in Table 2 and further detailed below.

Table 2: Workplan and Timeline 2012-2014								
	Nov12- Jan13	Feb- Apr13	May- Jul13	Aug- Oct13	Nov13 -Jan14	Feb- Apr14	May- Jul14	Aug- Oct14
<b>Objective 1: Deliver high-quality RAR programming</b>								
Task 1: Onboard LEAs	√							
1a. MOUs w/ implementing sites	√			√				
1b. Train site-based implementation teams	√			√				
1c. Order/Assemble materials	√			√				
1d. Deliver program		√	√		√	√	√	
<b>Objective 2: Coordinate RAR w/ state, LEA and school plans and resources</b>								
2a. Identify school, LEA and state plans	√							

2b. Use plans to inform delivery	√			√				
2c. Coordinate site teams	√			√				
<b>Objective 3: Evaluate and improve delivery of RAR</b>								
3a. Develop performance system	√	√						
3b. Use results to improve delivery			√	√	√	√	√	√
3c. Assess parent outcomes	√		√	√			√	
3d. Assess child oral language outcomes			√				√	
3e. Link implementation and outcomes							√	√

**Objective 1: Deliver high-quality RAR programming.** Over two years, the project will deliver high-quality RAR to 20,000 children in preK and K (ages 4-6 years old) in or near high-need LEAs.

1a. *Onboard LEAs and preK systems.* In each of the three communities identified for this project an established RAR affiliate exists. One existing partner is a high-need LEA (in MD) and

two partners are community-based nonprofits (in MA and AZ). In each community, we will work with one lead affiliate that will oversee services in that community with support from RAR National. In AZ and MA it will be a community-agency affiliate and in MD an LEA (see Table 1). In all cases, detailed memoranda of understanding will be developed by RAR National and signed by local partnering LEAs and other implementation agencies. LEA leadership and one designated LEA liaison with RAR National will be involved in recruitment and selection of schools (with priority given to the persistently low-performing school in MD), communicating with and incentivizing school participation, hosting training, overseeing materials ordering, collecting internal evaluation data.

1b. *Train site-based implementation teams.* In Years 1 and 2 site-based teams will receive training by RAR National. This training will cover orientation to the program – its theory of change, research basis, program aims and core components, program materials, implementation plan, evaluation practices, and sustainability. The three-person site teams will include key school actors (school librarian, lead kindergarten teacher or administrator, and designated RAR site manager). In a train-the-trainer approach, these teams will train all implementers at their site (i.e., preK and/or K teachers rotating book bags) and insure all necessary supports are in place to provide equal access (e.g., accommodations for children with disabilities). Site-based teams and other relevant school personnel will also be invited to attend quarterly online professional development webinars with research and best practice information on topics relevant to successful administration and integration of RAR in their work with children—including transition to kindergarten, family engagement, literacy, and program evaluation.

1c. *Order and assemble program materials for each site.* Once training is completed, the site-based team will work with RAR National to order customized program materials. RAR

National's participation in the ordering ensures that the specific needs of the agency are met. School library sets, which will include titles also in the classroom sets for rotation, will also be ordered. Once materials have been ordered, RAR National will work with participating school districts and community partners to help assemble and organize program materials.

1d. *Deliver program.* Program delivery will begin with a parent orientation to the program, preferably linked to another family engagement activity occurring at the school (e.g., Open House, Literacy Night, or parent-teacher conferences). Rotation of book bags will begin after the orientation, and will continue on a weekly basis throughout the school year. Four additional parent trainings will be held throughout the school year to build parent skills in interactive reading techniques. A connection to the school library and public library will also be established, through activities such as a family literacy night, family library tours, librarian-led classroom read-alouds, library card registration assistance, and distribution of blue library book bags. A special mirrored collection of RAR titles will be given to each school library such that children can continue to check out favorite titles long after they graduate from RAR.

Existing practices that ensure that RAR is delivered with fidelity will be utilized, including a detailed licensing and affiliate program agreement with program components spelled out, a rubric for use in site visits, and a turnkey program with coordinator and implementer manuals and tailored program materials delivered to each site. (Task 3a/b detail plans to augment and better use data to improve these activities).

**Objective 2: Coordinate/align RAR with existing resources and plans at the school, LEA, and state.** State and LEA priorities as well as district and school literacy and family engagement policies and practices will frame and inform RAR implementation.

*2a. Identify school, LEA and state level literacy, family engagement and academic plans.*

RAR National and local partners will collect, review and align school, LEA and state literacy and academic plans with RAR core components. Tight alignment is expected across all plans. For example, upon initial review, the Arizona State Literacy Plan (originally the Striving Readers Plan) aligns with RAR in Section II, naming collaboration among educators, families and communities as a core belief; acknowledges oral language as a precursor to literacy, recommends literacy strategies for 3-5 year olds (e.g., providing a literacy rich environment, reading daily, and asking open-ended questions); and points to family strengths, collaborative relationships and preK-K continuity in facilitating children's all-important transition to K.

*2b. Create delivery plan that integrates with existing resources/plans.* State and LEA alignment documents will be shared with site teams during training, with ongoing technical assistance to inform site implementation plans, along with the team's self-generated observations of school-level resources and policies. For example, earlier expansion into K classrooms in Arizona timed RAR parent orientation with schools' parent-teacher conferences and open houses to maximize attendance and integration of family engagement efforts. Also, read-alouds at circle time often utilized the same storybook titles circulating to children's homes in RAR book bags.

*2c. Coordinate site-based team training and larger learning community.* RAR National will attend to the important transition between preK and K, helping coordinate site-based teams across agencies for high quality implementation and building a larger learning community. This will include shared participation in training, communication between preK and K teams, and alignment of RAR activities with agency and school-wide efforts with state academic standards. Continuing communication will occur through best-practice webinars and collaboration with LEA content teams to include RAR in at least one in-service training per year. Progress toward

project objectives (i.e., program fidelity and early literacy outcomes), RAR's capacity to support a successful transition to K, and use of RAR activities as a strategy to build positive oral language and family engagement will be topics for discussion. Site-based teams, with support from RAR National, will reach out to each building's PTA/PTO to garner community support and sustainability. RAR National and community partners will co-host gatherings between school and LEA leaders and other local stakeholders to address issues of wider community engagement.

**Objective 3: Evaluate and improve delivery of RAR.** RAR National and its subcontractor will assess implementation fidelity and parent and child outcomes of the project, report all data to the U.S. Department of Education, and use findings to improve delivery and impact of the program.

*3a. Strengthen RAR's performance management system.* RAR National has several mechanisms to measure high-quality implementation and intends to improve upon these to build and pilot a comprehensive performance management system. Current monitoring includes: 1) an annual survey of affiliates, which tracks characteristics and number of participating children and families and implementation fidelity (i.e., book rotation, parent training, and library connections) among other things, 2) individualized scorecards that provide affiliates with annual snapshots of performance on key indicators of quality, with "scored" core components of the program and un-scored best practices, with scores compared to RAR National expectations, their own past year's performance and that of other affiliates (both on average, and by similar size), and 3) a site rubric for affiliates to gauge quality of program delivery during site visits. RAR partnered with a research firm, Sociometrics, in 2011 to outline performance management system needs and recommend a software platform vendor. Salesforce, a widely-adopted donor, customer, and

performance management tool was selected after a bidding process and will be used to build this system.

RAR will likely work with Child Trends (CT), a research partner to design and build a system that can later be scaled up to other RAR programs. The goal of the system will be to collect performance measures that include implementation inputs (e.g., staff performance assessments), implementation outputs related to model fidelity and quality, (e.g., book rotations and parent attendance in trainings), and program outcomes for children and parents (e.g., changes in parent reading frequency at home). CT (or our final subcontractor) will: 1) Help RAR refine current performance measures to reflect both core components of RAR and general implementation features that research has indicated are important to successful replication and scale-up, such as staff recruitment and selection, supervision, and performance assessment (Ogden et al., 2012); 2) Customize Salesforce to meet RAR's needs, identify and train an RAR staff person to lead the effort, and work to customize the system based on performance measures selected; 3) Develop training and procedures for collecting data—training program staff in conjunction with RAR national staff, suggesting language for current affiliate agreements to refine affiliate data collection responsibilities, and minimizing affiliates' data collection burden and maximizing their participation and use of the system and its data; 4) Develop reports for local affiliates, national RAR staff, and the Department of Education with customized reports that provide actionable information to RAR staff at various levels to improve program performance; 5) Work with RAR staff to develop training modules to use the performance management system, drawing from CT's previous experience, to include several consecutive sessions that build upon each other and that include 'homework' assignments so that RAR staff can practice using the system (e.g., entering relevant data and generating reports); and 6)

Develop procedures for quality control and regular use of the performance management system and its reports to inform decision-making. RAR will establish regular meetings in which reports can be reviewed and discussed by staff at all levels and findings can be used for data-based decision-making throughout the organization.

*3b. Use performance management results to improve program delivery.* True performance management is an iterative process that includes both cycles of evidence review and program improvement and periodic improvements to the performance management system to collect the most useful implementation data. RAR will work with CT to extend and improve its current performance monitoring system. Once the LEAs and agencies have been trained to collect data through Salesforce, CT and RAR National will review findings with all constituents. Webinar and telephone conferences will be used to review findings, identify challenges, and discuss strategies for addressing challenges. CT will also help refine performance measures to ensure they reflect both key implementation components of RAR and general implementation features that research has indicated are important to successful replication and scale-up. This will be done at three time points: 1) at the outset of the project, when the performance management system is being developed; 2) before the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, after review of the spring 2013 data; and 3) in summer 2013, after the 2013-2014 data have been reviewed. Round 2 and 3 revisions to the performance measures (both implementation and outcomes measures) will be informed by the analyses that CT will conduct linking implementation measures to outcomes (see *3e.* below).

*3c. Conduct evaluation of parent outcomes.* As per the overall goal of the project, we will measure the change of parents' literacy behaviors at home through a validated pre-post parent survey. The 19-item survey, available in multiple languages, will be administered at the start of

the program during the parent orientation (and one-on-one for parents not attending), as well as at the conclusion of each program year. New scanning technology (Remark OMR by Gravis) will allow for easy data scanning, entry, analysis, and report generation by RAR National. This information will be shared with LEAs, school teams, and local community based affiliates on an annual basis.

*3d. Collect data on oral language outcomes of 4-year-olds.* With help from RAR, CT will secure annual child outcomes data already being collected by preK partners on a representative sample of 4-year olds receiving the intervention and not receiving the intervention. Selection of local partners serving preK students will include existing measurement practices and a data sharing agreement for standardized 4-year-old oral language data (e.g., Teaching Strategies Gold), with site selection priority given to LEA-led Head Start classrooms for streamlined preK-K program coordination and common measurement practices.

*3e. Connect implementation and outcome findings.* See the evaluation plan for details on how CT will link implementation and outcome findings to maximize impact of the project.

*Organizational and Staff Capacity.* RAR's experience in the successful management of complex projects ensures solid execution of the work plan detailed above. RAR's capacity is evidenced by the breadth and longevity of relationships in its national network of affiliated organizations. RAR's National Office directs ongoing technical assistance to support the program's implementation by regional and local professionals, and currently maintains contractual agreements with 162 affiliated direct service agencies. Within these agencies over 5,000 professionals are trained to implement RAR in over 2,500 sites.

RAR's national staff, subcontractor, and local affiliate partners have many years of experience implementing and evaluating complex projects. Dr. Gabrielle Miller (Principal

Investigator) led U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation projects including two large scale ‘Star Schools’ technology grants and maintained primary responsibility for the management of USDOE, OII’s annual \$25M US Department of Education Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (IBDP) contract with Reading Is Fundamental. Her executive experience leading national early literacy organizations, including RAR and Reading Is Fundamental, includes successful partner management of 2,500-3,500 program implementation sites, interaction with key national leaders in early literacy, and several successful national partnerships with LEAs, regional, national, corporate, and private funders.

Dr. Holly Kreider (Project Director) has two decades of experience leading complex research on child development and family engagement, including studies with RCT and longitudinal designs, federal and private foundation funding, multiple research sites, and university partners. Projects include several Phase I and II Small Business and Innovation Research grants from NIH to develop, disseminate, and conduct research on archives of effective interventions for children, including interventions that prevent developmental disabilities and promote academic and social-emotional outcomes through afterschool programs. Dr. Kreider has also led and co-managed numerous family involvement projects, including program evaluations of family interventions, research-based family involvement initiatives, professional development and training, and a national online network of educators dedicated to family engagement. As Director of Programs at RAR National, she oversees program quality, adaptation and innovation, affiliate relations with 162 agencies, research and evaluation, and training, among other things.

CT, our potential evaluation subcontractor, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at every stage of development, across all of the major domains of childhood and the family, community, cultural, and other contextual factors that influence their development.

Its mission is to improve outcomes for children and youth by conducting high-quality, rigorous research and communicating research findings and insights to all stakeholders whose decisions affect children's lives and future prospects. Key CT project staff has extensive expertise in the design and conduct of multi-method outcomes and implementation evaluations and early and middle childhood. Dr. Karen Walker, A Senior Program Area Director and principal investigator for this project, has over 16 years' evaluation experience. She is a leading expert in implementation evaluations, evaluation design and qualitative methods. Her past projects include a multi-year evaluation of a community-based initiative in Trenton, NJ to improve the health and well-being of young children, including family engagement programs intended to improve children's language development and early literacy. While at Public/Private Ventures, where she was Vice President for Research until 2006, Dr. Walker led the ethnographic research and was primary author of the Plain Talk implementation study. At CT she is also leading the implementation study component of a random assignment impact and implementation evaluation of a family engagement program designed primarily for Latinos.

Roles, responsibilities, and time commitments for key personnel are detailed in the Budget Narrative, according to the key objectives and tasks described in Table 2.

**VI. Project Evaluation.** CT will conduct a multi-method evaluation to examine both implementation and child and family outcomes of RAR. The evaluation will also analyze links between implementation features and outcomes to better understand how the program works. Researchers have noted that effect-sizes of evidence-based programs are often lower in replication studies (Lipsey, 2009), but replications that monitor program implementation and outcomes, and use the data to improve program performance, are likely to have stronger outcomes (Dubois, et al, 2002; Smith et al, 2004). Yet relatively little information exists about

the aspects of implementation that contribute to desired outcomes (Fixen et al., 2005; Ogden et al. 2012). If more information were available, programs could prioritize implementation features that are likely to strengthen outcomes.

*Implementation Evaluation.* Performance management systems are excellent tools for collecting and analyzing implementation data, such as assessing fidelity and consistency across LEAs and sites. Added data collection will help identify *specific* practices and program components that contribute to a successful RAR program. RAR has identified components of its model, and an implementation evaluation will examine whether additional components drive the successful achievement of outcomes and identify challenges and potential solutions faced during program replication in various settings. The implementation evaluation will also examine whether or not modifications have been made by RAR affiliates to improve the program's effectiveness based on local conditions which may be useful in other locations. Finally, the evaluation will examine potential features not gathered through the performance measurement system that can have a profound effect on outcomes, such as contextual features like LEA funding conditions or unexpected events.

Implementation data will be collected through interviews and observations during visits with staff at selected sites. CT will visit each LEA three times: a brief one-and-a-half day visit for interviews with key local affiliate staff to refine the implementation research agenda, and two three-day visits (in spring 2013 and 2014) to collect interview data, conduct observations of RAR classrooms, and review the site's performance management procedures. Interviews and focus groups will include implementation measures captured through the performance management system as well as other themes that have emerged through previous conversations and findings from the performance management system. After each round of visits, CT will hold

a conference call with RAR National and local staff to discuss cross-site findings and make recommendations for improvement.

*Outcomes Evaluation.* RAR has conducted 20 independent evaluations and one random-assignment study (under review), and is building its evidence-base further through planned impact studies. CT and RAR will work to collect individual level parent and child outcomes data that will measure outcomes and link them to implementation.

Conduct internal evaluation of parent outcomes. CT will measure parents' changed literacy behaviors at home through a validated RAR pre-post parent survey. The 19-item survey, available in multiple languages, will be administered at the start of the program during the parent orientation (and one-on-one for parents not attending), and at the end of each program year. New scanning technology (Remark OMR by Gravis) will allow for easy data scanning, entry, analysis, and report generation by RAR National. This information will be shared with LEAs, school teams, and local agencies on an annual basis.

Collect data on oral language outcomes of 4-year-olds. CT will secure annual child outcomes data already being collected by preK partners on a representative sample of 4-year olds receiving RAR and not receiving RAR. CT will work with local affiliates to identify a sampling strategy, preferably with the treatment sample selected from sites within each LEA that CT visits (to maximize the ability to link not only quantitative but also qualitative information on selected sites with child outcomes). Selection of local preK sites will include existing measurement practices and a data sharing agreement for standardized 4-year-old oral language data, with priority given to LEA-led Head Start classrooms for streamlined preK-K program coordination and common measurement practices. For example, Southwest Human Development (SHD), who will oversee RAR delivery in Head Start preK programs in the Balsz School District in Phoenix,

utilizes Teaching Strategies Gold to track children’s developmental progress over time (including at age 4)—with periodic observational measures of the extent to which the child “listens to and understands increasingly complex language,” “uses language to express thoughts and feelings,” and “uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills.” SHD will share data with CT and RAR National such that oral language outcomes at age 4 can be assessed in relation to receipt of RAR. CT will work with RAR to collect matched comparison group data from the LEAs/agencies for increased comparability between groups.

Analyze and connect implementation and outcome findings. Final analysis of the entire data set will examine parent and child outcomes data for program effectiveness, describe program operations, and link outcome and implementation data. The quasi-experimental child outcomes data will be analyzed through multivariate regressions with controls for demographic differences between the groups. The implementation data will be analyzed through qualitative and quantitative methods (with the use of nVivo, a qualitative software program) to produce descriptions of site operations, implementation practices and fidelity to the model across sites, and reasons for variations. CT will link individual (parent) level implementation data from the performance management system with parent and child outcomes, triangulating findings with qualitative implementation information to investigate the potential explanations for variations.

*Evaluation Products.* CT will produce one article to be submitted to a peer reviewed journal and one brief for dissemination on CT’s and RAR’s website.