

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/26/11 12:00 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (S371C110035)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	19.5
Sub Total	37	19.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	12.5
Sub Total	28	12.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	11
Sub Total	15	11
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	9.5
Sub Total	20	9.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2.5
Sub Total	5	2.5
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	55.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SRCL - 2: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (S371C110035)

Questions

Quality of State-level activities - Quality of State-level activities

1. In determining the quality of State-level activities, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 19.5

Sub Question

1. How the SEA will carry out the required State-level activities (described in the Additional Requirements section of the NIA) and how it will align those activities with its comprehensive State literacy plan.

Strengths:

On page 2, the applicant notes that the SEA will make the process and results of the SRCL subgrant review publicly available through the state's website. This will ensure that the public is well informed about the subgrant competitions and provides a concerted effort toward transparency as it relates to the grant-funded project.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a full description (pages e49-50) of how the SEA will coordinate and utilize Federal and State funds to support the SRCL project. There is an inadequate discussion of how the applicant will leverage funds in improve outcomes. The lack of specific discussion of the integration of multiple funding streams provides the State with a poor plan to increase services for disadvantaged students.

The applicant fails to provide an overview of the comprehensive State Literacy plan; therefore a review and alignment cannot be established (page e1). This fails to provide a clear and credible path for achieving the stated goals of the proposal.

There is insufficient discussion about how the applicant will continuously improve their state literacy plan (page e48). A weak plan for continuous improvement will lead to poor implementation of project goals.

Reader's Score: 3

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the support of its LEAs.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The SEA SRCL project goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for students are noted by the applicant. For example, on page 21, there is a reasonable description of an assessment plan that includes outcomes and screening/progress monitoring assessments. This will assist the SEA in determining the success of the proposed SRCL project.

To meet the SEAs SRCL project goals for improving the student literacy outcomes throughout the State for students (page 4), the applicant briefly discusses use of a needs assessment (page 4). Discussion and utilization of a needs assessment will assist sub grant applicants to develop a quality proposal that will best meet the needs of the identified student population.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not include a SRCL goal to address the academic goals for the English Language Learner population. This is a critical goal as these students' literacy needs must be addressed for this population for learners who often have the greatest academic deficits and needs. This omission could affect the overall success or quality of the project. No page found.

The academic assessments for children, ages birth to five are not included in the table on pages e22-23; therefore, the literacy improvement for this age group was not represented. Without a specific and appropriate assessment, the applicant will not be able to gather the needed data to determine academic literacy growth for children ages 0-5.

Reader's Score: 4

- 3. How the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to its SRCL subgrantees (and, at its discretion, to other LEAs or early childhood education providers) to enable them to implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.**

Strengths:

The applicant describes, on page e24, a plan to utilize the SRCL grant to build a statewide training cadre to provide the needed technical assistance and support to the SRCL sub grantees. This will enhance local capacity for service delivery and will facilitate student achievement in core academic subject due to the delivery of high quality sub grantee projects.

Additionally, the SEA provides information regarding collaboration with AZREADS; whereas, additional funding from the organization will be coordinated with the SRCL project. With additional funding support, the SEA will be able to double the number of State Literacy Specialists that will provide training and technical assistance to the sub grantees. Additional members to the training cadre will increase the strength of the intervention treatment and increase student literacy outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project; and (3) how the SEA will use evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

On pages e29-30, the applicant provides a plan for evaluating the implementation of literacy instruction by each teacher. For example, a rubric will be utilized to reflect a four-point scale for each aspect of the literacy lesson or classroom instructional activities. This type of guidance will provide sub grantees with specific guidelines to evaluate teacher effectiveness as it correlates with student success.

The applicant provides an important plan for the disaggregation of data on page e28. The disaggregation of data is a critical component for the proposal as it is necessary for determining the progress in improving achievement in literacy for disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not identify on page e29 the measurement approach or assessment tool that will be used to determine the teachers' knowledge of literacy instruction; therefore, the SEA will not have valuable evidence that could inform the improvement of the activities. The SRCL goal addressing teacher impact and growth will not have the necessary data to improve the achievement in literacy for children and youth of the project.

The applicant does not describe how the project evaluator will be independent or if the evaluator role will be limited solely to conducting the evaluation (Page e25). Independent evaluation is an essential component for the SEA to evaluate and then determine the State's progress of the goals, objectives, and program outcomes.

There is not a direct and clear link between the data collection and the way evidence will be used to inform and continuously improve implementation (No page found). It is critical for the applicant to provide this information. Without this information the SEA is not able have knowledge about how to best improve implementation.

The applicant does not provide a description of thorough methods of evaluation of students and children for birth through grade 12. For example, for early childhood, assessments are not identified for children from birth to 3 years old (page e22-23). This lack of assessment for birth to 3 will not allow the SEA to evaluate growth in literacy outcomes for this group of children.

Reader's Score: 3.5

5. How the SEA will disseminate information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by, and accessible to, the public, and how the SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).

Strengths:

On page e31-32, the applicant provides a dissemination plan that includes the utilization of the state website and distribution of information through presentations and printed materials. Specific information on how the State plans to ensure information to varied groups is necessary to inform all stakeholders as it will lead to feedback to the design and implementation of the State's performance.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Quality of the State subgrant competition - Quality of the State subgrant competition

1. In determining the quality of the applicant's proposed SRCL subgrant competition, the Secretary

considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 12.5

Sub Question

1. **The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:**
 - a) **The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.**

Strengths:

On pages e32-33, the applicant specifies an adequate completion. The SEA provides a description about how the LEAs will be notified of the SRCL competition. During the review process, the State will have a two-level competition to review and judge proposals. During the pre-application process, the State will ask providers to address the systems that are in place within the LEA and the final application will target specific SRCL requirements (page 33). The sufficient quality of the completion potentially ensures that LEAs have an understanding of the criteria on which they will be evaluated.

Weaknesses:

The description of the scoring rubric is vague and only briefly mentioned (page 37 and in the appendix). Within the rubric there is no mention of disadvantaged students that will receive the SRCL funding. The vagueness of the rubric design calls into question the applicant's understanding of the importance of disadvantaged students within the SRCCP competition and of the LEA competition

Reader's Score: 2

2. **(b) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:**
 - (1) Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**
 - (2) Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.**
 - (3) Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.**

Strengths:

The applicant addresses the Additional Requirements for professional development in several ways. For example, on pages e8-10, the applicant describes the literacy skills needed at each level of student group and on page e3-4, discusses how the state will require a summer learning institute for staff of birth to five programs. The applicant provides a list of topics for the PD. PD will continue throughout the year with "just in time" training. In addition, on page e4, the applicant states that schools will form literacy leadership teams. Members of the teams are specified at each school level. The applicant discusses the duties of the PD teams. On page e5-6, the applicant discusses the qualities of the leaders of the leadership teams and on page e6, the applicant makes a case for using literacy coaches. In a table on pages e17-19, the applicant provides information about the two different strands (Learning Outcomes and Leadership) and how PD will be differentiated for early childhood and K-12. This table includes what content will be taught and the strategies/programs that will be the focus of PD. This plan will lead to student improvement in core subjects.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

On page e12-14, the applicant discusses the RTI framework that programs will use. For tiers 2 and 3 (population for which SRCL is focused) the applicant is vague about the level of instruction that will be needed to improve outcomes for ELL and minorities who perform poorly on state assessments. This brings into question the State's ability to achieve goals that improve academic outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The short paragraph (page 20) that the applicant provides about a comprehensive assessment system does not appear to provide an adequate explanation for how the State's assessment system will align with State standards. For example, there is no discussion about validity and reliability measures for screening or strategies nor discussion of validity and reliability measures for progress monitoring measures (no page found). In another example, no oral language summative assessment is suggested (page e11). In addition, there is insufficient information provided about the management of these systems. For example, the applicant lists AIMS as an outcome assessment. There is no information about how the state or programs will manage this data. The assessment system as described does not appear to be comprehensive or well-managed. Finally, there is little information about the way in which the SEA will review the extent to which the SRCL subgrant applicant proposes that defines how the needs assessment will inform the literacy program designed to support effective teaching and improve student achievement of struggling readers. This calls into question the State's ability to provide a clear and credible path to potential subgrantees; and, therefore, the LEAs ability to implement a comprehensive assessment system with the intent to reach project goals and improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Reader's Score: 5.5

3. (c) **The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds, including with funds the entity receives under Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the ESEA and, as appropriate, the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, and State and local funds.**

Strengths:

No strengths noted within the project narrative.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly demonstrate that they will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds beyond birth to 4 (page 49). There is lack of clarity that brings into question the State's ability to adequately and clearly define for potential subgrantees the SRCL criteria needed to meet this subcriterion; and to therefore leverage funds to provide additional literacy services to disadvantaged students. This calls into question the State's ability to provide a clear and credible path to potential subgrantees; and, therefore, reach project goals by leveraging outside resources that will improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Reader's Score: 0

4. **The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

Strengths:

No strengths noted in the project narrative.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Within the narrative, the applicant does not provide evidence of a methodology it will use to give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty. For example, the applicant does not provide a definition of poverty. Further, there is no narrative detail about how the State will award points for LEAs who serve disadvantaged populations nor is there information as to how the level of need will be weighted so that LEAs with the greatest need are selected and awarded SRCL projects. This calls into question the State's ability to provide a clear and credible path to potential subgrantees; and, therefore, reach project goals of awarding funds to serve high-poverty schools that will improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Reader's Score: 0

5. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.

Strengths:

No strengths noted in the narrative.

Weaknesses:

Within the narrative, the applicant does not provide evidence of a methodology it will use to give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence. For example, the applicant does not provide specific detail as to how the State will award points for strongest available evidence to LEAs who serve disadvantaged populations nor is there information as to how the level of evidence will be weighted. This calls into question the State's ability to provide a clear and credible path to potential subgrantees in terms of describing their strongest available evidence. and, therefore, impacts the State's ability to award funds to schools that will improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Reader's Score: 0

6. The extent to which the SEA will develop or update a process, or use an existing process, to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use in implementing their subgrants, and how the SEA will make the process and results of any such review publicly available.

Strengths:

The applicant provides table on pages e34-38 in which adequate information is provided about how the state will judge alignment with State standards for curricula and materials and includes a process as to how the review process will be made public. Public input is important because it provides additional opportunity for continual improvement to the project that will lead to better outcomes for disadvantaged populations.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the quality of the project management plan: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 11

Sub Question

1. (i) **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

In a table on pages e39-40, the applicant provides a clear management plan with responsibilities, timelines, and milestones. This table includes responsibilities of key staff (by category, e.g., State staff vs. Literacy Specialists) and information that defines tasks and general milestone timelines for completion. Such information of organization, responsibilities, timelines, and milestones of the project ensure precise operation of the project and support toward meeting SRCL goals.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 6

2. (ii) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides staff resumes on pages e42-43 for the five key personnel to administer the SRCL project. These individuals have strong qualifications and relevant training that will support a statewide literacy program. Having well-qualified staff in key positions will ensure that project goals are met and the quality of the project is achieved.

In addition, the applicant provides an overview of information regarding the State Literacy Team that will provide relevant expertise to the State (page 44) for the SRCL project. The Team will include expertise in the areas of family literacy, kindergarten through grade 12 education, Early Childhood Education, state and local early childhood, and community based organizations, Head Start, federal and state literacy, policy, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, and state and school based libraries. These perspectives in the design and implementation of the project will help meet the goals and outcomes for an extensively diverse student population.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (iii) **The extent to which the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project, including those of: families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries.**

Strengths:

No strengths noted

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The State Literacy Team appears to lack practitioner experience. Such experience would be critical in providing instructional feedback during the design as well as the implementation phases of the project and improve outcomes for students. No page found.

Reader's Score: 0

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

- 1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project: See Sub-Criteria**

Reader's Score: 9.5

Sub Question

- 1. (i) The extent to which the costs described in the SEA's budget are reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project .**

Strengths:

The applicant provides information on pages e45-46, which supports the SEA's budget that is reasonable in relation to the proposed project. For example, the budget includes State expenses for professional development, evaluation, and technical assistance that are reasonable and will meet the needs of the grantee. An appropriate budget will support the goals of the project and assist in meeting the goals developed by the State.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a budget that can support the current SRCL project. The design of the budget will have a significant effect on the project objectives; therefore this is a critical deletion. This budget information is particularly relevant to the information in the narrative addressing Criterion B, whereas the applicant does not provide a convincing plan for ensuring a rigorous, high-quality competition for sub grants. For example, information that is weak or lacking in Criterion B includes: procedures to collect a needs assessment, lack of attention to disadvantaged populations, poor alignment of literacy instruction from birth through grade 12 to other state and federal programs, and a poor plan to systematically identify high-risk poverty schools with the strongest available evidence. The budgetary costs cannot align accurately if the project objectives in Criterion B are weak or imprecise; therefore, rendering the budget ineffective.

Reader's Score: 5

- 2. (ii) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated as follows:**
- * At least 15 percent to serve children from birth through age five.**
 - * At least 40 percent to serve students in kindergarten through grade five.**
 - * At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.**

Strengths:

On pages e46-47, the applicant provides a descriptive table that addresses the distribution of funds noted in sub criterion (ii). The allocation of funds between the three categories of children and students will ensure that funds are appropriated for an efficient and effective literacy program for early childhood

Sub Question

and kindergarten through grade five students. Adequate resources for the sub grant awards will ensure that all children and students from birth to grade 12 will all have an opportunity to achieve the SRCL goals and objectives that address literacy needs and improve student achievement.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address or provide a clear plan to equitably distribute the SRCL sub grant funds between middle and high schools. The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL sub grants are allocated per the funding requirement is lacking the necessary detail. This omission could affect the extent to which secondary students will receive the necessary funds to show marked improvement in literacy skills. No page found.

Reader's Score: 2

3. (iii) **The extent to which the SEA will use the grant to leverage other State and Federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant and how it will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in integrating funds with other local, State, and Federal funds and in developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.**

Strengths:

The applicant includes a detailed list of local and state partnerships that will be used to leverage additional support for SRCL projects that address preschool populations. In addition, these organizations will ensure that SRCL preschool programs across the state build capacity during SRCL funding and can continue after SRCL funding ends. For example, the partnership anticipated with Head Start has the potential to maximize the project outcomes and make a significant impact on the pre literacy skills of preschool children (page 50).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how other State and Federal funds will be used to maximize the impact of a SRCL grant for kindergarten through high school students nor does the applicant address ways to sustain the grant operations after the end of the sub grant. The lack of other funds and resources, integration of funds, and a sustainability plan will greatly diminish the short-term and long-term effects of the project to boost academic outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 1.5

4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.**

Strengths:

On page e50, the applicant plans an anticipated dollar distribution for preschools and provides an estimate of the costs and numbers of birth to five children that will be served by the SRCL sub grantee projects. This example systematically provides the costs necessary to improve the outcomes for early childhood programs.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address the calculated distribution of funds to provide SRCL services to elementary or secondary students. The cost-per-child will be different from preschool costs and should be taken into account when planning for the number of students that will be served and the costs associated with serving them, as these directly affect budget allocations. A poorly addressed budget will

Sub Question

not support the sub grantee projects designed to improve instruction for students in elementary and secondary schools.

Reader's Score: 1

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

- 1. To meet this priority, an applicant must (1) propose to use technology--which may include technology to support principles of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA)--to address student learning challenges; and (2) provide, in its application, an evidence-based (as defined in the NIA) rationale that its proposed technology program, practice, or strategy will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness.**

Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.

Strengths:

On page e19, the applicant suggests strategies for effective use of technology for early childhood programs. This includes bringing the Teacher Strategies Gold assessment online. This will allow for programs to enter information for students and to review reports.

Analytical and effective use of technology will lend a positive impact on the ability of all children to learn in their own unique and diverse way. Creative and efficient use of technology will ensure that all children will have the opportunity to achieve literacy skills.

Weaknesses:

On page e20, the applicant notes that programs will be required to purchase and use iPad technology. There is no discussion about how this purchase is linked to universal design. Budgetary design is critical to the effectiveness and success of the SRCL project.

Reader's Score: 2.5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

- 1. To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students.**

Background: Improving the language and literacy development of disadvantaged students is essential to improving academic achievement for these students in all content areas. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show disproportionately large numbers of disadvantaged students struggle with developing the necessary pre-literacy and literacy skills needed to read, comprehend, and use language effectively. This results in persistent gaps in academic achievement through the elementary and secondary school years and in high school graduation rates, and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

Strengths:

Met. The applicant provides comprehensive professional develop plan that will have an impact on improving disadvantaged students literacy outcomes.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses are noted within the review.

Reader's Score: 0

Absolute Priority 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making

1. **To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, in accordance with privacy requirements (as defined in the NIA), to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning settings and in elementary and secondary schools.**

Background: Accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate data, and the effective use of that data for informed decision-making, are essential to the continuous improvement of children's literacy and language development. In developing comprehensive literacy plans and programs, it is important for States to consider strategies that provide educators, as well as families and other key stakeholders, with the data they need and the capacity and training to use those data to improve school readiness, respond to the learning and academic needs of students, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional development practices and approaches, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development.

Strengths:

Met. The applicant has recommended an evaluation plan that includes data-driven decision-making.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses are noted within the review.

Reader's Score: 0

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Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (S371C110035)

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	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
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1. State-level activities	37	34
Sub Total	37	34
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	24
Sub Total	28	24
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	18
Sub Total	20	18
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	95

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SRCL - 2: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (S371C110035)

Questions

Quality of State-level activities - Quality of State-level activities

1. In determining the quality of State-level activities, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 34

Sub Question

1. How the SEA will carry out the required State-level activities (described in the Additional Requirements section of the NIA) and how it will align those activities with its comprehensive State literacy plan.

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant, through the Arizona (AZ) State Literacy Plan (SLP; p. 2), has already made a serious commitment to enhancing literacy across the grades; therefore, the literacy improvement activities included in the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) project are meant to greatly augment what has already been planned in the SLP. The State Education Agency (SEA) objective in the SRCL project is to ensure that all young children and students have access to effective literacy instruction. The applicant plans for SRCL funding to affect 40 schools or early childhood education sites, with the potential to impact over 1,000 educators, and 6,600 students and families (p. e1 Abstract). Experts in the state are expected to develop comprehensive content knowledge for instructional delivery in language and literacy; this is to include listening, speaking, reading, and writing (p. 18). The newly developed content knowledge is to be evidenced-based and aligned with the AZ 2010 English Language Arts standards and the SLP (p. e17). On page 49, the applicant discusses how it will align the use of federal funds (i.e., Title I-E) with the SRCL project funds. The AZ state literacy team will provide guidance in aligning, leveraging, and integrating the use of SRCL funds with other federal, state, and local funds (p. 49). The AZ Department of Education will make publicly available all information concerning the SRCL subgrant application and review process on its website (p. 2). The applicant, because of its history of commitment toward enhancing literacy across the grades, presents a focused plan to do the same in the SRCL program.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 10

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the

Sub Question

support of its LEAs.

Strengths:

Strengths

On page 21, the applicant proposes a comprehensive assessment program for SRCL activities that is aligned with the Arizona 2010 English Language Arts standards and state assessments. Moreover, on page 4, the applicant discusses how all schools and early childhood education programs must complete a needs assessment in order to be eligible for participation in SRCL funding. In the needs assessment, schools and early childhood education centers are to examine their existing instructional environments and student achievement data, and teachers are to complete knowledge surveys of literacy assessment and instruction and also complete the Planning and Evaluation Tool for an Effective School Wide Literacy Program. Classroom observations will be conducted for efficacy of literacy instruction, and SEA literacy specialists, using individual school data, will work with other school-based literacy leadership to develop improvement plans that are specific to the school and students served. On page 32 the applicant discusses its goal for reading improvement among SRCL participants. Last, on page 22, the applicant provides an additional SRCL implementation plan to monitor all project activities. All of the above are indicative of a clear and credible path to support its Local Education Area (LEAs) in the SRCL project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 8

- 3. How the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to its SRCL subgrantees (and, at its discretion, to other LEAs or early childhood education providers) to enable them to implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.**

Strengths:

Strengths

On pages 22 and 24 the applicant discusses the technical assistance and support that will be provided to SRCL subgrantees. This process will start with State Literacy Specialists who will serve as liaisons between the SEA and individual schools (p. 24). The goal of the specialists is to address specific needs of a particular SRCL site and to determine program effectiveness by reviewing student achievement data. The applicant has experience with such an arrangement through a previous Reading First grant (p. 24). Because of the prior experience with this technical assistance program model, this is a sensible and reasonable methodology for the SEA to pursue.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 5

- 4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project; and (3) how the SEA will use**

Sub Question

evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.

Strengths:

Strengths

On page 26 the applicant provides information regarding the SRCL assessment system that will be used in the project. The applicant also provides documentation on page 21 related to the specific types of evaluation data that will be collected, including the use of the following measures: the AZ State Assessment (yearly), interim benchmarks and standards, universal screening and progress monitoring of literacy skills, and specific diagnostic measures as necessary. Because these data include formative and summative measures (pp. 28-29), such assessment tools are sufficient for the tasks of the SRCL project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Funding for an independent evaluator of the project is not found in the AZ proposal. On p. 26, the applicant states that researchers from the state-level Research and Evaluation Unit will conduct the evaluation of the SRCL project. The evaluation plan proposed by the applicant, therefore, calls into question its objectivity. Accuracy and objectivity of evaluation data are a must for a program with the size and scope of the AZ SRCL project.

Reader's Score: 7

- 5. How the SEA will disseminate information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by, and accessible to, the public, and how the SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).**

Strengths:

Strengths

On pages 32-33 the applicant provides a discussion of the dissemination of information procedures that will be performed in the SRCL project. These range from print, electronic, face-to-face methods, seminars, webinars, and conferences including the development of a website for the State Literacy Team and the SLP. These methods show a variety of formats for information dissemination meant to be easily understood. Local and regional newspapers in the state will share project information with families and other stakeholders (p. 32). Disaggregated data regarding student characteristics and educational status will be used to judge student progress, and is explained in the AZ proposal on page 29. Annual reports will be presented to the State Board of Education and Legislative Education Committees in state government. All of the above demonstrates that the applicant is committed to proper dissemination of the SRCL project activities and findings.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 4

Quality of the State subgrant competition - Quality of the State subgrant competition

- 1. In determining the quality of the applicant's proposed SRCL subgrant competition, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria**

Reader's Score: 24

Sub Question

1. **The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:**
 - a) **The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.**

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant proposes to use a two-step process for awarding subgrants to LEAs: (a) a pre-application process that addresses what the LEA or early childhood education provider currently has in place to address literacy across the grades, and (b) a final application that specifically addresses SRCL priorities (p. 33). The SEA will publish the rubric and procedures used to review subgrant applications before the competition is to begin (p. 34). In the subgrant application the SEA requires that each local subgrant applicant receiving funds must demonstrate that it has the capacity and commitment to oversee multiple sites (p. 34). Other components of the subgrant competition are found on pages 34-38, and are appropriate for the purposes of this sub-criterion SRCL competition because capacity of subgrantees is examined in a comprehensive manner.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 3

2. **(b) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:**
 - (1) Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**
 - (2) Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.**
 - (3) Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.**

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant, on pages 34-38, explains the statewide subgrant competition process, and it is sufficient for the purposes of the SRCL project in AZ. As stated previously in section A(ii), the SEA will also require subgrantees to submit needs assessment data in order to be eligible for SRCL funding. This, too, is commendable and necessary to guarantee that certain school districts and early childhood education programs are truly desirable candidates for improving the literacy skills of disadvantaged students. Subgrantees are also required to form partnerships with parents (e.g., the Academic Parent Teacher Teams, or APPTs) and other community programs such as family literacy and community members to help raise student achievement (p. 36). The applicant, on page 17, states that experts in transformational projects will provide in-depth and differentiated professional development in literacy. This is a commendable activity to increase academic achievement in the state. On page 7 the applicant includes information on how the LEAs will be expected to align district-wide literacy activities with the

Sub Question

state literacy plan and with the SRCL model. The Response to Intervention framework, and how it will fit into SRCL activities, is discussed on pages 13-14. This is another sound aspect of the project. Valid and reliable screening, assessment, and progress monitoring measures and strategies are to be used in the AZ SRCL project, and are discussed on page 35. High quality, literacy-enriched environments will also be expected in all participating SRCL early childhood education programs (p. 11). The state literacy team will meet at least quarterly to review progress monitoring data and initiate remedial action, if necessary, to effect continuous improvement and develop a strategic plan to build capacity for sustaining the SRCL project (p. 49). On page 50 the applicant discusses how the SEA will involve the following additional agencies and organizations to promote its literacy improvement program: First Things First (the AZ birth to five agency), the Helios Foundation, the Virginia G. Pipet Charitable Trust, Child Play Theater, the AZ State library system, and Public Broadcasting System (PBS). These additional agencies and organizations are extensive in foci and abundance, and will lend valuable information and support to the SEA and LEAs. In conclusion, the applicant is committed to assisting all who need the the AZ SRCL project, and what it offers.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

This SRCL sub-criterion states that project related activities will target early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement. In its application, the applicant does not specifically target schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement for subgrantee membership (no page found). Without such a focus the possibility exists for serving students and schools who may not need such intensity of intervention.

Reader's Score: 6

3. (c) **The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds, including with funds the entity receives under Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the ESEA and, as appropriate, the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, and State and local funds.**

Strengths:

Strengths

On page 49 the applicant mentions how the SEA will leverage other state and federal funds to enhance the SRCL project activities. In 2011 the state received a Title I-E grant to establish a State Literacy Team (n = 27 team members), and the SEA plans to utilize the existing team in SRCL project enterprises. This joint SRCL and Title I-E activity allows for nearly \$600,000 in personnel support for activities associated with the former project, and the shared, in-kind funds will extend the SRCL project literacy improvement effort. This is a sound method of fund alignment to enhance literacy improvement activities across projects.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 2

4. **The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant, in an effort to determine the best ways in which to serve high poverty schools and disadvantaged populations, has plans to screen LEA applicants for the number of disadvantaged students (as defined in the SRCL protocol) to be served (see Scoring Rubric for AZ SRCL Subgrant Applications on p. e1 of Appendices). This is justified for the purposes of the SRCL project because they address the disadvantaged students that the program targets for intense literacy intervention.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The AZ application documentation does not include a discussion of a funding advantage to LEAs in high poverty areas (no page found). This point is a specific sub-criterion of the SRCL competition, and its omission will lead to improper selection of subgrantees. Improper selection of subgrantees is not an effective use of funds to improve the literacy skills of disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 4

5. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.

Strengths:

Strengths

In the Appendices (pp. e2-e40) the applicant provides a rubric that will be used to judge LEA ability to deliver a project that uses instructional strategies and materials based on evidence and research. Included in the necessities that funded LEAs must provide are instructional strategies and programs that provide students with explicit, systematic instruction in the essential components of oral language, reading, and writing, and how instructional strategies based on literacy research will be implemented. Such instructional criteria are exactly what disadvantaged students need in a comprehensive literacy improvement program.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 4

6. The extent to which the SEA will develop or update a process, or use an existing process, to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use in implementing their subgrants, and how the SEA will make the process and results of any such review publicly available.

Strengths:

Strengths

The scoring rubric, or existing process that the applicant will use to judge the efficacy of curricula and materials to be implemented in SRCL project activities is found in the Appendices, pages e1-e4. A review committee consisting of AZ State Literacy team members will serve as reviewers for the subgrant competition (p. 41). Both are required for a comprehensive subgrantee review process in a program as large as the SRCL project. On pages e2-e3 of the Appendices the applicant mentions that materials, curricula, and assessments must align with the state standards. On page 2 the applicant discusses how the subgrant selection process will be publicly available at the state department of education website. In sum, this is a comprehensive process that the applicant has planned to address this sub-criterion; it will

Sub Question

yield the desired results for the disadvantaged students targeted for the SRCL project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

- 1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the quality of the project management plan: See Sub-Criteria**

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

- 1. (i) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant, on page 41, provides a management plan that includes SRCL initial planning activities, pre-application procedures, the subgrant award process, and project delivery and implementation spanning the initial two years. Well-defined responsibilities, milestones, and timelines are provided, and they are realistic for the project scope. All of these aspects are necessary for a well-managed project at the state and local levels.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 6

- 2. (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.**

Strengths:

Strengths

On pages 43-44 the applicant provides a description and qualifications of the key personnel involved with the SRCL project, including director, finance director, program director, and two program specialists. In addition, on pages e0 to e4 of the Appendices, additional duties are described for all key AZ SRCL personnel. The qualifications of the personnel are appropriate to meet the rigors of the project tasks; without such qualified personnel it is unlikely that the project would be a success.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (iii) **The extent to which the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project, including those of: families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries.**

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the SRCL project by including a multiplicity of personnel and expertise in the areas of early childhood education, community-based organizations, Head Start, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, and state and local libraries (p. 44). State Literacy Team subcommittees also include experts in the area of Response to Intervention, Family and Community Engagement, special education, and English Language Learning (p.45). This diversity of opinions and backgrounds will enhance the probability of success in improving the literacy outcomes of students who are disadvantaged.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Families and teachers are not mentioned as team members in the design and implementation of the AZ SRCL project. Leaving out these two important groups will decrease input from key stakeholders.

Reader's Score: 3

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

- 1. **The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project: See Sub-Criteria**

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

- 1. (i) **The extent to which the costs described in the SEA's budget are reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project .**

Strengths:

Strengths

On pages 45-46, and also in the budget narrative found in the appendices (pp. e0-e26), the applicant discusses the adequacy of the budget to deliver as promised the goals set forward in the SRCL proposal. The proposed budget, according to the applicant on page 45, is sufficient in size to deliver the project activities with fidelity and success. A total of 95% of the entire project budget will be funded to LEAs in subgrants, and the remaining funds will be used at the state level for the necessary evaluation, professional development, and technical assistance. In sum, the size of the budget is in line with the

Sub Question

number of objectives, design, and significance of the project and allows for the desired achievement of all concerned.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 10

2. (ii) **The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated as follows:**
- * **At least 15 percent to serve children from birth through age five.**
 - * **At least 40 percent to serve students in kindergarten through grade five.**
 - * **At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.**

Strengths:

Strengths

The subgrant funds awarded by the SEA are to be allocated according to the sub-criterion specifications (i.e., 15% for children from birth through 5, 40% to serve students in kindergarten through grade 5, and 40% to serve students in middle and high schools (pp. 47-48). The costs for all grant-related activities are reasonable and fit the scope and design of the project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Equitable distribution of funds across secondary level schools (i.e., middle and high schools) is not mentioned and will hurt the literacy achievement of deserving students in those grade bands.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (iii) **The extent to which the SEA will use the grant to leverage other State and Federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant and how it will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in integrating funds with other local, State, and Federal funds and in developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.**

Strengths:

Strengths

On page 49, the applicant discusses how the State Literacy Team (SLT) will provide guidance in aligning, leveraging, and integrating the use of some SRCL funds with other federal, state, and local funds. The SLT will also develop a plan for statewide funding to LEAs and early childhood education providers so that such funds maximize the effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students (p. 49). In addition, the SLT is to develop a strategic plan for LEAs and early childhood providers so that they have the capacity to sustain SRCL project activities after funding ends. All of the above funding options and activities fit with the SRCL sub-criterion specifications and will lead to success for disadvantaged students in the LEA programs.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 3

4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.**

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant, on p. 51, discusses plans to award subgrants of sufficient size to support early language and literacy development for children from high needs areas. For example, the applicant has budgeted approximately \$557,000 for each of eight preschools serving children in disadvantaged AZ communities. This is a good start for the approximately 400 young children enrolled in these select programs, and enhances their chances of literacy learning success and improvement.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The applicant did not address how elementary and secondary level schools will be targeted for subgrants of sufficient size in SRCL project. This omission of such a sizeable school population severely limits the AZ project focus, and will lead to disappointing results for students in those grade bands.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

1. **To meet this priority, an applicant must (1) propose to use technology--which may include technology to support principles of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA)--to address student learning challenges; and (2) provide, in its application, an evidence-based (as defined in the NIA) rationale that its proposed technology program, practice, or strategy will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness.**

Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.

Strengths:

Strengths

On pages 38-40, the applicant outlines how the use of technology will be infused into LEA and early childhood education programs as a result of SRCL project funding and activities. The applicant has already demonstrated expertise with using mobile computing, online and blended learning, and e-textbooks in the classroom. In August 2011 the SEA will receive the results of research examining the use of mobile, high access computing in the classrooms of AZ. These prior activities position the applicant well for learning the best uses for mobile and other technologies, and infusing such knowledge and best practices in the SRCL project. The applicant also provides (on pp. e68-e69 in the appendices) an additional sketch of the planned use of mobile devices in SRCL activities involving students in Tier 1 and Tier 2 Response to Intervention streams. The expertise and experience that the applicant shows in this competitive priority is impressive and positions the SEA to use technology to its advantage in the SRCL project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

- 1. To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students.**

Background: Improving the language and literacy development of disadvantaged students is essential to improving academic achievement for these students in all content areas. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show disproportionately large numbers of disadvantaged students struggle with developing the necessary pre-literacy and literacy skills needed to read, comprehend, and use language effectively. This results in persistent gaps in academic achievement through the elementary and secondary school years and in high school graduation rates, and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant has developed the Arizona State Literacy Plan, which outlines the stages of literacy development from birth to grade 12. Included in this plan is more than just a focus on reading, but also listening, speaking, and writing. The AZ plan for the SRCL project is twofold (found initially on p. e1 in the Abstract): (a) to ensure that all children have access to effective language and literacy instruction and, (b) equally important, provide educators with the necessary knowledge so that they clearly understand how language and literacy flourish, and are able to deliver effective literacy instruction to all students who need it. The applicant states that SRCL literacy interventions will be given to students who are most vulnerable to academic challenges (p. e1, Abstract); this is paramount to improving school success across all grades and is the thrust of the SRCL grant program. With such an approach, the applicant is poised to deliver on the promise of the SRCL initiative.

Priority: MET

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

No apparent weaknesses were found for this absolute priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Absolute Priority 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making

- 1. To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, in accordance with privacy requirements (as defined in the NIA), to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning settings and in elementary and secondary schools.**

Background: Accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate data, and the effective use of that data for informed decision-making, are essential to the continuous improvement of children's literacy and language development. In developing comprehensive literacy plans and programs, it is important for States to consider strategies that provide educators, as well as families and other key stakeholders, with the data they need and the capacity and training to use those data to improve school readiness, respond to the learning and academic needs of students, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional development practices and approaches, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development.

Strengths:

Strengths

On page 20 the applicant discusses the range of activities that will allow the SRCL project to enact more data-based decision making in attempting to improve the literacy of disadvantaged children and youth. Initially, professional development will be provided by the SEA to subgrantees to assist them in setting up the SRCL data system, and how to objectively collect and analyze literacy project data. Such data analysis will be used subsequently to attempt to improve instructional practices in the project as well as student outcomes over time. The professional development delivered to subgrantees in the AZ SRCL project will also include choosing and using technically appropriate screening and diagnostic instruments to inform instruction and continuous program improvement. Lastly, the SRCL project professional development will also include how to use Response to Intervention data objectively to infuse differentiated instruction to those who need it. In essence, the SRCL plan proposes a comprehensive assessment and data-based system to ensure that all students, especially those who are disadvantaged, are accurately assessed, and assessment findings are used to inform instruction and appropriate interventions (p. 21). All of the above data-based decision making will only enhance the chances of success for the entire AZ SRCL project.

Priority: MET

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

No apparent weaknesses were found for this absolute priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 6/24/11 12:00 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/24/11 12:00 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (S371C110035)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	25
Sub Total	37	25
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	16
Sub Total	28	16
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	10
Sub Total	15	10
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	18
Sub Total	20	18
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2
Sub Total	5	2
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	71

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SRCL - 2: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Arizona Department of Education (S371C110035)

Questions

Quality of State-level activities - Quality of State-level activities

1. In determining the quality of State-level activities, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 25

Sub Question

1. How the SEA will carry out the required State-level activities (described in the Additional Requirements section of the NIA) and how it will align those activities with its comprehensive State literacy plan.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a clear and comprehensive description of the components of the comprehensive State language and literacy programs (Additional Requirement (a)). This includes information about professional development to be provided, leadership staff who will provide technical assistance and support, as well as ways teachers and literacy leadership team members will utilize data to design and guide instruction and the type of literacy instruction to be implemented in K-12 classrooms (pages 2-21). The applicant provides convincing evidence about the alignment of Federal and State funds (Additional Requirement (b)). For example, the applicant indicates that the State Literacy Team meets monthly to strategize and coordinate the development of budgets and position responsibilities within the Arizona Department of Education and other State agencies with the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to discuss the optimum use of Federal, State, and local resources that support common objectives (page 49). The applicant provides complete details about the way the process and results of the subgrant application review will be made public (Additional Requirement (c)). For example, on page 2, the applicant indicates that information about the review will be made available on the Arizona Department of Education website. Additional Requirement (d) is scored in criterion B(b).

These activities will allow the State to successfully implement the literacy program and promote student literacy outcomes across the State.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the support of its LEAs.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant provides information about the goals for student growth in literacy. For example, the applicant indicates that a goal of 5% growth per year, with an overall 10% growth at the end of two years, is the goal for the SRCL subgrant recipients (page 22). Such a goal will ensure that a students are moving toward reaching proficiency in literacy.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide specific goals for improving literacy outcomes for English language learners (ELLs) or students with disabilities. For example, there is no description of the data that will be collected to support the achievement of ELLs and students with disabilities. Without specific goals for special populations of students, it will be difficult to ensure that these groups receive appropriate literacy instruction.

The applicant does not provide a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve the goals put forth in terms of improving student literacy outcomes. For example, the applicant does not provide information regarding how the SEA will go about supporting the LEAs to meet the 5% growth targets per year described on page 23 of the application. The lack of a clear and credible path toward reaching the goals makes it difficult to envision the way in which the State will support positive growth in student literacy.

Reader's Score: 4

- 3. How the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to its SRCL subgrantees (and, at its discretion, to other LEAs or early childhood education providers) to enable them to implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides appropriate evidence that the State Education Agency (SEA) will provide technical assistance and support to the SRCL subgrantees. For example, the employment of State Literacy Specialists as described on pages 23-25 is a model that has worked for other grants in Arizona (e.g., Reading First) and is incorporated into the State Reform Plan. The applicant provides significant detail on the types of technical assistance and professional development that the literacy experts will provide to the subgrantees. Providing technical assistance successfully will enhance the ability of teachers to provide the strongest instruction in literacy to all students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

- 4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project; and (3) how the SEA will use evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.**

Strengths:

The use of quasi-experimental methodology proposed by the applicant is an appropriate way to measure changes in literacy achievement as a result of the proposed SRCL grant. Such methodology provides strong measures of reading outcomes and allows the user to determine whether or not significant progress in literacy is being made as a result of the SRCL grant.

The applicant also proposes to effectively evaluate the way that professional development improves achievement in literacy for young children and youth (page 28-29). For example, the applicant proposes to observe professional development sessions, interview participants about what they learned during the

Sub Question

sessions, and conduct observations of teacher practice in the classroom to ensure that teachers are able to transfer knowledge gained in the professional development into their practice.

The applicant mentions that the SEA will conduct the analyses on disaggregated groups to ensure that all groups are improving (page 28).

Weaknesses:

The data that will be used to monitor literacy achievement for birth-age 5 is not adequately described. For example, there is only one assessment which the applicant proposes to use as a measurement for early childhood literacy: the Pre-K Oral Language Assessment--4 year olds (page 27). This does not include a measure of literacy for children younger than 4. Without an accurate measure of language and literacy in the youngest children, there is no way to provide appropriate literacy services and to ensure that students' needs are being met.

It is not clear from the description provided about the types of assessments and the research design whether or not different measures will be used for ELLs or students with disabilities to ensure that their literacy skills are being accurately captured. Without adequate measures of the achievement of special populations of students, it will be difficult to understand the students' progress.

The relationship between the data that is being collected and the way in which that evidence will be used to continuously inform and improve the design and implementation of activities of the grant is not clear. The applicant vaguely mentions "changing instructional and the ways that all stakeholders think about teaching and learning" (page 27) without explicitly relaying how the data will be utilized to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of the activities under the SRCL Grant.

The applicant does not state that the evaluation will be conducted by an external evaluator, which is criterion (iv)(1).

Reader's Score: 3

- 5. How the SEA will disseminate information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by, and accessible to, the public, and how the SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).**

Strengths:

The dissemination plan is appropriate in terms of providing information through a variety of outlets (e.g., website, presentations, local newspapers). The applicant includes various communication methods to ensure that the information will reach a diverse set of audiences (e.g., use of social media and public news outlets) on pages 32-33. This will ensure that the information about the grant will be provided and increase the transparency of the process.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly indicate the way in which the SEA will ensure that the information that is disseminated regarding the SRCL Grant will be made useful to varied groups (pages 31-32).

Reader's Score: 3

Quality of the State subgrant competition - Quality of the State subgrant competition

- 1. In determining the quality of the applicant's proposed SRCL subgrant competition, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria**

Sub Question

1. **The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:**
 - a) **The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.**

Strengths:

The applicant states that the SEA expects LEAs or early childhood education providers who propose to serve more than one site must demonstrate that [they have] the capacity to oversee multiple sites and that 100% commitment to participate by staff is firm (page 33). In addition, the applicant indicates that the State is "committed to ensuring that the implementation of the SRCL grant is successful and that LEA and early childhood education providers are well positioned to sustain their academic achievement gains" (page 33). Thus, the applicant provides evidence that the SEA will ask subgrant applicants to address the LEAs capacity to implement their proposal which means that those subgrant applicants who have the most capacity will receive subgrant awards and ultimately make the most significant changes to improve literacy instruction and achievement.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

2. **(b) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:**
 - (1) **Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**
 - (2) **Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.**
 - (3) **Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a scoring rubric that incorporates points that will be allocated to the subgrant applications based on the details about the type of literacy program that is proposed in the subgrant application (Additional Requirement (d)) (pages 1-7 of the Appendix). The applicant provides adequate information regarding the models of the literacy program that SRCL subgrantees will be required to implement (Additional Requirement (d)). For example, the rubric indicates that an exemplary subgrant application would provide a coordinated instructional sequence and use instructional strategies and programs that teach rigorously and include explicit and systematic instructional strategies (page 2 of the Appendix).

The applicant addresses the types of professional development that will be required in each subgrant application (Additional Requirement (d)(1)). For example, the rubric indicates that an exemplary subgrant proposal would include a clear plan with explicit means for assessing professional development needs (page 5 of the Appendix). The applicant includes a criterion in the scoring rubric indicating that exemplary applicants should propose evidence that the instructional programs are aligned to State standards (Additional Requirement (d)(2)) (page 2 of the Appendix).

The applicant also specifies the type of intervention framework (in this case, Response to Intervention (RtI)) that will be used throughout the State, which is also specified in the State Literacy Plan (Additional Requirement (d)(4)) on pages 12-14. The RtI framework is in place to ensure that students who need additional support, including those at risk receive appropriate support and instruction.

The applicant provides evidence that the subgrantees will be required to provide language-and text-rich classrooms in the descriptions on page 10 (Additional Requirement (d)(5)). For example, the applicant indicates that the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool will be utilized to

Sub Question

ensure a high quality, literacy rich environment (page 10) for preschool classrooms.

With regard to continuous improvement by monitoring program implementation and outcomes (Additional Requirement (d)(6)), the applicant includes a comprehensive monitoring plan in the table on page 21. The monitoring plan includes multiple measures of implementation, including budget monitoring, site visits, implementation checklists, and student achievement results to determine the effectiveness of the subgrant implementation at multiple levels (school, classroom, and student).

The applicant demonstrates that the scoring process for the subgrant applications will take into account the extent to which the subgrant application will develop partnerships with and involve other agencies to promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students ((b)(3))(page 7 of the Appendix).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a clear explanation for how the applicant will meet Additional Requirement (d)(3) (coherent assessment systems aligned with State standards). It is not clear how the applicant will ensure that the subgrant funds regarding a coherent assessment system will be aligned with State standards and assessments. In addition, the applicant does not describe the requirements for subgrantees' use of valid and reliable screening measures. The lack of description of the alignment between standards and assessments, the State cannot make accurate assessments of students learning.

The applicant does not clearly provide a method for how the SEA will address the extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant proposes a literacy program that addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement the activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement (b)(1). For example, the scoring rubric does not take into account the LEAs or early learning programs that have the most capacity for improvement by awarding points based on a description of such capacity in the subgrant application (pages 1-7 of the Appendix). Without focusing on the needs of the most disadvantaged students means that the students with the highest levels of need may not be served through the SRCL grant. Additionally, neither the scoring rubric on pages 1-7 of the appendix nor the project narrative address the way in which the SEA will review the extent to which the SRCL subgrant applicant proposes the way the needs assessment informs the literacy program that is designed to support effective teaching and improve student achievement of struggling readers ((b)(2)). Not taking into account the needs assessment indicates that the applicant has not considered the specific needs of struggling readers and cannot develop a plan to enhance and support effective teaching and learning.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (c) **The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds, including with funds the entity receives under Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the ESEA and, as appropriate, the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, and State and local funds.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a section in the scoring rubric included in the appendix regarding the extent to which subgrant applicants demonstrate that they will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported by other Federal funds (page 7 of the Appendix). For example, the scoring rubric sets the point value for exemplary applications that the "LEA/early childhood education provider describes how SRCL funds will leverage existing resources to maximize overall impact" (page 7 of the appendix).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly explain how the SEA will review and judge subgrant applications for the extent to which the SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction

Sub Question

supported with other Federal funds. For example, the applicant does not provide adequate distinctions between those applicants who would be considered "exemplary" and those who "meet the standard" (page 7 of the Appendix). Furthermore, it is not clear how "describes all funding resources are being coordinated to target literacy instruction" is different from "describes how SRCL sites will leverage existing resources to maximize overall results" (page 7 of the appendix). Without knowing how multiple funding sources will be utilized it is difficult to know whether or not literacy activities will be aligned or not. This could lead to multiple activities that do not work together but rather, provide silohed instruction that will not positively influence student outcomes.

Reader's Score: 1

- 4. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides criteria in the scoring rubric included in the appendix that requires subgrant applicants to include the criteria used to determine site selection for inclusion in the SRCL subgrant. These criteria include poverty level of the community and number of disadvantaged students served (page 1 of the Appendix).

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides little evidence for the way it will give priority to those LEAs or early childhood education providers that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population. For example, the applicant does not provide specific details regarding the number of points that will be awarded to those applicants who serve the highest poverty populations or the most disadvantaged populations on page 1 of the Appendix. The lack of priority for the most disadvantaged populations means that it is unclear whether or not these students will receive services. The applicant does not provide a State definition of poverty. For example, the scoring rubric does not define the "poverty level of the community" by providing definition of poverty. For example, the way the SEA intends to give priority to those schools that have the highest percentage of high-poverty schools and/or population of students is not clear from the scoring rubric provided on page 1 of the appendix. Without a specific definition of poverty, the applicant will not be able to identify those populations that have the most significant needs.

Reader's Score: 2

- 5. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence that the SEA will ask applications from an LEA or early childhood education provider to include validity and reliability of assessments (page 33). The applicant provides evidence that the SEA will ask applications from an LEA or early childhood education provider to include a literacy program that is evidence-based (page 34). The applicant provides evidence that the SEA will ask applications from an LEA or early childhood education provider to include instructional materials aligned to evidence based research (page 34). These criteria demonstrate that the SEA is most interested in those applications that have the strongest available evidence.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not specifically state the way in which the SEA will score applications to ensure that those LEA or early childhood providers that utilize the strongest available evidence in their applications receive priority. The applicant provides scant details about how it will provide priority points to those subgrantee applications which include the strongest available evidence. It is not clear how such priority

Sub Question

will be awarded or the specific process that will be used by the SEA (pages 1-7 in the Appendix).

Reader's Score: 2

- 6. The extent to which the SEA will develop or update a process, or use an existing process, to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use in implementing their subgrants, and how the SEA will make the process and results of any such review publicly available.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence that the SEA will ask applicants from the LEA or early childhood education providers to include information about the alignment of the curriculum to the state standards (page 34). The applicant provides evidence that the SEA will ask applicants from LEA or early childhood education providers to include information about the evidence base for the selected curriculum and materials in their application to the SEA for SRCL funding.

The applicant indicates that the SEA will make the review process and the results of the review publicly available on the SEA website.

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how the questions the subgrantee applicants include on their application regarding the alignment between the curricula and materials and the State standards will be reviewed and judged. It is not clear how the questions the subgrantee applicants include on their application regarding the research base for their selected curricula and materials will be reviewed and judged.

Reader's Score: 3

Project management - Project management

- 1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the quality of the project management plan: See Sub-Criteria**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

- 1. (i) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

The applicant includes a sufficient timeline with milestones that are specified on pages 40-41. This timeline is appropriate to complete the project on time and within budget.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides vague details about the tasks for which each of the key personnel will be responsible. The table on pages 40-41 does not provide sufficient clarity or detail on the specific members of the State department of education who will take responsibility for the tasks included in the table.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 4

2. (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.

Strengths:

The applicant includes sufficient detail regarding the qualifications and relevant training and experience of the key personnel (pages 42-43 and the attached resumes). The proposed director of the SRCL grant program for the state has had experience with other large federal grants (e.g., Reading First) and based on the vitae included in the appendix, she has experience with implementing Statewide literacy programs and initiatives. The other key personnel also appear to have significant background and experience with implementation of the Statewide literacy program.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (iii) The extent to which the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project, including those of: families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries.

Strengths:

The applicant provides information about the expertise of the State Literacy Team that is described as "literacy experts with diverse perspectives" (page 44). The application specifies the way in which the State Literacy Team will serve as an Advisory Team for the SRCL grant. This Advisory Team will meet regularly to provide feedback to the State regarding the implementation and progress of the grant toward the goals (pages 43-44).

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not included how families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations and libraries will be represented in the design and implementation of the proposed project (pages 44-45).

Reader's Score: 1

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. (i) The extent to which the costs described in the SEA's budget are reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project .

Sub Question

Strengths:

It is clear that the applicant proposes to implement a project that will have a significant impact on the literacy outcomes for the students in the state. The budget narrative provides details about the costs associated with such a project. In particular, the costs around the key personnel are justified in terms of the management of the project at the SEA level (pages 44-46 and the budget narrative in the Appendix).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (ii) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated as follows:

- * At least 15 percent to serve children from birth through age five.
- * At least 40 percent to serve students in kindergarten through grade five.
- * At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.

Strengths:

The applicant presents information indicating the specific amounts of the entire SRCL budget that will be provided to each of the grade spans which reflect the 15/40/40 guidelines put forth in the SRCL Federal Application. The budget narrative includes specific budget allocations which will be made for each of the subgrant categories. The applicant also states that 95% of the total SEA award amount will be granted to subgrantees as put forth in the application guidelines. The applicant documents that "individual consultations with ADE budget and compliance staff will ensure that subgrantee SRCL applications are consistent with the--use of funds" (page 47). The State will also use the State Grants Management System.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide adequate detail about how the SEA will ensure that there is an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools. For example, the applicant does not give the specific way in which the applications for subgrant awards will be awarded based on the type of secondary school (e.g., middle or high school). It would be helpful to know that the applicant has a method to monitor whether or not there will be an equitable split.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (iii) The extent to which the SEA will use the grant to leverage other State and Federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant and how it will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in integrating funds with other local, State, and Federal funds and in developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a list of both internal and external partners that will enhance the implementation of the SRCL grant. The applicant also specifies that the State is putting into place a strategic plan to sustain implementation of the essential elements of the SRCL after the grant ends (page 48). The applicant also details other grant money that the State has received to promote literacy and how it will be integrated with any new money from SRCL (pages 49-50). For example, the applicant indicates that the SEA lists First Things First, Head Start, the Helios Foundation, and the Piper Foundation as external strategic partners who can provide additional resources. The integration of money from different sources ensures the sustainability of the activities conducted under the grant to continue to promote literacy achievement in the State.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides details in the budget regarding how it will ensure that adequate funding is provided to the most high needs students being served by early learning programs. The applicant indicates that the SEA will provide support for the early learning program subgrant applicants in developing budgets as a way to ensure that the SRCL subgrant awards are of sufficient size to improve instruction for a significant number of students (page 47). Such guidance will help to ensure that the SRCL subgrant awards serve significant numbers of students and promote literacy achievement.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe the ways in which the SEA will ensure that grants of sufficient size are provided to elementary and secondary schools. Leaving out these two key sets of students means that it is unclear whether or not the SEA will be able to provide grants of sufficient size that will enhance learning outcomes in literacy.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

1. **To meet this priority, an applicant must (1) propose to use technology--which may include technology to support principles of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA)--to address student learning challenges; and (2) provide, in its application, an evidence-based (as defined in the NIA) rationale that its proposed technology program, practice, or strategy will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness.**

Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a rationale for why technology is important to incorporate into the learning setting. The applicant briefly mentions that technology can be used for both regular instruction as well as for students who require additional intervention (at Tier 2). The applicant provides evidence that technology is already being used in the state with ELL students.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides little evidence regarding how technology will be utilized to address student learning challenges. The applicant provides insufficient evidence regarding how the proposed technology program will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness. The applicant does not provide a detailed or specific description of the way in which the SEA proposes to utilize technology or the way in which the SEA will judge subgrant applications based on their use of technology.

Reader's Score: 2

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

1. **To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students.**

Background: Improving the language and literacy development of disadvantaged students is essential to improving academic achievement for these students in all content areas. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show disproportionately large numbers of disadvantaged students struggle with developing the necessary pre-literacy and literacy skills needed to read, comprehend, and use language effectively. This results in persistent gaps in academic achievement through the elementary and secondary school years and in high school graduation rates, and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

Strengths:

The applicant provides sufficiently detailed information about the curriculum models that will be used. This curriculum model includes a relevant discussion of the use of the RtI framework to ensure that those students who need additional intervention receive targeted instruction to help them achieve. The focus on intervention indicates that the State has a significant interest in enhancing outcomes for all children. The applicant has met the conditions for Absolute Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a clear path for the way in which the SEA will ensure that subgrantees who serve the most disadvantaged students will receive funding. Throughout the application, the applicant does not clearly indicate how the subgrant award process will take into account the needs of disadvantaged students. For example, it is not always clear how the applicant intends to ensure that significant numbers of disadvantaged students are served through the implementation of the literacy programs funded by the SRCL.

Reader's Score: 0

Absolute Priority 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making

1. **To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, in accordance with privacy requirements (as defined in the NIA), to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning settings and in elementary and secondary schools.**

Background: Accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate data, and the effective use of that data for informed decision-making, are essential to the continuous improvement of children's literacy and language development. In developing comprehensive literacy plans and programs, it is important for States to consider strategies that provide educators, as well as families and other key stakeholders, with the data they need and the capacity and training to use those data to improve school readiness, respond to the learning and academic needs of students, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional development practices and approaches, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development.

Strengths:

The applicant includes information about the assessment system that will be used throughout the implementation of the SRCL project (pages 10-12). In addition, the applicant provides information about the comprehensive and coherent assessment system used in the State (page 20). The information presented in the application reflects the type of data that the SEA intends to collect and the system that will be used by the LEAs and early childhood education providers who receive SRCL subgrants. The applicant has MET the

conditions for Absolute Priority 2.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses have been detailed in the earlier comments.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

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