

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Teaching & Learning (S371C110047)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	31
Sub Total	37	31
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	23.5
Sub Total	28	23.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	12.5
Sub Total	20	12.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
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	84.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - SRCL - 8: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Teaching & Learning (S371C110047)

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: 31

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 Colorado State Literacy Plan is based on the Colorado Literacy Framework which has been under development since 2009. The plan is comprehensive and comprises key components including alignment of state initiatives, reliance on research, setting clear expectations for accountability, and disseminating findings. Importantly, the plan includes an assessment system with formative, interim, and summative assessments.
- The state will provide technical assistance to LEAs to help grant recipients leverage and align funds.
- The state will review LEAs' proposals for their capacity to engage in scientifically-based instruction.
- Notification through web, newsletter and invitations to apply are adequate.
- The comprehensive literacy plan addresses program expectations at the teacher, school, and state levels making each level accountable for objective progress.
- The goals include measureable benchmarks with clear indicators.
- A strength of professional development is that building leadership teams will be required to participate and that participants will be required to implement programs with fidelity.

Weaknesses:

- The state literacy plan has not yet been implemented (p4).
- The scale used in the RFP selection criteria is a four-part categorical choice with point values assigned to each category. Because points available range from 0-10 this should be a scale where all point values can be assigned to the reviewed criteria.
- The qualifications and number of reviewers is not specified.
- The requirement that applicants score at least 108 points leaves no option if few applicants achieve that

Sub Question

score. There is no plan for a second application process and the proposal does not specify what would be done with that money.

-The application appears to be tailored to school districts, yet early childhood providers may not be school districts. The application should be revised to be user friendly to all applicants.

-It is unclear how the absolute priority of improving school readiness and success for disadvantaged students is being communicated to applicants or incorporated into review criteria.

-The professional development includes bi-yearly convenings, web-based mechanisms, and ongoing assistance from the Dept. of Ed. No evidence is presented that these are research-based, effective methods of delivering professional development.

-State leadership intends to have sufficient time to provide technical assistance but the amount of time this will take is not discussed and not reflected in the budget justification.

-The SEA proposes to use electronically-based supports for professional learning, but these supports are not specified.

Reader's Score: 9

- 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.**

Strengths:

-The SEA goals target five clearly articulated key goals/objectives designed to work together to build capacity and to improve student literacy outcomes.

-Leadership is an important component of the plan.

-Literacy coaches are included in the plan.

Weaknesses:

-No needs assessment was included in the data to inform goals.

Reader's Score: 7

- 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 types of technical assistance provided by the SEA are well specified and tied to reading research.

Weaknesses:

-It is not clear how some proposed technical assistance activities tie into other components of the proposal (e.g. demonstration sites) and how the activities will be implemented at the state level (e.g. supplying infrastructure for data collection) given the limited state budget.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 4.5

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:

- Growth modeling provides a potentially powerful way to evaluate individual childrens growth and growth at the classroom, school, and district level and to set performance goals each year.
- The proposal includes a well-thought-out plan for what should be addressed to improve literacy including oral language, reading decoding and comprehension, vocabulary, types of texts and writing. In addition plans call for systematic, explicit instruction.
- The outside evaluator will be independent of the SEA.
- The state plans to collect both formative and summative data.

Weaknesses:

- The specific schedule for formative assessments and feedback are not provided.
- Plans for 0-5 and middle/high school instruction are weak in comparison to the instructional plans for ages 5-10. For example, it is not clear what will be done to improve literacy in struggling high school readers.

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:

- The proposal includes required information.

Weaknesses:

- It is not clear how reports will be made accessible to families.

Reader's Score: 3.5

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: 23.5

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.

Sub Question

Strengths:

- The criteria used to judge LEA applications is clearly specified and meets all required criteria.
- The proposal targets disadvantaged students, requires a needs assessment from LEAs, and coordinates with the efforts of other agencies that promote literacy instruction.
- Instruction is based on scientifically-based reading research.
- The steps LEAs must take if awarded a grant are detailed and specific.
- The SEA specifies how LEAs must implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction.

Weaknesses:

- For curriculum and instructional materials that LEAs must describe in their proposal, if applicants fail to make the connection between these strategies they will not be funded (p. 38). However, funding should depend on points awarded. It is possible that an applicant could score high on other areas of the application and secure funding.
- Program expectations for children ages 0-5 are not as clearly specified as those for older students.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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 SEA provides clear priority for serving disadvantaged students.
- The SEA provides clear direction to LEAs on requirements via assurance forms and the scoring rubric.
- Background knowledge is addressed as well as other important oral language and literacy goals.

Weaknesses:

- No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

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 application process requires LEAs to show how their instructional practices and curriculum are supported by research.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

-No weaknesses noted.

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.

Strengths:

-An emphasis is placed on serving disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

-The proposal does not specifically address students living in poverty.

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:

-SEA will give priority to LEAs that support plans with research evidence.

-The SEA requires the LEAs to detail how they will use evidence to select curricula and materials.

Weaknesses:

-No weaknesses noted.

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:

-The SEA will use and update a process to review LEA proposals to insure they align with state standards and use evidence-based curricula.

-The review process is publicly available.

-The SEA requires LEAs to align curricula with State standards.

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: 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:

- The proposal includes a detailed management plan that includes a timeline, outcomes and budget allocations.
- The SEA provides clear definitions for key management components required for LEAs.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

- The project director is well qualified to direct the project, especially in the area of literacy instruction.

Weaknesses:

- The FTEs of key personnel are not provided.
- None of the key personnel have research experience that is important for designing and collecting data for project evaluation.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

- Multiple constituents have input into project design and implementation at the State level and this is carried through to requirements for the LEA level.

Weaknesses:

-No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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: 12.5

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:

-3.25 FTE is devoted to project activities at the SEA level. This helps to insure that SEA activities will be completed as planned.

Weaknesses:

-More detail is needed to determine whether costs are reasonable. Information in the application about the budget and the budget narrative are lacking important detail.

Reader's Score: 4

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 SEAs plan insures that funds are allocated as required.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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 SEA says that it plans to leverage other State funds.

Weaknesses:

-The plan to leverage State funds lacks specificity.

Reader's Score: 2

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 proposed allocations to LEAs is sufficient in total to meet grant requirements.
-The structure of grants allows applicants to specialize in particular age ranges.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The lack of budget detail makes it difficult to judge whether individual subgrants will be of sufficient size. A more detailed budget narrative is needed.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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 proposes to use technology to support professional development, for interactive texts, to complement content area knowledge, and to hold LEAs accountable for use of technology.

Weaknesses:

The rationale for proposed technology uses is not grounded in research and not well developed.

Reader's Score: 3

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:

-Priority met.

-The SEA lays out detailed plans for improving school readiness and success in school, particularly for elementary school grades.

Weaknesses:

-Plans tailoring instruction for ages 0-5 and middle and high school are needed.

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:

-Priority met.

-The SEA proposes to use both qualitative and quantitative data to inform teaching and decision making.

Weaknesses:

-No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 0

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Applicant: Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Teaching & Learning (S371C110047)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	28
Sub Total	37	28
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	23.5
Sub Total	28	23.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	10
Sub Total	20	10
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
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	77.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - SRCL - 8: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Teaching & Learning (S371C110047)

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: 28

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 overall goals of Colorado's SRCL Plan are identified and will focus on: formative assessment, five components of reading, nonfiction literacy/writing, oral language and vocabulary. The SEA will focus on completing the State Literacy Plan, coordination and alignment of resources and strategies, build out by grade level and focus area, piloting of instructional strategies in the LEA grantee districts, and the provision of technical assistance /professional development for the LEAs.

The State will administer and score the sub grant applications with the RFP included in the State SRCL proposal. The State Literacy Review Committee will include a diverse representation of constituencies. The State is a member of the Common Core Standards group that will provide direction for the alignment of the district to the state literacy plans. The alignment of the formative and summative assessment will also be supported because of the State's participation in the Common Core Standards committees.

Weaknesses:

The State Literacy Plan will be completed on September, 2011. Until then, the alignment of the State SCRL Plans to other Plans can be only generally described. The Additional Requirements specified in Section d are listed in a bulleted format (p. e10), but there are no details to describe how the activities will be carried out.

Reader's Score: 8

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 goals for improving student literacy are well defined. Specific outcomes, in terms of an increased percentage of students meeting proficiency standards, are described for each age band. The State level assessment data are cited to demonstrate the static or dropping trend of student achievement in the overall and disaggregated scores.

Weaknesses:

A state needs assessment has not been conducted; therefore, the proposal goals appear to be selected from a review of literature rather than from the review and matching of specific needs within the State.

Reader's Score: 6

- 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 State will communicate progress concerning the local piloting of instructional strategies to the Colorado school districts.

Technical support will be provided to grantees in the form of professional development in areas identified by local data and support State goals. The training will reflect research-based models of literacy instruction.

The districts will conduct a needs assessment to drive and inform their plans. The LEA literacy coaches will be trained to provide support to their own and other districts. The coaches at the district will be the point person for data review and planning based on the results of formative assessment.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear if the State will have the capacity to provide adequate technical assistance at the early stage of SRCL implementation. This would reduce the capacity of LEAs to implement high-quality literacy programs.

Reader's Score: 4

- 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 State will contract with an independent evaluator who has a background in literacy and reading. The evaluator will monitor the implementation and success of the State Plan. The evaluator will design a rigorous study that measures outcomes against state goals.

The State will guide the evaluator to develop a study design that includes State and LEA goals and outcomes. Yearly reports will be written as well as a comprehensive evaluation report at the end of the grant period.

The State Plans to review formative and summative reports from each of the grantees twice per year. The State evaluator will provide an overall on a yearly basis. The Literacy coaches at the State and Local levels will present their findings across the district. The State will create an Advisory Committee to meet 2-3 times per year to discuss findings and articulate improvements across the birth - grade 12

Sub Question

spectrum.

Weaknesses:

The SEA does not specify that the evaluator should have experience conducting large evaluations and in designing studies focusing on validity.

The budget does not specify an allocation for the evaluator which makes it difficult to determine if the funds will be sufficient.

The SEA does not specify plans for data collection for any category other than student achievement.

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:

The State will report findings via a special portal dedicated to the SCRL grant. In addition, reports prepared for the Commissioner of Education, State Board, Governor's Office, legislature, and superintendents of the sub grants will be disseminated. The State intends to use all collected data to inform continuous improvement.

Weaknesses:

The SEA does not specify how information on project outcomes will be released in a family-friendly format, making results less understandable to lay people.

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**

Reader's Score: 23.5

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:

The State's prepared sub grant application is thorough. The rubrics for scoring the LEA proposals will provide consistency to the scoring process. The application requires the LEAs to describe each of the components outlined in the SCRL RFP. The papers will be blind reviewed.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The SEA does not describe the number of reviewers that will score each application. Multiple reviewers are needed to insure a rigorous, high-quality competition. Without these items, it is difficult to know how the SEA will be judging subgrantees capacity for success.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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 SEA considered all required groups in their definition of students who are disadvantaged including those with disabilities, those receiving free and reduced priced lunch, and ELL students. The State goals recognize the need for increasing background knowledge of students from low-income families. The early childhood program will focus on oral language and vocabulary development. The nonfiction literacy focus will support the growth of background knowledge that can increase reading comprehension.

LEA applicants will be required to conduct a needs assessment to inform development of their program plan. Proposed data will be scored against the State rubric.

Each LEA applicant is required to provide evidence of collaboration with other funding agencies to strengthen the support for their plan and to develop ways to sustain the activities after the grant period is completed.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 8

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 requirements for the LEAs are directly aligned to those written in the SRCL RFP. LEAs will be required to demonstrate a coherent strategy aligned to strategies of other funding agencies. The scoring rubric specifically addresses this requirement.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Sub Question

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.**

Strengths:

The State proposes to focus on the urban and rural districts in Colorado, which tend to be the most poverty-stricken. Poverty is defined as receipt of free or reduced-priced lunch.

Weaknesses:

The LEA application requires that LEAs receiving SRCL monies will emphasize funding students with disabilities and who are non-native English speakers, but the priority to prioritize funding for students from high-poverty areas is not clear in directions to the LEAs.

The SEA states that geographic distribution should be considered by LEAs when selecting grantees. It is unclear how "distribution" is defined and how it is different from geographic "location".

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 LEA application will be scored based on whether solid evidence is provided for a specific literacy program.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

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:

The sub grant application has been fully developed. When the State completes its Comprehensive State Literacy Plan, the LEA application will be adjusted and realigned, if necessary. The process for reviewing and the outcomes of the reviews will be posted on the State SRCL website.

Weaknesses:

None 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: 13

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 SEA presents a comprehensive timeline of tasks/activities, designated responsibilities, milestones, and funding sources. Together these components form the basis of a strong management plan.

Weaknesses:

The hiring of the evaluator three months after the grant is funded will not allow for collection of early implementation data.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

Most of the staff are internal to the State Department and are aware of the history and requirements of the system.

An external evaluator will be contracted to complete the State evaluation. The State evaluator will also work with the local evaluators.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear whether one of the project directors has sufficient experience to head a literacy project. She has considerable experience and training in math education, but not in literacy projects.

Given the early phase of the SRCL Plan development, the Management Team may need additional FTE to get the plan implemented within the proposed timeline.

The qualifications of the evaluator are not specified.

Reader's Score: 4

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 SEA lists a number of participating agencies that have contributed their perspectives to the design of the SRCL project, including Wilder, political party representatives, faculty, school district personnel and early childhood leaders.

The State Literacy Team, which is already in the process of developing the SRCL Plan, represents a number of varying perspectives.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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: 10

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 State will hire two literacy staff to support training for sub grantees, one project director and one .25 FTE finance manager. This is reasonable given the scope of the project.

Weaknesses:

The budget and budget justification for the SRCL plan do not supply enough detail to evaluate whether all costs are reasonable. For example, the personnel line is not itemized and it is difficult to determine how salary amounts are allocated.

The SEA plan provides only a broad estimate of the number of students who might be served by the funds (12,000 - 15,000); the data to calculate the budget for students is not available.

Itemized costs are not provided for the contracted evaluator, supplies, equipment or travel.

Reader's Score: 2

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 SEA will distribute 95% of the funding to sub grant applicants and will distribute it according to regulations.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 4

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 State lists a number of collaborative endeavors. The United Way, the group for National Core Standards, the Colorado Pre School Program, the Results Matter program and higher institutions through the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids are included. Some collaborative efforts are already underway, such as the Colorado Legacy Foundation's proposal for an Integration Grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Weaknesses:

The extent of ties with organizations, other than the United Way, are not described in detail and may not serve as a strong foundation for support.

Reader's Score: 2

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:

Rubrics for scoring the LEA proposals include factors that will help reviewers determine legitimate costs associated with each project, and thus permit allocation of funds based on project needs.

Weaknesses:

The State's Plan does not provide sufficient detail to determine if adequate funding will be awarded.

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 sub grant application evaluates the LEAs' rationale for employing technology and how it will be used to improve learning outcomes. The main focus for instructional technology will be the inclusion of interactive texts.

Weaknesses:

The State's use of technology is primarily through training webinars. This includes no use of technology for improving student outcomes at the State level.

The rationale and the research to support the use of interactive texts, which is suggested as one use of technology for LEAs, is absent.

Reader's Score: 3

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 State Plan will include several important components of a good literacy program such as focusing on the five components of literacy outlined by the National Reading Plan. Other features to be targeted include increasing oral language and vocabulary development, nonfiction writing and formative assessment.

Weaknesses:

The State Plan is not written. Therefore, the proposal provides general requirements and direction but no details. The proposal overall provides little clarity for the LEAs that decide to apply.

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 SEA proposes several methods of data collection. The focus on formative assessment is fundamental to the SEA strategy for increasing data-driven decisions. The sub grant recipients and the evaluators will be required to submit regular reports for review by the Literacy Review Panel. The literacy coach and the data coordinator will also play a key role in analyzing and summarizing data to guide general instructional directions. The sub grant applicants will also be required to conduct a needs assessment to provide data to support their Plan.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how training will be provided to enable data-driven decisions. The LEA Literacy Coaches will be responsible for analyzing formative test results, but this may be difficult to accomplish because of the large volume of data collected.

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: Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Teaching & Learning (S371C110047)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	26.5
Sub Total	37	26.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	23.5
Sub Total	28	23.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	10.5
Sub Total	20	10.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
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	75.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - SRCL - 8: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Teaching & Learning (S371C110047)

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: 26.5

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:

1. The state Literacy Plan is scheduled for completion by September 30, 2011. The Plan will be based on the Colorado Literacy Framework developed in 2009-10, which addresses beliefs about literacy learning (called "content elements" in the Framework) (pp.8- 10). These research-supported beliefs can provide a foundation for literacy processes and activities that are comprehensive in nature.
2. Colorado's commitment to literacy is evidenced by the confluence of programs currently in place (i.e., Colorado Read to Achieve, United Way Literacy Plan, Colorado Basic Literacy Act, and others) (pp. 4-8). This proposal promises to align these projects with the SRCL grant (p. 8). Such alignment is crucial to maintain focus, eliminate competition or duplication, and avoid conflicting literacy practices.
3. Areas of focus for the project are derived from the Common Core Standards, which Colorado adopted (p. 1). This will ensure that schools are working from the most recent thinking on literacy needs for today's students.
4. The proposal specifies the five components of effective literacy instruction as defined by the National Reading Panel (p. 13). The applicant justifies this focus by citing research from nationally known experts and some seminal studies (p. 24). A focus on these components will help to assure a comprehensive literacy program.
5. The proposal includes a list of expectations for reading teachers and building leadership that addresses all components of Additional Requirements in section d of the RFP (p. 14-15) with the exception of Item (6) which is addressed in the Evaluation section below (Aiv). This list will hold schools accountable for SRCL implementation as it is intended by Federal regulations.

Weaknesses:

1. The sub-grant application is tailored to school districts. It is unclear whether early childhood providers will be able to adapt the application to their contexts (Attachment--Request for Proposals).

Reader's Score: 9

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

Sub Question

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.

Strengths:

1. The plan lists eight activities the State will undertake to implement its SRCL plan. The steps address alignment of initiatives, best practices, professional development, technical assistance, accountability, and dissemination of what works (pp. 10-11). Fidelity to these steps will ensure that important issues are not left to chance.
2. The Colorado Department of Education will analyze the research base provided in sub-grant applications to determine if it meets the needs of the target population (p. 12). Research is most effective when applied in the appropriate context.
3. Aggregate student achievement data were provided as evidence of the need for the project (p. 19).

Weaknesses:

1. Different list of what the State hopes to achieve were confusing. It was difficult to sort out overriding goals and objectives for the state and local levels. (Lists were labeled outcome objectives, strategies and activities, focus areas, goals, content elements) (Abstract, p. 1-2, p. 10).
2. Disaggregated student achievement data were only provided for grade 3 (p. 20).
3. There is no evidence that a needs assessment was used to determine the focus of the proposal.

Reader's Score: 6.5

- 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:

1. Sub-grant recipients will be provided a grant implementation tool to assure fidelity and accountability. The SEA will use this tool to make decisions about necessary feedback and support (p. 14).
2. The Colorado Department of Education will help sub-grant recipients to conduct a "resource asset audit" to identify and align funding streams (pp. 12, 43). This process will help LEAs sustain their efforts when SRCL funds expire.
3. The Colorado Department of Education will provide online resources such as scientifically-based research and best practices from in-state and out-of-state experts (pp. 11, 24, 33). This will help busy schools and districts to focus on implementation rather than the background work.
4. The proposal addresses "students' achievement in core academic subjects" through a strong commitment to nonfiction literacy (pp. 26-29).
5. Colorado Department of Education Literacy Coaches will support local level coaches through monthly phone conferences, webinars, regional conferences, and electronic communications, and at least one site visit per year (pp. 32-33).

Weaknesses:

1. The applicant states the Colorado Center for Literacy Research will be established in partnership with the Governor's literacy initiatives other professional organizations (p. 32). The roles and responsibilities of this Center are not explained.

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

- 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:

1. The project will employ an external evaluator (p. 13). This should ensure an impartial assessment of results.
2. Multiple data sources of student achievement will be gathered (p. 22). This will enable triangulation, thus resulting in a more reliable assessment of progress.
3. The evaluation will include both quantitative and qualitative data (p. 34). This will allow for measurement of objective results as well as perceptions and attitudes, which often have great impact on the success of an initiative.
4. Sub-grants will be required to provide data annually for GPR requirements as well as qualitative data on lessons learned (pp. 6, 34, Attachment-Request for Proposal).

Weaknesses:

1. Grant applicants of all kinds (Federal, state, foundations) frequently work with an evaluator prior to submitting the proposal. The potential evaluator helps to prepare the evaluation section of the proposal. This approach would have resulted in a stronger evaluation proposal as well as assuring that the evaluator would be ready to begin immediately upon notification of funding. At the very least, a State Department of Education professional with expertise in research could help to craft the evaluation section of the proposal.
2. Research questions to guide the evaluation are not included in the proposal.
3. Data collection procedures are not defined.
4. The proposal does not state that stakeholders other than LEAs will provide data for the evaluation (i.e., parents, community members, organizational partners, etc.).
5. Data analysis protocols are not defined.
6. A timeline for gathering and evaluating data is not included.
7. Page 34 indicates the external evaluator will report performance measures annually. There is no indication that the evaluator will touch base with key personnel before that time or provide interim reports in order to allow for "just-in-time" corrections to the program.
8. A desired outcome for the project is to increase, by six to ten points, the percentage of participating students who achieve significant gains in oral language and proficiency on the state English Language Arts assessment (Abstract, p. 21). Baseline data were used (p. 18,) but it is unclear how the percentages were determined or why the secondary school goal is less than the early childhood and elementary goals.
9. The budget does not specify an amount for the evaluator so it is uncertain whether an adequate amount will be allocated to ensure a comprehensive and high quality evaluation.

Reader's Score: 4

- 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:

1. The Colorado Department of Education envisions the sub-grants as "pilots" of instructional strategies, focused particularly on ELLs and students with disabilities (p4). "What works" will be shared with sub-grant sites as well as other LEAs and schools in the state (p. 12).
2. The Colorado Department of Education will disaggregate data by student subgroups and submit reports to the Commissioner of Education, State BOE, Governor and Lieutenant Governor's office, Legislature, and superintendents of sub-grant districts. The report will also be posted on the Colorado SRLC website (p. 36).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

1. The proposal does not indicate how project outcomes will be created in formats that are easily understood and accessible to the public, including families.

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

Reader's Score: 23.5

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:

1. The proposal includes a complete application packet for sub-grants. Instructions, forms, requirements, and rubrics are thorough (Attachment- Request for Proposal).
2. The sub-grant RFP delineates the meaning of "Effective Literacy Instruction" for this competition and spells out what effective literary instruction means in the birth to age 5 setting (pp. 3-4, Attachment-Request for Proposal). These definitions should clarify expectations for the use of sub-grant funds.
3. The sub-grant RFP includes 2 1/2 pages of assurances to which the applicant must agree. The assurances range from budgets and reporting to classroom instruction (pp. 1, 8, Attachment-Request for Proposal). The list leaves little chance for misunderstanding of expectations.
4. Sub-grant proposals will be blind reviewed (p. 13). This will ensure a fair process.
5. Sub-grant recipients will be required to hire a reading/literacy coach to provide professional development and instruction for teachers (p. 44). This will help to build capacity for success.
6. Sub-grant applicants are required to describe a sustainability plan that shows how their efforts to improve literacy achievement will continue when grant funds expire (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

1. All feedback for sub-grant reviews will become publicly available "upon request" (p. 13). Requiring that interested parties must request feedback makes the information less accessible.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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.

Sub Question

(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:

1. The State RFP includes a section on needs assessment. Applicants can receive up to 17 points (of 156 total) for providing data that supports the target population of disadvantaged and limited English proficient students (p. 25-Request for Proposal).
2. At least some professional development will be presented at the local level, based on unique needs of the school (p. 15). Desired results are more likely when needs are locally determined.
3. Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy coaches will meet regularly to support teachers in making data-driven instructional decisions (p. 32). Regular support will help to provide busy teachers with issues they face but may not always have the expertise or time to explore on their own.
4. Priority points will be given to Local Education Agency applicants that partner with a public or private nonprofit organization or agency serving higher percentages of disadvantaged children (p. 37).
5. The RFP specifies all requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section (Attachment-Request for Proposal)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

- 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:

1. Sub-grants are required to craft outcome objectives that are specific to their community's needs, challenges, population, and proposed program (p. 22). This can lead to a coherent project that is more likely to improve student achievement.
2. The RFP rubric evaluates the extent to which sub-grant proposals will align with other funding sources (Attachment-Request for Proposal).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

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.**

Strengths:

1. The SEA will send personal invitations to apply for sub-grants to regions and districts based on demographics and student needs (p. 14).
2. Up to 10 points (of 156 total) can be awarded for sub-grant proposals that target disadvantaged students and ELLs (p. 25, Attachment-Request for Proposal).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

1. The proposal does not make clear the extent to which high-poverty populations will be served.

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:

1. Sub-grant applicants will be required to address research-based language and literacy interventions to be used. The CDE will examine the research presented to assure it meets the needs of the population to be served and aligns with state standards (p. 38). This will assure that research cited is credible and relevant.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

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:

1. LEAs will be required to align curricula and materials as stated in the RFP (Attachment-Request for Proposal).

Weaknesses:

1. The applicant repeats the RFP language stating that the Colorado Department of Education "will employ an existing process to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with state standards for the curricula and materials" that sub-grants specify (pp. 12-13). However, it is unclear what that process is.

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: 12

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:

1. The plan includes an adequate timeline for major activities (pp. 39-42).
2. The timeline specifies when professional development sessions will be offered and who will conduct those sessions (p. 41).

Weaknesses:

1. Statements listed as "milestones" are primarily activities. For example, committee meetings, webinars, and evaluation compilation do not meet the definition of "milestone" (as per Webster: A significant point in development) (p. e27).
2. Hiring an evaluator three months after the grant is awarded (p. 40) will mean project start-up is not documented. This is a critical time in a grant's implementation and could mean opportunities missed for early course corrections.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

1. One of the directors of the project, Laura Benson, has extensive qualifications and experience in literacy instruction (Appendix B).

Weaknesses:

1. It is unclear whether one of the directors of the project, Melissa Colman, has the literacy background to lead a Striving Readers project. Her masters and PhD are in mathematics, and with the exception of the past year, all her experience has been in mathematics instruction (Appendix B).
2. Qualifications for the external evaluator are not included.

Reader's Score: 3

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:

1. The Advisory Committee will include representation from the Governor's office and the General Assembly (p. 35). This will leverage political power to institutionalize successful outcomes.
2. The Advisory Committee will include educators, politicians, community members and representatives from the business community in order to assure a diversity of perspectives (p. 34-35).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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: 10.5

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:

1. The budget provides for 3.5 FTEs. This will ensure capacity to implement the project (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

1. The amount of time (in hours or percentage) to be expended by each position is not defined.
2. The rate and base on which fringe benefits are calculated is not included.
3. The travel allocation does not provide an estimate for number of trips or an itemized estimate of transportation and subsistence.
4. The estimated unit cost for equipment is not included.
5. An itemized estimate for supplies and the basis for the estimate are not included.
6. There is no indication of how much time the project will spend with contracted personnel and organizations. \$139,036 per year does not seem adequate to cover expenses for professional development and an external evaluator.
7. The basis for cost estimates for contractors is not included.
8. There is no indication of how much time the evaluator will spend on the project.
9. Itemized costs for professional development are not included.

Reader's Score: 3

- 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:

1. Sub-grants will be allocated according to statutory requirements (pp. 9, 43).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

1. Coordination and alignment of resources, including state and Federal funds, is one of five key objectives listed in the proposal (p. 2).

Weaknesses:

1. The proposal does not address sustainability at the state level.

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:

1. The project aims to serve 12,000 to 15,000 students in 8-15 sites (Abstract, p. 44, p. 4 of Attachment-Request for Proposal).

Weaknesses:

1. The budget does not provide adequate detail to determine if subgrants are of sufficient size to meet the stated goals (Budget Narrative).

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:

1. The applicant proposes to provide students with interactive texts and resources to strengthen literacy acquisition (Abstract).
2. Technology will be used to complement and integrate content area studies (Abstract).
3. There will be a concerted effort to give greater access to technology to disadvantaged students and to ELLs and their families (p.2).
4. Technology will be used to evaluate and communicate student growth over time (p. 2).
5. Professional development will include how to utilize technology for the five essential components of literacy and how to complement and integrate content area studies (p. 2).
6. The Colorado Department of Education will use technology for professional learning with webinars and video-streaming (pp. 18, 33). This will make access easier for some educators as well as keep information on effective literacy practices current.
7. The Colorado Department of Education will support and evaluate LEA's implementation of technology in the classrooms (p. 2). This will assure implementation fidelity.

Weaknesses:

1. The sub-grant scoring provides for only 3 additional points (of 156 total) for applicants with a strong technology component. Since this is only 1% of the possible points it does not seem to send a message of "high priority" to sub-grant applicants.

Reader's Score: 3

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:

PRIORITY MET

1. There is a focus on oral and written language development and academic vocabulary, particularly for early learners and ELLs (pp. 1-2).
2. Priority will be given to sub-grants who target a greater percentage of students who are disadvantaged, ELL, or receive free and reduced price meals (p. 37, p. 5 Attachment-Request for Proposal).
3. Priority will be given to sub-grants who partner with a public or private non-profit organization serving higher percentages of disadvantaged children (p. 37).

Weaknesses:

1. Goals listed for the State Literacy Plan are actually activities. Verbs like provide, support, and create do not guarantee improved learning outcomes. Goals for the State Literacy Plan should be articulated in terms of change desired. For example, what student achievement results are desired as a result of "providing tools to eliminate gaps"? What results are desired for the professional development that will be "provided"? (p. 10).

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:

PRIORITY MET

1. One of the four focus areas of the SEA proposal is to develop a formative assessment feedback methodology for data-based decision-making (p. 23).
2. Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy coaches will meet regularly to support teachers in making data-driven instructional decisions (p. 32).

Weaknesses:

1. A specific requirement for professional development for teachers on data-driven decision making is not included in the proposal.
2. The sub-grant scoring provides for only 3 additional points (of 156 total) for applicants with a strong data component.

Reader's Score: 0

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