

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/23/11 12:00 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Florida Department of Education -- FL Department of Education JRF! and OEL (S371C110021)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	33.5
Sub Total	37	33.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	25.5
Sub Total	28	25.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	16
Sub Total	20	16
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	92.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SRCL - 3: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Florida Department of Education -- FL Department of Education JRF! and OEL

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: 33.5

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:

(i) (a) FL has proposed a plan that will strengthen and further develop their existing efforts to provide high quality effective teaching to accelerate student progress and close the achievement gap in literacy and other skills. The existing state-level literacy plan and activities provide a strong base for the efforts proposed in the application and demonstrate a commitment to the goals of the SRCL program; with a specific focus on disadvantaged at risk children (p. 1- 4).

(c) There is step-by-step process to make the process, the review, evaluation and results of subgrant applications transparent to the public and relevant organizations and to help applicants address all critical aspects of evidence-based literacy instruction (p. 20-35).

(d) (1) (2) A State Literacy Team, made up of key education leaders (Appendix C), has been established to guide the implementation, management, and oversight of the of the SRCL, the LEAs' efforts and the overall state reading program (p. 1- 4). FLDOE will ensure that funds are used to deliver a comprehensive literacy curriculum that is aligned with the Florida state standards (i.e., Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, the Common Core State Standards, and the FL Early Learning and Development Standards for Four-Year-Olds. FLDOE will improve the use of four types of assessments to guide literacy instruction; and will assist schools and teachers in developing their expertise (i.e., professional development) (p. 1- 4). Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR; staffed by leading literacy researchers) currently supports state-wide efforts by providing high quality, evidence-based teacher training and professional development, scientifically-based literacy curricula, evaluation and development, and teacher certification. As part of the application FCRR, will help to ensure that the LEAs' curricula and instructional materials are aligned with state standards and incorporate effective literacy instruction (p. 1- 4).

d (3) There is a description of student level outcomes assessments (p. 14- 18) that use reliable and valid literacy measures noted in a review in Appendix B. A noted strength is that ALL will use the same screening, progress monitoring and outcome assessments from pre-K to high school. Students' scores will be entered into the database (known as the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network; PMRN). This will allow evaluators to make systematic comparisons across students, classrooms, schools, grade levels and the sites state-wide.

d (4) The PMRN will allow teachers to monitor and fine-tune the classroom interventions for individual students to ensure all children's educational needs are met (p.9). Small group instruction will be used to increase the intensity and duration of instruction for children who are struggling. An RtI model (p. 11) will also to used to provide supplemental classroom interventions where needed.

d (5) Inherent to the applicant's proposal to implement scientifically-based literacy curricula state-wide is the provision of literacy rich environments (p. 9) for young children and instructional settings for older students that stimulate active thinking while reading (p. 4) and supports their comprehension.

d (6) The FLDOE administers a single, state-wide database (the PRMN) that contains information from all

Sub Question

school districts, colleges, and universities. This database (a noted strength in across many aspects of this proposal) will allow the applicant to systematically track student performance across time and varied educational sectors; to effectively monitor and fine tune the subgrantees' efforts, and to monitor and track the implementation and outcomes of the project's efforts at all levels, ECE, school, classroom and student (p. 1- 4).

Weaknesses:

(i) (b) There was no mention of how the SEA would align the use of federal and state funding.

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:

Using data derived from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), the applicant demonstrates the clear need to address children's reading achievement statewide. The use of multiple data points indicates where the gaps appear in children's progress at the elementary, middle and secondary levels and therefore, where the applicant can best target efforts (p. 4-8).

The applicant lists five goals that are key to student achievement on p. 8 and elaborates on these on pages 10-12; e.g., preventing the achievement gap from beginning; cutting the achievement gap by 50% by 2015 as evidenced by higher scores on the FCAT; and increasing high school retention across the four years, and so forth.

The applicant states that at risk children (i.e., special needs, limited-English-proficient-or low-income children) will be identified in the pre-K years (or as early as possible) (p. 9; 11).

Weaknesses:

none

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:

The applicant mentions that the Just Read Florida Office will provide the necessary and relevant technical assistance and support to the SCL grantees. These efforts will involve the initial and ongoing staff development to all early childhood education providers, school based-coaches, and a mandated instructional plan that will require at least 90 min per day is devoted to reading at the elementary level, and if needed, a double block at the middle and secondary levels. Teachers will be trained to provide screening and early identification of children who are at-risk for reading difficulties (p. 9). Technical assistance will focus on increasing learning rate, intensity of instruction, and individualizing the curriculum efforts to target children's specific needs (p. 9).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

none

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:

(1) To evaluate their efforts, the applicant proposes a comprehensive two-level evaluation plan. This approach will ensure that different perspectives are considered and the evaluation is thorough. For example, one evaluation will be conducted by reading researchers at FCRR focusing on outcomes and changes at the early childhood, and early learning center levels and the LEA and school level in children's literacy achievement from pre-K through high school (i.e., the student level). Another evaluation will be carried out by a hired independent contractor to examine leadership quality and effectiveness within the FLDOE, quality of data provided by FCRR, and the relative impact of FLDOE's professional development efforts (i.e., the state level) (p. 13).

(2) Specific questions to be addressed by FCRR at the student level will examine the extent to which the activities (broadly construed) supported by the SRCL funding improve children's reading outcomes; differences between and across programs and schools in these outcomes; and the extent to which the LEAs implement their proposed program (p. 14). These questions are nicely aligned with the goals of the study. These questions focus on the evaluation of student progress, and will provide an evaluation of the LEAs' efforts across different settings statewide. This will allow evaluators to determine whether what is effective in one location for particular groups of children, is equally effective in another.

The applicant provides a very detailed description of how student level outcomes will be assessed (p. 14- 18) using reliable and valid literacy measures. A technical review of these measures is included in Appendix B.

A noted strength of the student level evaluation is that schools who participate in the SRCL program will ALL use the SAME screening, progress monitoring and outcome assessments from pre-K to high school. Students' scores will be entered into the database (known as the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network; PMRN). This will allow evaluators to make systematic comparisons across students, classrooms, schools, grade levels and the sites state-wide.

The applicant describes the intended student level assessments in detail. For example, information is provided on the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR)-- what it measures, the reliability, a review by BUROS center for testing (see Appendix B), and how teachers will be trained to use the FAIR system. The Pre-K assessments are also described in detail and the applicant includes information about their development, what they measure, their psychometric properties, and so forth.

The applicant lists several questions to be addressed at the state level evaluation that are relevant to and also aligned with the overall stated goals of the project (p. 18-19); e.g., how well the applicant has involved stakeholder groups statewide; leadership effectiveness; evaluation of the LEA applicant process; strengths and weaknesses of the overall state wide efforts, and so forth.

(3) As mentioned above, the student assessments are entered into the PMRN database. From this system teachers can generate reports about their classrooms to be able to make decisions for individual student performance, principals can monitor their schools' progress, district officials can see the overall picture of their efforts on multiple levels, and the FCRR evaluators for the SRCL can monitor the LEAs' efforts (p. 17). This assessment system supported by technology, will provide the necessary evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of the SRCL activities and to determine whether the broad goals are being targeted; i.e., ideally the most at-risk children are identified, tracked, and impacted. These proposed methods at the student level, while quite extensive, will provide a comprehensive and accurate portrait of programmatic effectiveness.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

- (2) The evaluation method(s) to answer the state level questions was not provided.
- (3) Because the method of evaluation at the state level was not provided in any detail, it remains unclear how the SEA will inform and continuously improve design and implementation of its activities at the state level.

Reader's Score: 7.5

- 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:

In a short paragraph on page 19 and a bullet point on page 38, the applicant mentions publishing reports summarizing student level outcomes by mid-August for each of the funding years. This effort will help to disseminate information to stakeholders and will help to inform decision making each year.

Weaknesses:

none

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: 25.5

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:

(i) The applicant has outlined a fairly detailed plan for running a rigorous competition for the subgrants. A guidance document detailing the goals of the SRCL program and how to prepare a high quality proposal will be distributed to school districts and potential subgrantees (p. 24). This is intended to help applicants address all critical aspects of evidence-based literacy instruction (p. 20-35). Requests for proposals and a guidance document prepared by the applicant will be sent to FL school districts (p. 35) in early September, 2011. The guidance document is intended to help LEAs develop proposals that are consistent with the goals and of the SRCL program (p. 20). Technical assistance in proposal development will be available via webinars, conference calls, and regional meetings (p. 35). In addition, an outside evaluator will be responsible for evaluating the rigor, consistency, and transparency of the process used to evaluate the LEA application (p. 19). The applicant provides a detailed plan for making this information publicly available and the procedures that will be used to review the applications and the LEAs proposed curricula and materials. FCRR will participate in the reviewing of LEA subgrant proposals (p. 24).

Sub Question

The review process will be conducted by the Just Read Florida Office and university faculty identified by/associated with the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR). Each application will be reviewed by a well-qualified team with knowledge of evidence-based instructional practices that promote literacy development who will use a clearly defined step-by-step, points-based system (p. 24-28). Only applicants that receive 80% of the available points under each review criteria will be awarded an SRCL subgrant (p. 25).

(a) To ensure that the LEAs are successful in their capacity to implement their proposals, Florida Dept of Education (FLDOE) will judge the LEAs' capacity to implement their proposals based on the criteria described in section (b) below. In addition, grant recipients will be systematically supervised and monitored by FLDOE. For example, they will be required to sign partnership agreements; to agree to attend all staff development sessions (including the train-the-trainer staff development, and the five-day institute) (p. 37), to hire staff with input and approval from FLDOE, to document the scientific validity and effectiveness of their instructional materials; and to participate fully in annual state-level evaluations (p. 36-37). These efforts are clear evidence of rigor and quality in running the competition and the implementation of the projects.

Weaknesses:

none

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:

(b) To address the extent to which each subgrant applicant has proposed comprehensive high quality literacy programs, FLDOE has outlined four key absolute priorities and two additional competitive priorities that exceed the Federal requirements of the SRCL guidelines that the applicants must address. These requirements will ensure that the subgrant applicants have met the key benchmarks for high quality. For example, a competitive and fundable proposal will be required to address the four absolute priorities: 1) focus on improving student literacy in preschools and schools that serve high proportions of at-risk children; 2) identify clusters of participating schools that constitute a feeder pattern for high schools; 3) design a plan for holding school leaders accountable for implementation and outcomes of the SRCL subgrants; and 4) describe methods, training, and support for data-based instruction, including a plan for training staff in using the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) database system for tracking student progress; and two competitive priorities: 1) LEA applicants whose feeder pattern extends to pre-k; and 2) the use of technology to support high quality instruction (p. 20-24).

In addition to the need to the absolute and competitive requirements, subgrant proposals must meet the requirements of the SRCL. For example, all elements of a proposal must be consistent with scientifically-based research, and outcomes must be aligned with the FL state standards (p. 24). Subgrantees must provide fairly detailed information about 1) the rationale and method for identifying the schools that will participate and 2) their intended feeder pattern; 3) the curriculum and instructional materials they will use to address the literacy development of highly diverse populations of at-risk students (special needs, ELL, low-income); 4) the use of assessments to improve instruction (all schools will use the same screening and assessment instruments); 5) the intended intervention in terms of nature, intensity and schedule; particularly for at-risk children; 6) the plans for professional development and agreement to

Sub Question

participate in FLDOE professional development; 7) a leadership plan; 8) how other agencies will be included in LEA efforts; and 9) how funds will be used to support language rich learning environments (p. 29-34). These efforts indicate that the applicant will ensure that the LEAs will develop and maintain high quality literacy programs.

In addition, (as stated above in (a)), grantees will be required to provide evidence their instructional materials are consistent with scientifically based reading research (p. 35).

(1) FLDOE states that the LEAs will be required to focus on economically and linguistically disadvantaged students (p. 20). Funding to LEAs will be allocated to districts and schools with substantial instructional challenges associated with children from low income families and who are English language learners (ELLs); e.g., schools must serve a student population with at least 60% qualifying for free or reduced lunch or they must have 15% ELL students.

(2) FLDOE states that LEAs will be required to show how they will make significant improvements across multiple levels of schools using a feeder pattern of school support for participating high schools, middle schools and elementary schools with demonstrated need. Additional points will be awarded to their application score if the pattern can be extended to the Pre-K level (p. 21).

(3) FLDOE states LEAs will be required to describe how other agencies, non-profits, community-based organizations, and families will be involved in their efforts to improve children's literacy outcomes (p. 33). For example, applicants will be asked to specify how parents will be made aware of change efforts at the school; how organizations can be incorporated within the LEA efforts to improve student outcomes.

Weaknesses:

none

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:

As part of the subgrant application, LEAs will be required to describe how they will leverage other state and federal funds to assist schools in their efforts (p. 27). They must discuss how they will allocate these funds to support their activities detailed in the subgrant application.

Weaknesses:

There was no specific information how the applicant will determine that the subgrantees have aligned their efforts with state and federal funding.

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:

(ii) The applicant mentions that at least 15% of the SRCL funds must be spent on children birth to age 5 (p. 21) and of these 60% need to be low income or 15% ELL. As mentioned above, the applicant states that a competitive priority will be given to LEAs who extend their feeder programs to pre-k programs (i).

Sub Question

e., 5 points extra to their score) (p. 26).

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 6

- 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 made it clear that priority will be given to applications that are supported by the strongest evidence possible (p. 20-21).

Weaknesses:

none

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:

In an effort to ensure that the subgrantees have aligned their projects with state standards and are effectively implementing their projects as proposed, the FLDOE plans to publish reports made by the FCRR and independent evaluators in August each year (p. 39).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not specify how these reports would be specifically used to inform or update efforts (p. 39).

Reader's Score: 3.5

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.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant has provided a description of the Statewide Management Plan and Time line (p. 42). This description clearly shows each key activity and when it is expected to be accomplished.

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The key personnel are listed and their training, experience, and responsibilities are described on p. 40-41. Their CVs are included in Appendix C. The key personnel seem to be well qualified and represent not only administrative expertise, but also a strong grounding in scientifically based literacy research, policy, and practice. As mentioned in the proposal, the FCRR is a nationwide repository for cutting edge curriculum and assessment development.

Weaknesses:

none

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 provided a list of the members of the State Literacy Team (p. 41).

Weaknesses:

These members do not seem to represent a diversity of perspectives. Rather, these members seemed to be limited to FL state personnel who are involved in education and not inclusive of diversity, for example, missing seemed to be Head Start representatives, professional organizations, teachers, parents and other stakeholders (p. 41- 42).

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: 16

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 costs for the secondary and elementary programs seem reasonable in relation to the scope of the project objectives and the design (p. 46-47).

Weaknesses:

The pre-K programs may be underfunded if the estimates provided in proposal are accurate (p. 46-47).

Reader's Score: 8

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 Tables on page 46 and 47 show that the funds will be allocated in line with the SRCL guidelines. For example, approximately 31 subgrants will be made to pre-k programs accounting for 15% of the funding, approximately 40 subgrants will be made to elementary, middle and secondary.

Weaknesses:

none

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 will require LEAs to demonstrate leveraging and alignment with other funding (p. 27 and 34).

Weaknesses:

There was no mention of FLDOE leveraging other state or federal funding to maximize the impact of the grant. There was no plan for sustainability.

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.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The funding for elementary and secondary programs seems to be sufficient to make significant impact.

Weaknesses:

The applicant estimates that 31 subgrants will be made to pre-k programs accounting for 15% of the funding (i.e., 7.5 million/31= approx \$240,000 per program per year; whereas 40 subgrants will be made to elementary, middle and secondary (i.e., 80 million/40= approx \$2 million per program per year). If these estimates are in the ball park, the pre-K programs may be under-funded (p 44-48) and may not make a substantial impact.

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 has proposed several activities that will effectively use technology to help students and teachers and to ensure overall project implementation. For examples, on page 10 the applicant mentions the use of computer technology to provide additional instruction and practice opportunities for small groups of struggling readers.

On page 15, the applicant describes how the student assessments are automatically entered into the PMRN system. This database provides information to teachers, principals, district leaders, and parents about overall as well as individual student progress and can inform decision making at varied levels. The FAIR system, in particular, includes a diagnostic tool kit for teachers to progress monitor individual students who may need additional intervention.

On page 23-24, the applicant mentions that LEA subgrant applicants will be given a competitive priority if they propose to use technology to support high quality instruction. This could include software programs identified by the What Works Clearing House.

Weaknesses:

none

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:

This priority was MET.

The applicant has proposed a solid plan grounded in scientific reading research. The applicants (the PI and the FCRR personnel) are leading reading researchers who demonstrate the necessary experience and expertise to carry out a project of the magnitude. The State of Florida has a strong existing foundation on which to build this program.

Weaknesses:

none

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:

This priority was MET. A noted strength of the student level evaluation is that schools who participate in the SRCL program will ALL use the SAME screening, progress monitoring and outcome assessments from pre-K to high school. Students' scores will be entered into the database (known as the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network; PMRN). This will allow evaluators to make systematic comparisons across students, classrooms, schools, grade levels and the sites state-wide.

Using this system teachers can generate reports about their classrooms to be able to make decisions for individual student performance, principals can monitor their schools' progress, district officials can see the overall picture of their efforts on multiple levels, and the FCRR evaluators for the SRCL can monitor the LEAs' efforts (p. 17). This assessment system supported by technology, will provide the necessary evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of the SRCL activities and to determine whether the broad goals are being targeted; i.e., ideally the most at-risk children are identified, tracked, and impacted. These proposed methods at the student level, while quite extensive, will provide a comprehensive and accurate portrait of programmatic effectiveness.

Weaknesses:

none

Reader's Score: 0

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Panel #3 - SRCL - 3: 84.371C

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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: 36

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:

A. (i.a) Florida has developed a state literacy plan, Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Language Arts with alignment to the Common Core State Standards. (p. 0) Also, they have developed the Florida Early Learning and Development Standards for Four-Year-Olds . The State Literacy plan is to be distributed to school districts in June, 2011 (p. 42). Florida has well documented its efforts in providing a comprehensive, State literacy plan. Having the State Literacy Plan aligned with the Common Core Standards ensures that the state document will be revisited, as more support and information about the Common Core Standards become available. (p. 0) Regarding use of other funding in the SRCL grant, the State proclaims that substantial funds are already available from both the state and federal governments. (p. 1) Local Education Agencies (LEA) must detail funds from both state and federal levels that will be used to support the interventions. (pp. 1, 27). Points are awarded by reviewers for this subcategory in the LEA's application. The provided discussion on this topic is adequate.

Florida has adequately described the process and how the results of subgrant applications will publicly be made available. This includes a comprehensive guidance document based on the State Literacy Plan. Within this document, information is provided for writing the proposal. There is a complete description of the scoring criteria (pp. 0, 24), the technical assistance provided through webinars, conference calls, and regional meetings (p. 35), a posting on the Florida website reviewer scores and comments following the review of the applications (p. 26), and the publication of a report summarizing the outcomes by August 15 of each year (p. 19). Specific scoring criteria are sufficiently described in detail, listing the categories and points to be awarded (pp. 26 - 28)

Throughout the proposal are references to the supporting of students birth through grade 12, especially focusing on the provision of services in feeder schools, e.g., multiple levels of schools (pp. 3, 29). Districts are encouraged to utilize major research documents (e.g., The Institute for Educational Sciences) for selecting evidence based instructional materials (p. 30) which are aligned with the State Literacy Plan. Discussion on this topic is appropriate and detailed.

The assessments to be used are clearly spelled out, using four types of assessments to guide the literacy instruction including screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome assessment (p. 3). Some specific assessments mentioned include Florida Assessment of Instruction in Reading (FAIR) and VPK (Voluntary Prekindergarten Education) Assessment system (pp. 14 - 17, 30). The assessments are described in great detail, along with the professional development that will be provided to districts who are awarded grants for administering the assessments. Other assessments will also be utilized, e.g., a measure of oral language skills, an end of year outcome assessment that still is to be selected (p. 16). The assessments to be used are comprehensive, and well-thought out.

Professional development is a key ingredient of the Florida proposal which is to be on-going and job-

Sub Question

embedded. Nonproficient readers are to be provided intensive interventions to supplement classroom instruction (pp. 3, 9). This is specifically described as increasing the number of successful instructional interactions, decreasing group size, increasing the amount of time in instruction and making instruction more explicit, hiring additional professionals to assist with the provision of more intense interventions, peer tutoring, partner reading, and technology (pp. 9-10). This aspect of Florida's grant proposal is complete and comprehensive.

In sum, the Florida proposal has provided strong evidence that it has complied with the Additional Requirements.

Weaknesses:

A. (i.a) There are no identified weaknesses.

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.**

Strengths:

A. (ii) There are three SRCL goals listed for Florida and these are presented thoroughly and completely (pp. 10 - 12) The goals include: 1. Prevent the literacy achievement gap from starting; 2. Close the literacy gap where it exists; and 3. Ensure all students achieve proficient and advanced literacy in their use of reading and writing skills. Of particular note is the provision of the prevention of a literacy achievement gap as a goal. Description of the assessments and resulting data is comprehensive. (pp. 14 - 18)

Weaknesses:

A. (ii). There are no identified weaknesses.

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:

A.(iii.) Technical support to subgrantees include the following: hiring of elementary, secondary, and Early Learning Coalitions (ELC) facilitators; Train the Trainer staff development for district and ELC facilitators (provided quarterly); and summer institutes for school based administrators, reading coaches, and teachers (p. 37). Training for the FAIR (Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading) will be provided to ensure that all assessments are administered and interpreted correctly (p. 17). The technical support is appropriate and demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that the subgrantees provide quality intensive instruction to the student population.

Weaknesses:

A. (iii). There are no identified weaknesses.

Sub Question

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:

A. (iv.) Both quantitative and qualitative measures will be used in the evaluation process, occurring at two levels. One evaluation will be conducted by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) that will focus primarily on examining changes in student literacy achievement. The State will also contract with an independent evaluator who has experience in evaluating large-scale educational initiatives. This evaluation will focus on state level processes, e.g., effectiveness of leadership activities within FLDOE (Florida Department of Education), the reliability and utility of data provided by FCRR, and the quality and impact of professional development (pp. 12- 13). Of particular note are the inclusion of the specific questions addressed at the school and district level by FCRR (pp. 13 - 14, 18 - 19). Evaluation methodology is clearly and explicitly explained (pp. 14 - 19) The evaluative measures are appropriate for evaluating the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth to grade 12.

The State's discussion on this issue has been comprehensive.

Weaknesses:

A. (iv). There are no identified weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

- 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:

A.(v). FCRR will publish a report summarizing the statewide student level outcomes disaggregated by student subgroups by August 15th of each year (p. 19). Publication at the beginning of the school year will provide schools additional decision-making information to formulate proactive measures. (p. 19). Florida has provided an adequate description on how it will disseminate information on project outcomes.

Weaknesses:

A. (v). Part of the documentation for disseminating information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by the public is sparse and limiting. More information is needed on how the SEA will make the information useful to varied groups and what the formats will look like. (p. 19).

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:

B.(i). The description for the subgrant proposals is thorough and demonstrates the competitive nature of the grant. There are four absolute priorities and two competitive priorities included in the grant proposal (pp. 20- 23, 26- 28). The subgrant proposal will contain 12 grant review criteria and applicants must be awarded 80% of the available points to be awarded a SRCL subgrant. (p. 25) Applications will be reviewed by a team of three people who have knowledge of evidence-based instructional practices that promote growth in literacy. (p. 24). Discussion on the LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal has been adequately addressed (p. 37). The State will monitor the implementation process. (p. 37)

Weaknesses:

B.(i). There are no identified weaknesses.

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:

B.(i.b). Specific scoring criteria are outlined (pp. 26 - 28) in the grant proposal that address the specifics detailed in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section, e.g., coherent assessment systems aligned with State standards, monitoring program implementation, use of curriculum and instructional materials aligned with the State standards, etc. (pp. 26 - 28). (1) Absolute requirements for the subgrant competition include serving schools with a high proportion of economically and/or linguistically disadvantaged students (p. 20). (2) Subapplicants will use a common set of screening, progress monitoring and outcome assessments from Pre-K through high school. A commitment to administer these assessments according to a specific timetable to follow specific procedures is a requirement for an award. This will enhance the success of obtaining informative data. (p. 14) It is stated in the SEA's grant proposal that subapplications must focus on improving student literacy outcomes (pp. 20, 28). (3). Subgrant applicants must describe how they plan to involve families and other organizations in their efforts to improve student outcomes in literacy. Provided in the SEA's proposal are a series of thoughtful questions that subapplicants can consider when responding to this issue. (p. 33) As evidenced by the information provided above, Florida has adequately addressed this question.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

B. (i.b). The information on the involvement of other agencies is limiting. The applicants must merely state that they will involve other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that will support literacy improvement goals. No other information is provided. (pp. 26 - 28)

Reader's Score: 7

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:

B.(i.c) The State clearly states that it requires that subapplicants describe how the LEA and ELC will leverage other State and Federal Funds (including funds under Title I, Title II-A, and Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Head Start Acts, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2006) to enhance and align the proposed activities to increase the effectiveness of literacy instruction for disadvantaged students. The State has specified that use of other funding is essential in the administering and implementing of the grant. (p. 27) Some details have been provided to demonstrate that the State considers the leveraging of other funding essential to subgrants proposals. (p. 27)

Weaknesses:

B.(i.c) There is no specificity described regarding the implementation of a coherent strategy to align activities with literacy instruction with other funding. The proposal merely asks the applicant to describe how it will leverage other funding to align activities. (p. 27)

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:

B.(ii). To be eligible for an award, participating schools must have a proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch support that is 60% or higher. This is higher than the State averages of 50% for economically disadvantaged students. (p. 20) By establishing this percentage for eligibility, the State has ensured that SRCL funds are allocated to districts and schools with substantial challenges arising from poverty (p. 20). The State has clearly prioritized which districts or schools will receive funding based on poverty levels.

Weaknesses:

B. (ii). There are no identified weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 6

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.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

B. (iii). The State has outlined specific scoring criteria for the SRCL subgrants in Florida (pp. 26 - 28). Applications must provide rationales, descriptions, and their plans for such issues as selection of schools, description of curriculum and instructional materials, assessments, professional development, leadership, etc. Using a point system, funding will be awarded to those applicants that provide the strongest available evidence. The State clearly states that the proposals of the subgrants must be consistent with the best evidence from currently available research and outcomes must be consistent with Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Language Arts and with alignment with the Common Core Standards and Development Standards for Four-Year Olds. The information provided on what comprises strong available evidence is appropriate (p. 26).

Weaknesses:

B.(iii). Discussion on giving priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence is limited. No discussion was provided.(pp. 26 - 28)

Reader's Score: 3

- 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:

B. (iv). The SEA has developed a process for reviewing and judging the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use (pp. 24- 27). It is clearly stated in the SEA proposal that the subgrant proposals must be consistent with the best evidence from currently available research, and outcomes must be consistent with the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Language Arts and with alignment to recently adopted Common Core State Standards or the Florida Early Learning and Development Standards for Four-Year Olds. Points are awarded to specific criteria in the subgrant proposal and only those who receive 80% of the points available under each review criteria will be awarded a SRCL subgrant (p. 25). A guidance document will be provided to districts assisting them in preparing high quality responses. This document will be informative in that it will provide a description of the application and scoring process. (p. 24) The guidance document demonstrates the State's commitment and strategy for ensuring that SRCL subgrants address all critical elements of a high-quality, evidence-based program for the classroom, teacher, and district level improvements in literacy instruction and leadership (p. 20). Discussion on this topic is appropriate.

Weaknesses:

B.(iv). The State claims that the instruction provided during grant activities must be grounded in scientifically-based reading research and aligned with the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and the Common Core Standards (pp. 3, 30, 36) but there is no mention of a process for reviewing and judging the evidence base and alignment with the State Standards. In looking at the guiding questions for evaluators to consider, there are none specifically addressing this area (p. 19)

Reader's Score: 3.5

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:

Strengths

C.(i). The Project Management description provided by Florida is presented thoroughly and comprehensively. Key groups such as the Executive Director of Just Read Florida!, the Office of Early Learning, and the State Literacy Team have been named to lead the SRCL initiatives (p. 35). State responsibilities and timelines are provided, clearly defined, and are detailed. (pp 35 - 43). The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget has been sufficiently addressed and explained.

Weaknesses:

C. (i). There are no identified weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

C.(ii). Qualifications of key personnel are provided (pp. 40 - 42; Appendix C) and the educational backgrounds and expertise of the personnel are appropriate. Descriptions of four key personnel, e.g., the SRCL Project Manager, SRCL Curriculum and Instruction Specialists, and Policy Analyst for Reading Research, are provided and it is evident that these people are highly qualified. (p. 40 - 41).

Weaknesses:

C. (ii). There are no identified weaknesses.

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:

C. (iii). The State purports that the State Leadership Team ensures a diversity of perspectives and provides a listing of the State Leadership Team members (pp. 41 - 42) Many perspectives are represented on the State Literacy Team and these are clearly delineated. (pp. 41 - 42) These include the Commissioner of Education, the Chancellor, the Executive Director of Just Read, Florida! and the Office of Learning, Deputy Commissioners, Bureau Chiefs, representatives from the Florida Education Association, etc. It is apparent that there is a wide range of perspectives represented.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

C.(ii). Missing from the membership of the State Literacy team are families, Head Start Advisory Councils, libraries, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education. It is not clear whether the perspectives of these groups are included in the design and implementation of the SCRL project. (pp. 41- 42)

Reader's Score: 2

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: 18.5

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:

D.(i): The details provided in the budget descriptions are adequate for the intended initiatives.(pp. 43-45). Monies are to be expended for such items as travel, contractual, independent evaluator, consortium support to districts, etc. Florida's five year proposed budget reflects a state-level commitment in that FLDOE will make a maximum of 31 grants to ELC's, 40 grant awards to school districts to provide comprehensive literacy support to K - 12 feeder patterns. Taking into consideration minimizing expenditures, the State will make thorough use of technology, e.g., conference calls, webinars, etc. (p. 44) They are to be commended for lowering costs when appropriate. The budget costs are reasonable to support the scope of the projects.

Weaknesses:

D. (i) There are no identified weaknesses.

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:

D.(ii). The grant proposal mentions the breakdown of birth through age five, K - 5, and middle and high school (p. 48) in several sections of the proposal and it is clearly evident in the descriptive tables (pp. 46 - 47) which break down the information in greater detail.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

D. (ii). There are no identified weaknesses.

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:

D. (iii). The State maintains that there are substantial funds already available from both the state and federal government to assist schools in their efforts to help all students acquire proficient literacy skills. In the LEA application, the LEA or ELC will have to detail how they leverage other funding opportunities (p. 48). The State has shown that using other funding is essential in the implementing of the grant.

Weaknesses:

D.(iii): Other funding already available from both state and federal funds is part of the subgrant proposal but no specific information or support are provided as to how the State will assist LEAs or help with sustainability. (p. 48) LEAs must merely detail how they leverage other state and federal funds to support the activities and goals described in the subgrant application.

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:

D.(iv). The State has delineated the maximum number of awards that will be awarded (pp. 43, 45) ensuring that Florida's most at-risk students are provided with the necessary services. They will be awarding 31 awards for ELCs and 40 awards for K-12 feeder patterns. (p. 45)

Weaknesses:

D. (iv) There are no identified weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 3

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:

Technology: Applicants will use technology for data management (p. 23) and must describe other uses of technology to support high quality instruction. Florida cites a report from What Works Clearinghouse that reports significant gains on word-level reading skills in young children, and provides documentation that technology can assist in identifying texts at appropriate reading levels. Florida encourages LEAs to consider using technology to provide flexibility in ways to present information to accommodate all students. The State mentions that it would be beneficial to provide immediate intensive intervention for struggling readers through the use of universal access through computer technology to provide additional instruction and practice opportunities (p. 10). This is an effective use of technology. Florida has detailed some uses of technology and this discussion is adequate.

Weaknesses:

The proposal is not specific enough in the ways technology can enhance student learning and improve learning outcomes. (p. 1) There is no discussion as to how technology could be used to help students access materials. The information provided is sparse.

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:

Strengths

Improving Learning Outcomes is clearly spelled out throughout the grant proposal (pp. 1; 10- 12, 20, 27, 38) . The emphasis is addressed in the goals of State initiatives, in goals for the grant itself, and in the application for subapplicants. Particularly noteworthy is the State's efforts to align its initiatives with its current adoption of the Common Core Standards. Discussion on the project was thoughtful, grounded in research, and extensive.

Florida has met Priority Question 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes.

Weaknesses:

There are no identified weaknesses.

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 Question 2: Florida has proposed a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high quality and timely data to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes. The implementation process and the outcomes from the grant will be rigorously evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Evaluation will occur at two levels. One evaluation will be conducted by the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) and the other by an independent evaluator. (pp. 12- 13). The discussion and documentation of using data-based decision making are thorough and complete. Results from the assessments administered to the students will be sent to the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN). The measures undertaken by Florida will enable districts to monitor growth on critical literacy (pp. 16- 18). Florida has provided a comprehensive approach to using data as the basis for its decision-making.

Florida has met Priority Question 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision Making.

Weaknesses:

There are no identified weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 6/23/11 12:00 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/23/11 12:00 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Florida Department of Education -- FL Department of Education JRF! and OEL (S371C110021)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	35.5
Sub Total	37	35.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	26
Sub Total	28	26
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	11.5
Sub Total	15	11.5
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	16.5
Sub Total	20	16.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3.5
Sub Total	5	3.5
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	93.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SRCL - 3: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Florida Department of Education -- FL Department of Education JRF! and OEL

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: 35.5

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:

Applicant provides sufficient details of well established and existing structures to support literacy development (e.g. 70% of 4 year old in the State of Florida are enrolled in the voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program in 2010-2011, p. 1).

Applicant provides a comprehensive discussion Early Steps services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays (p. 2).

Applicant highlights existing services including the Florida Center for Reading research and Just Read illustrating the State commitment to literacy interventions.

Applicant overviews the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (p. 4-8).

Applicant is committed to using existing structures within the Just Read, Florida! Office to ensure adherence to the submission of each approved SRCL by making certain ELC facilitators and district facilitators provide initial and ongoing staff development by Early Childhood Education Providers, district staff, school administrators, school-based coaches, and teachers. (p. 8).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses not noted.

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.

Strengths:

Applicant explains effective planning with five clearly stated objective goals (p. 8).

Applicant describes reasonable intervention and planning elements including uninterrupted block of time, assessments and professional development (p. 9).

Applicant provides a discussion for the need for early explicit instruction (p. 9) which provides convincing evidence for improving student literacy outcomes.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses not noted.

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:

The applicant explains effective plans to provide technical assistance and support to its SRCS subgrantees in areas that include: assessment administration (p. 17), common core state standards, comprehension instructional sequence, reading interventions and progressing monitoring (pp. 37-38).

The applicant plans for technical assistance to be delivered through trainer-to-trainer models and summer institute formats.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses not 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.**

Strengths:

Applicant synthesizes key research in grouping strategies (p. 10).

Applicant relies on the potential benefits of Response to Intervention to match developmental needs with services (p. 11-12).

Applicant articulates 5 clear, objective goals (p. 8).

Applicant articulates an evaluation plan that maximizes the benefits of the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) and state level processes such as effectiveness of leadership activities within FLDOE (pp. 12-13).

A thoughtful set of 4 evaluation questions accompany this proposal. The applicant provides a discussion of explicit processes and measures that will be used to answer the evaluation questions (pp. 14-17).

Weaknesses:

It appears as though the applicant will access the evaluation services of university partners, it would be helpful to hear other ways that that partnership will be maximized.

Reader's Score: 9.5

- 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).**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant provides information on their already existing system to align results with student identification which helps to ensure that student data is disaggregated by subgroups. For example, these effort help to ensure that students with linguistic and disabilities are closely monitored (p. 17) and that results are reported to stakeholder groups.

Weaknesses:

While applicant commits to timely dissemination in accessible and understandable ways (p. 19), insufficient information is provided as to how that will happen.

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: 26

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 of Florida describes an effective plan for ensuring that subgrants undergo a rigorous, high-quality competition that includes a review of applications by a team of three people consisting of: a university faculty member; a school district employee and a representative from the Florida Department of Education (p. 24). The composition of that review committee will help to ensure a critical review.

The applicant provides clearly defined parameters for eligibility (pp. 20-21).

The State of Florida provides a detailed plan for running a rigorous competition (p. 24) to all subgrant applicants.

The applicant describes a point system (p. 20) to guide subgrant applicant

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

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.

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant provides coherency of planning with efforts to address the needs of disadvantaged students by providing workshops regarding the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading systems (p. 14 and p. 22); requirement for use of reliable and sustainable data management systems (p. 23); and use of rigorously vetted evidence-based practices (e.g. Doing What Works Clearinghouse, p. 23).

The State of Florida explains effective efforts as revealed in item 4 (p. 4) which calls for the description of use of assessments to improve instruction.

The applicant requires subgrantee proposals to describe how they plan to involve families and other organizations in their efforts to improve student outcomes in literacy. Provided in the SEA's proposal are a set of questions that prompt subgrantees to consider when responding to this issue of family and other organizations (p. 32).

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 State of Florida explains that it requires the subapplicants to describe how the LEA and ELC will leverage other State and Federal Funds (including 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) to enhance and align the proposed activities to increase the effectiveness for disadvantaged students. The State specifies that the use of other funding is essential in the administering and implementation of the grant (p. 27).

Clear and detailed information is provided regarding the procedures for review of subgrant applications (pp. 24-25), criteria for scoring applications (pp. 26-28) and guidance to districts in this process (pp. 28-35).

Weaknesses:

Additional information regarding how specific leveraging efforts (p. 27) will align with other funding sources will be aligned. For example, insufficient information regarding coherent strategies for aligning student IEPs within this effort (pp. 28-35).

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:

Applicant provides a description on p. 29 that highlights three requirements regarding 1) a description of the rationale and method for selection of participating school; 2) a description of the rationale and method for selection of participating schools according to the feeder pattern; and 3) a description of the curriculum and instructional materials including those focused on students at risk for reading difficulties because of socio-economic, socio-cultural, and linguistic difference, as well as those with specific learning disabilities.

The applicant clarifies that 60% of the students must qualify for free or reduced price lunch, or they must

Sub Question

have at least 15% ELL students (p. 20).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

- 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 a clear description of 12 requirements that all LEAs and ECEPs must adhere to and demonstrate in their application (pp. 29-35).

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 applicant commits to having LEAs and ELCs clearly articulate how they are leveraging funds from other sources and using existing strengths from leadership teams (p. 32 and p. 34).

Weaknesses:

The applicant needs to expand on how as they are assisting LEAs and ELCs leverage funds from other sources (p. 34).
Insufficient information about how this work will inform the alignment of State standards (p. 34).

Reader's Score: 4

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: 11.5

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.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

Applicant justifies planning with a description of state requirements, timelines, and recipient requirements for 2011 p. 35-39.

Applicant provides a listing of milestones beginning in Nov 2011 through 2016 which shows projected accomplishments.

Applicant provides an overview of a management plan on pp. 42-43, highlighting 8 key activities which guide the overall plan.

Applicant provides a listing of representative staff development topics to be delivered (pp. 37-38) and personnel appear well-qualified to assume the responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

Insufficient documentation provided in the Management Plan Overview on p. 42-43 with respect to how the 8 key activities align with project goals and objectives.

Timetable for work is broad with milestones providing very broad markers of intended efforts.

Insufficient information about how the represented topics for professional development (p. 37) strategically enhance staff expertise to meet the needs of disadvantaged students (e.g. culturally responsive pedagogy, inclusive practices, and accommodations).

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The applicant will maximize the leadership of exiting professionals in key positions (p. 35) (e.g. Executive Director of the Just Read Florida! And the Office of Early Learning as well as the State Literacy Team.

Key milestones are highlighted (p. 37).

Personnel for this project appear to be highly skilled and able to fulfill the expectations of the project. Project personnel have extensive experience in executing large-scale projects (pp. 40-41).

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:

The applicant provides an extensive listing of members on the State Literacy Team that represent a diversity of perspectives in design and implementation (p. 41-42).

Weaknesses:

The State of Florida does not explain how Head Start, libraries, parents, professional organizations, and higher education partners will be meaningful used.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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: 16.5

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 details in the budget description that are adequate for the intended initiatives (pp. 43-45). Funds are to be expended for such items as travel, contractual, independent evaluator, consortium support to districts, etc.

The applicant is minimizing expenditures by planning for conference calls and webinars (p. 44).

The applicant has clear aims for the participation of a maximum of 31 grants to Early Learning Centers and up to 40 grants to school districts which provide comprehensive literacy supports to K-12 feeder patterns (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

Insufficient information as how project objectives align with expenditures (pp. 44-47).

Insufficient information regarding the number of students that will be served hence it is unclear as to magnitude of the project pp. 46-47).

Insufficient information provided regarding the independent evaluator (\$200,000.) (p. 45). It appears from earlier discussions (pp. 12-14) that evaluation will occur at two levels, one by the Florida Center for Reading Research and the second by state level process.

Reader's Score: 8

- 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 proposal mentions the breakdown of 15-40-40% formula of birth through age five, k-5, and middle and high school (p. 48) in several sections of the proposal and it is further described in the tables provided on pages 46-47.

The applicant provides information on the requirement that LEAs develop an application for funding through high school feeder patterns when feeder patterns are classified as: High need (less than 50% of students proficient in reading: Moderate need (between 50-70% proficient) and Low need (greater than 70% of students proficient) (p. 48).

In the early portions of the narrative the applicant provides a strong base for understanding how issues of linguistic diversity, special needs and poverty contribute to lower achievement (pp. 8-10).

Weaknesses:

None 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**

Sub Question

developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.

Strengths:

Applicant requires Early Learning Centers and Local Educational Agencies to already existing resources such as the specific assessments (highlighted in tables in pp. 46-47) as well as professional development and technical assistance (highlighted in tables on pages 46-47).

Weaknesses:

The discussion regarding how the State of Florida is leveraging other State and Federal funds is lacking (p. 46-47).

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:

Applicant provides a reasonable rationale for travel expenses needed for face-to-face professional development (p. 44) across the state.

The State of Florida is sufficiently planning for funding for the elementary, middle and high school projects to serve the number of K-12 programs (pp. 46-47).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses note.

Reader's Score: 3

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 State of Florida acknowledges a commitment to using technology for screening and progress monitoring assessments within the FAIR and VPK Assessment system using online reporting systems (p. 10 and p. 23). Applicant acknowledges the potential for using software programs for word-level reading skills (p. 23) as a means of matching content to student needs.

Weaknesses:

Limited discussion regarding adherence to Universal Design for Learning principles and reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with identified special education needs (p. 10).

Reader's Score: 3.5

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:

Comprehensive efforts across the required space of school readiness through grade 12.
Attention to the unique challenges those with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds and with diverse linguistic needs display (pp. 9-12) and how that impacts their literacy achievement.
Applicant meets this priority.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

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:

Applicant is committed to requiring all subcontracts to administer FAIR/VPK/formative assessments and data-based decision making with the use of technology (p. 38).
The applicant meets this priority.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

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