

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Indiana Department of Education -- Student Learning Curriculum and Instruction (S371C110006)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	23.5
Sub Total	37	23.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	20
Sub Total	28	20
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	8.5
Sub Total	15	8.5
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	12
Sub Total	20	12
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2.5
Sub Total	5	2.5
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	66.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - SRCL - 1: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Indiana Department of Education -- Student Learning Curriculum and Instruction

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: 23.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

1. The Literacy Frameworks, Birth-Age 5 and K-6 (see Frameworks), are excellent and based on scientifically-based research. They are clear, easy to follow, and thorough. They represent an excellent foundation on which to build this proposal.
2. The specificity with which the assessments are described is excellent and lends support to the overall program (p. 19+).
3. The use of Response to Intervention (Rtl) is laudable and will add strength to the program (p. 5, 17).
4. The emphasis on struggling readers is an added strength of the proposal.
5. The use of data to provide support for arguments and suppositions is also a strength (p. 25).

Weaknesses:

1. Overall, it is not that clear exactly how the State Education Agency (SEA) activities will align with the comprehensive state literacy plan. The SEA seems to rely too much on the state literacy plans to explain the Striving Readers grant, rather than detailing how the plan will be carried out. In general, there is much information about the "what" of the grant and too little information about the "how" of the grant.
2. The Disciplinary Literacy Framework (p. 13, Appendix) is more like a work-in-progress rather than a complete framework. What is missing is a detailed argument for what disciplinary literacy is and the research support behind it. At this point in time, there is not enough research to support its use in content area classrooms, and it may be a "bridge too far."
3. It is unclear how all the frameworks will be implemented across the Opportunity School Communities (OSC). For example, the infrastructure of high schools will need to change to accommodate Rtl, but it is unclear how this will be done (p. 13).

Reader's Score: 7

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

1. The use of data to make arguments about Indiana's literacy needs is laudable. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data are important to present to see how Indiana scores within the nation and also how scores compare between state reading tests and NAEP, the closest to a national test (p. 26).
2. State level data (p. 27) are also excellent, as well as the disaggregation of subgroups, especially for special education students and ELLs.

Weaknesses:

1. It is unclear how all the activities will take place. This is especially true for the secondary literacy plan that does not have a clear path from the activities (e.g. one-on-one tutoring for high school struggling readers) to the infrastructure that must take place for this activity to happen (p. 32).
2. A weakness is that the proposal does not define what OSCs are (p. 7) and how they contribute to the overall goals of the project. Since OSCs have a special name, it is assumed that they are unique in some important way, other than that they are part of the grant. But how they are unique, and why they are called OSCs as opposed to something else, remains unclear.
3. A weakness is that some of the data need more explanation. For example, it is unclear and not explained why there was such a jump in the data at most grade levels from 2009 to 2010 (p. 25). A few hypotheses as to why students improved so much would be helpful. These hypotheses might lead to a better understanding of what is going on in the state as Indiana applies for its grant. Something happened between 2009 and 2010 to make this jump. If it was some change in curriculum, that would be important. If it was that the state changed assessments, that is good to know as well.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The quality of the Literacy Advisors is critical for effective implementation of the grant. Having the Literacy Advisors selected by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) will help ensure high quality. Sometimes Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) hire who is available or who they know best instead of the very highest quality personnel.

Weaknesses:

1. It is unclear who will oversee the "development of major professional development offerings and interview and select Literacy Advisors" (p. 35). Having a state literacy leadership team of four to five persons would be most helpful.
2. It is unclear just how the SEA will provide the extensive technical assistance they claim to provide. The Literacy Advisors cannot do it all.

Reader's Score: 2.5

- 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. The Center for Education, Evaluation and Policy (CEEP) appears to have sufficient credibility and experience to conduct the evaluation.
2. Triangulation of data will be important and will add to the strength of the evaluation.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

1. The evaluation team needs to have in its membership individuals who are experts in reading. Individuals with expertise in research design and evaluation are critical, but so are people with reading expertise. This is especially true for the formative assessment that the CEEP plans.
2. Measures, especially qualitative measures like site visits, observations and interviews, take a great deal of time to be developed. It is unclear how this all will be done within the given time period of each grant to be ready for baseline data and beyond.
3. It is also unclear how CEEP will communicate clearly and systematically with IDOE to monitor progress of the project (p. 37). There should be established formal meetings between the CEEP and the IDOE literacy leadership team to ensure accurate and ongoing monitoring of project implementation and progress.

Reader's Score: 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:

1. A strength of the proposal is that IDOE and the CEEP see the need to extend reports and dissemination of results beyond a website or policymakers alone.
2. The use of different formats will assist different audiences in understanding the grant, its purposes and its results. Dissemination of the grant results will be broadened in this way.

Weaknesses:

1. The proposal lacks specificity in what exactly will be disseminated, how many reports, policy briefs, presentations, and when (p. 38-39), and how they will be disseminated.
2. The proposal focuses on only professional people and not the lay public. These people are exceedingly important since the public needs to know this information as much as educators. This will assist the public in knowing where and how their taxes are used.

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: 20

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

1. The SEA is explicit about its competition for subgrants thereby assisting the LEAs in being clear about what they are being asked to do (p. 40+).
2. The SEA described the process by which it will review and judge proposals in a way that is clear and concise (p. 40).

Weaknesses:

The SEA needs to ensure that the early childhood education providers on the grant include at least one person with some expertise/experience/education in early and/or beginning reading. Without such expertise, there is no way to guarantee that early childhood providers will know what to do. This requirement should be a stated and explicit part of adequate staffing (p. 40).

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA is successful at addressing the specific needs of disadvantaged students through its explanation (p. 41+).
2. The SEA uses data to inform the grant proposal in terms of where the state stands and what the needs are (p. 24+).
3. The SEA demonstrates its commitment to using other organizations and institutions on p. 43.

Weaknesses:

1. It is unclear how the LEAs will involve other agencies and organizations in facilitating literacy development in the schools. Specific guidance must be provided to LEAs in the sub-grant proposal to assist them in this process.
2. The multitude of early childhood providers involved in the state literacy plan, though excellent, are not necessarily involved in activities that promote effective instruction for disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA explains clearly how it will ensure that various state and federal funding will be used to strengthen the grant proposal (p. 4-6) and insure coherence and cohesion within the overall program (e.g. p. 5).
2. Title III funding will reinforce instructional models and strategies that serve limited-English-proficient

Sub Question

students effectively, based on the most rigorous scientifically-based research (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA has made a commitment to serving high poverty schools and used a quantitative process to determine how that commitment will be implemented, e. g. using the score points system (p.44).
2. Up to 20 points can be assigned to disadvantaged schools, thereby providing weight to the most disadvantaged (p. 44).

Weaknesses:

The SEA is equally committed to special populations and ELLs, and how this affects the total number of points is unclear (p. 44). The result will have an effect on the extent to which the highest poverty schools are selected.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The text on p. 44 articulates that the SEAs will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence. This statement represents a commitment to the available evidence.

Weaknesses:

1. The extent to which the LEAs will advantage early childhood applications with the strongest available evidence is unclear (p. 44). There is not information about how this will be done, except to say that there is an emphasis on sound reading research.
2. "Reading level/text complexity measures" is unclear and not explained anywhere (p. 44).

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA states that it will develop a process to review and judge the evidence base and see that it is aligned with state standards (p. 45).
2. The SEA explains their point system well (p. 44).
3. The SEA explains how the process will be made public as well (p. 45).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 8.5

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.**

Strengths:

1. The management plan does an effective job of describing the responsibilities of the various specialists on the project as found in the Appendix. The responsibilities are clearly laid out and explicit (p.47+).
2. A strength of the project is that there is a requirement that the Project Specialist who oversees the project must have expertise in one area of the literacy curriculum (p. 47).

Weaknesses:

1. The objectives, timeline, and milestones for accomplishing the project tasks are vague and largely undocumented. On pp. 31-35, the SEA lays out the process for awarding subgrants, but not for accomplishing the project as a whole. Then, on p. 47, the page begins with the goal for the adequacy of the management plan. But then the text describes the responsibilities of the personnel of the project. No more information is provided about timelines, objectives, and milestones in the project. What would be helpful here would be chart that lays out specifically what the goals are, what the tasks are to accomplishing the goals, the timeline for the completion of those tasks, and the milestones or benchmarks to know the tasks have been accomplished.
2. While some specific tasks are laid out, it is difficult to see how they align with each other, with the overall timeline and with the milestones or benchmarks (p. 47).
3. Insufficient explanation is provided to get a clear sense of how the project will be managed (p.47).
4. A weakness is that the Project Specialist may be a person with a birth-age 5 expertise in reading. Such a person would not be qualified to attend to the K-12 curriculum. This person should have expertise either at the elementary or secondary level (p. 47) .

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

1. Many qualified individuals from the SEA with experience at the state level will be involved (p. 47+), including individuals who are reading specialists and English language arts specialists.
2. Individuals with sufficient expertise in many areas needed for school reform are involved, including individuals who have worked at the state level (p. 47).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

1. The qualifications of key personnel as laid out on p. 13-14 of the budget narrative are too general. Vitae or resumes explaining the prior experiences and educational backgrounds of the key personnel would have been more helpful. For example, it is important to know whether the personnel have M.Ed. or Ph. D.s, and whether those degrees are in reading or in a different area.
2. High levels of expertise in reading are required for some of the key positions, and it is unclear from the brief narratives on p. 13-14 of the budget whether these key personnel have deep knowledge about reading instruction.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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:

1. The Birth through Age 5 literacy framework suggests that a diversity of partnerships and community leaders will be involved in the early childhood project (see Appendix).
2. Based on the framework, there are key individuals who have a great deal of knowledge about early literacy, including individuals involved in the community and at the state government level. Further there is evidence of a wide range of community-based partnerships (see Appendix).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 12

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

1. Much of the justification of the budget is reasonable and makes sense in terms of the overall proposal.
2. The budget fits much of the set of objectives, design and significance of the proposal in terms of travel, professional development, and evaluation.

Weaknesses:

1. The budget justification is unclear on how over \$16 million will be spent on equipment and supplies. The Reading Level/Text Complexity Measures tools alone cost almost \$5 million a year, and the text lacks a sufficient and reasonable explanation of what the measures are, what they do and why they are being used.

Sub Question

2. A great deal of money is spent on technologies, but there is a lack of explanation in the text about how the technologies will be used and the extensive professional development that must accompany them. The explanation is also lacking in how these tools meet stated objectives.
3. The budget is not clear on the amount of money the subgrantees receive. Some important information is missing here.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The SEA clearly articulates this requirement as intended.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The SEA states it will ask the LEAs to leverage other state and federal funds.

Weaknesses:

1. It was unclear how the SEA would leverage other state and federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant. This was not stated in the text.
2. It is unclear how the SEA will support the LEAs in using grants. Clear directions for the LEAs are not offered.

Reader's Score: 1

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:

Overall, the SEA will offer subgrants of sufficient size so that learning outcomes are likely to be improved in the state.

Weaknesses:

Due to the particular awarding of points based on disadvantage, special education and ELLs, it is unclear whether the highest need schools and districts will be awarded funding.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA does make an effort to support innovative technology to improve student learning (budget narrative, e3).
2. A significant amount of money is used to support the technology (budget, e5).

Weaknesses:

1. A weakness of the proposal is that the SEA is vague as to what specific innovative technology will be used, how it will be used, when and where it will be used. The SEA appears to give up responsibility for technology to the LEAs (p. 49). Leaving few guidelines and mandates, the extent to which these innovative technologies will be helpful is unknown.
3. A further weakness is that the budget is unclear about the technology (budget narrative). Far too much money seems to be spent on the technology without clear and explicit explanations for it.
4. Further, with all the money to be spent on the technology, there is not a clear explanation of the extensive professional development that must accompany it in the budget narrative or the text itself (p.49).

Reader's Score: 2.5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

MET.

1. The applicant has proposed a grant that is designed to improve academic outcomes for students, birth through grade 12.
2. The proposal has many strengths, including the CEEP as an external evaluator. The CEEP certainly has many qualifications of a top-rate evaluation team.
3. A strength of the proposal is the Literacy Frameworks that will serve as a vision and guiding tool for

educators.

Weaknesses:

1. The proposal is strong on the "what will be done," and weak on the "how it will be done."
2. More personnel are needed at the SEA level to guide and provide support for LEAs.

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

MET

1. The SEA has established specific assessments across all the ages and grades so that more data-based decision-making can take place (p. 3).
2. Naming the assessments adds credibility to their use and makes it more likely that the SEA has knowledge and expertise in the kinds of assessments appropriate to the ages and grades (p. 3).
3. Having an existing kindergarten readiness test is a strength (p. 3).
4. Using DIBELS is a strength in that it will allow screening and monitoring of progress (p. 4). The fact that districts use DIBELS lays a solid foundation for further professional development and reliable use of the data.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 0

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Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
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1. State-level activities	37	26
Sub Total	37	26
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	8
Sub Total	15	8
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	13
Sub Total	20	13
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2.5
Sub Total	5	2.5
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	75.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - SRCL - 1: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Indiana Department of Education -- Student Learning Curriculum and Instruction

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 26

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 detailed state literacy plan is provided on pages 1-23 that separates focus from birth-5, k-6, and secondary. This plan involves adequate input from various stakeholders. The authors inform that the plan will be frequently evaluated which shows they are attending to the need for continuous improvement. (p. 2-3). The authors completely review the additional requirements and make linkages to the state literacy plan. On page 6 they address the transparent process they will use for subgrants. Page 7 gives clear guidelines to subgrantees on the comprehensive literacy plan that is required.

Weaknesses:

Although a detailed plan is provided as to what will be done, there are not details as to how this will be carried out. Much of the responsibility is put on the Opportunity School Communities (OSCs) rather than being guided by the State Education Agency (SEA). The Disciplinary Literacy Framework will not be completed until February 2012 (p. 48), therefore the Local Education Agency (LEA) will lack leadership from Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) on a critical component of their proposal (p. 15-16).

Reader's Score: 7

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:

Strong examples of the scientific based research to be used at professional developments were provided at the early grades level (p. 10). Comprehensive data are provided (p. 25-28) on current achievement of Indiana's students (including diverse learners). The project proposes literacy advisors, professional development, and resources to combat low achievement (p. 29). This shows a commitment to the ultimate purpose of remediating struggling readers.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The description of scientific based research to be used for teaching reading to older learners was vague. There is mention of monies being used to purchase products as needed but the types of products necessary is vague at this point. (p. 21). The 90-25-90 goal lacks information about what measures will be put in place for students who don't easily make these goals (p. 23).

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The SEA has a strong commitment to assisting all schools (p. 35) with extra supports for OSCs. For example, on page 35, the SEA describes professional development offerings in developing OSCs as well as literacy advisors who can assist LEAs in their efforts. There is an extended 4-part plan for this support (p. 35). Disadvantaged students are considered which ensures that LEAs will be supported in improving the academic achievement of even the students who often receive the least services (page 35).

Weaknesses:

The distribution of IDOE time is inconsistent with the number of OSCs planned. 70% of two people to elementary school and 30% of 1 person's time will be devoted to secondary education levels (budget narrative).

Reader's Score: 3

- 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:

An external evaluation using both formative and summative measures will be provided by the Center for Education Evaluation Policy (CEEP) which has a strong evaluation background in that state (p. 36) including areas such as technology, professional development, math, and literacy. This evaluation group covers a broad prospective of experience and expertise including both quantitative and qualitative assessments. An effective methodology for evaluation is detailed (p 38). The CEEP staff has already worked with the DOE and is familiar with many of the initiatives that will be tied to this project (p. 36).

Weaknesses:

It would have been helpful to tie evaluation information back to project objectives (as indicated in the abstract). It is unclear if non-OSC schools that receive support will also be evaluated. There are many qualitative evaluations to be conducted and not enough detail is provided in the narrative to determine whether this will be done effectively (p. 38).

Reader's Score: 7

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Multiple dissemination efforts ensure widespread dissemination (p 39) since dissemination will include various products. These products include report cards on each grade area, an executive summary, and a video. These efforts will include appropriate disaggregated data. Dissemination will be available in a variety of formats including via media outlets (p. 39).

Weaknesses:

No mention was made about how information would be disseminated to underrepresented groups. The dissemination formats are geared towards professionals and academics only (p. 39).

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 applicant has developed subgrants broken up into specific point values that target the critical components needed by LEAs. These components are appropriate and thorough (p. 40-41). Appropriate components are detailed. For example, on page 40, points are given to LEAs based upon recent commitments to instructional reforms and their commitment to set aside grade or content-level team time for reflection.

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:

Disadvantaged youth are appropriately accounted for (p.41-42, 44). The SEA recognizes the need to prioritize this student group so that they can be targeting for literacy achievement improvements (p. 41). Triangulation is used to ensure need from target subgrantees (p. 42). A strong commitment to collaboration is evident based upon 10% of the subgrant application points being based on the selected and demonstrated partnerships that LEAs write into their proposals (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address capacity for improvement of the disadvantaged youth from the needs assessment (section b.2). Although the need assessment will inform, the connection to how these improvements can be made is absent. (p. 42).

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:

Applicant provides statement that subgrantees must demonstrate a sustainable and coherent approach to improve literacy and align with other funds (p. 43). Any changes in this allocation among LEAs are required to be reported to the SEA (p. 43) and this is worth 8 of the 100 points to subgrantees. Tying a point value to this consideration shows that subgrantees will be evaluated to show they align their literacy project with these funds.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

An adequate scale has been provided that shows points awarded based upon free and reduced lunch status. Higher priority will be given to LEAs with highest need. This is given an appropriate weight in an overall weighted system to determine funding (p. 44)

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:

Decisions will be data-driven (p 44) showing that evidence will be used in considering applications. The applicant appropriately requires LEAs to use innovative technologies. The applicant appropriately requires LEAs to use program supported by rigorous research.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

On p 44, the case for using targeted interventions was described, but providing examples of them would have been helpful. It is unclear what types of interventions would be considered to be effective by the grant reviewers.

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:

A thorough breakdown of each component of reading and possible points shows alignment with state standards for subgrants (p. 45-46). The applicant appropriately requires LEAs to link their curricular materials with state standards in order to receive points towards funding. The point system for funding is based on evidenced based reading strategies (p. 45-46).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 8

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:

Responsibilities of each project personnel were provided (p. 47-50). Dates are provided for some project milestones (p. 48-50).

Weaknesses:

There is no tie in of how each member's experiences and training make them qualified to manage this project. It would have been helpful to create a management plan by objective that showed each person's responsibility and what time frame would apply to each objective. Also, connecting these activities to the budget would have shown that this was doable.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Qualifications of Project Specialist TBD are adequate (p.49). Key personnel are from varied backgrounds. For example, Mr. Jones is an English language arts specialist, Ms. Shults and Mr. Wolf are elementary reading specialists, and Ms. Jones is an early childhood specialist (p. 47-50). This will lead to expertise in a variety of age levels.

Weaknesses:

Detailed information was not provided in the narrative. It would have been helpful to include key experiences and training of the key personnel as it relates to this project. This could have happened in conjunction with the listed responsibilities of each person.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The management team is made up of a varied group of age level expertise (p. 47-50). Representation across the board of K-12, early learning, and elementary expertise in reading were represented.

Weaknesses:

Connections with others aside from IDOE employees is weak in terms of this project. It would have improved the proposal to have representation, from other agencies, institutions of higher education, or LEAs within the narrative.

Reader's Score: 3

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 13

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:

Adequate monies have been set aside for technology and for disadvantaged youth (see budget) which ties to the overall goals of the project. Ample funds have been put into trainings for leaders within OSCs. Indirect costs rates have been kept to the amount required and agreement from the university was provided (see budget narrative).

Weaknesses:

A significant amount of the total budget is being kept by the SEA or for technology (see budget). This money may be better used by going into the awards granted to LEAs for their direct use with children. Additionally, it is difficult to discern exactly what percentages of money is going to each group. Dividing

Sub Question

the funds provided at each level in total would have been helpful. An adequacy of resources section in the narrative could have provided this information in a way that would have been useful to the reviewer. Relying on information from the budget alone makes this difficult to assess. Additionally, tying any portion of the budget back to the objectives within the narrative would have been useful.

Reader's Score: 6

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 adequately ensured these percentages in the budget section. The subgrants proposed meet the guidelines. There is an appropriate disbursement of funds planned (see budget).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

On page 43 there is mention of requiring subgrantees to align and leverage with other funds.

Weaknesses:

This was not addressed beyond the mention on page 43 as it addresses alignment of funds.

Reader's Score: 1

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:

High need schools were earmarked to receive points. This need is based upon free and reduced lunch rates. On pages 41-42, a point system is explained to grant points towards the total an applicant can receive on their application based upon these rates.

Weaknesses:

There is not a clear plan for how these schools will be guaranteed a percentage of the funds. Perhaps tying these statements to actual dollar amounts or having set asides within the budget would have been helpful.

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:

A large portion of the early childhood budget is devoted to innovative technologies for young children. (budget p 6).

Weaknesses:

Providing these innovative technologies across age groups would have made this a stronger component.

Reader's Score: 2.5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

All grade levels were addressed throughout the narrative. Disadvantaged students were thoroughly indicated throughout. This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

Detailed descriptions of the use of data were provided throughout. This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

Privacy requirements were not mentioned

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: Indiana Department of Education -- Student Learning Curriculum and Instruction (S371C110006)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	22
Sub Total	37	22
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	23
Sub Total	28	23
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	9.5
Sub Total	15	9.5
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	13
Sub Total	20	13
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2.5
Sub Total	5	2.5
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	70.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - SRCL - 1: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Indiana Department of Education -- Student Learning Curriculum and Instruction

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: 22

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:

Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and Indiana State Literacy Team (ISTL) recently (2011) developed the state's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP). The two frameworks (Birth [B]-5, K-5) are central components of the CLP (p. 2); they are evidenced-based and impressive in their comprehensiveness, including such elements as goals, instruction, assessment tools, leadership roles, differentiated professional development (Appendixes A & B, p. 11, 15-16). (The third framework [Appendix D] has yet to be written.) The consistency in the components of each framework across the two grade clusters (B-5, K-5) eases the transition across the two clusters for teachers and students.

IDOE is appropriately specific in how it intends to monitor the growth of students to achieve the CLP-specified student goals (p. 3 - 4).

Professional development for B-5 and K-5 educators around the CLP's research-based instructional strategies is key to achieving the goal of enhanced literacy performance for all children, particularly disadvantaged children (p. 6-8, 11).

The requirement that sub-grantees develop plans for how to cohere the various Federal funds the sub-grantee receives around enhancing the literacy achievement of children is a positive move (p. 5). To achieve the significant CLP goals requires that LEAs focus their attention and available resources on enhancing the literacy achievement of disadvantaged students.

The IDOE proposal review will make the process appropriately transparent and will prove helpful as a guide for others to use to improve their future submissions. Clarity in all judgment procedures is central to acceptance of the review outcomes (p. 6).

The principles to be used to guide and key components of professional development for early childhood providers are consistent with professional development theory, research, and practice (p. 9-11). The focus on student data is highly recommended in the professional development literature, as is job-embedded PD (p. 11-13). Appropriately, data will be used to drive all components of the program (e.g., to inform instruction, to select interventions, to purchase materials, to identify program improvements). The rich descriptions of suggested assessment measures provided in Appendixes B & C and related to screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring are central to the creation of assessment systems that provide meaningful student data (p. 16-18, 21).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The third pillar of the CLP, the Disciplinary Literacy Framework which focuses on grades 6-12, will not be completed until February 2012 (p. 48). Consequently, LEAs will lack important leadership from the IDOE on a key component of their proposals (p. 15 & 16).

Showing clear linkages between the numerous assessments and the goals defined in each framework would assist the reader in better understanding the effectiveness of the frameworks and the CLP (p. 3 & 4). The proposal lacks a description of the interface between achievement and instruction, leadership, and teacher professional development (p. 4).

Differentiated professional development is one of the key components of the developed frameworks (Appendix B & C). Yet, the proposal calls for a 4-day Institute without a clear description of how this professional development will be differentiated (p. 8).

The proposal provides insufficient information on the IDOE to-be-developed training modules (p. 14). In addition, there is a discrepancy in the proposal regarding the audience for the modules, whether they are cluster wide (B-5, K-5, 6-12) or for B-5 educators only (p. 47-49).

The proposal suggests that Opportunity School Communities (OSC) must use an oral reading fluency assessment with children to determine their readiness for kindergarten (p. 17). Oral reading fluency is developmentally inappropriate as an assessment measure for kindergarten readiness.

To ensure that data drives OSC decision-making regarding instruction, professional development, and program improvement, the IDOE must set clear expectations that the funded OSCs must implement the identified key features of a comprehensive assessment system (p. 18), including how to assess disadvantaged children in a reliable and accurate way (p. 20).

The proposal highlights a language and text-rich preschool/early primary classroom only with no reference to other age clusters. While environment is addressed in the B-5 framework (Appendix B), no discussion of language and text-rich environments is provided in the K-5 framework (Appendix C).

The proposal does not detail how IDOE will make a judgment regarding the success of each OSC in meeting its benchmarks. The proposal suggests that literacy advisors will complete qualitative assessments of each OSC. To rely solely on descriptive data gathered by different advisors and reports by teachers is insufficient (p. 22).

Reader's Score: 7

- 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:

IDOE has set clear goals in its mission statement (p. 23). Goals are central to measuring the success of the project.

IDOE analyzed students' performance on the English Language Arts portion of the Illinois Statewide Testing for Education Progress Plus Program (ISTEP), on National Assessment of Educational Progress, and on the English 10 End-of-Course Assessment (p. 25-26). IDOE disaggregated these data by ethnicity, special education eligibility, and English Language Learner status to reveal the State's need for SRCL funding (p. 23-28). IDOE will require all sub-grantees to analyze their district data and to align all aspects of their proposals with the discovered needs (p. 30-31). This mandatory alignment requirement strengthens the potential of each funded project to meet the needs of the targeted children.

In addition, IDOE will require each sub-grantee to link its goals with the frameworks developed by the State (p.29). This requirement ensures fidelity with the frameworks across all funded project.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The data analyzed is limited to grades 3-8 and 10 (p. 23-28). The proposal lacks clarity regarding the data IDOE considered or will consider to understand the state's literacy needs at all levels (e.g., entry into kindergarten, non-tested grades).

The clear and credible path forward places significant faith in the skills of the OSC Literacy Advisors. The only description of the skill set that the Literacy Advisors must possess is limited and found in the budget narrative (p. 9 and repeated in subsequent budget years). The skill set is inadequate for the completion of the significant responsibilities given to them to ensure the achievement of the goals of the project (p. 10).

The professional development literature has long shown that to change practices teachers need support at the classroom level. While coaching is one of the Literacy Advisors tasks, with only 40 days per OSC and five other equally demanding tasks identified (p. 29), it seems unlikely that each teacher will receive sufficient support in her/his classroom to impact change. In addition, the assignment of 40 days/OSC is suggestive of the lack of potential for differential professional development needs of the LEAs and early childhood centers.

The proposal does not provide information on who is responsible for ensuring that classroom instruction is consistent with that detailed in the frameworks documents.

Differentiated professional development is one of the key components of the developed frameworks (Appendix B & C). The proposal calls for a 4-day Institute without a clear description of how this professional development will be differentiated (beyond the age level differentiation which was discussed on p. 8 and is suggested in the budget narrative on pages 4 & 5).

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The proposal identifies four kinds of technical assistance IDOE will provide (p. 35). Each is important to the development of proposals by the OSCs that meet the IDOE's guidelines. Of particular importance is the overseeing of the development of the major professional development offerings and the site visits to provide feedback, troubleshoot, and monitor progress.

Weaknesses:

The distribution of IDOE time is inconsistent with the number of OSCs planned. Though there will be the same number of elementary as middle and high school OSCs, only 30 percent of the K-12 IDOE staff time will be targeted to work with OSCs, while 70 percent of two IDOE staff time will be targeted to work with elementary. It is unclear how 30 percent of the time of a person will allow him to provide sufficient technical support to a considerable number of OSCs (budget narrative, p. 2). In addition, by year 3, 2 cohorts of OSCs will be working to achieve their outcomes. Yet, the percentage of time devoted to Striving Readers remains the same for staff; this seems incompatible with supporting high-quality comprehensive literacy programs and improving student achievement in core academic subjects (budget narrative, p. 24).

The proposal is unclear regarding who is responsible for developing the content of the content of the major professional development sessions (p. 35). Ensuring that the content is linked to the CLP is central to the success of the project. Further, the proposal is unclear regarding who is responsible for

Sub Question

providing the technical support related to the broad range of components of the sub-grants (e.g., implementation of the new frameworks, guidelines for purchasing scientifically-based materials, differentiated professional development).

Reader's Score: 2.5

- 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:

IDOE will contract with an external evaluator, CEEP, who has expertise in the evaluation of projects like Striving Readers (p. 36-37).

CEEP will provide IDOE with formative evaluation results that will allow IDOE to monitor the progress of the project and summative evaluation to provide information on the impact of the project, disaggregated by subgroups (p. 37-38). The summative evaluation will consider key components of the project: impact on the instructional practices of teachers, use of technology as an effective tool in improving student achievement, and students' literacy performance (p. 37-38). These comprehensive evaluation functions will allow the IDOE to make adjustments to the project as the project matures.

Multiple strategies will be used to collect the data (e.g., interviews, classroom observations, surveys, reviewing program data) (p. 38). This eclectic approach to data collection is important to CEEP's ability to triangulate the data in order to provide IDOE with an accurate and complete picture of the project's success and pitfalls. While the specific venues to communicate the findings are not specified, CEEP and IDOE understand the importance of communicating the findings to a broad audience (p. 38).

Weaknesses:

Student data are being collected and analyzed only at the 4-year-old, 5th-grade, 8th-grade, and 10th-grade levels (Appendix E). This provides insufficient data of the impact of the instruction by teachers of their use of the new ELA frameworks on the ELA achievement of students. No student achievement data might be forthcoming from some OCS partners. For example, an OCS partner could be a center serving B-age 3 children.

Technology is a performance measure in the evaluation plan (p. 37-38). The proposal does not highlight the required use of technology, except in the budget narrative where significant amounts of materials will be purchased (Budget Narrative). Therefore, the link between programming and evaluation is missing.

CEEP defines performance measures without specifying clear benchmarks, using words that have not been sufficiently defined, particularly regarding the implementation of the Literacy Frameworks by teachers, a key component of the success of the project (Appendix E).

Reader's Score: 5.5

- 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 proposal provides specific information on how the results will be communicated to the education stakeholder audiences using a variety of media (p. 39). IDOE will disaggregate the project outcomes by student subgroups so that stakeholders will understand the differential growth of each group. The three report cards to be created, based on multiple sources of data, and the video celebrating successes and areas of improvement are important ways to inform all stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not make clear who is responsible for preparing the various reports. The reports are not listed as anyone's responsibility in the Project Management section of the proposal (p. 47-50). Further, the reports are targeted to the professional audience; there is little mention of how the information will be shared with underrepresented groups. The exception is the video celebrating successes.

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

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:

IDOE has defined specific criteria with corresponding points for schools and centers to follow to create a proposal (p. 40). For early childhood partners, LEAs will be required to select centers who score at a specified level on the Quality Rating Improvement System rating, a state rating system, thus indicating a level of capacity to implement the B-5 frameworks (p. 40).

Weaknesses:

Though early childhood centers are required to meet a defined level of quality, no comparable scoring system will be used to identify capacity of LEAs. The criteria listed use descriptors that are not objective measures of capacity to implement a SRCL sub-grants (p. 40).

Reader's Score: 2

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

Sub Question

students.

Strengths:

Factor 1: IDOE clearly specifies the range of disadvantaged children in need of servicing (p. 41) and has defined points by percentage of population classified as disadvantaged (p. 42). This meets the requirement set forth by the SRCL guidelines.

Factor 2: IDOE developed a Comprehensive Literacy Plan based on the analysis of student achievement (p. 2, 24-28). The two developed frameworks are based on the current research regarding effective teaching aimed at improving student achievement (Appendix B & C). Sub-grantees must use the frameworks to guide their proposal writing.

Factor 3: IDOE (and the ISLT) are very attentive to the need to include others beyond the classroom to support the learning and achievement of students (p. 42). Yet, IDOE recognizes that involvement for the sake of involvement is not the answer; applicants must describe how the partnerships link to the analysis of the needs of students as well as the community (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

The proposal speaks to the need for OCSs to create a literacy plan (p. 41), but does not specifically detail the features that must be addressed (e.g., professional development, coherent assessment system aligned to the state standards; screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments; targeted interventions, etc.). Inclusion of these specifics would strengthen the guidance provided to the sub-grantees and provide the potential for stronger OCS proposals.

Factor 1: The proposal provides no insights into the why behind thinking of IDOE regarding the percentages of disadvantaged children and related points to be granted (p. 41). Further, assigning more points for fewer categories might ensure that OSCs with high percentages of disadvantaged students are selected for funding. The criterion asks the applicants to address two features: (1) highest levels of need and (2) capacity for improvement. The response (p. 41) provides the thinking of IDOE regarding only one of the two features, feature 1.

Factor 2: No weaknesses noted.

Factor 3: No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

IDOE recognizes the need for the sub-grantee applicants to provide evidence that the approach implemented must be sustainable. Considering sustainability from the start is key to long-term impact (p. 43). In addition, IDOE recognizes that these new funds might replace other funds, resulting in funding shifts (p. 43), allowing LEAs to use the funds in a cohesive manner. IDOE requires sub-grantees to detail how these funding shifts might occur and remain focused on the goals of the SRCL project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Sub Question

poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.

Strengths:

IDOE clearly values the criterion that the needs of high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population are to be addressed. IDOE will allocate a considerable number of points to this criterion (p. 44). IDOE has developed a formula for allocating the points, with the highest point total going to those applicants who will address the highest percentage of students on free and reduced lunch (p. 44). Because serving the needs of disadvantaged students is central to this grant program, this attention to important to meeting the requirements of SRCL.

Weaknesses:

The text on page 41 awards points for the same calculation of percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch to be served by the project. It is unclear whether or not sub-applicants will receive 30 points if the population OSC is designed to serve reflects 80% or more of the students on free and reduced lunch. Since the criterion on page 41 addresses both the capacity for improvement and the highest levels of need, perhaps the earlier 10 points should focus on the ability of the sub-applicants to show that the schools or centers chosen have the greatest capacity for improvement, with this criterion focused on serving students of greatest need.

Reader's Score: 5

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:

IDOE will require sub-applicants to provide evidence of a comprehensive reading and literacy assessment and intervention plan, and the plan must be based on a comprehensive literacy framework (p. 45). Further, all plans must be linked to CCSS (p. 45).

The plan, products, and programs must be evidenced based (p. 45-46). Building each on the strongest available evidence is required to ensure the greatest possible impact on student learning.

IDOE will require the sub-applicants to describe how student data will be used to continually inform instruction, assessment, and intervention (p. 46). They acknowledge the importance of this criterion with a relatively large number of points.

Weaknesses:

The requirement by IDOE that all selected programs/products be supported by rigorous, scientific research indicating effectiveness is insufficient (p. 44-46). IDOE should require the sub-grantees to provide evidence that an independent researcher completed the research, rather than the maker of the program/product. Further, the IDOE should direct sub-applicants to be attentive to the populations on which the program/product showed impact on student learning (e.g., low-income, ELL, special needs) (p. 45).

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:

IDOE will require sub-applicants to detail how their curricular materials align with the CCSS. IDOE provides specific information on what applicants at each grade cluster must include to earn the available 18 points (p. 6, 15, 45). Each aspect of the CCSS ELA standards and the Birth to Age 5 standards must be met to earn the full 18 points.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses note.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 9.5

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.**

Strengths:

The proposal details a lengthy list of responsibilities for each IDOE specialist (p. 24, 47-51). It is clear that the IDOE has begun to consider the significant number of tasks to be completed to ensure the success of the project.

Weaknesses:

The K-12 co-director is overseeing the selection of the Middle and High School OSCs (p. 48). The proposal does not indicate who is overseeing the selection of the K-5 OSCs.

Though the tasks assigned to the K-12 specialist and the elementary reading specialists are very similar, their time allocation to the project is considerably different, 30% for the K-12 specialist and 70% for each of the elementary specialists. This inconsistency seems inappropriate. In addition, the percentage of OSCs will be the same for elementary and middle/high school. Further, given the significant needs at the 6-12 level, work at this level could be more challenging than the work of the K-5 specialists.

IDOE specialists are to oversee the development of professional development for the introduction, Institute and implementation (p. 47-49). There is no indication of who is preparing the content for these professional development sessions. There also is no indication of who is preparing the professional development modules (p. 49).

The project duties of the project specialist are those of a project manager (p. 49-50). There appears to be no need for the specialist to have a background in one of the literacy clusters, at least not as the job responsibilities in the management plan are written.

While the list of responsibilities is lengthy, the milestones for each specialist to meet are minimal (2-3 in number), and some milestone dates have already passed (p. 47-51). While some responsibilities will be ongoing, others should have specific dates by which they will be accomplished.

Only the responsibilities of the IDOE specialists are detailed. The responsibilities of the Literacy Advisors, who are to be hired by IDOE, also are key to the success of the project. The proposal does not detail the responsibilities of the advisors or milestones by which each should be achieved. In addition, there is no indication who will provide professional development for them to support the development of their skills as advisors. Also the proposal is unclear regarding who supervises them and provides them with support (p. 35).

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 2.5

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

Strengths:

The elementary and early childhood specialists bring years of experience as teachers, educational leaders, supervisors, and professional development providers to the IDOE grant (see Appendix). These rich experiences will bring considerable strength to the IDOE project as they work to guide this initiative. Of particular importance is their work as professional development providers. They will be able to assist the project director in overseeing the professional development trainings (p. 50).

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not indicate that the K-12 English Language Arts Specialist has the background to support the work of the funded middle and high schools (see Appendix).

The qualifications of the Literacy Advisors are minimal and only described in the budget narrative.

The proposal calls for the use of literacy experts, advisors, and consultants (p. 8). Only minimal qualifications are specified in the budget narrative.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

IDOE is attentive to bringing a diversity of perspectives with a broad range of expertise to the table to consider the implementation of the literacy plan of the state and the ideas presented in this proposal (Appendixes B & C). IDOE has involved these individuals in the work of the state in literacy previously; this will not be a new group created to provide response to receipt of this grant. The history the group brings to the project is important. Their focus can be on implementation, rather than building the knowledge base of the group about literacy and the perspective of the state on literacy needs and instruction.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 13

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:

Considerable funds are targeted to materials and professional development. These are keys to the success of the project (Budget Narrative).

IDOE suggests that it will target nearly \$5 millions per year to innovative technologies. IDOE recognizes the potential value of these tools in serving the needs of disadvantaged students (Budget Narrative).

IDOE is attentive to the variations in the number of students to be served and the need to adjust the budget depending on the number of students an OSC will serve (Budget Narrative).

Weaknesses:

The number of OSCs will increase over the life of the grant, yet the time commitment of the IDOE specialists remains the same across all years of the grant. In year 1, the IDOE specialists will be providing technical support to LEAs to those LEAs applying for the first cohort of funded proposals. In year 2, the IDOE specialists will be providing technical support to those LEAs applying for the second cohort and program implementation support to cohort 1. Consequently, the IDOE specialists time should be increased and the charge to the budget annually increased (Budget Narrative).

Trainers for the OSC Institute are being paid an unreasonably high amount (Budget Narrative).

IDOE suggests that it will spend nearly \$5 million a year on Reading Level/Text Complexity Measures for K-12 (Budget Narrative). This seems to be an unreasonably high amount to determine the complexity of texts. The budget narrative does not justify the cost.

Reader's Score: 6

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:

IDOE is clearly attentive to the statutory requirement for the distribution of the SCRL funds (Budget Narrative). Several components of the budget narrative identify the targeted age cluster for the item to be purchased. IDOE staff have been specifically targeted to work with a cluster (Budget Narrative).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

IDOE will require sub-grantees to consider sustainability in the design of their approach to improving literacy instruction in their application. Sub-grantees will be required to align and leverage other Federal and state funds, funding streams that likely will last beyond the life of the SRCL funds (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

IDOE does not provide the OSCs with clear directions on how to align and leverage Federal and state funds.

Reader's Score: 1

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:

IDOE recognizes the autonomy of the OSCs, will expect OSCs to use their funds wisely, and to purchase materials that are attentive to the needs of their students (Budget Narrative)

Weaknesses:

The exact size of each sub-application is not noted. Providing the OSCs with information on the anticipated amount per student would be helpful to the OSCs as they work to create their budgets.

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:

IDOE recognizes the benefits of the use of innovative technologies for each age group cluster and dedicates a considerable number of dollars to this equipment.

Weaknesses:

Technology is not discussed in the narrative of the proposal. The only discussion occurs in the budget narrative (each year) under Equipment. How OSCs will be supported in their wise use selection and use of these materials is not clear in the proposal. There are considerable funds dedicated to technology without information on how these funds will be used to improve the literacy performance of students.

Reader's Score: 2.5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

IDOE is focused on disadvantaged students, broadly defined. CEEP will provide data analyses detailing the impact of the project on the performance of students. The two developed frameworks clearly define aspects of high quality, research-based instructional programs with the potential to impact the performance of all students.

Met

Weaknesses:

Specific measures to assess the learning of each grade level, including early childhood, are not identified. IDOE intends to focus only on select grade levels. This prevents IDOE from describing the impact of the project on student learning each year of the implementation of the OSC sub-grants. This is a significant limitation.

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

The external evaluator will conduct both formative and summative evaluations of the OSCs. The intent is for the formative assessments to provide IDOE with ongoing feedback about program implementation; IDOE intends to communicate these findings/conclusions to each OSC. A broad range of tools will be used to gather these data. Summative assessment will measure the impact of the projects on the literacy achievement of the students and the effective of the professional development activities on teacher practices.

Met

Weaknesses:

While the formative assessment procedures might gather information on student performance at all age levels, the summative assessment procedures will gather data only on select age levels.

Reader's Score: **0**

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