

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education -- Literacy Literacy (S371C110045)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	35
Sub Total	37	35
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	27.5
Sub Total	28	27.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	17
Sub Total	20	17
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	95.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - SRCL - 1: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education -- Literacy Literacy (S371C110045)

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 35

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. A strength of the project is the SEA's feeder model that will assist students birth through grade 12 (p. 1). It is an excellent idea and one that may well have benefits beyond the grant itself. Regardless of grade level, students can expect five years of improved teaching and resources because of the state level activities. Further, the feeder model helps to assure of vertical alignment, something to which educators do not pay enough attention.
2. The State Education Agency (SEA) has selected a few, manageable and reasonable goals (p. 2) to attend to rather than several overwhelming goals that are hard to accomplish. It therefore will be easier for the SEA to align the activities with the comprehensive State literacy plan. The SEA will accomplish this by dedicating existing resources to comprehensive literacy activities (p. 5) such as providing state funded webinars on the literacy plan and by summer academies be tied to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
3. The reporting of National Assessment of Educational Progress data and the achievement gap provide valuable information that strengthens the SEA's identified activities (p. 17).
4. The Louisiana Assistive Technology Initiative has eight regional centers and will initiate Data Summits (p. 9-10). These centers should assist teachers with the many important tools and resources they need to use technology effectively. The centers also serve as professional development learning centers for technology, thereby providing support for teachers as they learn to use the new technology. This will add great strength to the many data decision-making activities identified in the state-level activities.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

1. The goals of the project for improving literacy outcomes are clear (p. 16) and stated in measurable ways, increasing the likelihood of success. The SEA has also made very clear the objectives of the project (p. 39+), and these objectives are reasonable. Further, it is clear how the SEA will work toward these goals and objectives.
2. Selecting a few goals and objectives improves the likelihood of their being accomplished. A large number of goals and objectives would make the project unmanageable.
3. A needs assessment as well as data were gathered at the state level (p. 3, 16-17). The results of the needs assessment were useful in informing Louisiana of where they were and where they need to go in terms of achieving their goals and objectives.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA is very clear about the quality and quantity of technical assistance and support it will provide (p. 18-19). The focus on research, evidence-based practices and technology is exemplary. Technical assistance and coaching (p. 18) will be helpful in enabling the SEA to bring high-quality instruction to the LEAs.
2. Toolkits, protocols, resources, and the eight technology centers add further support to the LEAs. The eight technology centers will be particularly useful in helping teachers learn the necessary skills to inform their data-based decision-making as part of their formative assessment and to implement a high-quality and comprehensive literacy program.
3. The procedures, tools and resources ensure the implementation of a high-quality and comprehensive literacy program by teachers who have had the necessary professional development to implement these wisely to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

1. The System of Educational Evaluation of Performance (STEEP) will be useful in managing enormous amounts of data and taking away some of that responsibility from the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) (p. 24). It should be useful as a formative assessment tool.
2. The SEA assessment conducted by the independent evaluator, the Picard Center, is superb (p. 20-23). The goals, questions, methods, activities and benchmarks as well as the qualitative data will assist the SEA in determining the effectiveness of the project. The case study will provide additional helpful data that can be used to inform LEAs and SEAs of their progress (p. 23). The advanced research design

Sub Question

methodology (heirarchal linear modeling, or HLM) will enable evaluators to determine the variables that lead to improved achievement for students. These evaluators' focus questions (p. 20), methods, measures and benchmarks are clearly articulated and well thought out.

3. STEEP and DIBELS, as indicated in the application, are designed to provide formative assessment to teachers that they can use to inform their instruction. Annual data from the Picard Center will allow evaluators and SEA staff to improve the design and implementation of activities throughout the length of the grant.

Weaknesses:

It will take extensive professional development for the LEAs to learn how to use STEEP and manage it. Whether it will provide all the data it claims to on p. 15 is questionable. The DIBELS is a system that has been used extensively in the field, but STEEP has not.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The careful and thoughtful consideration of how to report the data from the project is praiseworthy (p. 25-26). Yearly data will be disaggregated by student subgroups as required by law. Different kinds of reports (technical, policy, research) on project outcomes will address different audiences, assuring that many different stakeholders will be aware of the project and its results. Thus, policymakers, families, teachers, administrators and other state leaders will be have access to different reports based on their background knowledge and needs.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

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

Reader's Score: 27.5

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

1. A strength of the proposal is the application process itself, with clear and explicit guidelines about what will be required of the LEAs (p. 31-32), and a clear and coherent timeline (Table 6, p. 31) that provides detailed information for the LEAs. There is a two-part process where LEA applicants will be screened first and then asked to submit based on initial feedback. This process makes sense and is a strength of the proposal in that it allows more careful screening of LEAs.
2. The SEA will provide trainings for LEAs to help them understand, recognize and utilize evidence-based best practices and high-quality research. These trainings will provide necessary support to the LEAs (p. 31).
3. The feeder system will help to improve the capacity of early childhood providers in that it will be paired up with LEA elementary and secondary schools (p. 28). In the feeder system, children birth to age five continue on to the same elementary, middle and high schools. Thus, students stay together as a cohort. This helps assure that vertical alignment among early childhood providers, elementary, middle, and high school teachers occurs. Thus, these educators must work together to ensure a coherent, cohesive program for all students in their system.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were 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.**

Strengths:

1. The proposal specifically attends to the needs of disadvantaged students in that LEAs must show how students with the greatest needs are served (p. 32). School activities will be based on the Comprehensive Literacy Plan and therefore be of high quality.
2. The LEAs will be informed by a needs assessment that has already taken place at the SEA level (p. 32). The assessment involved different organizations and institutions and was therefore likely to be thorough and comprehensive.
3. The LEAs must demonstrate how they are involving other agencies and organizations in collaborative partnerships (p. 34). This requirement ensures that LEAs use the many resources available to improve coordination of projects.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Sub Question

Act of 2006, and State and local funds.

Strengths:

1. LEAs will be required to demonstrate that they can plan and implement a coherent program that will improve literacy instruction aligned with the goals of the project.
2. They will use many different agencies and institutions to tie their project into existing institutions to maximize the project's potential (p. 34), including those identified in the sub-criterion to improve coordination and collaboration on the 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 poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

Strengths:

The SEA will provide a weighting or extra credit for schools with high levels of poverty (p. 35). This weighting should have the effect of ensuring that those schools are among the recipients of awards. In addition, the LEAs will be required to provide free and reduced lunch percentages for all schools and compare them with one another to ensure that the schools with the highest poverty rates are being served (p. 35).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The SEA is requiring early childhood educators become part of a feeder pattern design so that they can be partnered with elementary and secondary schools. This adds strength to the early childhood providers as they are part of this system and integrated with Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLIP) (p. 1, 36) which is a research-based system that supports evidence-based practices. The strongest available evidence is important for all levels of the grant.

Weaknesses:

Without the inclusion of the LACLIP in the Appendix, it is impossible to ensure that the plan does what the SEA says it does, e. g. use and support evidence-based practices. It has to be assumed that the plan includes evidence-based practices, but more information about it would have been helpful.

Reader's Score: 3.5

- 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.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

1. On p. 36-37, the SEA lays out its formal adoption procedures for the purchase of curriculum and materials. These materials must meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Louisiana's Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC). LEAs must describe their procedures for selecting from those materials and curriculum and demonstrate how they line up with the standards. The LEAs must submit the scientific research that supports the strategies and materials (p. 36). The chart on p.7 demonstrates clearly how the SEA will make the process and results public. The chart includes activities, dates and timelines.

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: 12

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

1. A strength of the proposal is the detailed chart with responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for the project (p. 39+). This is quite detailed and provides a clear and coherent picture of the roll out of the project.
2. The Data Specialist (p. 37) will be particularly useful in managing the significant amount of data. Having a designated individual with this sole responsibility is critical since the sheer amount of data can be overwhelming and since communication among the LEAs and the SEA data sharing is often difficult. The person will ensure collaboration and cooperation among the LEAs and the SEA. The Program Specialists work as "data coaches" with the LEAs, thereby providing the necessary level of support needed by LEAs (p. 38). Data specialists will help assure that the project is on time and within budget, especially as the yearly federal reports approach.

Weaknesses:

How the Data Specialist will interact with the external evaluators (p.9) is unclear but critically important. Weekly meetings should be held between the Data Specialist and the external evaluators to ensure adequate evaluation and reporting. In addition, the Data Specialist should be integrated into the STEEP system (p. 9) who should know the system and be able to assist the literacy leaders in using the system.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Qualifications of regular SEA staff seem adequate. These individuals have sufficient expertise at the state level and in areas related to reading (p. 37-38) to assist in the project.

Weaknesses:

SEA staff should have at least a few individuals who have extensive expertise in reading (pp 37-38). The other kinds of knowledge and skills addressed on p. 38 (e.g. differentiated instruction, RtI, instructional coaching, etc.) are important, but equally important are people who have a deep knowledge of reading. A trained expert in reading is needed to oversee or at least monitor the project along with the SEA staff. A nationally recognized consultant, someone knowledgeable in reading research, practice and school reform, would add to the credibility of the SEA leadership.

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 SEA has enough experience at these reform efforts to include other agencies and institutions (p. 45). Stakeholders from various universities add strength to the grant proposal, as well as other agencies such as the Governor's Office of Community Programs, Families Helping Families, and the Early Childhood and Family Learning Foundation (p. 45). These agencies and institutions insure broad and varied perspectives on the project.

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: 17

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. Overall, the budget is well aligned with the goals and objectives of the project (p. 46, Appendix, Sample Budget). The costs are reasonable and funds are allocated appropriately. The explanation of the budget and the sample budget are very helpful in making the budget transparent.

Sub Question

2. Including a sample of the LEA yearly budget (beginning on p. e0, Appendix) also makes the budget transparent.

Weaknesses:

The budget for the literacy specialists is too small (p. 46). Given the number of students to be served, the literacy specialists would be required to work with too many students.

Reader's Score: 8

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

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

Strengths:

1. The SEA makes clear its commitment to the mandate of money distribution as evidenced on pp. 47-48. The sample budget and the monetary distribution on the bottom of p. 47 clearly articulate what will be done and how the funds are broken down.
2. A strength of the proposal is the statement that the SEA will monitor LEAs to ensure that the budget mandates are allocated appropriately (p. 48). This will be necessary to assure compliance.

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:

A strength of the proposal is that the SEA will leverage additional state and federal funds to support the proposed project. These additional funds are explicitly stated in the text (p. 5) and add to the feasibility of the project. In addition, the requirement that LEAs do the same is a strength as well. The addition of the Tools for Integrating Educational Funds Guide (p. 6) should be helpful in this endeavor.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The SEA will award subgrants to serve several tens of thousands of children in Louisiana (p. 2), most of whom will be high needs students since the average poverty rate is 66% of students in the state. Further, a significant amount of monies (over \$165,000 in years 1 and 2) will be spent on early learners, maximizing the potential to target and intervene in these students' lives.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The subgrant allocation of a base of \$1 million may not allow the projects to be successful in improving instruction at the level desired (p. 49-50). The SEA has high goals for increasing literacy and it may take more than \$1 million per LEA, depending upon how large the LEAs are. If an LEA is one or two schools, \$1 million might be fine. If an LEA consists of a large number of schools, then it would be insufficient.

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. Technology will be used in a way that should benefit the SEA and LEAs (p. e3, 9, 12, 14, 15).
2. The technical assistance centers should be very helpful in assisting teachers and schools in the effective use of technology (p. 9-10).
3. The focus of UDL should promote the efficient use of technology, not as a gadget, but for differentiated instruction for all learners (p. 12).

Weaknesses:

It would be helpful to have more specific detail on the use of technology, for example, the mandate of professional development for teachers (p. 12+). It would be useful to know more specifically what will be covered by the technology centers, how and when. What is discussed is very general.

Reader's Score: 4

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 fact that a few goals and objectives were laid out by this plan (p. 2), instead of many goals, along with detailed and specific plans for how to accomplish these goals (p. 41+) should lead to improved learning outcomes for disadvantaged students. The grant is specific on many of the details needed to evaluate the grant positively.
2. In addition, the particular use of the feeder model (p. 1) will ensure that many students receive five years of Striving Readers, regardless of their initial grade.
3. The past performance and actions of the SEA presented on p. 1-5 demonstrate that the SEA has a solid base of knowledge and data that they have amassed so that they can build on its past strengths in ways that will benefit children in the state. This began in the fall of 1996 with the development of the statewide literacy plan for kindergarten and has expanded over the last 16-17 years with additional assessments, standards and the eventual development of Literacy Is for Everyone (LIFE Promise).

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:

MET

1. The use of the STEEP system along with DIBELS should ensure that more data-based decision-making will take place in schools (p. 12-13).
2. The fact that Louisiana already has established DIBELS as an assessment tool and has some foundation for using data as part of instructional decision-making will make it easier for the LEAs to improve their use of DIBELS as an assessment instrument. If iSTEOP works like it should, teachers will be provided with even more support in their instructional decision-making.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 0

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Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education -- Literacy Literacy (S371C110045)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	35
Sub Total	37	35
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	28
Sub Total	28	28
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	18
Sub Total	20	18
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	4.5
Sub Total	5	4.5
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	98.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - SRCL - 1: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education -- Literacy Literacy (S371C110045)

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 35

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The project is based upon a convincing pilot study of a statewide literacy plan (p. 1). Results showed great improvements for students and serves as the basis for the proposed project's comprehensive literacy plan. This plan is comprehensive at three levels: emergent, elementary, and adolescent (p. 1). The applicant has comprehensively tied their state level activities to their statewide literacy plan (p. 4-6) for example, the state Department of Education (DOE) is dedicating existing resources to these activities (p. 5) and providing state-funded webinars on the literacy plan (p. 6). They are also providing effective professional development (based upon the pilot) in literacy for all Local Education Agency (LEA) staff (p. 8) and summer academies for grantees (p. 9). Louisiana's common core standards will be used as the basis for the new curriculum (p. 11) aligning curriculum with state standards.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

Current and critical data were presented alongside targets for where the applicant wants to be in 2014 (p. 16). These data demonstrate need as the current goals (including entering kindergarten ready to learn, reading on grade level by grade 3, and performing at or above grade level in English language arts by grade 8) are all scoring at 67% or lower. By 2014, they appropriately aim to bring these all up significantly. They also clearly describe the achievement gaps among disadvantaged and minority youth with the state averages (p. 17). Redesign plans in the state have appropriately geared themselves towards reaching disadvantaged youth (p. 17) and this closing of the achievement gap has been shown in data from the Louisiana Education Reform Plan and the state Comprehensive Literacy Plan. The path is

Sub Question

credible and clear to reach these goals.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The SEA has been providing ongoing technical assistance to LEAs to improve student achievement (p. 18); for example, the State Literacy Office offers toolkits with protocols, tools, and resources and the Louisiana Assistive Technology Initiative established eight regional centers to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. Funds will increase the strong data summits that the State Education Agency (SEA) can offer in evidence-based decision making (p. 19). An effective contractor has been selected to continue this work with LEAs (p. 19). This contractor has demonstrated effectiveness as an evaluator for statewide literacy program initiatives since 2004 through their evaluation of projects such as Reading First and the K-12 Literacy Pilot (p. 19).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

A qualified external evaluation center has been selected for assisting in evaluation (Picard Center, p. 19). The SEA will utilize the System to Enhance Educational Performance (STEEP) to manage the student achievement data and to evaluate the implementation of project activities. The evaluation is thorough and includes summative and formative measures (p. 19-20). Specific assessments and benchmarks have already been identified (p. 20-22). These assessments will disaggregate data for disadvantaged groups (p. 22). A comprehensive plan to evaluate student outcomes as well as quality of the professional developments has been documented (p. 20-24) with a plan for using the data for continuous improvement (p. 24-25).

Weaknesses:

Although the assessments are detailed (p. 20-21), the standardized tests being used do not align to the common core. This should be better addressed beyond standardized tests which do not necessarily align with the common core. A wider range of tools to measure assessment would strengthen this proposal.

Reader's Score: 8

- 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**

Sub Question

SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).

Strengths:

The external evaluator will provide data to the SEA disaggregated by subgroup. The applicant states that data will be made available to key groups, including parents, students, and the community (p. 25). A platform for this work will be available on the DOE website (p. 26). A wide variety of dissemination efforts ensure that multiple groups can access the information (p. 26). This includes typical mid-year and annual reports as well as simplified charts (p. 26-27) to make information easily accessible. Key data will be extrapolated in chart form for ease of consumer use of results (p. 26-27).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

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

Reader's Score: 28

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:

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) will be required to run a comprehensive (across grades) and seamless (between programs) B-12 education clusters and each cluster must include at least one high need school and one non-profit organization (p. 27). A detailed plan for measuring LEA capacity has been spelled out (p. 28-32) taking into account a pre- and full application, a rubric for evaluation, and alignment with existing priorities. A timeline for each cohort has been described in a clear and comprehensive format and includes critical interviews. (p. 32). The SEA will review preapplications in December 2011. Finalists from this competition will then be allowed to submit a full application by February 2012. The detailed description of the review and judge process is a strength of this proposal. A detailed timeline for the review process is shown in Table 6 (p. 31). The judging of proposals will involve panel discussions and interviews in addition to a rubric that reviewers must use to score applications based on key criteria necessary to implement a successful proposal; for example, detailed budgets, itemized partners, and detailed transition plans (p. 30).

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

Sub Question

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:

LEA clusters are appropriately required to include schools with great need in their cluster (p. 32). The entire project was based upon a needs assessment (p. 32-33) and justifies the basis for the work proposed. The Louisiana DOE examined student achievement data, family and community involvement factors, and effectiveness of existing professional developments and used this information to create the literacy plan. Partnerships are required to be identified by subgrantees at the proposal stage (p. 34). Priority will be given to LEAs who show well-designed partnerships with various groups (p. 34).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

All LEAs have already been trained by the applicant in tools for integrating education funds. The SEA provided professional development in April and May 2010 (p. 34) to train the LEAs on this integration. These trainings adequately prepared LEAs to align state and federal funds. Charts are provided that already document these alignments (p. 34) including state initiatives, federal funds, and laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

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:

The SEA provides data on the high poverty across the state (p. 35). The child poverty rate of the state is 40% higher than the national average (p. 34). The feeder patterns (or schools that cluster together at various age levels) of the LEA applicants must be in the high need areas. This will ensure that the high-poverty schools will be given priority to receive this funding. The applicant requires that subgrantees provide free and reduced lunch data when applying (p. 35). This will allow the SEA to give weight to these factors when scoring the applications.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The applicant will ONLY consider applications from LEAs who outline quality programming B-12. They strongly emphasize alignment with state standards in considering LEAs (p. 35). Subgrantees must provide scientific support for any proposed strategies and materials with their applications (p. 36). This demonstrates clear priority to LEAs whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The SEA has already created a comprehensive plan to ensure that students meet literacy expectations; for example (p. 36), there is now a balance between literature and informational texts and an emphasis shift from literacy skills to cross-content literacy integration. This comprehensive plan and its improvements must be built into subgrants (p. 36). The applicant will provide professional development to LEAs who are considering applying to assist them in incorporating evidenced-based curriculum into their narratives (p. 36-37). Evidence will be required of LEAs to support their curriculum and material choices (p. 37). The chart on page 7 clearly demonstrates how the SEA will make the process for judging this evidence and the results of the evaluation of this evidence public.

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: 13

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

A detailed management plan (p. 39-42) clearly demonstrates each objective/activity with the responsible party, timeline for completion, and the milestone to measure the accomplishment. Timelines appear adequate for implementation. The thorough planning ensures that the SEA has given careful consideration to the management of this project as evidenced by the detailed alignment of the milestones to the objectives (p. 39-42). Having timeframes and responsible parties already identified shows a commitment to achieving the tasks on time.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The key personnel appear highly qualified for their roles in this project. All have extensive state-level literacy experience and high educational backgrounds (p. 43-44). There is an array of experience at state, district, and varying age levels including the director of the literacy office at DOE, chief of the literacy office, director of early childhood programs, and the director of management information systems (p. 43-44). This level of expertise shows that the project objectives should be guided by people capable of administering such a project.

Weaknesses:

The job description for the Literacy Integration Specialists (LIS) does not cover early childhood. Also, expertise specifically in reading is weak among the project personnel.

Reader's Score: 3.5

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:

Institutes of higher education, administrators, foundations, and non profit organizations are all included in the stakeholders (p. 45). A team has already been collaborating to produce the state literacy plan (p. 45). These partnerships have already been vetted. This should allow for the partnerships to easily continue from the start of the project, including the planning and implementation stages.

Weaknesses:

Parents are not included in stakeholder groups (p. 45). Including families in the implementation this project would make it stronger. Ethnic diversity was not addressed in the management and implementation of this project and would be of significant value to this project.

Reader's Score: 3.5

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The budget is reasonable in relation to the impact it will have on students of Louisiana (p. 47-48). This project will serve several thousands of children over the life of the project. The design of the project ensures that the applicant will achieve much potential within the budget requested.

Weaknesses:

The budgeted amount for Literacy Integration Specialists (LIS) (p. 46) is low and will cause each LIS to have a heavy case load. They will not be able to reach all proposed students based upon the dollars budgeted (budget).

Reader's Score: 8

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrated that this structure will be required for subgrants. The SEA will provide training for LEAs in budget development to ensure this takes place (p. 47). There are measures in place for detailed accountability from LEAs to monitor this (p. 47-48).

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 project aligns all new activities with existing resources (p. 49 and budget). The life of the project gears towards reducing reliance on these funds while supporting students with this work. Subgrantees are also required to address these issues and align their funds (p. 34).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Subgrants will receive a base of \$1 million (p. 49). They are also required to leverage other funds to increase impact and sustainability. LEAs will receive additional per pupil funding to ensure adequate funds based upon the size of LEA and number of students impacted (p. 50).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

This is a critical component of the program (p. 3). These technologies will be tied to assessments (p. 12). Mention is made throughout the narrative.

Weaknesses:

On page 12, more detail on how professional development will be tied to the use of technology would have strengthened this proposal.

Reader's Score: 4.5

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:

The entire narrative is focused on improving literacy success of disadvantaged students. Each LEA must have disadvantaged students included in their cluster. The entire state has high numbers of disadvantaged students. This requirement 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:

The applicant has provided a project that is based upon data collection throughout. High standards of data monitoring have been placed on LEAs who apply. Training is built in to ensure that all LEAs can utilize data. This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

There was no mention of privacy requirements.

Reader's Score: 0

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

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education -- Literacy Literacy (S371C110045)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	33.5
Sub Total	37	33.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	26.5
Sub Total	28	26.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	18.5
Sub Total	20	18.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	4.5
Sub Total	5	4.5
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	97.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - SRCL - 1: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Louisiana Department of Education -- Literacy Literacy (S371C110045)

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 33.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Having piloted a successful feeder pattern model (i.e., an attendance pattern where students from one level, a Birth-5 center, continue their education at the same elementary, middle and high schools) similar to what is proposed gives the State concrete data of what works in Kindergarten (K)-12 in this State. The use of the feeder pattern model is an excellent idea. With this model, students will experience multiple years of improved teacher and enhanced resources. This will improve the potential for a positive impact on student learning. LDOE has tied its state-level activities to its state literacy plan. For example, LDOE is dedicating existing resources to these activities (p. 5) and has provided state-funded webinars on the literacy plan (p. 6). Department of Education (LDOE) has considered how technology can be used to support the assessment, instruction, monitoring of the needs of students. The system can provide ongoing assessment data so that teachers can adjust their instruction with the proposed Response to Intervention (RtI) model (p. 13-15). The components of instructional change referenced in Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLIP) are research based, increasing the potential that, when implemented with fidelity, the result should be a positive impact on student achievement (p. 1).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

LDOE sets three goals for its project: the first goal focused specifically on enhancing the literacy outcomes of its students. This goal was created based on the analysis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress data (p. 16-17). The State provides sub-grantees a model in the use of data-driven decisions and suggests that sub-grantees begin their literacy plan by assessing their current practices,

Sub Question

resources and student achievement. These three key data sets are to guide the creation of the literacy plan to be created by the sub-grantees, modeled on the LACLIP (p. 3).

Weaknesses:

LDOE indicated that Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) would be used as a student data collection tool. It would have been appropriate to analyze Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or other data, including data from the Birth (B)-5 age level, to support the claims (p. 16-17). This additional analyses would have provided important information that would have allowed the LDOE to describe a clearer path forward for all age levels.

Reader's Score: 7

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

Strengths:

The LDOE has designed plans for providing professional development to educators across the State focused on the Common Core State Standards and related high quality instruction, with follow-up, provided by LDOE staff representing expertise in diverse areas. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) require the integration of literacy across the school day; such professional development begins to provide teachers with the new skills needed to provide opportunities for their students to meet the new standards (p. 8-9). Previously, LDOE funded a technology support system, including regional technology support centers; these centers will be able to provide support to teachers as they work to enhance the literacy skills of their students (p. 18). These professional development opportunities are important to helping teachers implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program.

Instruction is important; analyzing student achievement is also important. LDOE will provide Data Summits, with follow-up work in the LEAs, to teach educators how to analyze data and use the data to drive instruction (p. 19).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

LDOE has chosen an external evaluation center, the Picard Center, with expertise in evaluating literacy projects to judge the success of this project in meeting the specified goals of student growth and professional development (p. 19-21). Such external expertise is key to the success of the project.

The Center will employ statistical and descriptive procedures to help educators understand student growth, an important indicator of the impact of the project, and descriptive statistics of the impact of professional development on the instructional practices. The methods to be employed will provide

Sub Question

information on the student achievement, effectiveness of professional development, and impact on classroom instruction (p. 23-24).

In addition, LDOE will use the System to Enhance Educational Performance (STEEP) to manage the data for educators. STEEP will provide educators with a tool that will allow them to assess student achievement-plan instruction-teach-assess student learning. The assess-plan-teach-assess model is central to ensuring that all students achieve (p. 14-15). In addition, the Picard Center team will provide data analyzed at the cluster level (i.e., the centers and schools linked together in the feeder pattern model) to inform LDOE decision-making, allowing for corrections in project implementation (p. 25).

Weaknesses:

The proposal provides no information on how the tools selected to measure student growth in literacy align with the CCSS (p. 6, 12, 20-21) or how the tool selected to measure the literacy growth of preschool children links with the early learning standards of the State (p. 6, 20-22). The consequence is that the LDOE could have an incomplete picture of the literacy achievement of its disadvantaged students, measured against the CCSS and the early learning standards, the standards used to drive instruction.

The innovation configuration ignores the impact of professional development on the instructional practices of Birth (B)- age 5 teachers. Failure to provide data on the impact of professional at this level will result in the LDOE being unable to explain why the project failed to impact the language growth of four-year-old children (p. 23-24).

Student achievement data will not be gathered at each grade; this limits the ability of LDOE to fully understand the impact of the project on the achievement of all students, B to grade 12.

Reader's Score: 7.5

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

Strengths:

The external evaluation center will disaggregate the data by targeted groups, allowing LDOE to understand the progress of the subgroups, a key component of the project. The dissemination plan is comprehensive, allowing key stakeholders to have access to the information (p. 25-27). Key data will be put into chart form; this will provide easy access to the information for users (p. 26-27). LDOE has considered how to share the information with the various stakeholders.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses in the dissemination noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

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

Reader's Score: 26.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The announcement and review process promotes fairness among Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The two-step application process (from pre-application to full application) helps to ensure that the State selects only those proposals that indicate the potential of the LEA to deliver a quality project (p. 7). LDOE modeled its sub-applicant review process on that used by the Federal government in several of its competition (e.g., Early Reading First grant program). In addition, LDOE added an interview step, like that used by the Federal government in the Race to the Top grant program. The selection criteria guide LEAs in the key components that they must address. They are challenging, pushing the LEAs to engage in thoughtful exercises as they consider what is and what they can do to improve the literacy performance of their students, how they can form partnerships with early childhood providers, and how they might enhance the quality of teaching in their classrooms (p. 30-31). Collectively, these features help to ensure that LDOE will select LEAs with the potential to achieve the goals of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) grant program.

The feeder pattern model, coupled with the evaluation growth models and the close look at instruction in the LEAs, will allow the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) (and others) to understand how focused, ongoing attention to individual student performance and teacher instructional practices can impact student performance (p. 5, 7).

Comparisons across LEAs will help to define the variety of instructional models that work (p. 27). Using data from one cohort to inform changes to the second cohort likely will result in the project having a greater impact on the student performances (p. 27). The technical support provided by LDOE during the application process has an opportunity to encourage LEAs to assume responsibility for the quality of not only the achievement of children when they arrive at kindergarten but before has the potential for long-range impact on students (p. 28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

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:

LDOE will require LEAs to form clusters of schools and centers that serve disadvantaged students (p. 12). The combination of requiring LEAs to show high need and great capacity for success should result in the selection of the right LEAs for this project. Requiring the demonstration of impact on student learning over the past three years is a very appropriate way to show capacity (p. 33).

Replicating the model used by the state to guide LEAs in their needs assessment is very helpful technical support. The web platform on which the survey is housed sounds worthy of sharing with other states (p. 33). The LDOE examined factors such as student achievement, family and community involvement, and effectiveness of existing professional development offerings to create the State literacy plan (p. 34). This is available for LEAs to model.

The LDOE literacy plan identified community partners as important. Sharing information on the range of partners and their roles and responsibilities could be of interest to all LEAs (p. 34). Sub-applicants will be encouraged to partner with numerous groups, with priority given to sub-applicants who show sophisticated and well-designed partnership strategies (p. 34).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

In spring 2010, LDOE provided trainings on integrating educational funds and prepared a set of manuals on this topic to assist the LEAs. This proactive stance should be helpful to LEAs as they prepare their sub-applicant proposals. Other states likely would find their manuals of value (p.34-35). A detailed table is provided that describes these alignments; the table specifically references the integration of Federal and State funds for the benefit of implementing a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction (p. 34)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

The proposal provides data on the high poverty across the state (p. 35). The child poverty rate in Louisiana is reported as being 40% higher than the national average (p. 34). LDOE will require LEAs to provide free and reduced lunch data in their sub-applications. LDOE will use these data to select those LEAs, with the feeder pattern early childhood centers, with the greatest need (p. 35).

Weaknesses:

Because the points for high-poverty are given in the pre-application stage only, it is possible that LEAs serving the highest poverty children will not be funded. LDOE might consider granting competitive points at the application stage as well (p. 35).

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 5.5

- 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:

The narrative indicates that the LDOE will only consider sub-applications from the LEAs who outline quality programming across all grade clusters, Birth (B)-12. Further, sub-applicants must show how their ideas align with the state standards (p. 35). Sub-applications must provide evidence of scientific support for all strategies and materials proposed (p. 16). LEAs must align their ideas with Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLiP) (p. 35).

Weaknesses:

There is inconsistency between what LEAs must describe in their 30 page application (p. 30-31) and what LDOE indicates it will expect regarding strongest-available evidence (p. 35). Because the proposal does not include a copy of the LACLiP in the appendix, there is no way to confirm that the state plan is evidence based.

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:

Being able to identify high-quality research is central to understanding such key project features as interventions to select, materials to purchase, and professional development content to deliver (p. 36). The LDOE technical support is important to the success of the project and will assist all LEAs in their ability to recognize high-quality research. Knowing which curricula and materials align with CCSS is central to ensuring appropriate materials are purchased (p. 37). LDOE has an established process by which publishers must demonstrate alignment with the State standards (p. 36) and will provide trainings to LEAs to ensure curricula and materials are consistent with the CCSS (p. 37). LDOE provides a detailed description of what and when it will release documents and materials to the public (p. 7).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Using LDOE staff to manage the project provides for sustainability and ensures a quick start up of the project. Sustainability is key to real success of federally-funded projects (p. 37-38). The hiring of a Data Specialist and the use of LDOE staff as data coaches to the LEA leadership are clear signals of the importance of data analysis in this project (p. 37). LDOE has chosen to lead by example. A strong feature of the management plan is the clear link between data analysis and instruction, with group professional development followed by modeling and coaching in classrooms. These practices are consistent with current research on what works (p. 38). The Objectives, Activities, Responsibilities, Timeline, and Milestones appear to describe a path forward in the implementation of the project (p. 39-42).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The proposal describes detailed procedures for the selection of consultants (p. 10). The requirements for training and knowledge of Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLIP) ensure consistency of the professional development with the State literacy plan and suggest the potential for high quality professional development (p. 10). The further requirement for Literacy Integration Specialists (LIS) creates the possibility for positive links between the professional development provided by outside consultants and integration into the classroom, a requirement for job-embedded professional development.

Weaknesses:

The job description (Appendix p. 18) is appropriate for an elementary Literacy Integration Specialist (LIS). It does not include the requirement of a background in early childhood education for site-based work in B-5 or secondary schools in grades 6-12. In addition, the sample LEA budget lists a District Literacy Leader at each LEA (Appendix, p. 30), but there is no job description provided for this person.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

LDOE followed conventional wisdom in the involvement of multiple perspectives in the preparation of their LACLIP. The list is comprehensive including higher education, public and charter school leaders, early childhood to high school teachers, policy makers, and representatives from several state agencies. Several of these stakeholders have stepped forward to support the ideas presented in this proposal (p. 45-46).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

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: 18.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The funds to be held by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) are relatively minimal; the majority of the dollars will go to the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to implement the developed program. LDOE intends to keep only 4.5% for state-level activities (p. 48). Further, LDOE is cognizant of the need for start-up dollars for materials immediately (p. 46-47), and thus provides additional funds in the first year of the sub-grants. Each LEA will receive a base allocation of \$1 million. The \$1 million will be supported with a per student allocation (\$300/student) for each LEA cluster (p. 49). This base, plus the per student allocation, suggests careful thought on the part of LDOE regarding the amount needed by LEAs to have a positive impact on the literacy achievement of disadvantaged students (p. 49).

Weaknesses:

A significant portion of the grant is to be spent on personnel. In the sample LEA budget, it is unclear whether those assigned to Birth (B) to 5 are an employee of the LEA, with a portion of their time dedicated to B to 5, or employees of the child care centers. Job descriptions do not address this issue. In addition, if Literacy Interventionist or Literacy Integration Specialist is an employee of the center, the cost sharing requirement is unclear.

Reader's Score: 8.5

- 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:

LDOE indicates that all sub-grantees will be required to adhere to this statute. LDOE will provide technical support to LEAs in budget development to ensure consistency with the statute (p. 47). Further, LDOE indicates that it will develop procedures to monitor the adherence to the statute by the sub-grantees (p. 47-48).

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**

Sub Question

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:

LDOE aligns new activities with existing funds (p. 49). The blending of State and Federal dollars and the increasing responsibility of each unit to assume operating costs associated with the project by both the State and LEAs suggests sustainability of the project beyond the Federal funding (p. 5-6, 10). For example, the State will assume increasing percentages of the salaries of 6.75 State Full Time Equivalents (p. 5). Also, LEAs will be required to cover 75% of district staff dedicated to the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) project (p. 49). Collectively, these requirements are important to sustaining the progress after the SRCL funding ends. A significant strength is that LEAs are required to begin thinking about sustaining the gains and benefits of the SRCL project from the beginning of the project. The alignment of existing funds with new activities and the blending of State and Federal dollars maximizes the potential impact of the SRCL grant.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The guidelines provided to LEAs regarding allowable expenses are linked to the Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLIP) and to the State standards (p. 49). The SEA will provide considerable funds to each LEA; the amount appears to be of sufficient size to impact student achievement (p. 49). The \$1 million base and the additional per pupil funding of \$300/student ensures adequate funds based on the size of the LEA and the number of students to be impacted (p. 49). The strategy of a base amount, coupled with a per student amount, lends strength to the sub-grants beings of sufficient size.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a

basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.

Strengths:

The LDOE has already invested in online community networking sites that can be used to support the professional development aspects of the project (p. 11). LDOE also has strength in providing web-based instructional support ideas to assist teachers in differentiating instruction for all learners. The LDOE will use a technological platform to assist educators in monitoring the progress of students (p. 12). The evaluation system is a comprehensive on-line assess-plan-teach system. Tablet pc technology will be used to gather data about the impact of professional development on classroom practices (p. 25). The comprehensive online system, with multiple educators having access to the system, provides the needed platform for this project. In addition, LEAs are to purchase interventions that use technology.

Weaknesses:

The electronic platform for monitoring the progress of the students appears limited to the entry of data related to the performance of K-12 students; the early childhood measure appears not to be included. The result is that the participating early childhood educators will be disadvantaged in their ability to electronically monitor the progress of their children (p. 12).

Reader's Score: 4.5

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:

In the pre-application stage, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) aiming to serve the greatest number of disadvantaged children will earn priority points. The project will use a feeder-pattern model to provide services to students/children from Birth to Grade 12, with a focus on language and literacy. The intent is to ensure the implementation of the new Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLiP). This plan is grounded in research that supports literacy. Teacher use of the newly approved Common Core State Standards (CCSS) also is central to the success of the project. The focus of the project is the large number of disadvantaged children living in the State.

Met

Weaknesses:

A weakness of the proposal is the failure of the project to clearly address how the project will serve the needs of the Birth to 5 children. Based on the budget numbers, the estimated number of Birth to 5 children each LEA must serve is significant, approximately 500 per LEA. The proposal provides no significant material resources for B-5 centers. In addition, it is not clear how project staff will provide services to these centers.

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 LDOE proposes to hire a data specialist at the department to assist the LDOE staff in data analysis. This staff, then, will be data support to the LEAs. LDOE proposes to use a system to manage the student performance data. Literacy Integration Specialists assist teachers with the analysis of the data and the use of data to plan instruction.

Weaknesses:

How data will be managed for the Birth-5 centers is unclear. What ongoing data the centers will gather on the literacy progress of their children is unclear.

MET

Reader's Score: 0

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