

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Mississippi Department of Education -- MS Department of Education Curriculum and Instruction
(S371C110011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	29
Sub Total	37	29
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	18
Sub Total	28	18
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	12
Sub Total	15	12
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
Sub Total	5	2
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Mississippi Department of Education -- MS Department of Education Curriculum and Instruction (S371C110011)

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: 29

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The applicant has identified comprehensive activities that align with the seven areas provided in the state literacy plan to ensure literacy instruction of a uniformly high quality. Management team will provide a good amount of detail on funding sources with committee of practitioners to ensure that federal and state grant funds are used in a consistent and unified manner with no overlapping services. The Mississippi Comprehensive Literacy Instructional Model (MCLIM) (p. e4) involves appropriate and research-based components for effective literacy instruction. Professional development program is strong and extensive, with multiple layers for mentoring and coaching, and is driven by data use with literacy leadership teams to provide ongoing support. Program goals are appropriate, as they connect with and stem from Common Core Standards and Head Start Frameworks for early learning. State level activities will support and build upon the state's literacy plan and work that is already underway. A coherent system of assessment employs interventions requiring frequent progress monitoring and attention to student growth and development.

Weaknesses:

There was some ambiguity regarding data collection and the measurement of outcomes as described in the Continuous Improvement Cycle which delineates core state actions that will be taken to monitor program implementation and outcomes. More specificity is needed regarding the specific actions that have been outlined to ensure proper (p. e11-e13) alignment with aforementioned student learning outcomes and proposed goals.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant has established appropriate and reasonable annual proficiency target goals with frequent assessments to document and monitor progress. Target goals are identified as for students in participating schools or centers to meet or exceed the annual target goals established by the state. Goals for five years are established at Grade 3, 5, 8 and 10-12, with continued growth over the course of the project. Technology will be used to capture, report and analyze data that will keep students on track for meeting goals. Data provides convincing argument to justify goals as 95% of the state's students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

Weaknesses:

The applicant was not explicit regarding how it will provide support to the LEAs regarding achieving the goals. There were not clear and specific examples of how the state will provide support to the LEAs in achieving these goals, which are set at a high level. While the goals have been specified along with the methods for evaluating their success, there is not a specific system of support delineated.

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 applicant identified specific and rigorous support in the form of summer literacy academies, summer summits and data summits (p. e17). Clear priority has been identified as the subgrantees, with support and training being directed to these groups initially. The applicant demonstrates that support will be provided at multiple levels, differentiating the need for state, regional and local training.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how the support will be provided at the various levels. The applicant has been somewhat vague with regard to the actual content of this support. While technical assistance has been included, it is unclear how these directly connect with the goals and activities as outlined in the project.

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:

The state has a well-developed plan for conducting the evaluation, by an independent outside evaluator, who will employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. Three specific research questions (pp. e20-e21) have been developed to ensure a comprehensive evaluation, with four broad goals to align with the evaluation. (p. e19). The applicant has included formative and summative assessment approaches to target the effectiveness of the program. The methods outlined are appropriate and feasible and will provide evidence of the project outcomes.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has been vague about how the evaluation evidence will be used to inform future implementation and activities (e.22) without clarity regarding how the data will be used on a continuous basis to alter or change direction of activities to ensure appropriate literacy gains are being made.

Sub Question

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 applicant has clearly identified appropriate and key stakeholder groups for dissemination of project results. The applicant demonstrates their understanding of the importance of this component and how results will be shared with various groups and levels. Targeted audiences have been identified with specific ways that data will be differentiated for a particular group's needs and understanding.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted for this area.

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: 18

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 established a specific and comprehensive plan for the competition with multiple tiers for subgrantees. Specific criterion identified via a rubric will differentiate the areas required in subgrants. The second tier will involve high scoring applicants being interviewed with follow up LEA and school site visits. (pp. e25-26) These additional tiers will help to confirm the applicant has adequately identified the LEA's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant has established the multiple tiers and levels of review, there is a lack of consistency with the process that will be used for the LEAs and ECEs. It is not clear how the Facility Enhancement Plan and Continuous Growth Plan will provide the information to support the rigorous competition.

Reader's Score: 2

2. (b) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:
(1) Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in

Sub Question

schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.

(2) Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.

(3) Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.

Strengths:

The applicant has required subgrantees to submit specific criterion (pp. e27-e31) relating to disadvantaged students within the application. LEA eligibility will be based on 60% or more of their students qualifying for free and reduced lunch and is included in the scoring rubric (p. e33). Applicants will provide evidence of a comprehensive needs assessment using multiple data sources.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not adequately addressed clear expectations regarding the links to other agencies and organizations within this criterion. (p. e27). There are limited references to families or community based organizations or links with them.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates how subgrantees will have to include a coherent strategy in alignment with initiatives supported by other grant funds. Subgrantees will list and document other funding sources and provide evidence of successful experience using federal, state and private funds. Fund alignment is one of the criterion being used on the scoring rubric.(p. e29)

Weaknesses:

While the applicant requires subgrantees to address funding alignment as one of the criterion in the scoring rubric, there is no evidence of the various state, federal and local grants that LEAs may have received.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

The applicant has identified the number of districts and schools that would be eligible under the criteria. All eligible schools will be invited to apply and participate in the application process. The establishment of the feeder attendance pattern in the process provides evidence to support transition of students from one school to the next. Priority will be given to those LEAs or ECEs with high poverty students.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not adequately define and discuss the State's definition of poverty, although they did indicate schools with high poverty rates would be a priority for receiving funds.

Sub Question

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 applicant will use a research, evidence-based rubric to apply to subgrant applications to ensure proposals are comprehensive. The rubric specifies areas to be included in proposals with specific point values given to each of the sections with priority given to evidence-based proposals. This will ensure criterion are met and weighted research-based practices and required evidence for positive outcome measures.

Weaknesses:

While LEA subgrantees will be required to provide data, the same requirement does not appear for the ECEs in their applications. The applicant was vague with regard to this criterion on the rubric.

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:

The applicant justifies a new process from those used in the past, thereby limiting flexibility in selecting materials and programs for implementation. The process will be made public on the state website and reflect transparency and access for all interested applicants. The process described will ensure alignment, while more prescriptive than those of the past, seeks to provide consistency and ensure materials are high quality and evidence-based. (p. e35)

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 3

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 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:

The applicant has provided clear and specific information regarding a management plan for the project. Four personnel would be dedicated to overseeing the work. A comprehensive plan includes monthly activities and a timeline with responsible individuals identified in each area. Activities for Years 1 through

Sub Question

5 have been identified with projected time frames delineating each month and person responsible for implementation or oversight.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The applicant has provided good evidence for the assignment of key personnel for the project. One of the four full time personnel dedicated to the project has been identified and her training and experience align with the project, as she has extensive grant level experience and has done work oversee large scale grant initiatives. State level personnel have necessary experience with federal level grants and work in the area of literacy.

Weaknesses:

Three of the four personnel for the project have yet to be hired. As a result, clear qualifications and a specific job description should be developed so personnel can provide the appropriate level of support to the project.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The applicant has indicated the intent to collaborate with various outside groups and stakeholders. The addition of members to the committee of practitioners (p. e43) will further enhance the group. The applicant will provide updates to key groups, such as higher education and early childhood councils and academic associations.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide specific information about inclusion of various groups to ensure diversity. There is no information given regarding what roles these stakeholders may provide within the project and how their organization or perspectives would be represented in the design and implementation phases. The application indicates the state would collaborate with such groups, with no details about the nature of such collaboration, or expectations during implementation of the project.

Reader's Score: 2

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 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:

The budget narrative and corresponding costs outlined for the project indicate reasonable costs in relation to the proposed project objectives and design. Costs are based on state salary scales and travel policies established by the state for government business.

Weaknesses:

The budget projects costs associated with professional development and assessment. These areas represent key components of the project and are not being adequately funded to bring about level of impact in the proposed project. In order to support continuous improvement of instruction, technology costs as outlined here will not adequately support data collection needed throughout the project.

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 applicant has included a monitoring process to ensure that funds are adequately allocated according to the requirements (p. e44). Annual reports will support the requirement allotments for each age group. Site visits will support those who are not meeting requirements.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provided limited information about the nature of the site visits and what information would be gained and how the data would be used to ensure that fund allocation was going according to plan.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided adequate evidence that the SEA will use grant funds to maximize its impact and work in conjunction with other state initiatives. The state has proposed a new structure for literacy leadership to support the plan which recognizes literacy funding priority and requires that representatives from stakeholder groups form a partnership designed to sustain funding. In addition, the state has recently funded two new positions to assist in supporting literacy efforts at the local level.

Weaknesses:

The applicant makes a reference to other funding mechanisms to provide additional professional development materials and personnel to LEAs and ECEs, however they did not include how these other funding sources would be used in conjunction with other sources to leverage other grant monies.

Reader's Score: 2

4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects**

Sub Question

that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.

Strengths:

The applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate how subgrants will be awarded in high needs schools. Budget projections provided evidence of the key areas to be funded over a five year period to impact instruction and student learning, with the average estimated cost per student at \$838.40. (pp. e48-49) The applicant has provided a sample annual budget summary for a school of approximately 400 students thereby providing evidence of Subgrants would have adequate resources to improve literacy .

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not differentiate the budget projections for the early learning programs. Information provided did not include key elements of early learning literacy initiatives such as parental and family involvement and training. As a result, it was unclear if there would be sufficient support at various levels to implement these programs.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant adequately describes the way technology will be used to support teacher effectiveness. The Wireless Generation (p. e2) assessment tools will help teachers to adequately capture and analyze data to inform instructional decisions. Teachers will have immediate access to student performance data and align this with instructional standards the use of wireless technology will enable teachers to translate class and student level reports into individualized instruction and diagnose students' ability to meet standards and provide targeted interventions for students in need.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not adequately provide details of how technology and its use will support student learning challenges. The application (p. e2) refers to how technology will be used to manage the Response to Intervention (RtI) process, however no specific information is given. There is limited information about how technology will support learning needs of children or principles of universal design.

Reader's Score: 2

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

students.

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

Strengths:

The applicant documents the various ways the proposed project will improve literacy for disadvantaged students. The SRCL grant proposal aligns with the state's comprehensive literacy plan, using evidence based instruction for all students. The applicant has proposed to clearly identify those students who are in greatest need and provide instruction and support to the teachers through professional development and ongoing and frequent assessment. Emphasis on school readiness skills for young children and literacy support up through Grade 12 is evident.

MET

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide great detail on the specific learning outcomes for students at all levels. While these align with the reading goals in the state literacy plan, the applicant has not aligned specific learning outcomes with state standards. It is unclear how each of the learning outcomes will be supported through this application.

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 provides adequate information regarding the use of data throughout the scope of the project. Data and Literacy Leadership teams (p. e1) will be trained in order to use data to make informed programmatic and instructional decisions. Teachers will utilize wireless technology to collect, analyze and inform instructional decisions and provide up to date information on student learning outcomes. The proposal supports the principle of ongoing continuous improvement through the use of data.

MET

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address training families or other stakeholders in data use. The proposal does not include ways that parents and those outside of the school can build capacity for understanding and interpreting literacy data on their own children or their local schools.

Reader's Score: 0

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Applicant: Mississippi Department of Education -- MS Department of Education Curriculum and Instruction
(S371C110011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	27
Sub Total	37	27
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	19.5
Sub Total	28	19.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	9
Sub Total	15	9
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	12.5
Sub Total	20	12.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2
Sub Total	5	2
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	70.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Mississippi Department of Education -- MS Department of Education Curriculum and Instruction (S371C110011)

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: 27

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriteria i. The applicant presented a very detailed, comprehensive and cohesive plan for how the project will support subgrantees in aligning their literacy efforts with the state literacy plan (p. 2-14). The subgrantees will be required to include information about how their selected curricula and instructional materials align with state standards (p. 3). Additionally the applicant's proposed professional development plan was content based on improving student literacy skills and will be delivered in a variety of contexts including summer academy opportunities, technology-supported training as a follow-up to summer training, and literacy coaching which should provide a comprehensive training approach to support teachers in their efforts to increase the literacy skills of all project children.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g.,

Sub Question

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:

Strengths

Subcriteria ii. The applicant provided persuasive data regarding the extent of the need of the children in the state who would be served by the proposed project (p. 14-15). In this state approximately three-fourths of the children qualify for free and reduced lunch, one-third live in poverty and one-fourth are classified as low income (p. 14) so many of the children in this state could benefit from a literacy initiative specifically directed to serving disadvantaged children.

Additionally, the applicant proposed specific, objective goals for literacy outcomes for project children that include scores on the state English Language Arts test as the measure (p. 15). Basing project goals on an existing state measure guarantees that the project will have baseline data from which to determine their effectiveness.

Subcriteria ii. Even though the state does not currently have a data reporting system for birth-5, they are proposing to begin collecting data across the state with this project including the PPVT-4, PALS Pre-K and Wireless Generation.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriteria ii. The applicant included information about one school in Mississippi that had positive outcomes with fourth graders (p. 16). This section would have been more persuasive if the applicant had included information about the interventions/strategies this school used or the reasons this school might have had these positive results. Without this kind of information it was difficult to assume that schools involved with this project would have similar outcomes. The applicant set up the need for the project and reasonable goals for participants in the proposed project but did not lay out a credible path to reach these goals in this application.

Subcriteria ii. The applicant did not include any specific information in this section about proposed strategies/interventions for limited-English-proficient students or students with disabilities (p. 14-16).

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:

Strengths

Subcriteria iii. The applicant proposed a variety of TA activities that includes face to face training, summer academies and summits, conference calls, online learning, and webinars (p. 17-18). Since there may potentially be a range of programs (rural vs. suburban; including more or less effective interventions; extensive existing professional development versus no previous training), this variety of activities should accommodate the needs of all project participants.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriteria iii. The applicant provided a variety of contexts for TA but very little information was provided about the content of the TA for the subgrantees (p. 17-18) especially as it relates to the range of literacy activities appropriate for birth to 12th grade. It also wasn't clear who would provide the TA other than the Project Bureau Director and other staff (p. 17). It would have strengthened this section if a clear scope of the proposed content had been provided as well as the specific personnel or consultants involved in providing the TA.

Reader's Score: 2

- 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:

Strengths

Subcriterion iv. The project appears to be committed to including an independent evaluator as evidenced by securing a consultant to assist them in this grant application (p.19) and stating that if funded the project evaluation would be conducted by an independent evaluator (p. 19).

Subcriterion iv. The applicant proposed a variety of evaluation methods including standardized assessments, observational measures, surveys, interviews and focus group data (p. 20). This variety of quantitative and qualitative methods should provide the applicant with comprehensive project information from which to make decisions. The applicant also included specific research questions to be answered in this project with the kinds of measures to be utilized for each question (p. 20-23).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriteria iv. The applicant did not include information about how the project will specifically use the data to improve the implementation of literacy activities/strategies (p. 22-23). The application included information about the evaluation data being provided to the leadership team but it is unclear what steps will be taken in the feedback loop to improve the design or the implementation other than providing TA support to the subgrantees (p. 23).

Subcriteria iv. The applicant did not include any information about how they will evaluate the progress of children with disabilities in this project (p. 20-23).

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion v. The applicant appears to have an effective plan for disseminating the project results and a variety of contexts that will be included in these dissemination efforts. These contexts will include dissemination results via webinars, written products (evaluation reports, journal articles, conference proceedings) and presentations (project website, conferences, local school meetings) (p. 23-25). The applicant appears to have a solid understanding of the focus required depending on the needs of different consumers (universities vs. families for instance) (p. 24).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted in this section

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: 19.5

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion i (a) -The applicant provided a thoughtful plan for administering a substantive subgrant competition that included a gated approach (written proposal, then interview, then school site visit) (p. 25-26). This approach should be effective in the applicant making well- grounded funding decisions. The applicant also included a detailed plan for forming a proposal evaluation committee (p. 25).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (a) - It wasn't clear from the information provided how ECE providers will be able to determine funded LEAs with which to partner and the options for ECE providers if they cannot determine a partner LEA (p. 26). The applicant provided no information about whether they would accept proposals from more than one ECE provider with the same selected LEA. The applicant also provided no guidance in

Sub Question

this application to ECE providers about how to select between LEAS should they have more than one feeder LEA for their students. Without more specific information, it is not clear if subgrantees will be able to effectively develop a coherent birth-grade 12 program. It seems that the ECE part of the consortium is an after-thought since the LEA and ECE parts are not well integrated into a seamless project. The applicant might want to consider a process that develops the consortium before the application process or provides a stronger rationale for the proposed approach.

Reader's Score: 1.5

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion i (b) The applicant provided a very detailed set of criteria (p. 26-31) and a rubric (p. 33-34) for both the LEAs and the EC centers that includes determining the programs with the highest need, indicators of previous effective literacy instruction, as well as their plan for continued effective literacy practices during the course of the grant.

The subgrantee will be required to provide needs assessment data in the application they submit for grant funds as evidenced in the draft rubric (p. 33-34). Additionally, the applicant provided some guidance in the way of the kinds of data subgrantees could include in the needs assessment section of their application (p. 27, 30).

It appears that the process the SEA is proposing that includes weighted criteria for the need of the children and the effectiveness of past literacy efforts/future literacy plans should identify the most appropriate LEAs centers to participate in this grant effort.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (b). The applicant did not provide clear information about how they would support the LEAs and ECE programs in involving other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community based organizations and families other than to have them specify if they did involve these entities in their grant application. LEAs and ECE programs may need more support than this to effectively involve other agencies with their project.

Subcriterion i (b). It does not appear that the SEA will provide any technical support to subgrantees about how to conduct a needs assessment or how to analyze/use existing data as they develop their needs assessment section. This could be extremely critical to programs that have had limited grant writing experience. Additionally, the specific information that the applicant provided to the ECE program about the kinds of data to use in their needs assessment included state assessment data (p. 30) which according to the applicant does not currently exist for ECE programs (p. 14). It would have strengthened this section if the applicant had provided specific information relevant to the kinds of data ECE programs

Sub Question

could access and include.

Reader's Score: 6.5

- 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:

Strengths

Subcriterion i (c) - The applicant has provided clear guidance about how the LEA ("Continuous Growth Plan", p. 28-29) and the ECE program ("Facility Enhancement Plan", p. 31) will demonstrate the integration of project funds with other funding sources.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (c). It appears that the applicant is only providing a template for the required plans (Continuous Growth Plans for LEAs and Facility Enhancement Plan for ECE programs, p. 18) rather than an individualized technical assistance approach to support centers in developing their plan.

Reader's Score: 1.5

- 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:

Strengths

Subcriterion ii - The applicant has provided a very clear definition of what constitutes a high-poverty school for the LEAs (60% or more of students qualify for free and reduced lunch) and a process for including these in the grant competition (invitations to the approximately 140 districts that qualify, school districts identify their most at need schools that are also in a feeder pattern from K-12) (p. 31-32).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii. The applicant did not provide a clear definition of high-poverty for the potential ECE participants (working with high poverty birth to 5 populations identified to the participating elementary schools. As a result, the centers will meet the high-poverty priority, p. 32). Just because an early childhood program is a feeder for a high-poverty elementary does not mean that the EC program would also meet the definition. A clearer definition similar to one the applicant proposed for LEAs would have made the identification of high-poverty ECE programs more transparent for potential subgrantees.

Reader's Score: 3.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion iii. The applicant has developed a specific and objective weighted rubric that they will use to evaluate the strength of the evidence provided by LEAs and ECE programs in the applications submitted to the SEA (p. 32-34). This should ensure that the programs with the strongest available evidence are selected as part of the state project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii. The rubric developed by the applicant did not include any data that the ECE subgrantee could provide about the effectiveness of their instructional program. It would have strengthened this section if the applicant had provided guidance to the ECE programs about the kind of data to be included (i.e., pre-post test scores, developmental indicators) (p. 34).

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion iv - The applicant provided a clear and effective plan for ensuring that selected curricula will align with the state standards and will be evidenced based. This process includes providing the subgrantees with a list of "approved" curricula that meet state and evidence based standards (p. 35) and subgrantees will need to choose from this list for implementation. This should provide the LEAs with clear, adequate support in appropriate curriculum selection.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv - The applicant did not provide clear guidelines or a process for approving, other instructional materials separate from the approved curricula other than subgrantees must purchase only materials that complement and enhance core, supplemental, and intervention program materials(p. 35). If the applicant could not provide more objective criteria at the outset then the project may want to consider an approval process for these materials to ensure that all instructional materials are aligned with state standards and are evidenced-based approaches.

Reader's Score: 3.5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 9

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion i. The applicant provided a detailed management plan that included project activities and personnel responsible (p. 37-41). The activities were sufficiently detailed to determine the applicant's plan for the project. Given detailed information about project activities and the personnel responsible it is highly likely that the applicant will have a clear plan for the proposed project objectives.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i. The rationale for why direct involvement with children would not occur until late in the first year was not provided by the applicant (p. 38). It is possible that some of the activities in the first 10 months (developing RFPs for subgrantees and consultants, conducting the grant competition) might be streamlined or fast tracked so at least student assessments could occur during the first year of the award. With child literacy interventions/programming not beginning until the second year, it appears that there will be less time and funds to directly impact the literacy needs of disadvantaged children.

Subcriterion i. More information about the specific amounts of time that activities might take would have been helpful in determining the reasonableness of the management plan (p. 37-41). For example, on p. 37 the applicant states that the project will provide technical assistance to LEAs intending to submit applications during the month of October but it is not clear from this information how much actual time is spent on this activity. Number of estimated days/hours on activities would have provided a clearer framework for the reasonableness of the proposed activities.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion ii - The key personnel have the experience and training to successfully manage the proposed project. The proposed Bureau Director has state level experience in the field of literacy and has previous grant administration experience. She has presented and published extensively in this area. The proposed Director of Curriculum and Instruction is currently a Bureau Director for the state and has previous grant administration experience.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii -It was not clear from the information provided how the proposed Bureau Director would maintain her faculty position and devote 100% of her time to the proposed project. (p. 42-43, vita in the Appendix).

Subcriterion ii - It would have strengthened this section if the applicant had included more specific qualifications for the Division Director position and the Regional Services Officer positions to be hired beyond "qualifications for these positions will ensure strong literacy backgrounds and experience in coaching and management (p. 43). Specific information including the kinds of degrees preferred and the number of years of experience in coaching or management would have made it clearer that the applicant had provided enough guidance to recruit the appropriate candidates.

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion iii -The project is proposing to interface with an existing group (State Literacy Team) which already includes a diversity of perspectives (teachers, administrators, college faculty, Head Start and ECE representatives). Given that this group already exists, the process for including diverse perspectives should be expedited (p. 43).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii -The applicant stated that the project would include parents and library personnel but there was no clear plan about how these groups would be recruited to the proposed committee or their role in the project (p. 43).

Reader's Score: 2

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 12.5

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion i. The applicant provided a very detailed and comprehensive budget that included the purpose of the proposed expense, how the expense relates to the project effectiveness and project goals (Budget Narrative, p. e0-e32). The applicant is proposing to allocate 18% of their budget on personnel, 9% of their budget toward professional development, 3% of their budget toward assessment materials, 67% of their budget toward instructional materials and 3% of their budget toward technology (p. 44-45). These budget item allocations appear to be reasonable and sufficient to effectively impact literacy practices and outcomes for children in the state.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i. More specific information would have been helpful in determining the reasonableness of the cost of the independent evaluator including the amount of time to be spent each year in evaluation activities and the specific products for which the evaluator will be responsible (Budget Narrative, e13-14).

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion ii. The applicant has provided a clear plan for ensuring that subgrant funds are distributed as requested (15% birth through age 5, 40% K-grade 5, 40% grades 6-12 (p. 46). The required level of funding will be built into the grant application template so subapplicants will not be able to request more in their budget than the allocated percentages. Additionally, the SEA will monitor subgrantee spending on a consistent and ongoing basis to ensure they do not exceed the allotted percentages and will provide TA support on monitoring their own budgets as another check for staying within the allocated funding amounts (p.46).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii. The applicant needed to provide more detailed information about the criteria for continuation of funds for subgrantees. The proposal stated that TA will be provided for projects that are not making sufficient progress but all subgrantees must make "sufficient progress to continue to receive funds" (p. 46). It is not clear from this information where the line might be between receiving TA support because of not making progress and no longer receiving funding because of a lack of progress. If a project is no longer receiving funds during the life of the grant, this could potentially affect the appropriate division of funds among subgrantees.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Strengths

No strengths noted in this section.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii. The applicant provided global statements about leveraging funds if the project was successful ("funding will increase" (p. 47) and the project will have the data to request funding from the Legislature, p. 47) without a more specific plan articulated. It was not clear how the applicant would leverage funds if the projects are not successful or what mechanisms they might use to solicit additional funds. Additionally, it appears that the applicant is "requiring" the subgrantees to integrate all of their funding sources and will provide TA support, but it is not clear if this will be sufficient to leverage other state or federal funds (p. 48). There was no information provided about how projects will be sustained after the grant ends.

Reader's Score: 0

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion iv. The applicant has provided a framework for subgrantees to use in estimating their proposed expenses (p. 48-49). This framework builds in funds to address personnel, professional development, assessment, instructional materials and technology. The applicant has determined from this framework a cost per student total across the five years which averages to \$838.40 per year. The applicant has provided sufficient detail in this proposed subgrantee budget (i.e., stipend per day for teachers during professional development, assessment cost per student) to determine that the allocated funds appear to be of sufficient amounts to support subgrantee efforts.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv. The applicant estimated the cost per ECE student as \$1227.20 per year based on "the same budget categories" as in the sample budget for LEA programs on pages 48-49 but did not provide a sample budget for ECE programs which would have been helpful in understanding the difference per student and if the proposed budget would be sufficient to support early learning programs serving children birth through five.

Reader's Score: 1.5

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and

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

Strengths:

Strengths

The project is proposing to use existing technology-based professional development training and an assessment system. The project will utilize their own existing technology-supported professional development modules for K-12 and ECE teachers (p. 6) which includes training on teacher observation, student achievement, progress monitoring and RtL). Having an existing professional development system should provide the subgrantees with immediate access to training information because there will not be development time and effort on the part of the applicant if they are funded. The applicant is also using an existing and all encompassing data system (Wireless Generation) to screen, assess diagnostically and monitor progress of project children. Since this is a packaged program it should be relatively easy for teachers to implement.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

It appears that the technology-based professional development modules will only be offered to teachers/districts who have needs as determined by their data (p. 6). It's not clear from the information presented if this professional development would be provided for poorly performing teachers or for teachers of children who were poorly performing. It would have been helpful if the applicant had provided specific information about the criteria for participation in these technology-based professional development modules.

There was no information provided about how technology might be used as a instructional strategy to be used with project children which limits the use of technology to directly improve the literacy and language skills of children.

Reader's Score: 2

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

Strengths

The SEA has an existing state initiative to improve literacy including instructional strategies that are evidenced based and a cohesive system serving children birth through 12th grade. The current proposal is aligned with this existing system and the plan is sufficiently detailed and comprehensive that it is highly likely to improve school readiness in language and literacy skills for disadvantaged students.

This absolute priority has been MET.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

Strengths

The applicant is proposing to provide training in data gathering and utilization and how to analyze student data to plan instruction (p. 9). The applicant is using an all encompassing data system (Wireless Generation) to screen, assess diagnostically and monitor progress of project children. Adapting an all inclusive assessment will most likely be easier for teachers/programs to use. Subgrantees will also be required to form data teams to analyze data and inform instruction (p. 9). These data teams could result in building local capacity for analyzing data to make informed decisions beyond the grant.

This absolute priority has been MET.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The applicant's plan for enabling more data-based decisions was not innovative but used an existing system. The applicant is proposing to use an all inclusive data/assessment system (p. 9). Using a pre-packaged system like this could result in programs not learning the concepts behind an effective data/assessment system. When programs use pre-packaged materials without being taught the principles behind the concepts (in this instance data based decision making) they may not be able to generalize these concepts to other instructional areas. The applicant did not provide information about who will make up the data teams and how the SEA will support the data teams. The staffing of teams will most likely determine whether the teams will effectively analyze data. The applicant did not provide a clear objective plan for onsite visits but proposes to "conduct periodic onsite visits to all subgrantees to collect data for monitoring effective data" (p. 13). The frequency of face to face support could be an important factor of whether data can be effectively used to plan instruction. While the applicant had some promising plans (for example data teams) there was not enough detail included to determine if it would be an effective process.

Reader's Score: 0

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