

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Montana Office Of Public Instruction -- Education Services Ed. Opportunity & Equity (EOE)
(S371C110024)

Reader #1: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Quality of State-level activities | | |
| Quality of State-level activities | | |
| 1. State-level activities | 37 | 34 |
| Sub Total | 37 | 34 |
| Quality of the State subgrant competition | | |
| Quality of the State subgrant competition | | |
| 1. State subgrant comp | 28 | 27 |
| Sub Total | 28 | 27 |
| Project management | | |
| Project management | | |
| 1. Project management | 15 | 13 |
| Sub Total | 15 | 13 |
| Adequacy of resources | | |
| Adequacy of resources | | |
| 1. Adequacy of resources | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Priority Questions | | |
| Competitive Priority | | |
| Effective Use of Technology | | |
| 1. Competitive Priority | 5 | 5 |
| Sub Total | 5 | 5 |
| Absolute Priority 1 | | |
| Improving Learning Outcomes | | |
| 1. Absolute Priority 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Sub Total | 0 | 0 |
| Absolute Priority 2 | | |
| Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making | | |
| 1. Absolute Priority 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Sub Total | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 105 | 99 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SRCL - 6: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Montana Office Of Public Instruction -- Education Services Ed. Opportunity & Equity (EOE) (S371C110024)

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: 34

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 state has a clear plan to implement the subgrants along with the alignment. Each focus area is detailed with specific roles, responsibilities, and timelines (p. e0-e18). The three implementation teams (p. e2) are designed to move the LEA and Head Start teams through the process which includes a self-assessment(p. e2), an action plan development (p. e3), and a continuous school improvement plan (p. e3). Required assessments with specific administration schedules are listed on page e13 to guide the subgrantees.

Weaknesses:

There should be more focus on the early childhood providers beyond Head Start in order to allow access to more agencies and increase the reach of the grant.

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.

Strengths:

The goals of the grant are to dramatically improve literacy achievement for all students and to support all levels (birth-grade 12) with a focus on disadvantaged students (p. e0). Specific goals are detailed by grade level and subgroups (American Indian/Native Alaskan, Free-Reduced Lunch, Limited English Proficient, and special education) on page e23. For example, 10th grade American Indian/Native Alaskan students should move from 56% proficiency of the MSRP assessments to 59% proficiency by 2011-2012. Information from the previous state assessments is used to emphasize these subgroup areas of disadvantaged students (p. e18- e21). This provides a clear direction for the implementation of the grant.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

(ii) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

Three phases of implementation will be used to assist subgrantees exploring, implementing and sustaining (p. e23-e26). Each phase relies on the Implementation Team and Instructional Consultant Team's use of visits, email, phone, and online communication (p. e26). Specific Continuous Improvement Plans provide support for subgrantees to assess their current status using inventories to formulate and update action plans, responsive plans of change, progress monitoring plans and ways to review new data and revise plans (p. e26). These extensive procedures ensure that the grant is monitored and adapted with state support throughout the process in order to meet the evolving needs of the subgrantees.

Weaknesses:

(iii) No weaknesses

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:

Independent evaluation of the subgrantees will be conducted and the proposal describes the tools, methods, and timeline (p. e26). Education Northwest will utilize its experienced researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to produce a mixed-method report (p. e26). The scheduled evaluation activities are described by year and method on pages e26-30. Data will be used to modify grant implementation plans through the use of the Continuous Improvement Plans (p. e26).

Weaknesses:

(iv) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

Reports will be shared with MSRP teams and implementation teams. Programs will be assisted with compiling reports for their communities (p. e30). Specific reports will be sent to the various teams and an annual report will keep the MT OPI Team aware of findings.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

(v) The reporting procedures do not specify how progress will be communicated to outside groups in detail beyond providing "providing reports and presentations" (p. e30) and does not indicate what information and the type of information that will be disseminated. Ensuring that the information can be easily accessed by the outside community is critical as a part of the grant.

Reader's Score: 3

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

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

Reader's Score: 27

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The state's procedures are outlined and thorough from the eligibility letters to the webinars assistance (p. e31-32). The issue of capacity is clearly defined in the evaluation criteria (p. e33) which certify that the subgrantees will be capable of implementing their grants. Subgrantees should have a strong leadership component, a minimum 80% buy in and must attend all meetings and workshops (p. e33). This encourages subgrantees that are prepared to meet the rigors challenges of the grant planning and implementation processes to apply.

Weaknesses:

(i)(a) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

(b)
(1)The subgrantees must address the needs of disadvantaged students and utilize ongoing assessments,

Sub Question

technology, and UDL (p. e34). Each subgrantee is required to share their evidence-based literacy programs, their early learning materials, and plans to maintain a multi-tiered system for all students.

(2)Subgrantees are required to complete a needs assessment and incorporate their information into their plan (p. e37). Each needs assessment focuses on identifying tools for needs assessment followed by plans for utilizing the data collected. This enables the subgrantees to build on their own data collection and analysis.

(3)Community and family involvement are listed as a requirement (p. e37). Subgrantee applications are expected to possess systems for helping families at home, communicating with families and involving parents and students in problem solving processes. There is a requirement to collaborate with families to aid students as they transition from birth through high school. Tutoring is emphasized as well as the formation of literacy partnerships with families and the private sector.

Weaknesses:

- (b)
- (1) No weaknesses
- (2) No weaknesses
- (3) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

The subgrantees are required to align their work with other funding sources (p. e37). There is a criterion focused on leveraging subgrant funds with LEAs and Head Start as well as local funds. There is a precedent for the state that was used with the Reading First subgrant competition that ensures that larger districts are allowed to have enough schools to implement plans at the district level. This previous experience and structure provides a foundation for incorporating the SCRL grant into the state's existing funding efficiently.

Weaknesses:

- (c) No weaknesses

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:

District guides are provided for the percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch schools or graduation rates of less than 80% that can apply (p. e38). This establishes a set criterion of all subgrantees to meet and ensures that high needs students will be served.

Weaknesses:

- (ii) No weaknesses

Sub Question

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 subgrant application requires a listing of evidence-based instructional methods/materials (p. e39). All subgrantees are required to align their curriculum with MT standards at all levels from birth-12. For example, grades 6-12 are required to describe how their middle and high schools will align their curriculum to state standards and additional literacy instruction (p. e39). Coupled with the ongoing assessment plans in place, this provides for strict delineation of evidence-based literacy instruction that is monitored via assessments.

Weaknesses:

(iii) No weaknesses

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 review process is detailed and a rubric is provided (p. e31). All reviewers must have a research publication record, hold advanced degrees in reading, been previously trained to review applications at the state and federal level, have training experience and the proven ability to use evidence-based instruction to improve reading achievement (p. e31). Each application will be reviewed by two reviewers and rated according to the rubric provided. Reporting will be shared at the administrative levels via reports with appropriate graphic representations (p. e30).

Weaknesses:

There are no indications that the review processes will be made publicly available beyond the LEAs and providers.

Reader's Score: 4

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 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:

(i) The proposal clearly describes the timelines and the methods/meetings and persons responsible at each stage of implementation (p. e40). Goals are detailed and the first year activities and goals list specific milestones, persons responsible with quarter based timelines.

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

(ii) Key personnel and their qualifications are provided (p. e44). All personnel listed are experienced in the focus areas and their time allotments are clearly indexed. For example, the implementation team members are currently in state level positions such as the Reading Coach, Title I Director, Response to Intervention Consultant and the School Improvement Specialist (p. e45) whose position is set at 75% for the grant work.

Weaknesses:

(ii) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

(iii) The proposal states that partnerships will be established (p. e46). The application specifies MT Statewide Community Partner, MT Literacy Team, and the MT OPI Statewide Divisions team will provide diverse perspectives in regard to educational settings.

Weaknesses:

(iii) There are not clear descriptions of the parent representatives as a part of the diverse perspectives included in the proposal. There should be more information that ensures that parent viewpoints are clearly a part of the process.

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: 20

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 delineates the costs of each area of the grant in relation to the populations of the state (p. e47-e48). Each goal is cross-listed with budget funding such as goal one's focus on the literacy framework for a cost of \$100,000 with a breakdown of how that cost relates to the LEA and Head Start program budgets (p. e47). The evolution of the funding is clearly detailed by goal and funding source relationships. This provides a view of the leveraging activities and the distributions of resources over time and by objective.

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The allocation of funds is based on the required percentages in the subgrant applications (p. e38, e 47). LEAs are required to include 2 elementary schools, one middle school and one high school, while Head Start and Early Head Start will receive 15% of the funds (p. e47). The subgrantees' applications also specify the number of schools at each percentage level (p. e38) ensuring compliance.

Weaknesses:

(ii) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The proposal mentions the prior state grants (such as Head Start and Reading First) and how they will be integrated into the subgrant work (p. e47). There are descriptions of how integration will be facilitated and how sustainability will be achieved. For example, the MT OPI Implementation Team is already staffed and will assist in sustainability.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

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:

The funding allocations are aligned with the state populations and meets the requirement of serving a significant number of students (over 8000) (p. e49). Only applicants who have 50% or more students eligible for free/reduced price meals or and on time graduation rate of less than 80% are eligible. This criterion certifies that funds will be reserved for the students who are most at risk (p. 38).

Weaknesses:

(iv) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

The proposal utilizes technology to support UDL (p. e11) teacher professional development (p. e10) and student learning related to RTI(p. e 9) and UDL (p. e11). Devices such as iPads, cameras and computer assisted reading applications are named specifically for student and teacher use (p. e11). These provisions are focused on technology and its application to classroom instruction. Evidence-based rationales are used to justify the technology "as an influence on student learning when the learning goals are clearly articulated prior to the technology's use" (p. e11).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

Strengths:

The proposal does meet the criteria and relies on national research based literacy practices and state level standards at all levels (p. e7-e11). The appendices clearly list all literacy areas required for student literacy development at each level.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

The application does meet the criteria.

Data collection and analysis are embedded in the structure of the grant. There are self-assessments (p. e2), action plans based on data (p. e3), standard based instructional requirements (p. e5) and intervention implementation monitoring mechanisms (p. e6). Specific required assessments are listed and required throughout the process (p. e13).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

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Applicant: Montana Office Of Public Instruction -- Education Services Ed. Opportunity & Equity (EOE)
(S371C110024)

Reader #2: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Quality of State-level activities | | |
| Quality of State-level activities | | |
| 1. State-level activities | 37 | 31 |
| Sub Total | 37 | 31 |
| Quality of the State subgrant competition | | |
| Quality of the State subgrant competition | | |
| 1. State subgrant comp | 28 | 26 |
| Sub Total | 28 | 26 |
| Project management | | |
| Project management | | |
| 1. Project management | 15 | 14.5 |
| Sub Total | 15 | 14.5 |
| 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 |
| 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 | 93.5 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SRCL - 6: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Montana Office Of Public Instruction -- Education Services Ed. Opportunity & Equity (EOE) (S371C110024)

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 31

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

A(i): A detailed plan was described for carrying out required State-level activities and included collaboration among 6 implementation teams (Table 1) that will coordinate the implementation of the 7 components of the Montana Literacy Plan (MLP) (Table 3) through the completion of 4 systemic processes (evaluation, self-assessment, action plans, and monitoring; p. 2-4).

Alignment of state-level activities with the components of the MLP was described in clear detail (Table 3). The activities were based on current research evidence, extensive and comprehensive, and inclusive of all student levels that will be incorporated into the project (p 1-18).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

A(i): The project's inclusion of early childhood education providers was limited to Head Start programs (p. 1).

There is a heavy reliance on the online professional development (PD) modules to implement the components of the MLP (assessment, instruction and intervention, system-wide commitment, and community and family involvement) (Table 5; p. 6-18). Limited face-to-face training outside of in-class coaching activities is planned (on-site day-long workshops and group coaching) and is largely focused on training provided in the PD modules, including guided practice using the PD modules (Table 6). The content of the online PD modules are divided into RtI (Year 1) and Literacy (Year 2), which may delay implementation of effective, developmentally appropriate language and literacy instruction (Table 5).

Reader's Score: 5

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the

Sub Question

data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the support of its LEAs.

Strengths:

Strengths

A(ii): The goals for improving student literacy outcomes were appropriate and inclusive of all students, with specification of reasonable goals for disadvantaged students at different grade levels (PreK, grades 5, 8, and high school), as well as for subgroups of disadvantaged students (American Indian, LEP, students with disabilities) (Table 2). The goals represented clear, measurable, and reasonable goals. A clear and credible path to achieve these goals was described in detail.

Specific data across a number of measurements for different grade levels and subgroups of students were presented to demonstrate a need for a comprehensive state literacy plan (p. 18-22). Performance gaps in reading (grades 4 and 8) and English and reading subtests within the PLAN assessment, writing assessment, and ACT scores (for grades 11-12) were evident for economically disadvantaged students (as defined by free/reduced lunch eligibility), American Indian students, ELL students, and students with disabilities. Important data were also reported with regard to drop-out rates, which indicated a disproportionately higher rate for American Indian students.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

A(ii): Data were not provided for younger children in the state below grade 4.

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:

Strengths

A(iii): A number of statewide activities was described to provide technical assistance and support to subgrantees in implementing a high-quality comprehensive literacy program, which encompass exploration, implementation, and sustainability of the 7 components of the MLP (p. 23-26). A multi-tiered approach for technical assistance was described, which includes onsite workshops, group and in-class coaching, and teacher reflection. An iterative process for identifying needs, evaluating implementation, and revising plans was appropriately included in the plan for providing assistance and support to subgrantees.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None 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.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

Strengths

A(iv): A strong and comprehensive evaluation plan was described that will provide a rigorous assessment of the project outcomes (student outcomes and implementation data) across multiple domains using a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures (p. 26-30). A quasi-experimental design will provide comparison of baseline (pre-test) data to phases of implementation as a measure of the project's effectiveness in achieving the specified goals. Calculation of effect sizes will allow closer examination of the effectiveness of the project in closing the performance gap between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students. Finally, incorporating non-MSRP students as a comparison group will allow a more meaningful evaluation of the project outcomes to a business as usual model of literacy instruction. The state will use the multiple forms of data to inform the Implementation Teams regarding progress on project objectives and to continuously improve the design and implementation of the project activities.

The external, independent evaluator brings extensive experience to the project in evaluating literacy initiatives (p. 26).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

Strengths

A(v): A specific schedule of reporting to project staff with reports designed to the specific 6 implementation teams is planned. Graphic representations will be used to aid interpretation of results. Finally, the Implementation Teams will support LEAs/Head Start programs to prepare reports that will be useful to their community and family partnerships (p. 30).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None 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

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:

Sub Question

a) The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.

Strengths:

Strengths

B(i)(a): Seven steps will be incorporated to ensure a rigorous review and high-quality competition for subgrant applications (p. 30-32). Eligible LEAs and Head Start programs will be supported in developing high quality applications through a number of activities, including providing information about the project and application process (alignment of the project with MLP and the new state standards for English Language Arts, the funding formula, resources available on a website, and two grant writing workshops that will be held in two cities in the state); utilizing expert grant reviewers who meet specified qualifications and are trained in evaluating the grants; and providing technical assistance in follow-up webinars to address questions following the applications workshops and provide needs data for various age groups/grade levels, conference calls, googledocs, and website resources. Applications will be rank ordered by points. A capacity criterion will be included in the subgrant applications to ensure the LEA/Head Start providers' capacity to successfully implement its proposal. Finally, requirements for minimal scores for each part of the application will ensure high-quality proposals (p. 30-33).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

B(i): It would be useful to ensure unbiased reviews by including some grant reviewers who reside outside of the state.

Reader's Score: 2.5

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

- (1) Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**
- (2) Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.**
- (3) Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.**

Strengths:

Strengths

B(i)(b): To ensure each applicant proposes a comprehensive high quality literacy program, subgrant applications will be required to address each of the implementation outcomes of the project (CICs) within a specific Criterion that encompasses each of the 6 additional requirements of the grant, as well as describe how they will address the needs of disadvantaged students, identify current needs, and demonstrate commitment to community and family involvement. Specifically, applicants will be required to address how their On-site Leadership Team will respond to a detailed and extensive list of questions within each criterion (p. 34-37); this will effectively ensure proposals for comprehensive and high quality program, as well as commitments to the Montana Striving Readers Project (MSRP).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Sub Question

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:

Strengths

B(i)(c): Appropriate alignment of proposed literacy activities and leverage of state and federal funds will be ensured in the Coherent Strategy Criterion by requiring applicants to describe their plan and how funds will be used to support specific activities(p. 37).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None 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:

Strengths

B(ii): Eligibility criteria for districts and schools within a district were specified, which listed criteria that would include high poverty schools (p. 38).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

B(ii): Eligibility was based on inclusion of 2 of 5 criteria (listed on p. 38), which could result in potentially including districts that do not serve populations of high-poverty students. For example, a district could be eligible on the basis of graduation rate and >12% students with disabilities.

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:

Strengths

B(iii): A Strong Evidence Criterion will be included in the subgrant application, which will require applicants to describe its implementation of successful evidence-based instruction. This criterion also requires applicants to describe alignment of their curriculum to state standards for PreK, K-5, and 6-12 (p. 39).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

- 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

B(iv): A comprehensive and detailed process was outlined to align curriculum and instructional materials to the new state standards (p. 5-6). Extensive training and support will be provided to LEAs and Head Start programs to understand the new standards, align the standards with curriculum and instructional materials, and evaluate level of realignment (p. 6).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

B(iv): The training and support activities to align curriculum and instructional materials to the new state standards is limited to pre-application workshops (p. 5-6). The state's review and judgment of the evidence base and alignment with state standards for curricula and materials is limited to the grant application. A process for the review and for making the results of the review publicly available was not included (p. 39).

Reader's Score: 4

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 14.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

C(i): The activities, indicators, and responsibilities were clearly specified in a management timeline. The management plan was adequate to achieve the project objectives on time and within budget (Table 12; p. 40-44).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

Strengths

C(ii): The qualifications of the 6 OPI Implementation Team members was appropriate for the project. Three project staff have experience directing or managing large scale federal projects in literacy (Table

Sub Question

13). The team members represent areas of expertise across the age/grade level (birth-grade 12). Four of the six members have a master's degree. Diverse educational backgrounds in literacy, educational leadership, elementary education with K-12 Spanish language endorsement, and special education will bring strength to the project.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

C(ii): It was not clear how Instructional Consultants will provide culturally sensitive and effective support in their roles to deliver concentrated coaching and classroom instructional support in schools/Head Start programs that serve American Indian students and other minorities.

Reader's Score: 4.5

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:

Strengths

C(iii): Information and feedback was sought from each Statewide Community Partner, state Literacy Team member, and the statewide Divisions Team members on the grant application to ensure diversity of perspectives ((p. 46-47).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 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:

Strengths

D(i): The costs were clearly justified and linked to the project goals and were reasonable for the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the project(Budget Narrative; Table 12).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

D(i): The ratio of 1 Implementation Team member : 5-7 LEA/Head Start programs is high and could potentially weaken the project design (Budget Narrative).

Reader's Score: 9

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

D(ii): Selection criteria and subgrant competition processes will ensure that MSRP meets the mandatory allocation of funds (p. 38). To meet the required 15% fund allocation for K-5, LEAs may include two elementary schools since there is a relatively smaller number of Head Starts, Early Head Starts, and district operated special education pre-schools.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

D(ii): A small number of children 0-5 will be served by this project because of the smaller pool of eligible Head Start, Early Head Start, and special education district preschools (p. 47). This pool would be potentially increased by including other early childhood education providers that are located within an eligible district.

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:

Strengths

D(iii): The project will effectively allocate other state and federal funds (Title I, ERF, Accreditation) in funding a percentage of the salaries for each of the 6 Implementation Team members (p. 44). Additionally, funds from the state budget and /or LEA and Head Start program budgets will be integrated in support for each of the 5 project goals (Table 15). The state has a successful history of leveraging federal funds to build a strong foundation for future sustainability (p. 48).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None 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:

Strengths

D(iv): Of the 112 LEAs and 150 Head Start programs eligible for the subgrants, MSRP anticipates funding between 25-35, which is estimated to impact a sufficient number of children (preschool aged) and

Sub Question

students (8000) and teachers (500) (p. 49). Funding and support for districts/Head Starts was described based on population size (Table 16). The state has extensive experience with this funding formula in providing sufficient support to schools on previous grant projects.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
None 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:

Strengths

Technology will be a central component of the professional development activities through the use of online PD modules (p. 14-15). Additional activities that incorporate technology include a link to OPI website with a list of technology resources to use technology tools and the principles of UDL (p. 11); use of universal design technology resources for all tiers, including Tier 2 and 3 for meeting the needs of disadvantaged students (p. 11); use of document cameras and mobile iPad labs to link content to real life (p. 11); use of text-assisted computer reading applications and voice recognition programs (p. 11); and online RtI Implementation survey (p. 9)

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The project did not include a plan to support teachers engaging students through innovative and instructional technology.

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

Strengths

An appropriate and detailed plan was included to address the special and differentiated learning needs of disadvantaged students to improve their language and literacy development. Year 1 PD modules are devoted to RtI across age/grade levels (early childhood, elementary, and secondary).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
None noted.

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

MET

Strengths

The comprehensive evaluation plan will provide rigorous assessment of the project outcomes (student outcomes and implementation data) across multiple domains using a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures (p. 26-30). A quasi-experimental design will provide comparison of baseline (pre-test) data to phases of implementation as a measure of the project's effectiveness in achieving the specified goals. Calculation of effect sizes will allow closer examination of the effectiveness of the project in closing the performance gap between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students. Finally, incorporating non-MSRP students as a comparison group will allow a more meaningful evaluation of the project outcomes to a business as usual model of literacy instruction.

The external, independent evaluator brings extensive experience to the project in evaluating literacy initiatives (p. 26).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
None noted.

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: Montana Office Of Public Instruction -- Education Services Ed. Opportunity & Equity (EOE)
(S371C110024)

Reader #3: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Quality of State-level activities | | |
| Quality of State-level activities | | |
| 1. State-level activities | 37 | 37 |
| Sub Total | 37 | 37 |
| Quality of the State subgrant competition | | |
| Quality of the State subgrant competition | | |
| 1. State subgrant comp | 28 | 26 |
| Sub Total | 28 | 26 |
| Project management | | |
| Project management | | |
| 1. Project management | 15 | 13 |
| Sub Total | 15 | 13 |
| Adequacy of resources | | |
| Adequacy of resources | | |
| 1. Adequacy of resources | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| 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 | 100 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SRCL - 6: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Montana Office Of Public Instruction -- Education Services Ed. Opportunity & Equity (EOE) (S371C110024)

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: 37

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

i). The applicant has provided documented explanation that the existing structure of the SEA provides the framework for the SRCL grant. The comprehensive plan, built on evidenced based research and tools is closely aligned with the grant proposal. The grant will be carried out by the same individuals involved in the existing plan and this is a sound and successful structure (pg e0). Table 3 (pg.e1) presents the Montana Literacy Plan and its high level of alignment with SRLC. Infused into the plan is the closely aligned proposed grant. The existing plan incorporates the required grant components. There is strong evidence of the capacity of the SEA to carry out the required activities of improving learning outcomes, enabling more data driven decision making, and the effective use of technology (pg.0). Information presented in the Appendices such as charts aligning state-level and State literacy plan activities, presents evidence of the advanced efforts to prepare for the grant.

Weaknesses:

i) 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:

ii). The applicant provides clear implementation outcomes (pg e3-e4) for the way the SEA will improve student literacy goals. The applicant identified 7 outcomes-all of them tied to data and feedback and these provide a clear and extensive path. A focus on Head Start and early learning is evident throughout the goals. The goals reflect a multi-tiered system of support using universal systems to address the needs of all learners. The applicant presents data that has been gathered from state assessment to validate the achievement gaps for high-risk students (pg. e19). LEP and American Indian student data is

Sub Question

given on page e20 and this data clearly indicates the need for improving student literacy outcomes. There is ample documentation the SEA goals (Table 3, pg.e1) which presents a graphically organized format aligning SEA goals, data, and activities that the SEA will use to improve student literacy outcomes . The documentation of previous achievement gap reduction, especially for American Indian children, provides evidence the applicant has the capacity to use data and develop a clear and credible path (pg. e21) to improve literacy for all students.

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:

iii). The applicant provides a convincing description of the way technical assistance will be provided. Multiple resources will be accessible to support the subgrantees in a variety of areas including assessment and standards which will increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement (pg e10). The OPU website also has adequate resources to assist teachers. Other unique technologies (UDL book builder, CAST strategy tutor, mobile iPad labs, vbooks, Dragon diction) are listed as tools to provide technical assistance (pg. e11). Online professional development, instructional consultant teams, and implementation teams will also provide technical assistance. These examples evidence a strong commitment to providing technical assistance to promote high quality literacy instruction.

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:

iv) The applicant clearly describes the multiple assessments which will be used to monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs. Table 4(pg. e13) uniquely presents the What/Who/When of the assessments in a comprehensive format. Continuous progress monitoring is evident in the proposal and a strength that addresses the goals of the grant.

1) The applicant will send data to an outside evaluator (fall, winter, spring) who will publish and present data to all education sites involved. The role of the outside evaluator is clearly defined and a strength (pg e26).

2) The applicant provides a comprehensive summary of the methods used for evaluating the progress of the state. Table 9 presents an organized timeline of the methods, instruments, and time periods. Table 10 evidences an impressive documentation of reliability and validity measures (pg. e27). This information is a significant strength of the proposal.

3) The applicant presents clear information regarding the way evidence will be used to inform and improve the project activities. Page e28 details the way the information will be shared and the information will be used to update self-assessments. Following the Response to Intervention (RtI) project approach, student data from fall to spring will be compared and used to impact teacher practice. Data will also be used to determine appropriate interventions for students. The use of data is appropriate for

Sub Question

improving learning and teaching and will be examined using a variety of perspectives and comparative views (pg. e29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

v) The applicant will review new data with the on-site leadership. Subgrant participants will stay informed and monitor progress by sharing notes from grade level and team meetings. The plan will be continuously reviewed and new action items identified. This process indicates that the grant participants will be informed of progress directed at improvement. The proposed plan for the second and third year indicates recognition of the need for ongoing dissemination of project outcomes (pg.e30). The data will be disseminated to the the Montana State Reading Project teams at their meetings. The teams are made up of various stakeholders in the community. They will recieve data specific to their group (American Indian, Title 1, Special Education). Page e41 presents a clear and detailed chart of dissemination strategies indicating this is a clear priority throughout the entire project. Project outcome results will also be available on the state website.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesss 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

Sub Question

1. The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:

a) The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.

Strengths:

i) The applicant presents a rigorous competition for subgrants which is reviewed in 7 steps. Included in these steps is the unique opportunity for applicants to attend a workshop (pg e31). The workshop element indicates the strength of the implementation team effort to select quality subgrants. The applicant has determined the qualifications of the grant reviewers and these align with the grant intentions. The subgrant application also includes criteria for subgrant capacity indicating the goal of quality. The applicant has predetermined the score an applicant must get before receiving a subgrant.

Sub Question

The clear and specific elements of the competition provide evidence of a structured and rigorous competition.

a) The applicant presents in chart form (pg. e33) the capacity criterion each subgrant application must address. This detail evidences that subgrants must prove their capacity is at a high level before receiving a subgrant, and this exemplifies the rigorous, competitive nature of the grant.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

(1) **Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**

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

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

Strengths:

b) The subgrant application contains elements of all additional requirements (pg. e34-e37 and addresses each one with ample details.

1) The focus on disadvantaged students is evident as part of the criteria for the subgrant competition. Applicants must describe the practices they will use to improve learning.

2) The applicant clearly explains the 4 assessment types utilized to make decisions. The clear alignment of types of assessments with purposes indicates a positive focus on the information data can provide for the project (e9,e13). The screening data required for the subgrantee will be used to inform and support effective teaching.

3).The applicant presents criteria for family involvement as well as for formal and informal partnerships with the public and private sector as a part of the grant competition. This indicates that there is value in external input (pg.e 18,37)

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:

c) The applicant demonstrates its ability to leverage additional funds. The applicant presents information of past success integration of Head Start funds (Table 15, pg.e15) and states it will continue to integrate funds. The applicant also documents the projected funding it would receive from Title I, Early Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other existing and ongoing grants.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

ii) The applicant presents information that the subgrant competition is based on addressing the needs of disadvantaged children (pg. e36). The eligibility criteria (pg.e38), which must be met to qualify for a subgrant, ensures that children in poverty will be given priority. Eligibility criteria include: a district with 50% or more students eligible for free and reduced lunch, a district with a low-income group not meeting adequate yearly progress targets, Head Start and Early Head Start programs (pg e38) This criteria for applicants to identify their high-poverty population is also seen in the grant application checklist on page e39.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were 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:

iii) The applicant presents a comprehensive self-assessment as well as an action plan template to be used for early learning centers and LEA's as a part of the grant application. The subgrant applicant is required to present information regarding the type of data they have already collected, they intend to collect, and to explain how they will use the data. The action plan requires performance targets, annual and long terms, and contains adequate focus on evidence. The details of these documents indicate a priority on evidence based applications.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were 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:

iv) The SEA will require the Subgrantees to use the currently existing isation (ISIP) measures to monitor their evidence base. The process enables the SEA to view outcome the subgrantees evidence base (pg.e35).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide detail regarding the way the SEA will view alignment of curricula and materials with state standards. Table 3 (pg e1) indicates the Office of Public Instruction will meet with subgrant recipients during the implementation process to assess standard alignment but no information is given about reviewing and judging prior to the grant award. There is no information about how the SEA will make this process publically available.

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: 13

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

i) The applicant presents a reasonable chart depicting timeframes and deadlines for the first year of the grant. The distinctions between ongoing tasks and ones with deadlines indicate understanding of the fluid nature of some tasks and the ongoing nature of others (pg e40). The details in planning are evident as tasks are assigned to different quarters. The indicators of progress are clear and aligned with responsibility (pg. e40).

Weaknesses:

i) The applicant states that the management plan for subsequent years will be based on first year results and feedback from all stakeholders (pg. e40). Information about what parts of the "project management" need to be met to continue into the second year is lacking. There is no information regarding what stakeholder feedback takes priority or will merit changes for the second year. There is not information regarding the timeframe of feedback that will influence the planning for next year (pg. e40).

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

ii) The applicant presents specific information about the (Montana State Reading Program (MSRP) team. The details of their roles (Table 1/13) exhibit a clear direction to manage the project. The roles are aligned with their experiences in a well thought out manner. The key personnel are highly qualified and have experience at the level required for this grant.

Weaknesses:

ii) No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

Sub Question

- 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:

iii) The applicant has presented information about the way the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project in Table 3. This table identifies planning meetings which are attended by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), the implementation teams, and the Statewide Teams. To receive subgrant approval the state requires the subgrant applicant to describe community partnerships and how they will involve other stakeholders.

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: 20

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:

i) The applicant presents a clear and reasonable budget based on project goals. The charts on pg e0-e3 detail expenditures and are comprehensive in their comparison of the costs with different funding lines. The budget evidences knowledge of the components of a well implemented project and the applicant's past experience with grants is a positive. Multiple graphic depictions show the budget planning and document the supplies, contractual agreement, funding needs, (e3), training, and technology components necessary for the project to reach its intended significance. Presentation of year by year expenditures evidence long range planning and knowledge of potential costs associated with the proposed activities.

Weaknesses:

i) no identified weaknesses

Reader's Score: 10

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

iii) The applicant presents the percentages of federal and state funds that will be added to the MSRP grant in Table 13. This assurance is stated multiple times throughout the document. The applicant is clear that funds will be directed to subgrantees who can guarantee that students in these categories will be served by this grant.

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:

iii) The applicant provides information on leveraging funds from Head Start, Curriculum and technology funds and other sources. These are estimated in the overall budget, based on past experience. This discussion is a strength and indicates that the applicant has experience utilizing funds from multiple sources to accomplish grant objectives. (pg e4).

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:

iv) The applicant intends to award 25-35 subgrants, decreasing the funding slightly after year one. The yearly fund distributions are well planned and are based on school size and are related to the activities the school has identified as needed. (pg. e5)

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:

Strengths

1) The applicant presents information about the way they propose to use technology to support the principle of universal design and to increase student achievement and engagement. There is a convincing explanation of the universal design technology that the applicant proposes to use for all tiers of disadvantaged students. The applicant will award competitive technology priority points to subgrantees who propose to use technology to support principles of universal design. There is strong documented information regarding the use of technology to address student learning challenges (pg.10,11)

2) The applicant presents information regarding the innovative way the OPI team will use technology to gather data during walkthroughs. The use of iPads and iWalkthroughs indicate a desire to collect immediate data that will impact teacher effectiveness. The applicant presented a clear description of the way data is used to identify the needs of LEA's and to assist them in their next steps of RTI implementation. This is strength as it indicates that this is ongoing assistance to schools and it will impact the way they meet the needs of students and increase teacher effectiveness (pg. e9). Three PD modules are in place and contain resources for teachers to increase their effectiveness (pg e 10) Teachers also have access to document cameras, mobile iPad and text-assisted computer reading applications. There is convincing information that the applicant has proposed an effective use of technology.

Weaknesses:

There are no identified weaknesses

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:

Strengths

The applicant provides clear documentation and examples of the way the project will improve school readiness and success through grade 12. The project aligns with current existing programs and will enable the LEA to continue its endeavors. Table 3(pg. e1) presents a clear plan of the way the MSRP goals will be achieved. Seven components, all of them aimed at improving instruction and using evidence, are strong supports for Absolute Priority 1. The graphic organizer on pg. e0 presents a visual of the way the 4 systemic processes will interact to achieve the MSRP goals. The multi-tiered system of support (RTI) has an emphasis on disadvantaged students and Appendix 1B documents this detailed framework. (pg e9). The applicant presents convincing documentation about the way the OPI has used past funding to successfully increase achievement of disadvantaged students. (pg e21). The applicant claims to have a high level of confidence, based on their

previous experiences and evidence, and this claim appears to be justified. MSRP goal 3 specifically addresses improving literacy for disadvantaged populations (pg e42). This priority is justified in an extensive manner. This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified

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 presents a reasonable and well documented plan to address absolute priority 2. Evidence based instruction and intervention (pg. 34), a universal screening system, multiple assessment measures, diagnostic procedures, and fidelity of assessment administration are all components of the subgrant application, indicating the priority of data-based decision making (pg. e35). A continuous improvement monitoring process has been developed and is cyclical and ongoing (pg. 36). This cycle included professional development based on identified needs. MSRP goal 4 addresses a data-based decision making process and using data in a timely manner. Multiple state documented measurement tools are listed on page e0 and these add to the thoroughness of the attention to absolute priority 2.

This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

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