

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction -- NC Dept. of Public Instruction K-12 Curriculum & Instruction (S371C110039)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	20
Sub Total	37	20
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	9
Sub Total	15	9
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	5
Sub Total	20	5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
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	55

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction -- NC Dept. of Public Instruction
K-12 Curriculum & Instruction (S371C110039)

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: 20

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 provided strong evidence of how the activities will align with the state's literacy plan. They have embedded the activities with the literacy plan shown in Table 7 on p. e22. A well developed conceptual framework supports the literacy plan and incorporates the goals already established along with elements of learning theory and best practice. (p. e 10). There is clear alignment with the Common Core State Standards and the North Carolina Responsivess to Instruction (NCRtl) model so that all literacy initiatives are pursuing common goals and are research-based and data driven.

Weaknesses:

The integration of the State level activities within the alignment of the existing literacy plan make it difficult to distinguish what or how these are different. While the project suggests building upon initiatives already in place, this may cause confusion about how the goals and activities of one project will provide support for the other and which will take priority.

Reader's Score: 7

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

Strengths:

The applicant has proposed a data-rich project, with recommended data sources to align with the SRCL Program and the Common Core State Standards. Descriptions of the data to be collected and analyzed are complete and concise. (p. e18-e21). There is good alignment with the standards being used for the project so that all schools and partner organizations can have consistent assessment systems in place.

Weaknesses:

While Table 6, Common Core State Standards Alignment, (pp. e18-e21) provides a clear alignment of the recommended data sources and the Common Core State Standards, there is some confusion of how

Sub Question

these integrate with the activities proposed by the State. There is not a clear and well-articulated connection or path for how the data will be used to inform future decisions within the project. There is no reference to how the data will be gathered through a needs assessment.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The SEA has provided a plan for providing technical assistance and support to SRCL subgrantees. The goals and objectives included in this technical assistance plan are clear, concise and multi-tiered to include monitoring, evaluation of progress, and communication of outcomes. These four tiers or stages align with work going on throughout the project, providing clear expectations and training, onsite visits and progress monitoring. (p. e24) SEA will monitor the implementation of recommendations to schools and teachers via monitoring visits.

Weaknesses:

While the technical assistance section is aligned with project goals, there is not enough specificity and detail regarding the actual timelines and how this might occur. The information is vague regarding how the technical assistance support will be provided and how it will enable LEAs to improve student achievement in core academic subject areas.

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:

The following areas are shown to be strengths within this section:

The applicant provides information about the evaluation and some aspects of the process intended to be used for evaluation of the state's progress.

Participants will include SEA NRTi monitoring and managerial staff, and NCRti professional staff. (p. e33).

Monitoring and evaluation with feedback and recommendations for improvement, with targeted interventions is an activity outlined in Table 10. This evaluation component will be required of subgrantees who will be given access to all relevant data and analysis, along with reports will have to be provided.

Weaknesses:

The following areas presented as weaknesses within this section:

It is unclear whether an independent evaluator would be utilized to conduct the evaluation.

Limited information was included about the intended methods of evaluation to be used.

While data was described as a key component throughout various phases of the project, the explicit data used to evaluate the overall projects' success and outcomes was not clearly identified.

While data should be used to continuously inform the design and implementation of its activities, there was not a clear feedback loop relative to how the data would be used to inform future activities.

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

- 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 provides guidelines and includes information regarding the communication plan and how it will be implemented to provide project outcomes to various stakeholders. This section provides specific communication tools that will be utilized, including written reports, assessments, and types of communication such as onsite meetings, webinars and publications of state and national test data. (p. e23). Progress reports to the US Dept. of Education as well as media communication would be included as part of this plan.

Weaknesses:

The Communication Plan and the communication of project outcomes was embedded within Table 7, (p. e22), however the details were not as explicit or evident to the reader. While the technical assistance template includes a section dedicated to communication, there was not specific information about the various stakeholders and how the information might be differentiated to meet the varying needs of different audiences.

Reader's Score: 2

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 SEA has provided good evidence of a high quality rigorous competition for subgrants. The application process includes very specific guidelines and procedures, with an accompanying scoring rubric and specific timelines to follow. (p. e41) Applications will be scored with attention to key priorities and the inclusion of required populations. Applicants will be required to develop specific goals designed to meet the needs of their student populations, with personalization to the school and students.

Weaknesses:

There are no noted weaknesses in this section.

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

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 provided clear and convincing evidence regarding subgrantees addressing the needs of disadvantaged students in the competition requirements. (p. e33). Formative and summative assessment will be required and assessment results will be targeted for intervention. Subgrantees must study and discuss program goals with parents and other stakeholders, involving them in the goal creation and development.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not adequately addressed the needs assessment and how this will inform the goals and desired project outcomes. As this provides a typical starting point of data collection, this missing element would not launch the program in an appropriate direction. While stakeholders are involved in the goal setting, parents and other stakeholders do not appear as prominently in other aspects or activities of this process. It is unclear how parents and other organizations would be involved in the activities to promote the implementation of effective instruction for all students.

Reader's Score: 4

- 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 recognizes the importance of a strategy to link the subgrant with other grants and fundings sources for improving literacy instruction. A reference is made to previous efforts that have not been aligned, (p. e.11) indicating that this initiative differs from other state initiatives and is the work of consensus and agreement across groups.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not make specific references to the various Title grants or other federal monies that might be supporting or have supported literacy efforts in the past in the state of North Carolina. Limited information is given regarding any other initiatives and how a strategy linking them together would support efforts to improve literacy.

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 specifies very clearly the statistics related to poverty with projected estimates throughout the state. The applicant provides a specific activities to support the free and reduced lunch student populations and provide training to parents. (p. e22) The subgrantee application scoring rubric provides for extra points for those applications targeted to this population.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

There are no noted weaknesses in this section.

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 application for subgrantees includes the provision and scoring rubric requiring evidence of a comprehensive literacy plan that begins with early childhood. The application includes specific goals for providing the strongest evidence and accompanying data sources to identify, assess and monitor the needs of young children. (p. e.25) Stages of early literacy development provide the instructional standards for determining progress. Table 6 provides several data sources to be used as evidence with this indicator.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

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:

No strengths are noted within this section.

Weaknesses:

Limited information is given about the process, established or newly developed, for selecting curricular materials. There is no reference to a state process whereby materials can be judged for evidence based use and alignment. While the project proposal identifies a variety of assessments and how they align with standards and project activities, there is no process for identifying materials and curricula and how this will be made publicly available.

Reader's Score: 0

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.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The proposal has provided a template that outlines the evidence required in each of the SEA's projects and plans. This template provides an overview in four key areas for subgrantees' monitoring and reporting. (p. e44). These key areas are evidence-based, requiring the integration of data and scoring rubric in order to provide program management.

Weaknesses:

The proposal provides limited information about the budget and timelines in relationship to the Project Management template they have provided. While they have indicated one key personnel for the project in the template, there is no information provided regarding budget, timelines and milestones for the work in this section. Without this information, it becomes difficult to determine how the proposed objectives would be met with a corresponding time frame and budget requirements.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

Three key personnel have been identified to oversee and participate in the implementation of the project. Resumes provide strong evidence of relevant training and experience. Job descriptions have been developed for additional key personnel to be involved in the project. (p. e46)

Weaknesses:

Several key personnel positions have not been identified. It is difficult to assess whether they will have the necessary and relevant experience to oversee the work on the project. Language within the job descriptions (pp. e46-47) is vague making it difficult to understand how the various positions will work together.

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 proposal has done an excellent job of meeting this requirement. The themes of collaboration with partners and key stakeholders is embedded throughout the proposal. The scoring rubric and application materials provide a scoring system that requires all levels be involved and require subgrantee goals to align with SEA project goals. (p. e. 47)

Weaknesses:

There are no noted weaknesses in this section.

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: 5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The applicant has developed a system for ensuring that an adequacy of resources exists. A rubric (p.e47) that is required of sub grantees provides for specific elements to be present. This rubric is aligned with the subgrantee's plan and requires evidence as well as provides for recommendations. The rubric has a dual purpose, providing clear expectations to sub grantees as well as ongoing monitoring and recommendations for improvement.

Weaknesses:

There are a number of weaknesses that are presented within this section. The "Budget Narrative" provides limited information about how the costs relate to the objectives, design and scope of the project. Costs associated with the project are not reasonable and do not align with the work to be accomplished. The projected amount for supplies does align with the work proposed in the project. There does not seem to be a clear connection with the costs and the amount of money requested (pp. e0-e4). The requirement of two project managers is not well justified within the budget sections or elsewhere in the proposal.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

The SEA has stipulated that the funds will be allocated according to required allotments by integrating these aspects in the application and scoring rubric. The populations to be served and the percentages required for each are incorporated into the scoring process and scoring rubric. Subgrantees will be required to provide data to meet this requirement.

Weaknesses:

While the stipulations to meet the required percentages are included within the application, there is not a good plan to ensure that funds are actually allocated accordingly. There is no link from these requirements to anywhere else within the project proposal, making it unclear how this equitable distribution will be made.

Reader's Score: 2

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 refers to a USED grant from October 2010 and connects the SRCL application with the state literacy plan. The application process requires the subgrantees to consider and address SEA goals and include partners and key stakeholders in the process. (p. e36) Planning charts and documents require the overlap of goals within the application.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

References to federal, state and local grants are minimal with sustainability after the end of the subgrant not addressed.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

The applicant has provided evidence that subgrants will support projects to improve instruction with high needs schools and early learning programs. This information is integrated into the application process and embedded throughout the proposal document. The requirements for the application and scoring identified by the application materials and scoring rubric (p. e48) will attempt to ensure this will be met.

Weaknesses:

Beyond the initial application and the score provided on the rubric, there is no other reference to the award of subgrants to meet the needs of a significant number of students. It is unclear how the rubric point score of 25 for this item will be calculated.

Reader's Score: 1

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant has made a strong case for the integration of technology throughout this project. The proposal includes specific goals for technology that align with the SRCL activities along with a timeline for how the methodology will use technology at each level of student learning. (p. e29). Table 9 provides an overall comprehensive view of the way technology will be incorporated within all aspects and levels of the project and the requirements for subgrantee proposals.

Weaknesses:

The use of technology with specialized populations is limited and there was not intentional use of how technology would provide access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities. While technology will be used to collect data within the project, there were not explicit references to how technology will support individual student learning needs of principles of Universal Design.

Reader's Score: 3

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant has a well-developed plan to ensure that the project improves school readiness and success for disadvantaged students. Three goals have been identified which align with the goals and objectives for the state's NCRti program. (p. e22). The four tiered intervention model will be utilized to target instruction for disadvantaged students. An accompanying timeline provides key areas for data collection and progress monitoring to occur.

MET

Weaknesses:

Technical assistance and support to grantees serves as a component of the absolute priority of improving learning outcomes. This information is vague and does not align with or overlap the three main goals already identified. While this technical assistance suggests important support, it is unclear how this interfaces with the rest of the proposed project. (p. e. 23)

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 proposal includes a comprehensive plan for ensuring that data is used to drive key decisions on program outcomes. Three goals have been developed to center around data use, for interventions and decision criteria, with students and parents and to provide training in data use for subgrantees. (p. e25). The plan include

specific activities that align with the methodology and timelines to ensure and provide key data points.

MET

Weaknesses:

Technical assistance and support to subgrantees has been embedded within this priority of enabling more data based decision making, however, how it will be implemented is less clear. The timelines presented are general and somewhat vague. The technical assistance area does not align with the key goals already established in this absolute priority, (p. e26) thereby diluting its ability to be effective and provide support and assistance as described in the project.

Reader's Score: **0**

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction -- NC Dept. of Public Instruction K-12 Curriculum & Instruction (S371C110039)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	8.5
Sub Total	37	8.5
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	9.5
Sub Total	28	9.5
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	7
Sub Total	15	7
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	5
Sub Total	20	5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	1
Sub Total	5	1
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	31.0

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction -- NC Dept. of Public Instruction
K-12 Curriculum & Instruction (S371C110039)

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: 8.5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion i - The applicant provided detailed information about their proposed literacy program (p. 15-17; 19-22), specifically Response to Instruction and the alignment with the proposed curriculum and the state standards. There is an evidence base supporting Response to Instruction and the applicant has provided enough detail to successfully implement this intervention.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i - While the applicant included references to SEA activities (technical assistance, p. 28; professional development focused on literacy, ensuring that subgrant funds are used to implement an effective literacy intervention) there was very little specific detail about the process the SEA will use to carry out these requirements. It is difficult to determine if the SEA will carry out the required activities and the effectiveness of their plan.

Reader's Score: 2

Sub Question

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion ii - The applicant provided detailed and comprehensive data regarding the need of students in their state including students with disabilities and students with limited-English proficiency (p. 3-15).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii - While the applicant provided a detailed needs assessment of the students in their state (p. 3-15), they did not provide a clear and credible plan that the SEA will take to achieve the project goals with the support of its LEAs. The applicant also did not provide any specific goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the state for all students other than a general statement about eliminating gaps (Abstract). More specific, objective and measurable goals needed to be provided by the applicant for improving student literacy goals.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Subcriterion iii - The applicant provided the content of the proposed technical assistance to subgrantees that included initial and ongoing training and monitoring in their selected literacy instructional method of North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction (NCRtI, p. 28) which should be helpful to the subprojects in implementing this strategy.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii The applicant provided no information about how they will provide technical assistance to subgrantee applicants. The application states that initial and ongoing training and monitoring in North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction (NTRtI, p. 28) will be provided to the subprojects but no information was provided about the duration of the training or the frequency of the monitoring. The applicant also did not provide any information about who would provide the training or the monitoring. On page 25, the applicant states that onsite monitoring visits would be provided by the US Department of Education but this most likely will not be an option since this is not the role of USED. Without specific information about the frequency and duration of the training and monitoring, there is no way to determine if the proposed technical assistance approach will be effective.

Reader's Score: 0.5

Sub Question

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 applicant provided information about the proposed assessments to be completed to evaluate the results of the project (p. 26-29) with specific assessments including the North Carolina End of Course (EOC) and End of Grade (EOG) tests. The applicant also proposes to include evaluation methods like observations and interviews to determine the effectiveness of their intervention strategies which will provide a richer data set.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv - The applicant did not include any information about whether they will engage an independent evaluator so it is unclear whether they will have an independent evaluation of their project results and outcomes. There was also no information provided about how the applicant will use ongoing evidence and evaluations to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of subgrant projects. Without a clear evaluation plan or independent evaluation it is not likely that this project will have a significant impact.

Subcriterion iv The applicant provided general information about their proposed evaluation but more specific information about the assessments or evaluation methods would have strengthened this section of the application. For example the applicant stated that they would evaluate the intervention with LEA, school, teacher, and/or commercial sources for data collection and interpretation (p. 26) but did not propose specific named assessments in this section. It would be important for the applicant to propose specific assessments so there is continuity among the projects for evaluation. The applicant stated that they would conduct onsite observations of fidelity to NCRTL (p. 27) but no information was provided about who would conduct these observations, how often the observations would be conducted, and no sample rubric of the observation measures was included with the application. Without more specific information about evaluation included there is no way to determine whether their proposed evaluation plan will be effective.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Subcriterion v The applicant included information about dissemination/communication of project results (p. 27-28). These dissemination methods include communication among the subgrantees (online visits/meetings, webinars, emails and phone calls) and progress and yearly reports to the Department of Education and state agencies.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion v - The applicant included information about disseminating results to the Office of Education and state authorities (p. 28) but there was not more specific information included about how the applicant will disseminate project results to families or the public in general and no acknowledgement that dissemination to different groups might require different types or levels of information. It would have strengthened this section if the applicant had included more specific information about the types of outcomes to be disseminated and how it will specifically support subgrantees in their dissemination efforts (technical assistance, templates for dissemination).

Reader's Score: 1

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: 9.5

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

The applicant included detailed application directions that will be provided to the subgrantees when they are developing their applications (p. 33-37) as well as an application template and scoring rubric (p. 38-39) that should provide effective guidance to potential subgrantees as they develop their application.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i - The applicant did not provide any information about how they will conduct the subgrantee competition. There was no detailed information about who will review the applications other than naming the SEA and LEA staff, SEA partners, and Selection Committee Members (p. 34). There was no information provided about who the SEA partners or Selection Committee Members would be or how they would be selected. The applicant did not provide any information about how it will support subgrantees to develop effective proposals, for example technical assistance in grant writing which could

Sub Question

be very helpful to districts and programs that had limited grant writing experience.

Reader's Score: 1

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 is requiring that subgrantees use Response to Instruction which has an evidence base in addressing the learning needs for disadvantaged students (p. 15-17;19-22). The subgrantees will also be required to provide information about the needs of their students to ensure those programs serving the children with the greatest needs will be supported by these grant funds (p.39-40).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (b) While the applicant provided information about how it will address the needs of students with the highest level of needs, it did not provide specific information about how it will determine a potential program's capacity for improvement (Abstract). The applicant did not provide any substantive information about how it will support subgrantees to involve other agencies in the development of their literacy efforts. The applicant did not provide a process to support the subgrantees in conducting a needs assessment on which to develop their project plan.

Reader's Score: 2

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 did provide a very detailed framework for aligning their proposed SRCL Literacy Instruction with their Common Core State Standards (p. 19-22). This framework included recommended goals and data sources for the SRCL Literacy Instruction and how these aligned with State Core Standards in Foundational Skills, Language Skills, Speaking and Listening Skills, Reading Skills and Writing Skills. This plan appears to be detailed enough for the subprojects to effectively align the proposed intervention with the state standards.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (c) There did not appear to be any information included in this application about how the applicant will integrate this proposed literacy proposal with literacy instruction supported by other Federal funds. Additionally, there is no information provided about how the state will support a coherent strategy from birth to 12th grade. For example, there is no evidence that the children served by the Early Childhood subgrantees will transition into Kindergarten programs that are also subgrantees. Without this kind of continuity it is unclear how effective this grant project will be.

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:

Strengths

Subcriterion ii - The applicant provided a definition of schools that will qualify for the subgrant application process in the Project Abstract (p. 1) which included all School Improvement Grant (SIG) qualifying schools in 2011, schools with low-income students at 40% or higher, any LEA and school with a significant number (40% or more) of Exceptional students or ELL students not performing at proficient levels on the EOC and EOG tests and Early Childhood Programs serving children birth to 5 in low wealth area of the state. This definition seems clear and programs should have no issue self-identifying for participation in the grant competition.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii - While the applicant provided a clear definition about qualifying programs (Abstract, p. 1), they did not provide information about how they will weight the differing criteria. For example, if a potential subgrantee applicant qualifies because they have 40% or more students who are low income it was not clear if they would be given priority over a subgrantee applicant that has 40% or more Exceptional students. It was also not clear if a subgrantee applicant served a more needy population (for example low income + Exceptional students + students who were ELL) if they would be given priority over a program that only served one of these student populations. Also the applicant did not provide their definition of "low-income." Clearer guidelines about prioritizing subgrantee applicants would have strengthened this section.

Reader's Score: 4.5

- 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

Subcriterion iii - The applicant included an item on the subgrant application that required the potential subgrantee to provide evidence of a comprehensive literacy plan, sustained rigor of project implementation, of sound implementation strategies, emphasis on early education and high poverty children (p. 39-40). This will provide the applicant with some information with which to evaluate evidence among applicants.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii While the applicant is requiring the potential subgrantee to provide evidence about their project and the need of the children in the subgrant application (p. 39-40), they provided no specific guidelines about the type of evidence that would be appropriate and are not providing any technical assistance to potential subgrantees to support them in strategies for collecting evidence or the types of evidence that would be the strongest indicators to include in their application process.

Reader's Score: 1

- 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

No strengths noted in this section.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv The applicant provided no information about whether they will develop a process, update a process or use an existing process to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with state standards in the subgrant competition.

Reader's Score: 0

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: 7

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 timeline for the subgrant competition only that was sufficiently detailed to effectively manage the application process (p. 34-36).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i The applicant did not include a management plan that provided enough detail to determine if the applicant would be able to achieve objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget (p. 45-47). The applicant did not include clearly defined responsibilities (including for the management team), timelines or milestones for accomplishing tasks. Especially given the limited large grant administration experience the key personnel have, it was really important to include a detailed and comprehensive management plan with clearly defined timelines, responsibilities, goals and objectives so it was evident to the reviewers that the management team could administer a large scale grant effort.

Reader's Score: 0.5

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion ii The applicant provided resumes of the two project managers and project director in the Appendix and there is a brief description of their roles in the management table on page 46. All three of these key personnel have doctorate degrees and educational backgrounds in instruction and curriculum and educational/school administration and professional experience in the areas of curriculum, instruction and district/state level administration. This professional management team appears to have the experience and training to lead this grant effort as it relates to curriculum and instruction (resumes). The applicant provided detailed personnel descriptions for a project manager, literacy coaches, monitors and an administrative assistant (Appendix, in key personnel). These descriptions included the proposed responsibilities and the desired qualifications for each position. These were sufficiently detailed to effectively hire these positions.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii - While the management team appears to have a solid background in curriculum and instruction, they have very little collective experience administering large scale grants. It would have been helpful in the project management section if the applicants had provided a solution to their limited grant administration like consultant support in that area. It would have also been helpful if the applicant had provided the roles and responsibilities for the three named key personnel. It is not clear from the limited information provided how the responsibilities would be divided or how the three key personnel would interface as a management team.

Reader's Score: 3.5

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion iii The applicant included a framework for collecting evidence on including diverse perspectives in designing and implementing the subgrantee projects (p. 47). It appears that the

Sub Question

applicant will require the subgrantees to provide demographic information and a position and mission statement as evidence that the subgrantee solicited and integrated diverse perspectives in developing their plan (p. 47).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii - While the applicant provided information about how they will monitor whether the subgrantees solicit diverse perspectives as they develop their projects, the applicant did not provide any information about how the state project will ensure that they solicit diverse perspectives or support the subgrantees in including diverse perspectives from across the state in developing their subgrant project.

Reader's Score: 3

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 5

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion i - The applicant included information about the roles/responsibilities of key positions and the salary requested for these positions (p. e7-8, key personnel, appendix). Based on this information these personnel costs appear to be reasonable.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i There was no budget narrative included in this application and without a narrative detailing the specifics of the proposed budget there is no way to determine the reasonableness of these proposed costs (p. 1-5, budget). For example, there is no information provided about why there are travel costs written in for the clerical assistant, no information provided about what kind of benefits are included in the fringe benefits cost, no information provided about what costs are included in technical assistance or trainings in literacy and language. Office supplies were listed as approximately \$ 8.8 million the first year and \$12 million annually for years 2-5 of the grant but there is no information about what kind of office or instructional supplies are included for that amount of money. There is no specific information included about the number of items requested under equipment (laptops, monitors, ipads, printers, projectors, docking stations) and a per item cost for each of these requested items. There is no information provided about the reason for having a travel budget (p.4, budget) and also

Sub Question

listing travel under the other category (p. 5 budget). There is no information under contractual about how many consultants would be hired or how much time they would be asked to provide to the project for the proposed costs. Without a detailed narrative there is no way to determine the reasonableness of this proposed budget.

Reader's Score: 1

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 clear guidelines for ensuring that 15% of funds are allotted for birth through kindergarten, 40% is allotted to programs serving kindergarten through grade 5 and 40% is allotted to serve middle school and high school students (equally divided). These guidelines are included in the budget (p. 1-3) with specific monetary breakdowns for each age/grade group and there is a category for scoring whether the subgrantee follows the guideline on a form that subgrantees will use during the application process (p. 48).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii There was no plan provided by the applicant about the process that will be used to ensure that subgrant funds are allocated with 15% budgeted for serving children birth through kindergarten, 40% of funds serving kindergarten through grade 5 and 40% serving middle school and high school (equally divided between these two groups) (p. 48). Information about how the applicant will ensure this distribution during the application process (for example, subgrants not accepted over a specified dollar amount) or after subgrantees are selected (for example, whose responsibility it will be to adjust the subgrantee funding amounts to ensure allocations remain within these specified amounts) would have strengthened this section.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Subcriterion iii - The applicant included a template to be used by the subgrantees to document their own adequacy of resources and the plan the subgrantee proposes they will use to leverage other state and federal funds if they receive the subgrant (p. 48).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii - The applicant provided no narrative in the adequacy of resources section (p. 48) but only included the template for the subgrantees to use for documenting their plan for adequacy of resources. This was actually listed in a format of 4 sections that were even listed in the same order as the four criterion in the technical review form. The applicant allotted 25 points to each of the four criteria which also does not seem like an adequate plan for evaluating the subgrantees adequacy of resources (p. 48). For example, the reasonableness of the plan should potentially be weighted more than the plan for leveraging additional funds. Including the categories for the subgrantees to complete about their plan for adequacy of resources does not provide any information about how this applicant proposes to support the subgrantees in leveraging other state and federal funds or providing them with support to determine a plan for sustaining their funding after the subgrant ends (p. 48).

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion iv - The applicant included a template to be used by the subgrantees in the subgrant application process to document their own adequacy of resources and whether their proposed budget was of sufficient size to support their objectives with the students they serve (p. 48).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv The applicant provided no information about how much subgrantees would receive as far as funding amounts but only provided information in the budget narrative detailing the total amounts each age grouping would receive based on the 15-40-40% allocation of funds (Appendix). Without this information there is no way to determine if the SEA is going to award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects in improving the literacy outcomes of children with highest needs.

Reader's Score: 1

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 applicant provided some information about their plan for effective use of technology in their projects in Table 9 that included technology-based professional development modules for teachers, online courses for students and teachers and virtual courses/meetings for teachers and students.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The applicant did not provide persuasive information about how this proposed project meets the Competitive Priority of effective use of technology. The applicant cut and pasted the same table with the exact same information as their evidence for the 2 Absolute Priorities and the one Competitive Priority. This made it seem as if the applicant was not clearly responding to the requested information and the information provided seemed very convoluted because they cut and pasted the same information for each priority. The applicant needed to provide clear and detailed information that specifically related to the information needed for each priority. Additionally, it would have strengthened this section if the applicant had provided more detail about some of their technology activities like virtual courses to understand how comprehensive that approach might be.

Reader's Score: 1

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 is building their proposed literacy approach on the foundation of previous successful literacy initiatives (p. 14-15) and has proposed an effective, research-based instructional approach (RtL) that all subgrantees will be required to use (p. 15). Given the historical base for literacy instruction in the state and a strong instructional approach the project has a high likelihood of improving literacy and language outcomes for the disadvantaged students in their state.

CRITERIA 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 provided some information in Table 8 (pp. 26-29) on their data based decision making plan that included using assessment results to identify gaps in learning and conducting conferences with students, parents, teachers, literacy coaches, counselors to evaluate student's academic need based on data.

PRIORITY MET

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The applicant did not provide persuasive information about how this proposed project meets Absolute Priority 2 of ensuring data-based decisions. The applicant cut and pasted the same table with much of the same information as their evidence for the 2 Absolute Priorities and the one invitational priority. This made it seem as if the applicant was not clearly responding to the requested information and the information provided seemed very convoluted because they cut and pasted the same information for each priority. For example on page 26 under this priority the applicant discussed the use of various modes of communication to inform students and parents about the availability and benefits (plus confidentiality measures) of free and reduced lunch and physical activity which is not appropriate or germane to this priority. The applicant needed to provide clear and detailed information that specifically related to the information needed for each priority.

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: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction -- NC Dept. of Public Instruction K-12 Curriculum & Instruction (S371C110039)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	9
Sub Total	37	9
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	8
Sub Total	15	8
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	4
Sub Total	20	4
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	43

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction -- NC Dept. of Public Instruction
K-12 Curriculum & Instruction (S371C110039)

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: 9

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:

[Note: The page numbers in the North Carolina (S371C110039) application are those listed in the format of "Page xx of 48, with xx being the page referenced in this review.]

STRENGTH

A.(i) The narrative states on page 12 that many literacy plans have been implemented throughout the state, albeit have not been "...aligned with each other or other statewide initiatives..." As well, implementation of the plans have not been the "...result of statewide consensus and have not been sustainable by all stakeholders." The inclusion of this statement provides a strong rationale for the support of a State Literacy Plan. This will enable the SEA and LEAs to expect the beneficial alignment that will contribute to the beginning of a viable and cohesive literacy plan for K-12.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

A.(i) The state activities are modeled after a North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction (NCRtI) framework which involves four different levels or tiers of intervention. The first level is "Core Instruction" and the last level is "Consultation for Special Education referral." However, some elements are puzzling. The model diagram refers to Tier 1 as being "Core Instruction," while the narrative refers to the first three levels as "intensive intervention" (p. 17). Intervention implies that something doesn't happen the way it is supposed to. Thus a new strategy (intervention) is tried, resulting in a change that is desired. If the first three levels are "intervention" levels, then there needs to be an explanation as to what instigated all three interventions.

The focus of the program appears to be on individual gaps as opposed to general gaps between groups at certain levels. Thus, it is more like an IEP (Individual Education Plan). Student achievement is assumed to increase by providing appropriate and sustained interventions to individual students based upon the four tiers (p. 15-17). It is confusing to understand where Tier 2-3 interventions occur (classroom, lab, etc.) and for what general time lengths. The intervention tiers must be conducted on a one-to-one basis since they are based on specific needs of specific individuals (p. 17). Unless classroom instruction is put on hold, when students return after an intervention, the gap could be exacerbated.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 2

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:

STRENGTH

A.(ii) The inclusion of Table 6" Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Alignment (p. 19-22) offers a good example of relating effective literacy instruction with recommended data sources and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) / College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

A.(ii) One of the secondary goals has to do with the "parity of literacy development and performance" based upon "inconsistent academic opportunities (p. 1)." However, the "inconsistent opportunities" are not addressed or described. The reason they are inconsistent could be because they have all been done one-on-one as interventions or as implementation of literacy plans that are not aligned to each other or to state standards. In this sense, the activities would appear to be working against the goals.

The path is not clear and credible because, while the goals and data are identified, the activities to achieve those goals are based on individual interventions. The path will be different for each student. This is a method used in special education IEPs. There is no attempt in the evaluation to say that the reduction of individual gaps will lead to achievement in literacy. Moguls, or mounds of snow, in skiing provides a metaphor. There are a bunch of little hills that you have to ski around to get down to the bottom of the run (the goal). The SEA program appears to provide more of a mogul approach by creating individual paths rather than integrated and aligned paths to the successful achievement of literacy goals.

Reader's Score: 2

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:

STRENGTH

A.(iii) The Applicant has proposed a multi-tiered program, with the progress-monitoring of students.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

A.(iii) Technical assistance and support will be provided to SRCL sub-grantees in two ways: 1) in the form of professional development training in grant expectations and SEA roles and responsibilities, and

Sub Question

2) monitoring and evaluation with feedback and recommendations for improvement with targeted interventions. This assistance will be provided by state staff and North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction professional development trainers (p. 34). The applicant also describes "NC Falcon," a formative assessment online learning community, as providing on-going support to teachers in utilizing formative assessments to monitor and adjust instruction (41). These supports, however, do not specify the objective of enabling teachers to "implement a high quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects."

Reader's Score: 1

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:

STRENGTH

A.(iv) The SEA identifies specific assessments (e.g., End of Grade/EOG, End of Course/EOC) and evaluation sources and some aspects of the process that will be used in evaluation and support of a continuous improvement project.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

A.(iv) An independent evaluator will not be used for project evaluation. While data from several assessment instruments will be collected, the methods for analysis and evaluation of the data in relation to project objectives has not been identified.

With the exception of individual student interventions or non-interventions, the Narrative does not specify how evidence from formative or summative assessments will be used to inform or continuously improve program design and the implementation of activities. While formative and summative assessments will only be provided for individual students, no procedure has been identified to correlate these individual assessments with any evaluation of general trend or demographic variables.

Reader's Score: 3

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:

STRENGTH

A.(v) Guidelines regarding a Communications Plan will be utilized (p. 23).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

A.(v) The Narrative provides no evidence of how the SEA will disseminate disaggregated group information from project outcomes and in formats easily understood, accessible, and useful to the

Sub Question

public. Even though sub-grantees are required to show evidence of "Communication of Project Outcomes" as part of their application (p. 39), that information does not provide stakeholders with an overall view of the SEA's literacy initiative.

Reader's Score: 1

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:

STRENGTH

B.(i)(a)

The sub-grantee application process is illustrated on P. 34 and involves 1) an electronic submission of a WORD document, 2) a Rubric appraisal, and 3) the announcement of sub-grantee awards. Application directions are provided on P. 37-38. An important feature of this criterion is the requirement that applicants must include all of the state's goals in their project and no less than one, but no more than 3, complementary goals that are relevant to the school and students.

The application also includes information for sub-grantees to respond to different aspects of the Competitive Priority and to Absolute Priorities 1 and 2 (p. 39-44). This helps sub-grantees fashion their projects to reflect these priorities.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

STRENGTH

B.(i)(b)(1-3) The Applicant provides clear evidence of the necessity for sub-grantees to address the needs of low-wealth, ELL, and EC students {p. 33}.

Detailed information about the proposed literacy program is evidence-based and is aligned with state standards.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

B.(i)(b)(1-3)

The applicant has proposed a literacy program based on a 4-tier approach of instruction and intervention. While the literacy program will target disadvantaged students who are identified as having literacy gaps with individual intervention programs, it looks as if the intervention may cause more complex problems. For instance, if students are put into Tier II intervention to receive needed help, they apparently will be missing the core instruction. If intervention is successful and students are returned to Tier 1, they will have missed the instruction that occurred during their intervention time. They will then have more gaps, because of missing the window of opportunity, and have to repeat the cycle. Recovery does not seem to be eminent. Lastly, it looks as if the desired outcome for the literacy program is to decrease or limit the number of students referred to Exceptional Children programs (p. 16). In all honesty, this program cannot be classified as a comprehensive or high quality literacy program.

Reader's Score: 2

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:

STRENGTH

B.(i)(c) On Page 48, the SEA assigns 25 points out of 100 possible for sub-grantees to provide evidence for the "leveraging of other state and federal funds to maximum impact." The assignment of these points represents an important emphasis for the co-mingling of funding sources and helping build capacity in order to bolster and sustain potential project effectiveness.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

B.(i)(c)

The applicant does not demonstrate ability or intent to implement a coherent strategy regarding improving literacy instruction. On Page 2, the Narrative states, "The adequacy of resources is assured through alignment of all relevant statewide initiatives...so that duplication and other forms of inefficiency and ineffectiveness of effort can be decreased significantly...." However, no evidence of the co-mingling of funds from other federally funded entities is provided.

Sub Question

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:

STRENGTH

B.(ii)

The applicant states that all School Improvement Grant Fiscal Year 2011 qualifying schools with low income students at 40% or higher or any LEA and school with 40% or more Exceptional Children and/or ELL students not performing at a proficiency level on the End of Course or End of Grade tests, and partners who serve students from B-5 in low wealth areas of the state are eligible to participate in the sub-grant competition (p. 1, Abstract). Tying "low wealth" and "not performing at a proficiency level" together will enable a more equitable allocation of resources.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

STRENGTHS

B.(iii)

This element appears to be the strongest item in the SEA's proposal. The SEA asks sub-grantees to provide evidence of a comprehensive literacy plan (29 out of 100 pts), evidence of priority given to high-poverty children (22 out of 100), evidence of emphasis upon state standards (18 / 100) and evidence of sustained rigor of the project and project implementation, of sound implementation strategies, and of emphasis upon early education. These evidence indicators are part of the application information required for both absolute priorities and the competitive priority (p. 39-44).

Three of the categories on Page 45 of the Management Plan rubric are Type & Source of Evidence, Alignment of Evidence with Sub-grantees Plan and SEA Plan, and Evaluation of Sub-grantee's Evidence and Alignment.

In Table 10: Sub-grantee Project Timeline, sub-grantees are asked for clear, convincing evidence of implementing recommendations and ongoing, sustained formative and summative assessments.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

B.(iii)

While sub-grantees must provide evidence, no specific guidelines on the type of evidence needed to be included with their applications. In order to reach the students most in need, it would be helpful to

Sub Question

provide some Technical Assistance (TA) regarding the selection of the "strongest possible evidence" for sub-grantee applications.

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

B.(iv)

This project allows North Carolina to align its literacy efforts with a) the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts; b) Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, and c) the Responsiveness to Instruction model (p. 12 -13).

The initial sub-grantee application and ongoing implementation processes of the sub-grantees place a heavy emphasis on providing evidence.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

B.(iv)

No provisions are identified for publicizing evidence of program effects available beyond SEA and sub-grantee levels.

The process and results of evidence is primarily restricted to communication with sub-grantees (e.g., onsite visits and meetings, webinars, emails, phone calls, training sessions in which outcomes are publicized, and publication of state and national test data (p. 24).

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: 8

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

STRENGTH

C.(i) A timeline for sub-grantee competition is sufficiently detailed (p. 34-36).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

C.(i)

There are three general management plan threads, none of which are adequate to achieve project objectives.

1. The charts shown with the Competitive Priority (p. 29-33) and with Absolute Priorities 1 (p. 23-25) and 2 (p. 26-28) are too vague and many of the descriptions do not fit the categories. The four category levels are defined as Targeted Population / Rtl Activity / Rtl Methodology and Alignment / Timeline. For example (p. 23), under Timeline for the first activity (diagnostic testing of all students...), the timeline lists prenatal care and birth to age 5 wellness visits, PreK-12 Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring. Also, the differences between two of the categories (Activity and Methodology/Alignment) are ambiguous. For example, under the third Activity on P. 23, it specifies "ongoing communication of physical, emotional, and academic benefits of good nutrition and physical activity." The related Methodology/Alignment frame states "use various modes of communication to inform students and parents about the availability and benefits of free and reduced lunch and physical activity."

2. The Project Sub-grantee Competition chart found on Pages 33-35 provides a general management plan with categories of Activity, Participants, Requirements, and Due Date. However, basic details are insufficient for being able to effectively implement them. This is especially troublesome for first year actions. One suggestion to provide clarification for the first Activity box (Application Process) and the related Requirements box (Electronic submission) might include when and how the application will be made available. Details could be broken down to indicate milestones or benchmarks such as a) publish a sub-grantee RFP, b) provide technical assistance for eligible sites, c) submit applications, d) provide sub-group awards, etc.

3. The Project Management chart found on Pages 44-45 does not provide responsibilities, timelines, or milestones for accomplishing project tasks or objectives. Instead, the categories specify categories for collecting, aligning, and evaluating evidence; and recommendations for improvement.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

STRENGTHS

C.(ii)

The three top personnel presented impressive resumes that included experiences in public school administration, experiences in managing other grant funded programs, supervisory backgrounds, and years of experiences in other educational endeavors.

The other key personnel are not hired yet. However, job requirements were submitted for 132 Local Program Managers who will assist local school districts and schools with grant implementation; 2 Literacy Coaches to assist teachers and administrators in sub-grantee schools; 2 Literacy Monitors who will monitor sub-grantee implementation of the grant; and an Administrative Assistant

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

C.(ii)

There is no narrative for this section so it is difficult to know what the top 3 personnel will be doing: Project Director or the Project Manager. It is unclear why two Project Managers are noted but only one will be paid according to the budget.

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:

STRENGTH

C.(iii)

The SEA will consider demographic evidence, position and mission statements, interactions, and anecdotal evidence to sustain diversity of perspectives and provide shared, collective leadership. The SEA will examine diverse perspectives as revealed in staff profiles, sub-grantee profiles, parental involvement, community involvement, and grant partners. Two important aspects of fulfilling this criterion are 1) the fact the SEA will not only look for evidence of cultural and socio-economic variation, but also for different political and philosophical perspectives. And 2) the SEA affirms that position and mission statements will reflect alignment with grant goals and components, regardless of perspectives on those components. Facilitating a diversity of perspectives can strengthen even the weakest of plans.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 4

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:

STRENGTH

D.(i)

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

D.(i)

Four weaknesses characterize the budget for this proposal.

First, costs are not reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, the project design, or the potential significance.

- a. The objective of identifying and eliminating gaps as a means of increasing academic achievement and limiting referrals to Exceptional Children programs does not seem justified for the amount of money requested and especially in light of SRCL grant requirements that projects provide for the advancement of language and literacy and pre-literacy skills in reading and writing for birth to grade 12 students.
- b. The "Responsiveness to Instruction" project design of 4 levels of progressively intense interventions does not seem justified in light of providing no examples of the kinds of intervention requirements or expenditures needed for one-on-one interventions.
- c. The potential significance of the project is limited primarily to those students who need additional interventions, rather than providing increased literacy achievement for all students, especially for those who may not need Tier 1-4 intervention levels.

Second, the budget is missing a breakdowns of equipment costs, literacy professional development consultants, literacy supplies, language supplies, communication, printing, and travel (p. 5, Budget). Also, there is no reference in the Narrative in terms of using or needing Reading 3-D Palm PDAs, iPads, Classroom Response Systems, EBooks, or SRCL Website Design.

Third, there is ambiguity with the listing of 2 separate project managers on Page e0. Yet, only one project manager at \$85,000 is listed in the budget (e7).

Finally, the role, responsibilities, and qualifications of 132 Local Project Managers at \$70,000 each are questionable. The qualifications of a Bachelor's degree and 4 years of experience in education or a related field, and knowledge of adult learners appear insufficient for the required responsibilities of school and classroom leadership, management, instruction, organization, external forces, and capacity building. These qualifications are insufficient because of a lack of a higher degree and 4 years of experience may not provide enough exposure for the types of instructional literacy challenges and leadership roles (e.g., best practices for capacity building) they will be expected to provide.

Reader's Score: 0

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:

STRENGTH

D.(ii)

The 15/40/40 distribution pattern and the associated middle/high school disbursement, is one of four 25-pt parts of each sub-grantee's 100 pt Adequacy of Resources application and ongoing evaluations (p.

Sub Question

48).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

D.(ii)

The explanation regarding the distribution and disbursement of funds to the respective LEA /ECE (Early Childhood Education) levels is minimal, even though this is a major part of grant requirements. No reference is made about this requirement in the Narrative except for what is shown on Pages 2-5 in the Budget table (p. 48).

Reader's Score: 2

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:

STRENGTH

D.(iii)

The leveraging and integrating of funds is one of four 25-pt parts of each sub-grantee's 100 pt Adequacy of Resources application and ongoing evaluations (p. 48).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

D.(iii)

The SEA neither identifies such funds nor suggests any collaborations in terms of co-mingling any current or previous academic or literacy funding initiatives; Furthermore, no provisions are made in terms of sub-grantees who fail to muster adequate funding to maximize impact or build capacity.

Reader's Score: 1

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

Strengths:

STRENGTH

D.(iv)

The awarding of sub-grants of sufficient size to support instructional projects for a significant number of high need students is one of four 25-pt parts of each sub-grantee's 100 pt Adequacy of Resources application and ongoing evaluations (p. 48). In terms of this criterion, the SEA exhibits strong support for targeting high need schools and populations based exclusively on low wealth, ELL, and Exceptional Children (EC) demographics.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

D.(iv)

There is no provision made for supporting literacy projects that target significant numbers of high need / disadvantaged students who happen to attend schools or centers that may not be classified as low wealth, who fall outside of ELL (English Language Learner) or EC (Exceptional Children) parameters, or who score at higher proficiency levels.

Reader's Score: 1

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 used for professional development modules as well as online courses which teachers and students will be encouraged to complete (p. 30). This is beneficial to students and teachers because it exposes them to an online learning system with which they may not have had any experience. These are not always easy to navigate so the added bonus is gaining more familiarity and confidence in the digital world.

Databases of results of EOC and EOG will be used to identify learning gaps of students and provide appropriate interventions (p. 30). This demonstrates a way to ensure that instruction and interventions, if needed, are directly related to the learning gaps.

Virtual meetings with global student community and with sub-grantees will be available all year (p. 30). Participation in the global student communities can open up many opportunities for student learning in innovative ways.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

To meet this priority the applicant needed to propose the use of technology to address student learning challenges and to provide a rationale for the proposed technology program. Neither was done. While the courses and the interactions with the global student community do involve students in positive ways, these were not linked in any way to addressing learning challenges, although they could have been. Likewise, there was no rationale for any of the technology uses.

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:

STRENGTH

MET Absolute Priority 1: Improving Learning Outcomes

The applicant states that corrective actions will be based on the results of mandatory visits and student test data (p. 28). In addition, monitoring and evaluative feedback and recommendations for improvement with target interventions will be part of each sub-grantee's application process (p. 34). During the implementation stage of the project, monitoring rubrics and other feedback and the identification of specific areas in need of improvement and recommended strategies for improvement will be available (p. 45-46). Reflective feedback by sub-grantees will be included at the end of the grant period. (p. 35).

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESSES

Absolute Priority 1: Improving Learning Outcomes

Table 5 (Stages of Early Literacy Development) and Table 6 (CCSS and CCR Standards) provide strong support for literacy and pre-literacy efforts and related assessment sources (p. 18-22). The incorporation of these standards for improving the literacy of disadvantaged children is weak. Based on the following items, the proposal's obligation to meet the chief objectives of providing school readiness and success through grade 12 in language and literacy development for disadvantaged students remains limited:

1. The Applicant identifies the goals of learning in English/Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Yet no indication of providing technical assistance or support for instruction in those areas is provided.
2. The Applicant emphasizes the need for parity among schools as based upon inconsistent academic opportunities among and within LEAs. No technical assistance or support for attempting to make academic opportunities consistent for all students is offered.
3. On Page 23 of the chart detailing Absolute Priority 1: Improving Learning Outcomes, the Applicant states that EOC and EOG assessment results and other data sources should be used to identify gaps in learning and to determine and provide appropriate and targeted interventions to lessen the number of Exceptional Children referrals (p. 23). The impetus of this proposal emphasizes one-on-one intervention in which student deficiencies are targeted as opposed to making increasingly complex literacy gains the focus.
4. Based on the 4 tier levels of interventions, the SEA plan seems to contradict the notion that was expressed in

the Narrative on Page 12, that "not all efforts have been aligned with each other and with other statewide initiatives." Thus, the notion of everybody doing their own thing may be more apt to be repeated.

5. Rather than encouraging the inclusion of all disadvantaged students, the project focuses on low wealth ELLs and Exceptional Children who need academic interventions in order to avoid being placed in Special Education classes. Other sites serving disadvantaged students who may not match these specific need categories may not be approved or receive less consideration.

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

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

Data will be used for program participant outcomes to improve 1) student outcomes and 2) instructional practices.

a) Student outcomes measures will include End of Course and End of Grade assessments (p. 1, Abstract; p. 19-22).

b) Instructional measures will include onsite observations of fidelity to the North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction (NCRtI) and for onsite monitoring visits (p. 27-28) and several "Recommended Data Sources" aligned with the CCSS and the CCR standards (p. 19-22).

The Applicant states that assessment results will be used to identify gaps in learning and provide appropriate and target interventions (p. 23). Statistical analysis of data, based on NCRtI interventions will be used with individual students.

Weaknesses:

WEAKNESS

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

none

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

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