

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/25/11 12:00 AM

### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education -- PA Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learnin (S371C110044)

**Reader #1:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
1. State-level activities	37	32
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
1. State subgrant comp	28	26
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Project management</b>		
<b>Project management</b>		
1. Project management	15	13
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	19
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Priority</b>		
<b>Effective Use of Technology</b>		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		
<b>Improving Learning Outcomes</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 2</b>		
<b>Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>95</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SRCL - 2: 84.371C

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education -- PA Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learning (S371C110044)

## 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: 32

#### 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 created a strong State Literacy Plan and has set out guiding principles that meet Additional Requirement (a). On pages e11, the applicant provides an appropriate table that outlines the principles of literacy competencies, instruction, community, and learning communities. The literacy plan has a consistent focus on the needs of birth to grade 12 and disadvantaged students. In addition, the applicant meets the Additional Requirement (b) by providing evidence that the state will align the use of Federal and State funds and programs to provide a comprehensive support to funding and implementing effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students. On page e48, the applicant presents a number of examples of how the State will align the use of Federal and State funds within the State and Local Educational Agency (LEA). These examples include: Integrating the Common Core and Literacy Design Collaborative work funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; using Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy core training to connect sub-grantees to the family literacy provider network for family literacy; and creating connections to State and the Region III Head Start Technical Assistance Center to bring together early childhood providers and school districts. The inclusion of an exemplary literacy plan and alignment of other funds to effectively provide literacy instruction creates a synergistic effort to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide information about publicly posting application results. On page e40 in the roles and responsibilities table the project director will disseminate scoring information and comments. This does not sufficiently describe how information will be made available to the at-large public. This fails to ensure transparency and the opportunity for public feedback to further enrich the SRCL projects.

Reader's Score: 8

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered

**Sub Question**

**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:**

On pages e14-16, the applicant provides a comprehensive table that outlines the literacy goals and strategies to follow Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy guidelines that provides a clear and credible path to achieve its goals. The goals include disadvantaged populations and create a literacy environment across the state with research-based literacy practices. These excellent goals with accompanying strategies convincingly demonstrate the applicant's ability to achieve improved student outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score: 8**

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

**Strengths:**

On page 17, the applicant provides a systematic, comprehensive technical support model with a framework for technical assistance. The State will use the Intermediate Units (IU) system of existing state-wide technical Assistance Centers to provide literacy training and technical assistance (page 20). Through the IUs, the state will create sustainable change by routinizing research-based literacy practice and ensuring sustainability past the grant period. Though this existing framework, the state ensures high-quality technical assistance to create high-quality LEA literacy programs thereby improving student's achievement in core academic subjects.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

On pages e25-33, applicant presents a strong evaluation plan with research questions and actions that address who will conduct the evaluation, the feasibility and appropriateness to the objectives, and evidence of a plan for continuous improvement of activities. For example, on page e25, the applicant discusses the evaluation plan in which the University of Pittsburgh and internal SAS system will conduct the evaluation. The SAS system will take the lead on collecting quantitative data and University of Pittsburgh will take the lead on the qualitative, synthesis, analysis, and reporting. To ensure that the evaluation plan is appropriate for the objectives, on pages e26-29, the applicant provides learning outcome evaluation and research questions that assess if students are making academic progress. The applicant also describes how teachers will be able to access this system to see how individual students are performing and also gain access to webinars and training modules. Finally, on pages e30-31, the State will collect evidence on how the project is working through a case study evaluation that includes a sampling of classrooms in which educators will be interviewed, SAS documents will be analyzed, and a survey of IU staff blogs will be used. The State will use this information to determine what modifications need to be made to the system. This convincing evaluation plan ensures vigilant monitoring of improving achievement with disadvantaged students so that modifications can be made to the system to further

**Sub Question**

improve outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

When describing the teacher survey (pages e31-32), it is not clear if the survey is for the case studies or if all teachers will be surveyed. This lack of information brings into questions the number of teachers on whom fidelity measure will be collected and could affect the quality of implementation and monitoring of the project.

**Reader's Score: 9**

- 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:**

On page e32-33, the applicant innovatively discusses of how dissemination will be completed through the print and web media that will be available. For example, a publication will be disseminated to all 500 LEAs and state and deferral legislators. The systematic plan will allow essential stakeholders to provide feedback that will improve the comprehensive project goals and add to the integrity of the outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not provide information or discusses how disaggregated student subgroups results will be made public nor how the information will be easily understood and useful to varied groups (No page found). information on how the State plans to disaggregate data is necessary to inform all stakeholders of subgroup results and to provide a feedback loop for the design and implementation project performance.

**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: 26**

**Sub Question**

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

**Strengths:**

On page e33, the applicant provides an innovative idea that sub-grant applications will be scored on a combination of need and capacity. The combination of need and capacity will allow the State to make accommodations for districts/early childhood programs that may have great need but require help with capacity. This approach will eliminate districts and early childhood programs that may have great capacity and can write strong proposals but do not have extensive disadvantaged populations. This will assure that the State will have a successful sub grant award to encompass population that best represent the intent of the State competition.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 3

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

**Strengths:**

On page e34, the applicant provides a table that very clearly and systematically breaks down and awards maximum points for a magnitude of impact, severity of need, and quality of data. Within each category are supporting exemplars. The table and narrative explanation on page e35, effectively describes how the applicant will address needs versus capacity. On page e41, the applicant provides further information about how the State will work with districts/early childhood programs to involve agencies/non-profits to promote implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantage students. This comprehensive plan for establishing need categories ensures that funds awarded to LEAs for disadvantaged students who will demonstrate significant academic improvement.

**Weaknesses:**

The rubric table on page e35 does not present specific information about how LEA effective teaching will be informed by a needs assessment. This omission fails to provide a clear path for LEAs to improve student achievement of struggling readers.

**Reader's Score:** 7

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

**Strengths:**

On pages e48-49, the applicant provides an extensive description of current grants and outside funding and how those funds will be used to align activities with SRCL goals. The substantive alignment of instructional activities with supportive funds will add literacy services and improve literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 2

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

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides information that addresses the State's intention to serve high-poverty schools. For example, on page e26, the applicant describes demographic information that will be collected. This will include free and reduced lunch, race, ethnicity, special education, ELL, Title 1, Title 3, graduation rate, and School Level. In addition on page e34 the criteria for poverty and the process for applying the priority are provided. By incorporating these comprehensive factors, the application process provides clear LEA criteria for different areas of need that will facilitate appropriate numbers of high-poverty schools receiving funding.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 6**

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

**Strengths:**

The State will work to give priority to districts/early childhood programs through use of a self-assessment. On page e36-37, the applicant provides a table that describes the self-assessment that early childhood/districts will use to describe their strongest available evidence of current instructional and assessment practices. By incorporating these comprehensive criteria, the application process clearly indicates criteria of strongest available evidence that LEAs will need to provide. This will ensure appropriate selection of high-poverty schools.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

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

**Strengths:**

On pages e37-39, the applicant systematically describes the process the state will use to review and judge the evidence base and alignment of state standards of sub grantees. The state will use a 3-level review. 1. Team will score self-assessment and application to determine who meets the criteria. 2. Applicants who meet the criteria will be reviewed by a three panel team. 3. Project director and state reviewer, and fiscal representative will review to choose applications with high scores that fit the funding allocations. These three levels of review are impressive and will provide LEAs with a clear understand of the process of review. This knowledge should improve the quality of LEA proposals.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not discuss how the process for aligning State standards with the curricula and materials will be made available to be viewed by the public (no page available). Public input is important because it provides additional opportunity for continual improvement to the project that will lead to better outcomes for disadvantaged populations.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 4

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 13

Sub Question

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

**Strengths:**

On page e18, the applicant provides an impressive organizational chart that outlines technical assistance, indicates an aspect of the management plan, and tells how the team will be organized. Pages e40-41 includes specific responsibilities of key staff and information on pages e42-45 clearly defines tasks and milestone timelines for completion. Such convincing information of organization, responsibilities, timelines, and milestones of the project ensures efficient completion of project tasks. Well defined and organized management has the potential to corroborate an effective literacy program for children, ages birth to grade 12.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

**Strengths:**

As reflected within staff resumes, key personnel have excellent qualifications and relevant training. Having well-qualified staff in key positions will ensure that project goals are met.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

**Strengths:**

On page e11, the applicant discusses how the State will expect LEAs/early childhood programs to align with other programs such as Head Start to ensure strong implementation. The expectation to include other agencies and program will ensure an effective completion of project tasks and leverage resources for a successful implementation of Striving Readers.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

The State does not discuss in detail how it will ensure a diversity of perspective during the planning or design phase of the project (page e47). Lack of diversity is an unfortunate omission because diverse representation provides additional opportunity for a myriad of feedback perspectives. That could improve the project and eventually lead to better outcomes for disadvantaged populations.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources**

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

**Reader's Score: 19**

**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:**

To ensure that the State's budget is reasonable in relation to the proposed project, the applicant will dedicate funds to build state capacity and make the project scalable depending on awarded funds. On pages e47-49, the applicant makes a strong case for the reasonableness of the budget in relation to the proposed project. Balanced costs will ensure that the objectives, design and project significance are successfully implemented and effective for a high quality literacy project.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Strengths:**

On page e39, the applicant discusses how funds to sub grantees will be allocated to meet SCRL percentages for each age or grade group delineated by the grant requirements. This demonstrates that early childhood and kindergarten through grade five students will benefit from project funds, ensuring that the project goals will be implemented.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not mention the equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools. This brings into question how the funds will be distributed to ensure each level of secondary schools will receive sufficient funding and the opportunity to improve student outcomes.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Sub Question**

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

**Strengths:**

On page e48-49, the applicant provides a list of state funds that will be leveraged to improve student outcomes. This will lead to efficient use of State resources to leverage funds for the State and LEAs to improve literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 3**

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

**Strengths:**

On page e49 the applicant effectively provides information about how many students and cost per student to be used with SRCL funds. The numbers of students served appears to be strongly supported by staff and resources. This appropriation will lead to allocations of equitable size for the support of all students so that instruction for high-needs, disadvantaged students will be accomplished.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology**

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

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant makes an effective case for the use of technology to improve student outcomes and provide professional development. For example, on page 6, the applicant discusses the use of Classrooms for the Future that provides hardware, software, and PD that allows staff to collaborate to enhance student learning. Further on page e7, the applicant describes how iPads will be used to provide universal access to all students (e.g., text-to-speech). Finally, on pages e8-9, the applicant describes 4 strategies for sub grantees to infuse effective use of technology to promote increased literacy. Throughout this discussion, there is attention paid to disadvantaged students and universal design. A focus on high quality and effective utilization of technology will ensure a high-quality design with easy-to-use data for implementation, improvement and

evaluation of the project.

**Weaknesses:**

No weakness noted.

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes**

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

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

**Strengths:**

Met. The applicant has proposed a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantage students.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 0

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

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

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

**Strengths:**

Met, On page e3, the applicant notes that the State will establish a clear vision for data-driven decision making and model the practice in its evaluation design. Pages three and four describe that design.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 0

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 6/25/11 12:00 AM

Status: Submitted

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

### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education -- PA Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learnin (S371C110044)

**Reader #2:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
1. State-level activities	37	35
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
1. State subgrant comp	28	27
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Project management</b>		
<b>Project management</b>		
1. Project management	15	15
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	19
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Priority</b>		
<b>Effective Use of Technology</b>		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		
<b>Improving Learning Outcomes</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 2</b>		
<b>Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>101</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SRCL - 2: 84.371C

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education -- PA Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learning (S371C110044)

## Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 35

#### Sub Question

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

#### Strengths:

Strengths

The PA keystones to Opportunity SRCL project attempts to stem the tide of the literacy crisis found in the state (p. 1). The crisis is highlighted by the projection that slightly over one-half of the 8th graders in PA are at risk for not being proficient in reading by the 11th grade (p. 1). In 2010 the SEA established a statewide task force to promote literacy and increase student engagement using the 29 intermediate units (i.e., educational service agencies comprised of 15-40 school districts in a region of the state), and the intent is to expand such foci with the PA literacy plan and SRCL programs (p. 8). On pages 11-12 the applicant discusses how past literacy initiatives were not organized statewide, but now the state has an updated strategic vision for literacy, or state literacy plan, which serves as the catalyst for its SRCL application. The applicant is in the final stages of a major revision to the state literacy plan and implementation of it would coincide with the nascence of the SRCL project. The applicant intends to align existing state and federal funding with SRCL dollars (p. 12). The guiding principles of the state literacy plan are found on page 12 and are aligned with planned activities of the SRCL program. This is important to align actual state-level state level SRCL activities with the state literacy plan to make it comprehensive. All of the above will have a positive effect on literacy achievement in PA.

#### Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The applicant fails to provide information on how the review process and results will be made publicly available as required in the Additional Requirements (no page given). This will restrict dissemination of information to interested stakeholders.

Reader's Score: 9

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

**Sub Question**

**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

On pages 15-17 the applicant provides five goals and several additional strategies to improve literacy outcomes across the state. Emphasis is provided to address (a) English Language Learners and students with disabilities (see Goal 4 on p. 16), (b) the data that will be collected and examined for decision making (see Goal 3 on p.16), and (c) the path that will be taken to achieve the goals of the SRCL project (see Goals 1, 2, 4, & 5 on pp. 15-17). Collectively, these goals and plans strengthen the purposes of the literacy improvement project. Without these goals and strategies literacy improvement is not likely to occur.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score: 8**

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Beginning on page 17 the applicant discusses how the 29 intermediate units (IUs) in PA will be the primary supports for LEAs involved with the SRCL project. It is through the IUs that the applicant intends to provide all SRCL literacy training and ongoing technical assistance in core academic subjects. The IUs have a long history of delivering such assistance, and have been at the heart of school improvement in the state for some time (p. 20). The IUs are experienced in the practice and research related to serving special populations (p. 20), and because of this type of expertise will strengthen the SEA in delivering technical assistance associated with the SRCL project.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

The methodology for evaluating the achievement improvement of those served in the PA SRCL project, and associated research and data collection, analysis, and dissemination, is impressive. Two independent

**Sub Question**

evaluators, the Collaborative for Evaluation and Assessment Capacity (CEAC) at the University of Pittsburgh, and SAS (p. 26) will serve in the project. The quantitative dimensions of the PA SRCL project data (e.g., value added analyses, disaggregation across demographics) will be managed by SAS, and the qualitative (i.e., school processes and perceptions) scope will be analyzed by CEAC (p. 26). These data include both formative and summative measures. Such data will be analyzed continuously throughout the SRCL project to inform the SEA and LEAs of literacy improvement progress, or lack thereof. Because the SEA has committed this level and type of evaluation to its SRCL activities, it allows for efficacious literacy instruction and success in the program.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

State level dissemination of SRCL project outcomes, disaggregated by subgroups, is first discussed on page 6, and again on pages 33-34. The SAS evaluation plan will handle disaggregation of project value-added and other quantitative data. The SEA will use the annual, statewide publication, Innovation Showcase, to highlight achievements of subgrantees and also to highlight overall project evaluation information and statewide data (p. 33). Similar data and SRCL activity dissemination will be provided by the PA IUs and regional curriculum coordinators (p. 34). All SRCL activities in this domain are sound.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

The applicant does not describe how dissemination in formats that are easily understood by the public will occur, and this restricts the sharing of important information that is required in the SRCL project.

**Reader's Score: 3**

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

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

**Reader's Score: 27**

**Sub Question**

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

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On pages 34-36, the applicant states that the SRCL Planning Team followed three guiding principles for the proposed sub-grant competition: (a) need + capacity = success, (b) learning from failure, and (c) accountability. Because the applicant has a specific criterion related to capacity of the subgrantee to deliver robust literacy improvement services and instruction, it shows that the PA SEA is committed to successful implementation of its SRCL project plan. Capacity of a SRCL subgrantee to lead sustainable change is to be determined via a self-assessment, judging the quality of the proposed literacy program, and capacity to implement the literacy program (p. 35). The self-assessment serves as a baseline, and it will show literacy progress over time. This is an important goal of the SRCL project.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score:** 3

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On page 37, the applicant outlines its plans to address disadvantaged students and those in the highest literacy instruction need groups. Because high poverty level is a criterion in the subgrant competition, the SEA will give automatic priority to LEAs that serve high poverty populations (p. 37). A needs assessment is included in the subgrantee application in order to assess whether SRCL funding will have a sufficient magnitude of impact, and whether the LEA has the necessary capacity to deliver a quality literacy program (p. 35). The needs assessment will also focus on the LEA demographics, literacy processes, learning outcomes, and stakeholder perceptions (p. 37). An SRCL Guiding Coalition (p. 21) is to be formed that will consist of diverse stakeholders (e.g., teachers, parents, representatives of the Head Start Policy Council) in an attempt to promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction in subgrantee communities. The applicant will deliver technical assistance through its Intermediate Units (pp. e6, e16), and continuous program improvement information is provided on page e34. Collectively, the information that the applicant provides in this domain is a comprehensive literacy improvement plan that serves those with the highest needs (the intent of the SRCL project for all 50 states). It should also strengthen the quality of the subgrant competition so that literacy achievement can occur with the selected subgrantees.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 8

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On page 12 of the proposal the applicant mentions how the SEA will align other state and federal funds with SRCL project activities. Subgrantees will also need to address how SRCL funds will fit with existing state and federal funding when applying for membership as a funded SRCL subgrantee. In the Abstract (p. e0), the applicant also states that the SEA will provide guidance to subgrantees in aligning local literacy initiatives. This method of alignment of SRCL activities and funds to be provided to subgrantees is extensive and necessary for project success.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 2

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

As stated above in section B(b), the SEA plans to give subgrantee funding priority to high poverty schools and districts (p. 37). A subgrantee will be allowed to propose to serve an entire school district, a single school or program, or a literacy intervention meant to address sub-populations of students with high demonstrated needs (p. 37). District level poverty data (e.g., those living in poverty, those on free or reduced fee lunch) will be necessary to present in the subgrantee application in order to be eligible for SRCL funding (p. 37). All of these proposed practices are appropriate for this project sub-criterion. Without such practices, the ability of PA to address those who are disadvantaged would be inadequate.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

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.

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On pages 37-38 the applicant provides an outline the self-assessment tool to be used to award subgrantee funding. The proposed instrument is complete for the purposes of SRCL subgrantee selection because of the extensive evidence base assessed. To name only a few (n = 10), the evidence base includes foci on population demographics, existing literacy initiatives, family literacy and engagement activities, and interventions. This is a comprehensive list that is necessary to ensure literacy success from preschool through grade 12.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**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:**

Strengths

The applicant plans to implement a 3-level review process to judge the evidence base and efficacy of curricula and materials to be used in SRCL activities (pp. 38-40). The first level is screening that will focus on the aforementioned self and needs assessment. The level 2 review will include 3-person referee teams who will check for curricular alignment with state standards, and the evidence base of proposed project activities and materials. Level 3 review will consist of the state Project Director, state-level experts, and a state fiscal representative. These levels of review are convincing and necessary for project success.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

The evidence of how the SEA will make the subgrantee selection and review process publicly available is not found in the proposal (no page found).

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Project management - Project management**

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

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Sub Question**

**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

The applicant, on pages 41-42, provides the SRCL roles and responsibilities of the Project Director (60% time) and Project Coordinator (100% time). On pages 43-46, projected milestones and timelines of the PA Keystones to Opportunity program are found. All roles, responsibilities, milestones, and timelines are specific for the intent of the project. Having a management and personnel plan such as that provided by the applicant is important for project success.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score: 6**

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On page 47 the applicant provides a brief description and qualifications of the key personnel involved with the SRCL program, including project director, project coordinator, state region managers, and other personnel. The curriculum vitae of all the key SRCL project personnel are found in Appendix 2. The personnel used to direct SRCL activities are qualified to meet the rigors of the project tasks.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On page 12, the applicant states that conversations were held with federal partners such as the Region II Head Start Technical Assistance Office, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act technical assistance system, and the Career and Technical Education Resource Center of PA. Such conversations with experts from these agencies assist in the design and implementation aspects of the proposed SRCL project. The PA SRCL Guiding Coalition (p. 48) will consist of a diverse group of stakeholders (e.g., project leadership, teachers, parents, and community members) to guarantee that diversity of perspectives contribute to the success of the PA Keystones to Opportunity program. The magnitude of diversity from project stakeholders is convincing and necessary for success of the PA SRCL program.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**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: 19**

**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

On page 48, and also in the budget narrative found in the appendices (pp. e0-e11), the applicant discusses the reasonableness of the budget to deliver the goals of the SRCL project. The proposed budget, according to the applicant on page 48, provides the state the opportunity to deliver the project and to assist in sustainability of activities. A total of 95% of the entire project budget will be funded to LEAs in subgrants (p. e3 of budget appendix), and the remaining 5% of funds will be used at the state level for project priorities. Having a focus on sustainability shows that the applicant has visualized a longitudinal program beyond five years; this is important for durable literacy improvement.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On page e5 of the budget narrative appendix the SEA discusses how subgrant funds are to be allocated (i.e., 15% for children from birth through age 5, 40% to serve students in kindergarten through grade 5, and 40% to serve students in middle and high schools). The costs for all grant-related activities are reasonable with regard to the goals and objectives, and design of the project. This is important for proper use of funds in a difficult economic climate at the national and state level.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Equal distribution of middle and high school funds (p. 39) is not described.

**Reader's Score:** 3

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

On page 49, the applicant discusses how SRCL finances will be leveraged with other funds in order to maximize the impact of the project. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funds will be used to blend work on the Common Core and Literacy Design Collaborative with SRCL resources at the state level. Similarly, the SRCL project will attempt to connect subgrantees with the family literacy provider network where they can also access state funded literacy services. The SEA will also attempt to connect SRCL activities with those provided by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning so that priorities are shared in assisting disadvantaged children and youth. Because of the connections to other related services that the PA SRCL project will allow, the ability to assist the literacy development and improvement of disadvantaged students and families should be seen only as a strength.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

**Reader's Score:** 3

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

The applicant, on page 50, discusses plans to award subgrants of sufficient size to support early language and literacy development for students from high needs areas. On the same page the applicant attempted to provide an estimate of what the SRCL project would cost, on an average per pupil (and other) basis. The SEA is projected to spend an average of \$750 per student, from \$11,250 to \$22,500 per average classroom, serve over 50,000 students, and involve over 5,600 teachers. These data and projected results and costs are reasonable in size for the SRCL project at the state, classroom, and per pupil levels. The subgrants are of sufficient size to improve instruction for a significant number of students in high need schools. Because the applicant was able to estimate the possible costs at various levels it shows a level of organization that will be necessary for project financial feasibility.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

**Strengths:**

Strengths

The applicant makes a strong statement regarding using technology in the SRCL project to enhance and implement the Universal Design of Learning (UDL; p. 7). In its Classrooms for the Future program (p. 7) the applicant has a history of infusing hardware, software, and professional development UDL technology to assist teachers, administrators, and others in PA classrooms. The PAInet has also been used to enable students and teachers in the state to create, communicate, collaborate, and share valuable resources to enhance student learning and, in 2010, it was used to promote literacy and increase student engagement (p. 8). The applicant also discusses the evidence-based rationale for its SRCL technology strategy on pages 8-11, and provides additional justification for using UDL as a robust learning instrument for all students on page 11. The proposed SRCL technology-related activities will also include a specific focus on helping teachers understand how UDL can be used successfully in the classroom (p. 11). In sum, the applicant is to be well-positioned to use technology in the manner suggested in the SRCL guidelines. In doing so, the SEA is ready to use it to affect positive change in student literacy learning.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

None found

Reader's Score: 5

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

**with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Beginning on pages 2-3, the applicant discusses how the planned activities found in the SRCL project will address improving learning outcomes of students who are disadvantaged (as defined on p. 2). This will be accomplished by (a) encouraging school districts to collaborate and align language and literacy instruction with high quality preschool programs for children and families living in poverty (e.g., Head Start and Office of Child Development and Early Learning programs); (b) requiring subgrantees to provide specific, evidence-based strategies for improving literacy instruction for those most at risk for literacy difficulty; and (c) providing additional incentive awards to subgrantees who show the greatest growth (during project years 2-5) in literacy and reading scores among targeted populations (i.e., birth to age 5, kindergarten through grade 5, and grades 6 through 12). These three strategies are commendable for it shows that the applicant has a comprehensive plan for improving the learning outcomes of disadvantaged students targeted for assistance.

Priority: MET

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

No apparent weaknesses were found for this absolute priority.

**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, on pages 5-6, includes four very specific data-driven strategies that it plans to implement in its SRCL project. These include: (a) regional language and literacy data retreats for teachers and administrators to perfect their literacy programs and access appropriate technical assistance; (b) access to summative data (e.g., value added) to empower educators rather than evaluate them; (c) data collection to be used for evaluative purposes that are disaggregated across important SRCL dimensions (i.e., district, school, student population); and (d) access to ongoing educational service agency data coaching to improve school processes and instruction. Moreover, the two external evaluation contractors (i.e., CEAC and SAS) will also provide relevant and appropriate, formative and summative, quantitative and qualitative data to guide the applicant in improving and providing effective literacy instruction during the project. The comprehensiveness of the data-based project activities is impressive and should lead to an increase in scientifically-derived instruction and improvement of literacy for selected PA subgrantees and their students.

Priority: MET

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

No apparent weaknesses were found for this absolute priority.

**Reader's Score:**     **0**

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**Status:**           Submitted

**Last Updated:**   6/24/11 12:00 AM

Status: Submitted

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

### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education -- PA Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learnin (S371C110044)

**Reader #3:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
1. State-level activities	37	33
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
1. State subgrant comp	28	27
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Project management</b>		
<b>Project management</b>		
1. Project management	15	15
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	18
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Priority</b>		
<b>Effective Use of Technology</b>		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		
<b>Improving Learning Outcomes</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 2</b>		
<b>Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>98</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - SRCL - 2: 84.371C

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education -- PA Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learning (S371C110044)

## Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 33

#### 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 provides clear evidence of a comprehensive State literacy plan with which the SRCL grant activities will be aligned. In addition, the applicant clearly indicates that the proposed project intends to implement a comprehensive and coherent literacy program that serves students from birth through grade 12 (Additional Requirement (a)). The consistent focus of the literacy plan is on meeting the needs of disadvantaged students, which the applicant has clearly made a priority throughout the proposal (e.g., pages 0, 2, and 22).

The applicant also provides evidence that the SEA will align the use of Federal and State funds and programs within the SEA and in LEAs in the State to support a coherent approach to funding and implementing effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students (Additional Requirement (b)). For example, on page 11, the applicant notes that conversations with federal partners such as the Region III Head Start Technical Assistance Office and other organizations helped design the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant project in such a manner to foster alignment between the SRCL proposal and existing funding in the State.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not indicate how the process and results (including the procedures the SEA used to review and judge the evidence base and the alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials LEAs propose to use) of its review of subgrant applications will be made publicly available (Additional Requirement (c)).

Reader's Score: 8

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

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

In Table 3, (pages 14-16) the applicant provides a clear set of goals that are designed to meet a set of identified gaps within the existing literacy program in the State. Each of these goals has a corresponding set of strategies aligned to it. The set of strategies for each goal is appropriate and provides a clear path to improve student literacy outcomes for all students.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 8**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a clear and comprehensive technical support model on page 17. In addition, the applicant provides a framework for change that will be used to create sustainable change in reading on page 16. These models lay out the framework for the way in which the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to the SRCL subgrantees. These models are detailed and provide evidence that the SEA has developed a model that will allow for sustainable change in literacy practice over the course of implementation of the SRCL grant. The resources and tools that the SEA proposes to provide to the LEA subgrantees are sound and incorporate professional development, resources, tools for assessment, and community involvement procedures (including families). The applicant focuses on disadvantaged students, proposing specific training for teachers of students with special needs and English language learners (ELLs) (page 22). The technical assistance plan proposed is comprehensive and detailed.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant presents a coherent and comprehensive evaluation plan on pages 24-32 and includes a description of the evaluation that will be conducted by an external evaluator (pages 26-27). The plan utilizes methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant provides a comprehensive description of the type of data that will be collected over the course of the evaluation. The proposed use of demographic and student achievement data provide a comprehensive method for determining student gains in literacy while at the same time, allow for disaggregation of the data to examine outcomes for specific groups of disadvantaged students. The proposed sets of research questions on pages 27, 28 and 29 are appropriate and meaningful to address the goals of the project. The evaluation activities described on page 30 which are designed to evaluate teacher's practices and fidelity of implementation add an important element to the evaluation as does the proposed case study. The applicant includes information about how the SEA will utilize the evidence collected to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities. For example, the applicant indicates that educators will utilize the demographic and student outcome data to determine those students most at-risk, which will enhance the instructional choices teachers make and it will assist teachers in using resources more strategically to ensure the success of every

**Sub Question**

student (pages 25-26). In this way, the applicant proposes to use evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides specific details regarding publications about project outcomes that will be disseminated to school districts, state and federal legislators, and other State and district administrators. The information to be provided includes achievements of the subgrantees as well as project evaluation information and statewide data (page 32). The applicant provides ample description of how the project information will be disseminated to subgrantees and other education stakeholders in the state. Providing information to these groups means that these stakeholders will be able to utilize the information from the project to inform and make changes to current and future literacy programming in the State.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not mention how the information that is disseminated will be made useful and accessible to the public. The lack of information about making information useful to the public means that the public may not be able to receive adequate information about the project activities.

**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: 27**

**Sub Question**

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

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant includes a comprehensive plan for the way in which the SEA will run a rigorous, high quality competition for subgrants. This includes details about how it will review and judge the LEAs or early childhood education providers' capacity to successfully implement its proposal. For example, the applicant includes a table (table 10 on page 34) which clearly outlines the specific details in a rubric with points that will be used to review and judge subgrant applications. In addition, the applicant provides a set of three guiding principles that will be used to review the subgrant competition. These guiding principles (pages 33-35) include targeting high needs students (page 34), providing rigorous feedback to applicants (page 35), and ensuring an accountability system addressing progress toward goals and

### Sub Question

objectives (page 35). These guiding principles enhance the review process proposed by the applicant and indicate that those subgrants who have the greatest chance of success will be selected.

### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score:** 3

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

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

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

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

### Strengths:

The applicant thoroughly addresses the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements. For example, there is a system of professional development in literacy that will be provided to participants (Additional Requirement (d)(1)). On pages 5-6, the applicant describes the way intermediate units will provide professional development, including professional development for teachers working with special populations of students.

The applicant provides significant evidence that curriculum and instructional materials used by the SRCL subgrant awardees will be aligned with State standards, incorporate the components of effective literacy instruction and incorporate technology and principles of universal design to support students with diverse learning needs (Additional Requirement (d)(2)). The applicant includes convincing evidence of the coherent assessment systems that are aligned with State standards and assessments (Additional Requirement (d)(3)). For example, on page 34, the applicant indicates that LEAs will be required to include validity and reliability measures to demonstrate the quality of their data.

The applicant includes evidence supporting the implementation of interventions to ensure that all children and youth are served appropriately (Additional Requirement (d)(4)). For example, on page 34, the applicant describes that interventions must be a central part of the LEA subgrant literacy programs.

The applicant includes convincing evidence that SRCL subgrant applicants must demonstrate that the LEAs or early childhood learning providers will provide language- and text-rich classroom, school, and early learning program environments that engage and motivate children and youth in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. For example, on page 15, the applicant includes a set of strategies that LEAs and early childhood education providers will use to ensure high quality teaching and learning environments. These include utilizing measures of classroom environment to continuously improve environments.

The applicant includes convincing evidence that SRCL funds will be utilized to inform continuous improvement by monitoring program implementation and outcomes. For example, on page 15, the applicant includes a plan for using valid and reliable data to guide instructional decision making.

The applicant includes scoring criteria that gives priority to those subgrant applicants with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement. The applicant includes a scoring criterion that ensures that the proposed literacy program meets the needs of the disadvantaged students in the population (page 34). Thus, the applicant takes into account and addresses the needs of disadvantaged students (b)(1).

The applicant includes a requirement that SRCL subgrant applicants must utilize a needs assessment to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers. For example, on page 34, the applicant includes a criterion focused exclusively on the needs assessment each subgrant applicant must conduct and utilize to inform the proposed literacy program ((b)(2)).

The applicant includes convincing evidence that the SEA will involve other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students. For example, on page 20, the applicant describes a Guiding Coalition that will consist of diverse stakeholders from across the State

**Sub Question**

who will guide the implementation of the SRCL grant.

These principles mean that the subgrant competition will provide the subgrant funds to those LEAs that will provide services to the most disadvantaged students and who will best be able to support improvements in literacy.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 8**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant includes a criterion which will be used to review and judge subgrant applications that specifically focuses on the alignment between activities under the SRCL grant and other federal and state initiatives designed to improve literacy (Table 10, page 34). This criterion indicates that those subgrant applications that include a specific alignment of funds focused on the improvement of literacy will be awarded points while those applicants who do not include this information will not receive those points.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 2**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant has provided a clear process to ensure that 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. The severity of the student needs is taken into account by a set of 40 points which are given to those applicants based on student demographics (poverty rate, percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch, percentage of LEP students, achievement gaps, drop-out rates, etc.) as indicated on page 34. The applicant indicates that the definition of poverty that is based on student demographic information (e.g., percent of students on free and reduced lunch, etc.).

The priority that the applicant will provide to the subgrants that serve the most high-poverty schools means that those students who have the highest needs will be served by the subgrants and produce the desired impact.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**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.**

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides evidence that the SEA will require subgrant applicants to provide information regarding the strongest available evidence for each of the literacy initiatives that are proposed in the subgrant application (page 36, Table 11). The subgrant applicants will be required to provide a response using a Self-Assessment Tool in which LEAs and providers of early childhood education will be asked to provide evidence and/or examples to support the ratings they give to their proposals prior to submission. In this way, the SEA is asking LEAs and providers of early childhood education to provide reasoning for the literacy activities and data collection processes proposed in their subgrant application. Assigning priority to the LEAs or providers of early childhood education who use the strongest available evidence indicates that the subgrant applicants using the strongest methods of instruction will be selected. This, in turn, will result in more positive student outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 4**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant outlines a clear and comprehensive plan for reviewing and judging the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that the LEAs and providers of early childhood education propose to use. The three-step process described on pages 37-39 includes reviews by teams of reviewers who are experts in each of the funding areas. The review process will award points to those LEAs and providers of early childhood education who provide the strongest evidence base and the closest alignment with State standards.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not provide a process for the way in which the SEA will make the process and results of the review publicly available. The review process described on pages 37-39 does not include details about where information on the review process or the review results will be made publicly available so that the transparency of the project is not clear.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Project management - Project management**

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

**Reader's Score: 15**

**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 applicant provides detailed information regarding the management plan that is clearly outlined and sufficient to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. More specifically, the applicant provides detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of the two key personnel, the project director and the project coordinator, who will be the primary overseers of the project at the SEA level (Table 12, page 40). The defined roles and responsibilities for these two key personnel provide convincing evidence that the project will be well managed at the SEA level. Roles and responsibilities are also included for the project managers and content leaders who will be responsible for working directly with the LEAs and providers of early childhood education who receive subgrants (Table 13, page 41).

In addition, the applicant provides a detailed timeline of activities which includes milestones for accomplishing project tasks (Table 14, pages 42-45). The timeline is well-developed with a clear set of project tasks and assignments for key personnel. For example, the milestones indicate major tasks to be conducted during each of the five years of the project, while additional activities reflect steps leading up to the milestones. Thus, the applicant provides a management plan that is detailed and specific.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 6**

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

**Strengths:**

The key personnel described in the application have the qualifications, relevant training and experience to successfully implement the SRCL grant in the State. For example, the project director has significant background implementing and developing reading curriculum for the secondary grades (page 0 of the appendix). In addition, the project director has experience with existing literacy initiatives at the State level, including the Language Arts Education and Literacy Education, state writing assessments, and the implementation of the Common Core Standards. The project coordinator also has a strong background in literacy curriculum development and implementation (page 3 of the appendix).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

The application presents convincing evidence that the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project. For example, on pages 20 and 47, the applicant includes a description of the Guiding Coalition which will consist of "diverse stakeholders from across the Commonwealth" (page 20). The Guiding Coalition will include the state agency, school leaders, teachers, and parent representatives and representatives from Head Start Policy Councils. The Guiding Coalition will provide leadership and guidance to the design and implementation of the proposed project.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources**

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

**Reader's Score: 18**

**Sub Question**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides detailed information in the budget narrative to warrant the proposed budget in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the project. For example, the applicant provides justification for the amount of money budgeted for the project evaluation as a way to "model data-driven decision making at the state level" (page 47). In addition, the applicant indicates that "this project was designed to be scalable, so that it can be downsized in the event that the available dollars are less than requested" (page 47). This indicates that the applicant has developed goals that are reasonable and that can be modified based on the amount of allotted money.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides evidence that the SEA plans to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated based on the Statutory Requirements. For example, the applicant specifies that the SEA will ensure that "per the SRCL Statutory Requirements, 95% of grant dollars will go directly to local educational agencies. These dollars will be distributed 15% birth through age 5, 40% Kindergarten through Grade 5, and 40% Grade 6 through Grade 12" (page 3 of the budget narrative). Thus, the budget reflects the requirements put forth in the federal register notice. Additionally, the applicant indicates that subgrantee applicants "will be encouraged to structure their applications accordingly [based on the 15/40/40 statutory requirements]" (page 48).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not indicate how the SEA will ensure an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools at the secondary level. Thus, this section is missing this aspect of the sub-criterion.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 3

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides evidence for the types of collaborations the SEA will develop to leverage other state and federal funds with the SRCL grant. For example, the applicant mentions "integrating the Common Core and Literacy Design Collaborative work funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation" as a way to "contribute to overall project success" (page 48). Other collaborations include working with the family literacy provider network, Head Start Technical Assistance Center, and SAS Inc. (specific to the program evaluation) (pages 48-49).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not provide a clear plan for how the SEA will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant. For example, the applicant does not mention the ways in which SRCL funding can be utilized as a way of receiving additional funding. The applicant also does not develop a method for guiding SRCL subgrant awardees toward developing an infrastructure to support the literacy programs that are put in place using SRCL funding.

Reader's Score: 2

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 documents the number of students that the SEA expects to serve with the budget of the SRCL grant that is proposed. Using a cost of \$750 per student, the applicant attempts to project the number of students that would be reached over the course of the implementation of the SRCL project. The applicant also states that the State "is committed to giving sub-grants of sufficient size that sub-grantees have the necessary resources to facilitate change" (page 49). This reflects a commitment on the part of the applicant to ensure that subgrantees have sufficient funding to meet the needs of the students included in the subgrant proposals.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

**access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant indicates that technology will be primarily used as a tool for implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The applicant further demonstrates that the State has had some existing success in the use of technology for UDL and that there is an existing framework and infrastructure for the use of technology upon which the SRCL funds could help the State build upon. The applicant provides a set of goals for the implementation of technology and how the State will use technology to address student learning challenges (specifically, through the implementation on pages 8-10). In addition, the applicant provides clear guidelines for the requirements of subgrantees to ensure that technology is used to support learning goals or outcomes and is particularly focused on supporting students with learning challenges, including both English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (pages 8-9).

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses have been identified in other sections of this review.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes**

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

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a definition of disadvantaged students on page 1, indicating the population of students to be included as a focus of the SRCL project in the state. The description on pages 1-2 demonstrates a commitment on the part of the State to improve language and literacy for the State's disadvantaged students. On pages 2-3, the applicant provides explicit goals for ensuring that the programs funded under the SRCL subgrants will meet the needs for disadvantaged groups of students, including both ELLs and students with disabilities.

The applicant has MET the requirements for Absolute Priority 1.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses have been identified in other areas of this proposal.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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

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

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a focused and detailed explanation for the way in which the State will enable more data-based decision-making both at the SEA and LEA levels. The applicant proposes a model to be used to assess literacy practices and reading outcomes using multiple measures as a way to inform continuous improvement (pages 3-4). The applicant also provides a set of strategies that will be used to help the state increase data-driven decision making (pages 4-6). These strategies are appropriate and provide concrete methods for educators at all levels of the organization from evaluators to administrators to teachers to access data to inform decisions and drive change. The applicant has MET the requirements for Absolute Priority 2.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses explained in other sections of this review.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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