

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency -- Standards and Programs Standards and Programs (S371C110013)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	37
Sub Total	37	37
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	26
Sub Total	28	26
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	14
Sub Total	15	14
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	15
Sub Total	20	15
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2
Sub Total	5	2
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	94

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SRCL - 6: 84.371C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency -- Standards and Programs Standards and Programs

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 37

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

The Texas Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Initiative Plan provides a blueprint for the state to integrate their five components of leadership, assessment, standards-based instruction, an effective instructional framework for RtI, reporting and accountability along with sustainability (p. e2). The application describes online coordination focused on sharing resources with educators and caregivers in order to align the activities with the state literacy plan at the implementation level(p. e3). Literacy Lines are required by all subgrantees to ensure vertical collaboration among the birth-grade 12 focus areas and there are several existing initiatives embedded in the planning structure from birth to grade 12 such as early reading assessments, Texas Teacher Reading Academies, etc. (p. e0).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The state has detailed activities to ensure data analysis is connected to student outcomes. It will provide a two and half day summit including four modules and liaison follow ups online as well as face to face and online professional development. All subgrantees are also required to create assessment plans (p. e3, e9). These measures secure the inclusion and reliance on multiple data sources by subgrantees throughout the process to monitor student learning and improve student literacy learning. It also supports sites by involving the liaisons in the data analysis process.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

blueprints. The focus of each Literacy Line blueprint must be based on the five components of reading instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (p. e3). Project Share (an online platform) will be set up for continuous literacy program data analysis and for the sharing of literacy resources throughout the process (p. e2). This allows for continuous communication, evaluation, and access concentrated on literacy achievement.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

(iv) Evaluation will be accomplished via a very clear monitoring process including options for intervening with those subgrantees not making progress as well as provisions for independent evaluators (pp. e6-7, e11, e17). Literacy Line Liaisons are assigned to compile implementation reports in order to pinpoint schools not satisfying a minimum of 80% of the grant plans (p. e11). This secures a systematic means of continuous progress monitoring for all subgrantees.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

Information will be made accessible to parents and community partners and will be available to subgrantees and other educators throughout the state (pp. e4, e18). This allows stakeholders across the community to have access to the information. Information will also be distributed at meetings as well as on websites allowing for open access and transparency p. e18). In order to highlight the grant focus on student subgroups that are at risk, all reports will share disaggregated data from the assessments. Special codes will be utilized to protect the identity of the sites and all participants.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 4

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

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

Reader's Score: 26

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

a. The capacity of the providers is embedded in the selection criteria (p. e21, e22). The selection criteria have a clear focus and requirement for subgrantees to implement a comprehensive and coherent literacy programs (p. e21). The applicants have a responsibility to determine the willingness and commitment of their stakeholders and to describe their process for applying for the grant. This allows for taking buy in into consideration and provides information about the applicants' commitment to the process prior to funding.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

- (b)
 - 1) The proposal addresses the needs of disadvantaged students by requiring the subgrantees to meet at least two of the criteria (economic, language, and special education (p. e31-e32). This prioritizes applications at the onset of the process and ensures that only applications that meet the requirement of serving diverse learners are in the applicant pool.
 - 2) Each subgrantee is required to complete a needs assessment to demonstrate how it should plan to

Sub Question

support teaching and student achievement (p. 29, 34). The needs assessment is required to address change based on data subgrant applicants collect. Data is required to be focused on a literacy plan, Response to Intervention, evidence-based curricula, instructional decision foundations on data, Professional Development criteria, literacy program implementation, and agency collaboration across birth -12. These requirements provide an informed foundation for the application evaluation.

(3) Other agencies such as nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families are mentioned on page e34.

(C) The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is responsible for the alignment of federal and state funding such as Title I, Title II-A, Title III, Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The state will also assist Literacy Lines with their local funding integration and provide funding reports to subgrantees during the Strategic Leadership Summit (p. e4). The professional development plans and the literacy lines, are all based on data, detail a coherent strategy to align and improve literacy while considering the integration of existing funds (p. e4, e22).

Weaknesses:

B (1) No weaknesses

(2) No weaknesses

(3) Other agencies are mentioned but their type of participation is not detailed (p. 34). The applicants do not describe how other agencies will be involved in planning and implementation or how they will be solicited. Involving key participants is a priority of the grant structure to ensure the inclusion of diverse stakeholders beyond the institutional structure of the schools.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

(C) The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is responsible for the alignment of federal and state funding such as Title I, Title II-A, Title III, Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The state will also assist Literacy Lines with their local funding integration and provide funding reports to subgrantees during the Strategic Leadership Summit (p. e4). The professional development plans and the literacy lines, are all based on data, detail a coherent strategy to align and improve literacy while considering the integration of existing funds (p. e4, e22).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

The prioritization of those LEAs and providers of high poverty populations is mentioned in the rubric with very clear criteria for prioritizing (p. e21). The baseline for consideration requires applicants to meet at least two criteria: (1) 59% economically disadvantaged students, (2) 16.9% limited-English proficient students and (3) 9 % special education students (p. e 31). The highest number of points is reserved for applicant eligibility in this area securing opportunities for those sites in need (p. e21).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

The application provides priority points for criteria such as leadership capacity, a commitment to raising student achievement, leveraging existing resources, reliable measures to document readings progress (p. e35-36). Those applications that demonstrate these qualities will be preference, setting a well-defined standard for applicants to meet prior to funding.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

Reviewing of subgrant applications will be conducted by state appointed peer reviewers who consist of state experts and educators experienced and familiar with literacy practices, assessments, leadership and research. All reviewers will be trained prior to reviewing and use the prepared criterion based rubric (p. e20-e21). The review process will be published on a website (p. e4, e20). TEA will post the approved applications and the review procedures along with information related to the alignment of state standards for the public.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

(i) The management plan consists of yearly progress monitoring of all subpopulations, a three year check of significant progress is monitored along with very detailed timelines and requirements (p. e1, e9, e39). These guidelines provide clear responsibilities for each group as far as deadlines.

Weaknesses:

(i) The product(s) of the ongoing analysis and monitoring are not specified (p. e40). Data analysis is not detailed as far as how it will be used and delivered to those districts and campuses working through the subgrants (p. e40). This could make it difficult for personnel responsible to follow through on their reporting duties.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

(ii) The qualifications and requirements of personnel for the reviews are listed (p. e20, e40). Personnel qualifications include those who have experience being veteran leaders of state level literacy initiatives, who are experienced in the management of state projects, and have budget oversight experience. This provides an in place experienced team prepared to implement the grant at the state level.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The diversity of perspectives is addressed (p. e17, e45). The initial working group consisted of state agency representatives across areas of expertise, higher education representatives, Head Start, Texas Association for the Education of Young Children, Bilingual Education association leaders and parent and teachers' representatives.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

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: 15

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 costs detailed in the budget are described and detailed within the budget narrative in relation to personnel, expenses, and travel (p. e46; Budget narrative, p. 1-5). All of the expenditures reflect the goals and activities set up by the grant.

Weaknesses:

(i) The budget is not described in detail in relation to how the percentages of personnel effort relate to each other and the goals of the grant (p. e5-e7). Therefore it is difficult to ascertain how the various personnel will fulfill their duties, for example, some literacy line liaisons are funded at 50% while others are funded at 100%, etc., (Budget narrative, p. e10)

Reader's Score: 6

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 percentages of each level of focus are detailed within the budget (p. e47). The application provides an example of the funding breakdown accompanied by a table illustrating district size and number of students served. This provides specific parameters for the grant's scope and funding possibilities.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The proposal integrates other funding in its planning at the state and local levels (p. e48). TEA will leverage federal funds such as Title I, Title II-A and Title III, Head Start, IDEA and the Perkins Act. The state will also coordinate state funds already in place to allow for integration of the SRCL funding by including the Student Success Initiative for struggling reader intervention and professional development and the recently updated Texas Reading Academies. Sustainability will be a part of the State Literacy Partnership work with the Literacy Lines (p. e 49).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Various levels of funding are delineated to ensure coverage for districts with different size populations (p. e49). The criteria for subgrants to include 59% economically disadvantaged children, 16% LEP, and 9% special education (p. e31) will guide the selection of a limited number of Literacy Lines to preferentially fund high-need schools (p. e49).

Weaknesses:

(iv) There is no clearly designated means, beyond a statement on page e49, of prioritizing the subgrants in favor of selecting subgrant applications that serve high needs populations as described on page 31. The application mentions the criteria for subgrants to include 59% economically disadvantaged children, 16% LEP, and 9% special education but there are no specific guides to guarantee how the limited number of Literacy Lines mentioned on page e49 will be decided.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

The proposal relies on Project Share as an online platform delivery system that allows for students, teachers, and other professional needs access to technology, data, resources, webcasts, and training. Technical assistance is available to subgrantees for professional development and data access and management. The information is also available to all educators in the state as well as those receiving the subgrants. (pp. e0, e1, e2, e15).

Weaknesses:

There was no description of how students would benefit directly from or use the technology. There is no clear statement of how technology and the use of technology by teachers would be delivered to diverse students. Supporting student learning and teachers' instructional strategies with technology in the classroom would assist diverse learners. There is no funding for additional instructional technology or goals for student and teacher use of technology.

Reader's Score: 2

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

The proposal does meet the criteria.

The proposal monitors data regularly using technology to share and interpret data; there are specific timelines and benchmarks specifically at the one and then three year markers (p. e17). There is an explicit focus on economically disadvantaged students, LEP students, and special education students (p. 31). Literacy instruction and assessment are the priorities and highlighted throughout the application.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

The application does meet the criteria.

Yearly progress is required and after three years without significant there is a substantial review (p. e1).

All levels of education are evaluated with specific assessments (C-PALLS, STAAR, TAKS). (p. e17-18).

There is technical assistance to monitor the student achievement as well as grant implementation.

Weaknesses:

There are no detailed mechanisms for how the state will provide educators outside of the grant, families, as well as other stakeholders with strategies and information.

Reader's Score: 0

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency -- Standards and Programs Standards and Programs (S371C110013)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	36
Sub Total	37	36
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	28
Sub Total	28	28
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	11
Sub Total	15	11
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	14.5
Sub Total	20	14.5
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	2
Sub Total	5	2
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	91.5

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SRCL - 6: 84.371C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency -- Standards and Programs Standards and Programs

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: 36

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

A(i): A clear and comprehensive plan was described for carrying out the required state activities, which included the TX State Literacy Plan (TSLP) (p. 1-3), alignment of federal and state funds (p. 4), publication of the process and results of the subgrant application reviews (p. 4), and a comprehensive literacy program for students birth to grade 12 (p. 4-12).

The comprehensive literacy program was inclusive and extensive, and addressed children's entire learning careers from birth to college or career. It specified inclusion of the following activities based on a needs assessment: professional development activities, standards-based curriculum and instructional materials (which included infant/toddler; preK; English and Spanish Language Arts and Reading; English language proficiency standards; and college and career ready standards); system for assessment; intervention to support instruction for all learners; language and text-rich environments; and a system for monitoring program implementation and outcomes (p. 4-12).

State-level activities will be strongly aligned with their state literacy plan (TSLP) through the selection of Literacy Lines, which will be a vertical collaborative of leaders within feeder programs from PreK to grade 12. Leadership Teams (CbLT) within each Literacy Line will participate in a 2½ day face-to-face Strategic Leadership Summit as part of a 12-week online course to successfully implement the TSLP. The needs of students and the community will be appropriately determined within each Literacy Line, with development of a specific Literacy Instructional Plan (LIP) and Language and Preliteracy Development Plan (LPDP) by a Leadership Team (CbLT) within each Literacy Line so it meets the unique needs of all the learners within that vertical collaborative (p. 2-4).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None identified.

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

A(ii): The applicant thoroughly addressed all three components of this subcriterion. Needs assessment data were provided that clearly identified the state's needs with regard to student subgroups by grade, ethnicity, and economically disadvantaged (p. 12-13). These data then were appropriately and specifically linked to their established goals for improving student literacy outcomes within each of the student subgroups (p. 13). Finally, a successful path was outlined for achieving those goals that is driven by two important leadership groups that encompass a diverse group of stakeholders (Professional Learning Communities and Literacy Lines). These teams will participate in statewide meetings paced at strategic points during each year (beginning, middle, and end of year) that will allow the teams to develop action steps, examine and monitor data, and adjust Literacy Instructional Plans (LIPs) to readjust the action steps with the data (p. 13-15). This iterative process provides a strong and unique method to ensure successful attainment of the goals.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None identified.

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

A(iii): A number of diverse and unique support mechanisms was proposed that will ensure the successful implementation of the TSLP by subgrantees (15-17). Of note, is the state's utilization of technology in innovative ways, including using a series of webcasts to inform eligible LEA/ECE's about the subgrant requirements, TSLP, and research-based literacy instruction. This importantly levels the playing field so all eligible LEA/ECE sites can compete for funds. An interesting side benefit to this approach is that LEA/ECEs will learn about research-based literacy instruction, which potentially will improve their practices even if they are not awarded a subgrant. The technical assistance support is extensive in its inclusion of state literacy partnerships, Literacy Line liaisons, and regional educational service centers, which will effectively serve to provide direct support to each line within the state network. The statewide web 2.0 platform, Project Share, will be a valuable resource for successfully connecting each level from the state to the teacher. Finally, another innovative component is the effective use of data to provide targeted technical assistance to those LEA/sites that demonstrate minimal gains on the implementation progress.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None identified.

Reader's Score: 5

4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough,

Sub Question

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

A(iv): A rigorous evaluation is proposed that will examine literacy outcomes for children in funded versus unfunded LEA/ECEs. The identification of specific assessment data for subgroups of children (PreK, K-2, 3-9, and 10-11) across multiple testing periods for the younger children (PreK-2) will provide important information about the implementation progress, which will be used in a reiterative process to adjust the Literacy Implementation Plans and tailor professional development activities (p. 17-18; 14).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None identified.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

Strengths

A(v): An appropriate plan for dissemination of project outcomes that is parent and community friendly will occur through a Grant Implementation Team for the funded Literacy Lines, which will include student performance data disaggregated by student subgroup, as well as a number of additional outcome measures.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

A(v): It was not clear that dissemination of project outcomes would be presented in different formats that would be easily understood by different stakeholders, including families and State leaders.

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: 28

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Strengths

B(i)(a): A cohesive and thorough strategy was described for judging LEA/ECEs capacity to successfully implement a SRCL subgrant. It is aligned with the SRCL grant criteria, which will ensure consistency in goals and objectives. Establishing a minimum number of points per criterion and overall score will further ensure cohesiveness with the state SRCL grant. The four components, which include Interest and Commitment, Data-Informed Planning, Significance and Need, Management Plan and Budget, will provide a detailed mechanism for clearly evaluating each subgrantee applicant's capacity to not only successfully implement its proposal, but also their commitment to the SRCL goals (p. 21-23). The use of external peer reviewers who will be trained on the review process will guarantee a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of the proposals, which will more likely lead to identification of applicants who will have capacity to successfully implement their proposal (p. 19-20).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None 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:

Strengths

B(i)(b): The applicant has described a thorough plan, which will ensure that subgrantee applications include a comprehensive high-quality literacy program, which will include current best evidence regarding instructional practices (p. 24-27); intensive and contextualized professional development within a defined Literacy Line (p. 27-28); instructional materials that align with the state's standards regarding textbooks and resources (p. 28-29); assessment and monitoring plan that will inform instructional practices and include appropriate assessment for bilingual students (p. 29-30); an intervention plan that incorporates a tiered model of instruction using RtI (p. 30); language and text-rich environments (p. 30); and data that will ensure accountability of implementation at different levels and for different purposes (p. 30-31).

Appropriate eligibility criteria were specified for percentages of students for individual sites within a Literacy Line for economically disadvantaged students, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, and students receiving special education services (p. 31). Similarly, criteria were suitably specified for eligible sites to prioritize funding (p. 32-33). Finally, criteria were listed to appropriately give priority to applicants with student populations representing greater need (p. 33).

Community collaboration will be ensured in subgrantee applications through the exploration/planning process through implementation, which will effectively promote implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students (p. 34-35).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

Strengths

B(i)(c): Coordination of resources will be acknowledged as a competitive priority (p. 35). This will require applicants to demonstrate evidence of leveraging existing federal resources (such as Title I, Title II-A, Title III, Head Start, IDEA, and Perkins) with state and local funds to support effective implementation of a comprehensive literacy program.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 2

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

Strengths:

Strengths

B(ii): High-poverty schools in the subgrant selection process will be prioritized in the subgrant selection process, which will require that at least 59% of students served in the selected sites will be identified as economically disadvantaged students (p. 35).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 6

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

Strengths:

Strengths

B(iii): Priority will be given for applications with higher degrees of evidence to demonstrate capacity, commitment, ability to leverage existing resources, assessment and monitoring plans, and knowledge of a comprehensive literacy instructional plan, which will result in greater cohesion and consistency in implementing the TSLP (p. 35-36). This will be demonstrated through the applicants' methods for collecting and analyzing data; data reporting disaggregated by student subgroups; current needs assessment data based on screening and diagnostic reading measures, progress-monitoring measures, classroom-based assessments, and end of year student performance data (p. 36).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Sub Question

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

B(iv): Information regarding state adoption of materials under Proclamation for conforming and nonconforming textbooks is required by the TX Education Code to be posted to the districts at the TEA website (36-37). The TEA is required to provide lists to the districts of conforming and nonconforming textbooks by December 1 following any new adoptions. Definitions for conforming and nonconforming textbooks are specified.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 11

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

Strengths

C(i): A management team, State Literacy Partnership, comprised of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), university partners (CLI at Univ of TX Health Science Center at Houston, IPSI and VGC at UT-A), and Education Service Center (ESC) representatives will provide a coordinated and balanced approach to accomplishing the project tasks (p. 38). This will be accomplished through monthly meetings to examine data, determine progress toward objectives, and revise plans as indicated by the data (p. 39).

General responsibilities were described with reasonable and regular timelines for team meetings of the State Literacy Partners and Literacy Line Liaisons (p. 39-40).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

C(i): Limited information was provided for the specific responsibilities of the management staff (p. 39-40), which makes it difficult to evaluate the adequacy of the management plan to accomplish the project tasks in a timely manner.

A clearly defined timeline linked to project objectives was lacking (p. 39-40).

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

Strengths

C(ii): Key staff bring strength to the project with extensive experience in large scale grant management, as well as a number of years of teaching experience. An additional value of the management team is the diversity of experience and background (educational administration, curriculum and instruction, educational psychology, speech-language pathology, and education policy), as well as expertise across the full age/grade spectrum of student learners (p. 40-45).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None 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:

Strengths

C(iii): The TSLP reflects comprehensive and diverse perspectives inclusive of age/grade levels, abilities, and bilingual education (p. 45). A plan to receive feedback on the TSLP will include a number of different stakeholders. Advisory committees comprised of community stakeholders will provide important and local input to the individually funded Literacy Lines (p. 45-46).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

C(iii): Feedback on the TSLP from stakeholders outside of academia has not yet been received, which limits the variety of perspectives that provided input to the project design (p. 45-46). Feedback from non-academic stakeholders (such as families and community-based organizations) would ensure diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the project.

Reader's Score: 3

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

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

Reader's Score: 14.5

Sub Question

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

Sub Question

Strengths:

Strengths

D(i): The budget includes reasonable activities to successfully implement the project (p. 46-47). The budget for project activities was adequate (p. 46-47).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

D(i): The percent effort allocated for specific project staff may not be sufficient, which could significantly impact the implementation of the project objectives. Of specific concern are the following: 25% for the TEA grants/contracts administrator; 5% for the Institute of Public School Initiatives at UT-A (IPSI) Executive Director; 5% for the Children's Learning Institute at UT Health Sciences Center at Houston (CLI) Technology Specialist; and only 2% for the Vaughn Gross Center at UT-A (VGC) Director (Budget Narrative). These represent areas of concern because of the important role each center plays in the project design (professional development, assessment, and instructional methodology). In another instance, the percent effort was not adequately justified; for example: 50% for the IPSI Editor.

It was not clear why the SRCL State Director was also the Director of the CLI project. It therefore appears that the two jobs overlap, which may impact ability to effectively carry out project responsibilities.

No justification was provided for the following duplicate positions within a site: 2 Senior Support Specialists at 100% effort at CLI; 2 Project Managers (100% and 40% effort) at IPSI; 2 Program Specialists (100% and 50% effort) at IPSI; and 2 Administrative Associates (each at 75% effort) at IPSI.

The role and responsibilities of the Administration Services Officer (2.5% effort) at VGC was not specified. This position was not included in the other sites.

Reader's Score: 5

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

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

Strengths:

Strengths

D(ii): The applicant ensured appropriate allocation of funds within the vertical feeder pattern of LEA/ECE sites that form each Literacy Line (p. 33-34; 47-48). Specifically, subgrantees will be required to equitably distribute funds as follows: 16% to serve children birth-age 5; 42% to serve K-5; and 42% to serve 6-12.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

None noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

Strengths

D(iii): The TEA described a plan to effectively leverage state, federal, and local funding across a number of funding resources, including utilizing existing funds for professional development (p. 48-49). They

Sub Question

propose to integrate state and local funds, including the Student Success Initiative, to support interventions for struggling readers; and utilize funding from the TX Student Success Initiative and the TX Reading Initiative to support a number of professional development activities and technical assistance resources. Their successful record of leveraging funding has the potential for sustainability after the funding period.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
None noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

Strengths
D(iv): A reasonable formula for funding districts (iv) was delineated based on number of students served (p. 48). Information regarding eligibility criteria based on student needs was presented (p. 31), which will ensure that subgrants will include a significant number of students in high-need schools.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
D(iv): It was not clear that the Literacy Lines that include a significant number of students in high-need schools or early learning programs would be prioritized or that weighting would be given for those Literacy Lines that include a high percentage of students with needs (p. 48).

Reader's Score: 2.5

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology

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

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

Strengths:

Strengths
Innovative and extensive use of technology to support professional development was described through the state online web portal, Project Share.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
Technology was not included specifically addressed in the way it will be incorporated within instructional practices or strategies to improve student achievement or motivation. In addition, information was not

provided about how teachers who choose to incorporate technology into their instructional practices will be supported through professional development or technical assistance. Finally, information was not provided regarding the number of LEA/providers or schools within a Literacy Line that will incorporate technology; or how the use of technology will be evaluated with regard to student outcomes compared to those Literacy Lines that do not incorporate technology.

Reader's Score: 2

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

Strengths:

MET

Strengths

The applicant includes a strong, integrated, and comprehensive plan to improve school readiness and success from birth to grade 12 with specific objectives addressed within the vertical Literacy Lines. Instructional practices will be supported through professional development and instructional resources available through Portal Share, which will provide an effective network for training and dissemination. A strong emphasis on the incorporation of RtI will ensure differential instructional strategies for disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses
None noted.

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

MET

Strengths

The project includes a specific and appropriate plan to collect, analyze, and effectively use data to inform instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes. A strength of the plan is to include an iterative process to develop LIPs, collect data, and readjust the LIP based on data collected. This will help to support ongoing progress monitoring, timely decision-making, and implementation of corrective actions if indicated.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

The dissemination of data is largely focused on administrators and teachers with no clear description of how the project outcomes will be reported in different formats that would be easily understood by different stakeholders, including families and State leaders.

Reader's Score: 0

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

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency -- Standards and Programs Standards and Programs (S371C110013)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Quality of State-level activities		
Quality of State-level activities		
1. State-level activities	37	37
Sub Total	37	37
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
Quality of the State subgrant competition		
1. State subgrant comp	28	28
Sub Total	28	28
Project management		
Project management		
1. Project management	15	13
Sub Total	15	13
Adequacy of resources		
Adequacy of resources		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	19
Sub Total	20	19
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Effective Use of Technology		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
Absolute Priority 1		
Improving Learning Outcomes		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Total	105	100

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SRCL - 6: 84.371C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency -- Standards and Programs Standards and Programs

Questions

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

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

Reader's Score: 37

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

i) The applicant provides comprehensive details of state-level activities in a series of seven focused steps (pg. e0). All of these steps align with the grant requirements. The Texas Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Initiative (TSRCLI) has five components already in place and these will facilitate alignment of activities. The existing blueprint of the state literacy plan is comprehensive and is a strong platform for the SRCL (pg. e2). Support via an online platform is in place and evidences ease of alignment.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

ii) The applicant has specific priorities regarding the student populations focused on by this grant. The focus on disadvantaged students is evident (pg.e1). Frequent references to at risk students populations are integrated throughout the application (e7, e10,e11, e13, e20). The focus on using data to improve achievement for all students is evident.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

iii) The applicant provides adequate training for sub grantees during the grant review process. This is a reasonable venue to ensure alignment of subgrants with overall program goals (pg. e6). Complete support at various times during the year adds to the strength of the technical assistance (pg. e14,15,17)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

iv) The applicant demonstrates ongoing evaluation through liaisons (pg.e11), and an outside evaluator (pg. e17). Grade level data collected 3 times a year adds to the soundness of the evaluation methods (pg. 18) as do the requirements for the applicants (pg.e22, bullet 4/5).

iv 1) An outside evaluator will evaluate the progress (pg. e17). Frequent data collection at beginning, middle, and end of year indicate a continuous evaluation process

iv 2)The applicant explains the method used to evaluate the progress of the state; the regression design has been utilized in a previous grant. A strong variety of grade specific assessments will be used. This indicates the applicants desire to have appropriate assessments tailored to specific age groups (pg. e18)

iv 3) The applicant present a clear process of how it will use evidence to compare funded and nonfunded LEA's. This exemplifies a commitment to examining differences in scores and using the information to improve designs (pg e18).

Weaknesses:

no weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

v) Disaggregated data explaining project outcomes will be distributed to multiple stakeholders in a variety of ways. The applicant evidences a proactive approach to information by beginning the information dissemination at the onset of the grant process. The strategies for informing the constituents are extensive and frequent, indicating a transparency throughout the process (pg. e18).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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

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

Reader's Score: 28

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

ia)The applicant presents comprehensive information regarding the rigor, criteria, review process, rubric, proof of capacity of LEA's subgrants and specific budget requirements(pg. e19-23). Subgrantees are required to provide explicit information about their literacy plan and must agree to implement a Response to Intervention Model (RtI). Applications must be scored by several levels of trained reviewers. Cut scores for applicants has been determined in advance. The requirements and details of the application indicate a highly competitive subgrant process.

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:

B1) The applicant presents focused and ample details that thoroughly documents how subgrants must meet edibility requirements. The multiple percentages, priorities, and fund distributions presented to identify the schools with the highest levels of need and capacity are appropriate (e31-34)

B2) The applicant documents the requirements of the needs assessment and the 7 strong areas it must address (pg. e34) as well as providing standards that will be applied to the selection process (pg. e23). These requirements are sound.

B3) The applicant references comprehensive lists of other agencies (higher ed, members of the literacy partnerships Regional Education Service Centers) that will be involved to promote effective literacy

Sub Question

instruction (pg. 3, 16, 17,35 38).

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:

C) There is a documented requirement that priorities will be given to an LEA that demonstrates leveraging of multiple existing funding sources. The applicant has made this a priority and this indicates an expectation of multiple funding sources in the subgrant applications. (pg. 35, 48). The applicant references their past history of leveraging funds from all resources. The reference to past success indicates competence in this area.

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:

ii) The priority given to serving high poverty schools/population is documented throughout the application. It is mentioned in the first sentence of the abstract as a goal of the TSRCLI (pg.e0), as the first priority (pg.e1), in the intervention explanation (pg. e10), when discussing data, (pg. e31) and in other sections throughout the document (pg. 21, 31,35). The applicant provides a definition of poverty and this is evidenced in the applicant eligibility application through required percentages for economically disadvantaged children. A sub priority is also designated for sites with the highest percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged (pg e32.This is a clear priority for the applicant.

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.

Strengths:

iii)In discussions of SEA priorities for subgrants, early childhood education supported by evidence is mentioned (pg. e0,e1). The applicant also discusses the criteria of data-informed planning, referencing kindergarten as a critical transition point (e22). A strength of the application is the evidence based best practices explained on pages e24-e26, and weaved throughout this discussion the need for evidence based instruction. The commitment to competitive priority for early childhood educators who provide a willingness to use valid and reliable data measures provides another example of this priority (pg.36).

Sub Question

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:

6) The applicant describes the existing process (Literacy Line) which will be used to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with state standards. The SEA will also use the process implemented by a Proclamation in 2010 to insure all adopted materials fall under state determined subject and standards (pg. e37). The details of public review of the process are adequate and explain how stakeholders will be informed throughout the grant. The applicant desires a transparent process throughout the process.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Project management - Project management

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

Reader's Score: 13

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

i) The applicant has presented a strong management plan and subgrantees are required to describe how they will manage multiple areas (pg e23). The applicant has determined the responsibilities of each entity and this also promotes timeliness and budget adherence. Milestones are detailed and state specifically what must be accomplished during the implementation phase. (pg. e40). Clear guidelines are established for monitoring program implementation (pg.e11). Project managers and literacy line liaisons roles in the project are clear. The detailed description of the management plan indicates thoughtful attention to tasks that are necessary for program success.

Weaknesses:

i) The applicant presented minimal detail about the project expectations benchmarks for each year of the project. The expected outcomes for each year are not noted. Undefined benchmarks could impact the timeliness of the entire project.

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

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

Strengths:

ii) The qualifications of key personnel are documented and exhaustive. Their credentials span a variety of entities including K-12, higher education, consultants, and the public sector. Several of the key personnel have experience with grants and have been involved in other initiative such as this. The key personnel have multiple years of experience and will bring varied perspectives to the process.

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:

iii) The applicant demonstrates diversity of perspectives through the presentation of names and titles on page e45. Extensive additional stakeholders groups are listed (pg. 46). The applicant has chosen individuals who have expertise in the areas that directly relate to the populations that state will serve. Stakeholders will participate in the process through reviews, serving on advisory councils, participating in literacy building activities at the site level, and through participation in focus meetings to gather feedback (pg. e44).

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: 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:

i) The applicant presents a sound budget with comprehensive details regarding duties, travel, supplies, contracted services, and other lesser budget items. The online materials via Project Share exhibit sound budgetary practices (pg. e4) The programs listed at TBD have been given room in the budget and projected travel is detailed. The budget is reasonable based on the number of project proposed and the online component is a positive that allows the applicant to present materials with less spending. This is a significant project and the items proposed are large yet the budget identifies how the proposal will be funded in a clear manner.

The objectives of the proposal are aligned with budget lines, making the alignment evident.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

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:

ii) The applicant presents complete details about fund allocations. The percentages align with the requirements and an equitable distribution is evidenced. Examples are provided regarding how subgrantees should determine their budget (pg. e47). This makes the prescribed percentages clear and a key part of the proposal. Throughout the proposal it is documented that the subgrant funds should be utilized to serve students in a balanced manner.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

iii) Appropriate information is given about the use of grants to maximize use of grant impact. The applicant listed multiple revenue sources and the fact that this was cited positively in a previous Reading First visit (pg e49). This evidences that the applicant has the capacity to leverage other funds and is able to do this in an effective manner, as they have been able to successfully do this in the past.

Weaknesses:

iii) The applicant is lacking in additional detail regarding the sustainability at the end of subgrant (pg. e49). The funding plans for maintaining the subgrant programs are not clear.

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:

iv) The applicant presents criteria for subgrant eligibility and the focus on students in high-need schools (e31). The applicant frequently mentions high-need students as intended recipients of funding (pg 31-33. This reoccurring mention indicates that significant students in high-need schools will be served by this grant. The applicant presents convincing information about the (pg. e47) fund allocations in the budget categories relating to high-need students. It is clear that awards will be designated to the projects that improve instruction for the students intended to be served by the grant. This is a strength of the applicants narrative.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

iv) 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 presents information describing the innovative Texas State Literacy Plan (TSLP) online platform. This platform indicates a commitment to technology that can be used to achieve the grants absolute priorities. The clearly outlined modules are diverse in content and one is specifically devoted to the premises of universal design (1) (pg. e3). A module in the online platform presents standards in two languages and trains teachers in learning gap identification and remediation. The platform can also be used to supplement diverse learners academic needs. A complete description of the platform provides evidence that it is aligned with best practices for all learners (e9). The 12 week online course is comprehensive in its content and is focused on clearly defined achievement goals and the strategies necessary for both teachers and students to achieve. Online guidance and coaching is another effective use of technology (pg. e15). The goal of increased teacher effectiveness (2) is addressed through the online Project Share and its ability to foster online PD (pg e17, e28). The applicant has strong evidence that technology will be used to support learning.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not specifically address how technology will be used to increase student engagement and motivation and how this relates to increased student achievement. The applicant presents minimal information about the way the technology will be used to directly address student learning challenges and it is difficult to determine the way the online training for teachers will impact student learning challenges.

Reader's Score: 3

Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes

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

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

and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

Strengths:

The applicant provides strong and well organized documentation of how it will improve school readiness and success for disadvantaged students. The focus on utilizing data driven decision making demonstrates the applicants understanding of this absolute priority. The evidence required will indicate progress through the establishment of Literacy Line. The applicant provides strategies that will address all levels of students, beginning in early childhood (pg.e1). The learning expectations/standards for student levels focus on success for all students including ELL and college and career readiness. The components of a comprehensive literacy program and the researchers cited are extensive and are used to support the components of effective instruction (e25-27). This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were identified.

Reader's Score: 0

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides clear information regarding the requirements for program participants to explain how they will use data to inform all decision making (pg22). They are also required to describe the assessments they will use as well as their their purpose. The assessments must be standardized across grade levels to increase validity and reliability. The structured requirements relating to data-based decision making indicate clear and focused project design. Specific requirements relating to progress monitoring for the purpose of improving teaching and learning exhibits data-driven decision making as a priority. Stakeholders will be informed of progress each October 1, indicating the applicants understanding of the value of data to inform teacher training and student academic needs (pg.e18). This priority has been met.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address ways stakeholders could provide feedback on the progress reports they received. It is unclear if stakeholder feedback will be solicited to inform future practices.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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