

Science of Reading: Literacy Instruction for Tribal Education (LITE)

The National Fund for Excellence in Indian Education

EIR Mid-Phase

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TNTP

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INTRODUCTION

The National Fund for Excellence in Indian American Education submits this proposal, Literacy Instruction for Tribal Education (LITE), for consideration for the Education and Innovation Research (EIR) grant in response to the **Absolute Priority** (AP, *Promoting Evidence-Based Literacy*), **Competitive Preference Priority 1** (CPP1, *Returning Education to the States*), and **Competitive Preference Priority 2** (CPP2, *Education Choice – High-Impact Tutoring*). We are applying as a **Tribal Organization** and **501(c)(3)** in partnership with Bureau of Indian Education (**BIE**), acting as an **LEA/SEA**, as a **rural applicant**. Building upon prior research on the effectiveness of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and high-impact tutoring in helping students make academic progress, this project proposes to implement an instructional coherence model- ensuring Tier 1 core instruction, interventions, and tutoring are seamlessly aligned to advance the same learning priorities (TNTP, 2022). Specifically, the project proposes to not only examine if the delivery of these interventions is more effective and more sustainable when implemented through the lens of instructional coherence, but also the extent to which it improves early literacy achievement for high-need students (**AP**), meaning students of Tribal nations who are attending BIE schools in the states of New Mexico and Arizona, where the study will take place. This project will provide tribes and local educators with the tools to implement the Science of Reading, returning more power to local Tribal leaders to further tribal choice and sovereignty (**CPP1**).

HQIM make a significant impact in ensuring achievement at a high level for all students (The StandardsWork, 2024). The successful implementation of the Science of Reading, a vast body of research on how children learn to read, is critically dependent on the adoption of HQIM (Stein & Kaufman, 2010; IES, 2016). HQIM provides the essential foundation for systematic and explicit

instruction in foundational skills like phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency (CORE Learning, 2024). Additionally, many studies on the impacts of one-to-one or small group high-impact tutoring have found that it is a highly effective intervention and can help high-need students achieve reading proficiency (Kortecamp & Peters, 2023). To test the impacts of instructional coherence when implemented in conjunction with HQIM and high-impact tutoring, this project proposes to partner with TNTP, Inc., the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), WestEd, and the leaders of Tribal nations in New Mexico and Arizona in up to 60 Tribal nation/BIE schools (**AP, CPP1 & CPP2**). This project will focus on implementing a coherent instructional system for K-3 literacy, as detailed in Section A below.

A. SIGNIFICANCE

A total of 449,000 students from Tribal nations are enrolled in U.S. public schools nationwide and face profound and persistent educational disparities including lower graduation rates (75% graduation rate amongst students at BIE schools compared to 87% nationally), higher rates of suspension and expulsion, and the highest drop-out rate – the national average is 5.3% compared to 9.9% for students of Tribal nations (NCES, 2022; NCES, 2024).²The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test shows that since 1992, 4th grade reading scores have increased for all student groups at statistically significant levels except for BIE students. Scores for BIE students decreased 3% in 2019 and were 16 points below the national average – in 2019, 27% of students nationally were proficient or above in reading (NAEP, 2019). Approximately 80% of BIE children are reading below the proficient level, compared to 69% below proficient nationally (NAEP, 2024).

Additionally, students in this education system often face compounding challenges such as poverty and geographic isolation that exacerbate school-specific issues related to staffing shortages, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of high-quality materials and training (Demmert et al, 2006). These outcomes highlight the urgent need for innovative, coherent, and evidence-based approaches to literacy instruction tailored to unique contexts of Tribal nations.

BIE has been working to meet its legal obligation to serve Tribal students in part by partnering with Tribes to run their own schools. Currently, 128 of the 183 are Tribally Controlled Schools (TCS), and the BIE is partnering with Tribes in the remaining Bureau Operated (BO) Schools. This project will provide critical capacity to Tribes to improve literacy by investing in tribal leaders, governments, and school boards to implement the science of reading through HQIM and deliver aligned high dose tutoring (**CPP2**). This is a critical step toward tribal choice and sovereignty and ensuring that Tribes can deliver quality literacy instructions to their students (**CPP1**).

Extent to which the project introduces an innovative approach. The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education ("the National Fund") proposes partnering with the BIE, TNTP, WestEd, and local Tribal governments to implement and test the impacts of an educational intervention with 60 BIE schools in Arizona and New Mexico. Our project's innovation lies in its unique composition of evidence-based components – the use of HQIM and high-impact tutoring – woven together through the critical, yet often missing, lens of instructional coherence. By instructional coherence, we mean a deliberate, systemwide connection between what is taught (curriculum), how it is taught (instructional practices), and how learning is supported and reinforced (tutoring and intervention). Our focus on instructional coherence will ensure students learn skills which spiral from grade to grade and systemically build their ready fluency and

decoding skills, so all grade-levels are vertically aligned in their approach. We will test the combined effect of aligning these components seamlessly across all tiers of instruction to dramatically improve K-3 literacy outcomes for students in BIE schools.

The Proposed Project - A Comprehensive, Cohort-Based Model: Our project will strengthen K-3 literacy instruction by (a) implementing high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), through the lens of evidence-based research about how children learn to read and write proficiently (also known as the Science of Reading); (b) high-impact tutoring to monitor student progress and offer differentiated supports; and (c) professional learning and continuous improvement cycles for educators and leaders. The model includes:

- **Direct Educator Support:** Job-embedded professional development and coaching for teachers on the Science of Reading and effective and coherent HQIM implementation.
- **Leadership Systems Support:** Professional development, resource sharing, and coaching for school leaders to build systems that sustain instructional excellence and coherence.
- **Aligned High-Impact Tutoring:** Integrating evidence-based tutoring strategies that use the same HQIM and pedagogical approaches as core instruction, ensuring a unified learning experience (CPP2).
- **Cohort Model:** Creating a community of schools across AZ and NM to foster shared learning, accelerate progress, and build a sustainable partnership model for Tribal education that is led and sustained by these communities (CPP1).

An Innovative Approach: While the use of HQIM and high-impact tutoring are individually evidence-based, their power is often diluted by a lack of strategic alignment. This project

introduces innovation by deliberately composing them into a coherent instructional system, an approach that needs further testing, especially in Tribal educational contexts where resource gaps create limited access to standards-aligned curriculum and related professional development for educators. Without professional development in instructional practices that support coherence across grades and interventions for at-risk learners, students from Tribal nations in BIE schools are left with fragmented and inefficient learning experiences (Guiberson & Vining, 2023). As the lead technical assistance provider on this project, TNTP will work with the National Fund to spearhead the development of a shared instructional vision and coherence plan with BIE schools and Tribal community stakeholders **(CPP 1)**. **Our project innovates by making coherence the central organizing principle.** This means:

- **HQIM as the Foundation:** High-quality literacy curriculum, grounded in the science of reading, serves as the common platform for all educators – classroom teachers, special educators, and tutors.
- **Aligned Tutoring as an Intervention:** High-impact tutoring is not a separate “add-on” but a targeted Tier 2 intervention that also serves as an extension of core instruction, reinforcing the same concepts and skills with fidelity **(CPP2)**.
- **Systems to Sustain Alignment:** We will build collaborative structures (e.g., shared planning time, professional learning communities) and leadership capacity amongst Tribal governments and leaders to ensure this coherence is maintained over time **(CPP1)**.

This innovative approach is uniquely suited to address the historical challenges of instructional fragmentation in rural TCS and BO BIE schools. By creating a logical, predictable, and unified learning experience, we directly combat resource isolation that can hinder student achievement in these communities. Furthermore, the cohort model itself is an innovative strategy

for scaling impact in Tribal nation contexts, building a cross-school community to share best practices and create a collective voice for educational excellence. (CPPI)

B. STRATEGY TO SCALE.

B.1 The extent to which there is unmet demand for broader implementation of the project. This project responds to a profound need for educational approaches that are both evidence-based and support all students in TCS and BO schools in Arizona and New Mexico. The demand for this specific, coherent model is acute, demonstrated by the following critical factors:

1) A literacy crisis amongst students of Tribal nations: The BIE funds 183 primary and secondary schools and during the 2020-21 school year, these schools served 34,529 students, with the highest concentrations in Arizona (9,113) and New Mexico (7,439). BIE and other Tribal-led schools serving high percentages of students from Tribal nations often grapple with issues that impact academic outcomes, including high poverty rates and serious problems with student absenteeism (NIEA, n.d.; NCES, 2008). Nearly 26% of children on Tribal lands experience poverty (Economic Policy Institute, 2023) compared to the national child poverty rate of 16% (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2025). In Arizona, the chronic absenteeism rate for all students during the 2022-23 school year was 28%, compared to 45% amongst students from Tribal nations (Mumphrey et al, 2024).

2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows a significant reading proficiency gap amongst Tribal students – in 4th grade, only one in 10 students from Tribal nations in New Mexico demonstrated reading proficiency, compared to one in 5 students statewide (NM KidsCAN, 2023). Nationally, New Mexico was ranked last in proficiency rates amongst all 50 states and Washington D.C (NM KidsCan, 2023). The 2024 Nation’s Report Card showed that

only 26% of Arizona’s fourth graders are proficient in reading (below the national average) and students from Tribal nations are even lower than this state baseline (██████████). 2019 NAEP results show that of all 4th grade students from Tribal nations in public education settings across the country, students in BIE schools had the lowest average reading scores with an average score of 186 for BIE students versus 204 for all students from Tribal nations (NCES, 2021). The NAEP considers a reading score of 238 to be proficient for 4th grade students.

Lack of access & resource disparities: The 2019 National Indian Education Study found that overall, 60% of students from Tribal nations had teachers who reported “never” attending professional development programs aimed at developing instructional practices geared toward students from Tribal nations over the past two years. This same study also found that the percentages of students from Tribal nations attending BIE schools who reported having a computer in their home were lower than rates for their peers attending public schools (NCES, 2021). In many rural reservation communities, geographic isolation is a significant challenge – families in remote reservation communities may be hours away from major city centers where they can access basic resources. Lack of access to high-speed internet and technology, and issues with homelessness (5.2% of students at BIE schools were identified as experiencing homelessness – nearly twice the rate of students in all public schools), all contribute to broader systemic issues that are directly connected to the academic challenges that students from Tribal governments face (Reed & Bock, 2025).

Demand from Tribal leaders: The proposed level of scale is not arbitrary but is directly aligned with explicit, documented demand from our partner organizations, which represent the communities we aim to serve. **The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education**, as the lead applicant, was founded by Congress to address this exact gap. Our mission,

our Board of Tribal education luminaries, partnership with the BIE, and network of relationships with Tribal leaders and BIE school administrators demonstrate a deep, long-standing demand for evidence-based educational models in schools that serve Tribal students. Our leadership in this application is a direct expression of this demand. **The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)** has identified literacy as a top strategic priority based on extensive consultation with Tribal governments and local education stakeholders whose partnership signifies a demand for solutions implemented across their funded schools. Their commitment ensures access to specific schools with the greatest need, and organization-wide buy-in to change (see Letter of Support). **The National Indian Education Association (NIEA)** brings a national network of Tribal educators and leaders who consistently advocate for programs that respect Tribal choice and sovereignty while providing high-quality academic supports. Their involvement reflects broad demand for innovative approaches like this one and ensures increased representation for all students in literature, literacy curricula, and classroom instruction (see Letter of Support).

B.2 Management Plan to Achieve Project LITE Objectives and Goals. The National Fund will lead this project, partnering with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), TNTP, and WestEd. The National Fund, supported by TNTP, will direct project management through a structured communication plan to ensure timely, high-quality implementation. A tiered meeting structure will facilitate oversight and continuous improvement: 1) Monthly cross-partner leadership meetings led by that National Fund will oversee all project activities, 2) Bi-weekly meetings with WestEd will review interim findings, using data for continuous improvement throughout the grant, and 3) Monthly BIE coordination meetings in Year 1 will focus on recruitment strategies and partnership alignment.

Recruitment and implementation will be managed through direct, phased engagement: 1) The National Fund and TNTP will collaborate with BIE schools and Tribal government leaders to recruit schools, 2) Once recruited, TNTP will initiate bi-weekly school support meetings to prepare for implementation, 3) during active implementation, TNTP will maintain weekly communication with each school via designated school leaders/coaches who will receive training and stipends to facilitate communication, implementation, and data reporting and 4) the Fund will regularly work with Tribal leaders monthly to share information and resources (CPP1). This management and communication structure, detailed in Exhibit 2, will be consistently applied across both Cohort 1 (2026-2028) and Cohort 2 (2028-2030), ensuring all project activities are on time, implemented with quality, and adaptively managed throughout the five-year performance period (January 2026 - December 2030).

Exhibit 1. Milestones, Timeline, and Responsible Party

Milestone	Dates	Responsible Party
Planning & Management		
Submit project for The Fund/BIE review, update annually	1/26-1/30	TNTP/WestEd
Create scope of work plans for implementing high-impact tutoring utilizing school staff in various school models	1/26 – 3/26	TNTP
Kick-off meeting with partners	1/26	TNTP
Monthly cross-partner leadership meetings	Ongoing	TNTP/Fund
Monthly BIE coordination meetings	Ongoing	TNTP/Fund
Bi-weekly evaluation team meetings	Ongoing	TNTP/WestEd/Fund
Recruit Tribal school members - Cohort 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize recruitment strategy and materials Host outreach webinars for prospective schools Finalize school selection 	1/26-4/26	TNTP/BIE/Fund
Complete MOUs, data sharing agreements, etc. - Cohort 1	5/26	TNTP/BIE/ WestEd
Identify Cohort 1 school division leaders and coaches and train them on The Science of Reading, HQIM Implementation, and High-Impact Tutoring	05/26-06/26	TNTP

Cohort 1 leadership toolkit shared including PLC protocols, lesson internalization tools, observation and feedback rubrics, etc.	06/26-7/26	TNTP
Conduct teacher outreach - Cohort 1	7/26-8/26	TNTP
Provide professional development focused on The Science of Reading, HQIM Implementation, and coherent literacy intervention	08/26, 11/26, 08/27, 11/27	TNTP
Develop High-Impact Tutoring Guidebooks - Cohort 1	7/26-8/26	TNTP
Monthly meetings with tutors to provide support and coordination on the usage of HQIM	Ongoing	TNTP
Develop teacher guidance for reteaching, intervention, and acceleration – Cohort 1	07/26-8/26	TNTP
Recruit Tribal school members - Cohort 2	01/27-4/27	TNTP
Complete MOUs, data sharing agreements, etc. - Cohort 2	05/27	TNTP/BIE/WestEd
Identify Cohort 2 school division leaders and coaches and train them on The Science of Reading, HQIM Implementation, and High-Impact Tutoring	05/27-6/28	TNTP
Conduct Teacher outreach - Cohort 2	7/27-8/28	TNTP
Provide teacher professional development focused on The Science of Reading, HQIM Implementation, and coherent literacy intervention	08/28, 11/28, 08/29, 11/29	
Develop High-Impact Tutoring Guidebooks - Cohort 2	7/28-8/28	TNTP
Connect with High-Impact/ Tutoring teachers to coordinate support and ensure use of HQIM	Monthly	TNTP
Develop teacher guidance for reteaching, intervention, and acceleration – Cohort 2	7/28	TNTP
Progress reports	Annually	TNTP/WestEd
Coherence in Literacy Instruction		
Communicate randomization to school leaders	5/26-6/26	TNTP
Fall Coherence in Literacy Instruction window opens for treatment schools (cohort 1 & 2)	8/26-11/26 & 8/28-11/28	TNTP/WestEd
Winter Coherence in Literacy Instruction window opens for treatment schools (cohort 1 & 2)	01/27-04/27 & 01/29-04/29	TNTP/WestEd
Fall Coherence in Literacy Instruction window opens for comparison schools (cohort 1 & 2)	8/26-11/26 & 8/28-11/28	TNTP/WestEd

Winter Coherence in Literacy Instruction window opens for comparison schools (cohort 1 & 2)	01/27-04/27 & 01/29-04/29	TNTP/WestEd
Post data collection	05/27, 05/28 & 05/29, 05/30	TNTP
Implementation & Impact Study		
Randomize participating schools	05/26-6/26 & 05/27-06/27	WestEd
Teacher survey data collection (Cohorts 1 & 2 will both participate in the survey in year 3 (3/28))	03/27, 03/28, and 3/29	WestEd
Student outcome data collection	Annually	WestEd
Student survey data collection (cohorts 1 & 2)	3/28, 3/29	WestEd
Review interim data with partners and adapt implementation support	Quarterly, starting 11/26	TNTP/National Fund/WestEd
Impact estimate on combined cohort data	06/30	WestEd
Dissemination		
Evaluation report	08/30	WestEd
Dissemination of products and publications	Ongoing between years 4+	Fund/TNTP/BIE/We stEd

The Project Team.

Exhibit 2. Personnel, Roles, and Responsibilities

Person, Role	Responsibilities & Qualifications
██████████, National Fund Project Director	██████████ is the ██████████ of the Congressionally chartered National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education and will direct the Fund's work on this project. At the Fund, ██████████ leads national efforts to strengthen Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools through innovation and a focus on student achievement. A citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, ██████████ brings more than 20 years of cross-sector leadership across federal policy, education, healthcare, and the Fortune 100.
██████████, National Fund Senior Project Manager	██████████ is the ██████████ of NFEAIE and will spearhead the Fund's leadership on this project as well as serving as the lead and main contact along with ██████████ for the project team. At the Fund, ██████████ oversees programmatic strategy and national partnerships to provide technical assistance to the BIE schools and drive student outcomes. With over 20 years of experience in federal policy, education

	<p>leadership, teaching and civic engagement, [REDACTED] brings a systems-level approach to public education reform.</p>
<p>[REDACTED], BIE Project Advisor</p>	<p>In [REDACTED] current role as the [REDACTED], she works with a robust team of education program specialists, Associate Deputy Director (ADD) staff, and Education Resource Center (ERC) staff to implement, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of federal education monies from the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to overseeing the ESSA grants for the BIE, she has served in the role of BIE State Coordinator for the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) grant, which renders targeted and intensive school improvement supports to Bureau funded schools.</p>
<p>[REDACTED], TNTP Project Director</p>	<p>[REDACTED] is a [REDACTED] at TNTP and will lead the organization’s technical assistance on this project, serving as the primary lead and main point of contact alongside [REDACTED] for the project team. A former principal with extensive experience in high-needs schools, [REDACTED] brings deep expertise in education, literacy, and learning acceleration to support the success of all students.</p>
<p>[REDACTED], TNTP Partner Project Advisor/Co- Director</p>	<p>[REDACTED] is a [REDACTED] at TNTP and will advise and direct TNTP’s work on this project. At TNTP, [REDACTED] has led many PK-12 literacy projects including New Mexico’s Summer Literacy project which supported intensive foundational skills support for students in grades K-8 through New Mexico including Tribal schools. She directly supports Laguna Pueblo schools and Albuquerque Public Schools where 6% of the students are citizens of Tribal governments.</p>
<p>[REDACTED] Principal Investigator and Evaluation Director, WestEd Partner Director</p>	<p>[REDACTED], is a [REDACTED] at WestEd. He will lead the design of both the impact and implementation evaluations and serve as the main point of contact between the evaluation team, TNTP, and participating BIE and Tribal school partners. He will approve all final deliverables to ensure measures and analyses meet WWC standards. [REDACTED] is dually certified in WWC group design and advanced group design standards and has led investigations of literacy interventions for both state education agencies and large school districts. [REDACTED] also worked closely with the Bureau of Indian Affairs as well as bureau operated and Tribally controlled schools.</p>
<p>[REDACTED], Co- Principal Investigator & Technical Director, WestEd Partner Co- Director</p>	<p>[REDACTED] is a [REDACTED] at WestEd. He will facilitate evaluation coordination and planning activities between the National Fund, TNTP, the BIE, and WestEd. He will also manage the evaluation staff and oversee IRB submissions and modifications. [REDACTED] has more than 20 years of experience developing and managing high-quality applied research and evaluation designs that study the impact of program implementation in K–12 systems. He has directed a wide range of research and evaluation projects that feature experimental and descriptive analytic approaches; several of his studies are in the What Works Clearinghouse.</p>

B.3 Relevance and Commitment of Each Partner. In its congressionally chartered role, the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education serves as a Tribal Organization—chartered by Congress and governed by a 100% Tribal citizen Board of Directors appointed as representatives of key Tribal communities and local interests. Through this structure, the National Fund acts as both a steward of federal trust responsibilities and a bridge between the BIE and the Tribal Nations it serves. Working in direct partnership with Tribal leaders, the National Fund helps ensure that education across the BIE system is guided by the sovereignty, vision, and priorities of Tribal communities themselves. This includes supporting Tribes that directly administer their own BIE-funded schools through TCS boards, as well as collaborating with Tribal leaders who guide Bureau operated schools through consultation, governance participation, and local decision-making about where and how their children are educated. Together, the BIE and the National Fund are advancing a shared commitment to return education to the hands of Tribes and Tribal leaders—ensuring that resources, policies, and programs are designed and directed by those closest to Tribal students, their families, and their futures (**CPPI**).

More specifically, the Fund supports community-led efforts that center local Tribal control and influence in education and foster students' academic and life success at the forefront of every student's educational journey. The Fund has awarded \$6.6M in its inaugural grant round to eight BIE-funded schools for Tribal language immersion initiatives. The grants support comprehensive approaches including curriculum development, teacher training and pipeline development, family and elder engagement, effective communication in assessments, and innovative approaches like VR storytelling for language instruction. Additionally, the National Fund has launched a BIE school Principal coaching program with New Leaders, a national nonprofit with 25 years of experience helping school leaders succeed.

BIE's mission is to provide, in partnership with Tribal nations, quality education from early childhood onward, preparing students to thrive and lead their communities. With the National Fund as their Congressionally chartered foundation partner, they look to accelerate progress on their strategic direction and priorities through collaboration and a commitment to local Tribal community-level buy-in of initiatives.

Since 1997, TNTP has been a leading education practice, policy, and research organization dedicated to transforming America's public education system to meet the needs of tomorrow—for students, families, communities, and the nation. TNTP's mission is to create multiple pathways for young people to achieve academic, economic, and social mobility, leading to thriving lives in adulthood. TNTP works side by side with educators, system leaders, and communities across 42 states and in more than 6,000 districts nationwide to reach ambitious goals for student success. TNTP's work with Tribal communities emphasizes strengthening literacy instructions, developing leadership and educator pathways within Tribal communities, and supporting family-school partnerships rooted in Tribal choice, sovereignty and traditions. Additionally, TNTP has led initiatives to develop alternative licensure and training for Tribal educators, parent navigator roles for community engagement, and frameworks that integrate Tribal language and values in instruction.

B.4 Plan to Deliver Project Services at Scale. From the outset, this project is designed with efficient scaling and sustainability in mind, with the goal of creating a replicable model for Tribal and rural schools. Our plan ensures we accomplish this by building local capacity, leveraging technology, and implementing continuous improvement cycles. TNTP will not simply train teachers (we anticipate training 150 teachers over the span of the project) but instead develop leaders and Tribal council facilitators within each school who will then co-facilitate PLCs and

provide ongoing, job-embedded coaching to their peers. This creates a self-sustaining network amongst Tribal nation schools. By organizing schools into 2-year cohorts, we create a professional community of practice where leaders and teachers from different Tribal nation schools can share challenges and solutions, leveraging the collective wisdom of the network rather than a top-down, school-by-school approach (CPP1).

A hybrid approach will be used, with initial relationship-building, classroom walkthroughs, and key professional development and coaching occurring in person, while virtual supports such as data analysis meetings and community of practice sessions will help keep costs down and maintain frequent, flexible touchpoints. This will reduce travel costs and allow for more frequent, flexible touchpoints – this is particularly important to making this support sustainable across vast geographical distances in Arizona and New Mexico. Additionally, this project will include developing a variety of resources and materials that can be reused by future cohorts – helping to ensure consistency without additional expenses. Lastly, we will use our bi-weekly meetings with TNTP and WestEd to review interim data on implementation fidelity and early student outcomes to make real-time adjustments to our coaching, PD, and resources. This ensures that the model is continuously refined and improved, maintaining its effectiveness throughout the process.

B.5 Mechanisms to Disseminate Project Information. The Fund, in partnership with BIE, TNTP, and WestEd, will disseminate its works through press releases, dedicated websites, and news articles on partnerships, and funded programs, including award amounts, supported schools, and intended outcomes. The team has experience offering free webinars to share language and professional development on lessons learned and impact and delivering professional learning materials and protocols for language and Tribal engagement.

The Fund participates in national awareness-raising efforts, sharing insights and models for Tribal and language education that can be adapted by organizations beyond the initial grantees. Strategic plans and protocols serve as models for local adaptation and are available for public use, allowing other schools or entities to reference them in implementing similar projects. The Fund models and disseminates sustainable funding approaches for Tribal education, providing templates and examples for replicating these efforts.

TNTP has experience with evaluation partners in sharing final reports through blog posts, subscriber email lists, and social media accounts. TNTP's blog readership reached 82,000 users in the last year, with an email distribution list of 36,000. TNTP's work has been featured in the media more than 40 times in the last two years, including in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the New York Daily News, NBC, CNN, Vox, Politico, and Education Week. TNTP's 2018 national report, *The Opportunity Myth*, has had 222,000 unique visitors since publication. TNTP has presented at professional conferences, including USED-sponsored grantee meetings, i3 learning community webinars, the National Rural Conference, the National Charter Schools Conference, and the SXSW Education Conference.

C. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN.

C.1 Conceptual Framework for the Project. The proposed project is grounded in a robust conceptual framework that integrates two evidence-based components: 1) high-quality instructional materials as the foundational core, and 2) high-impact tutoring as a targeted, aligned intervention (**CPP2**). Instructional coherence is the innovation that brings these two components together to maximize impact on K-3 literacy. Our framework posits that by systematically aligning *what* students learn with *how* they are supported when they struggle, we can create an enhanced

learning experience that improves foundational reading skills for students of Tribal nations. The logic model (see Appendix G) visually represents how the inputs and activities are linked to achieve these outcomes. The framework below articulates the evidence-based reasoning behind these connections.

Evidence Base: Our framework is built upon two bodies of research. The IES Practice Guide, “Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade” provides the foundational evidence for our instructional approach. *This practice guide meets evidence requirements for this competition as it has been reviewed under standards 2.1 or higher and has at least one recommendation with moderate or strong evidence.* This guide recommends explicit, systematic instruction in foundational skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. Implementation of HQIM operationalizes this evidence by providing a standards-aligned, sequential curriculum that ensures all students receive consistent, high-quality Tier 1 instruction. Research shows that when teachers have access to engaging, high-quality instructional materials, they can have a greater impact on raising student achievement. Additionally, the effects of HQIM implementation are maximized when there is a deliberate connection to job-embedded professional learning for teachers (Kuhfeld et al, 2020). Our project’s use of HQIM and foundation approach to literacy instruction will be grounded in the Science of Reading, which is an evidence-based literacy instruction approach that includes the systematic and explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, as recommended by the IES Practice Guide that forms the basis of our instructional framework.

The IES WWC study, “The Impact of Reading Recovery” *meets WWC standards without reservations* and provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of intensive, short-term tutoring for struggling readers. Our project extends this evidence by applying the core principles of high-

impact (frequent, one-on-one or small-group) tutoring within a coherent instructional system. Best practices from the research on effective tutoring include – 1) Frequency: tutoring is most effective when delivered in high doses with three or more sessions per week; 2) Group size: tutors most effectively instruct up to 3-4 students at a time; 3) Focus: the evidence on the effectiveness of tutoring is strongest for reading-focused tutoring for students in early grades (K-2) (EdResearch for Recovery, 2021). Our project will ensure alignment with these best practices: tutoring will be in small groups for Tier 2 students with 90 minutes of tutoring per week, for a total of 20-30 hours of tutoring during the course of one academic year. **(CPP2)**

Conceptual Framework: While HQIM and tutoring are powerful individually, our framework introduces Instructional Coherence as the innovation that amplifies their combined effect. In 2001, Newmann et al. Introduced the concept of “instructional program coherence” in their publication *Instructional Program Coherence: What It Is and Why It Should Guide School Improvement Policy*. Their research indicates that instructional coherence requires focused and strategic coordination of key supports for instruction, such as curriculum, instructional strategies, and professional development. Additionally, the research in this publication demonstrates a strong positive relationship between improving coherence and increased student achievement, highlighting the importance of a unified and strategic approach within a school (Newmann et. Al, 2001). TNTP defines instructional coherence as existing "when every element of an instructional program—from core instruction to interventions to adjusted or extended time—works in concert, not in opposition" (TNTP, 2022). This principle is operationalized in our project through two key, interconnected practices. First, we ensure instructional materials coherence by using the same High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) as the foundation for both Tier 1 core instruction and Tier 2 high-impact tutoring **(CPP2)**. This alignment guarantees that the content, academic

language, and skill-building sequences are consistent across all learning spaces, preventing the fragmentation that occurs when students are taught with conflicting methods. Second, we implement assessment coherence by moving beyond universal screeners to leverage curriculum-embedded assessments. These diagnostics allow educators to group students for tutoring with high precision based on specific skill gaps directly related to the core curriculum. Furthermore, these assessments are administered regularly, creating a dynamic and responsive feedback loop that enables tutors and teachers to quickly regroup students and adjust instruction as skills are mastered, ensuring that support is both targeted and fluid.

Our theory of action is that by deliberately aligning Tier 1 (HQIM) with Tier 2 (High-Impact Tutoring) instruction, we create a system of instructional coherence that improves K-3 student literacy achievement (**CPP2**). Our logic model maps the pathway from resources to results:

- **Inputs & Activities:** Partner expertise (The Fund, TNTP, WestEd, BIE) is deployed to assess current literacy practices and establish a baseline for data collection, internalize HQIM through PD and coaching, develop coherence around high-impact tutoring, and relationship/practice building through PLCs and a network of Tribal nation schools. These activities are not isolated; they are designed to build the capacity of teachers and leaders to implement HQIM and aligned tutoring *simultaneously*.
- **Outputs:** The direct products of these activities are tangible tools for coherence: a shared instructional coherence plan, trained leaders, and structured tutoring sessions. These outputs are the mechanisms that ensure alignment is operationalized in daily practice.
- **Short-Term Outcomes:** The framework hypothesizes that aligned outputs will lead to:
 - For **Teachers:** Improved, data-driven instruction and consistent use of HQIM.

- For **Students**: A coherent learning experience, leading to increased participation and demonstrable growth in foundational literacy skills. This is the first critical test of our theory.
- **Long-Term Outcomes**: Ultimately, this chain of events leads to sustainable system change: **increased and sustained student achievement**, schools with the **internal capacity** to maintain coherence without external support, and a fully **aligned instructional system** where classroom instruction and tutoring seamlessly support the same goal.

By using instructional coherence as the organizing principle, we ensure that the evidence-based inputs of HQIM and high-impact tutoring are directly and efficiently channeled toward the ultimate outcome: transforming literacy outcomes for students of Tribal nations.

C.2 Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes to be Achieved.

Goal 1: Scale The Science of Reading, HQIM Implementation, and High-Impact Tutoring program.		
Objective	Measure	Target/Timeline
1.1 Scale HQIM Implementation to K-3 Tribal school teachers.	● X number of Tribal school teachers participate in the Science of Reading and HQIM Implementation professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By the end of year 5, a total of 150 treatment group teachers have participated in The Science of Reading HQIM Implementation training at least once. ● By the end of year 5, 5,760 Tribal school students will have a teacher who is trained in The Science of Reading and HQIM Implementation.
1.2 Recruit BIE schools to participate in the program study.	● # of BIE schools recruited	● By year 3, no less than 60 Tribal government schools have been recruited for the program study.
1.3 Train Tribal government school leaders and coaches to manage program implementation.	● Training materials and # of Tribal government school leaders and coaches who attend training sessions	● By year 3, at least one leader or coach for each participating school has participated in training.

1.4 Identify barriers to implementing and scaling HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Qualitative notes and feedback from Tribal government school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual reports will identify, and address barriers as noted from meetings with Tribal government school leaders
1.5 Work with leadership to determine next steps and additional strategies to sustain efforts to maintain HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss implementation and impact findings with Tribal government school leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By year 5, all Tribal government school leaders are provided resources and support to sustain the program moving forward.
<u>Outcome:</u> All K-3 teachers at the participating Tribal government schools will participate in The Science of Reading-aligned HQIM Implementation training to allow the scaling of evidence on teacher and student outcomes.		
Goal 2: Evaluate the implementation and impact of The Science of Reading-aligned HQIM Implementation training.		
Objective	Measure	Target/Timeline
2.1 Randomize schools for program impact evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruited schools agree to random assignment design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By year 3, all 60 Tribal government schools have signed MOUs for the impact study.
2.2 Measure and assess the implementation fidelity and impact of HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The # of reports from an independent study of the project that (a) codifies critical program components for successful replication, (b) measures its effects on students and teachers, (c) provides information replication, and (d) provides the cost-effectiveness of the key practices to identify obstacles and success factors to scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By the end of year 5, 1 report that meets WWC standards without reservations will be completed.
<u>Outcome:</u> HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring are found to be implemented with fidelity and found to have positive effects on reading scores for students at Tribal government schools.		
Goal 3: Disseminate findings on HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring and continue to track progress on scaling.		
Objective	Measure	Target/Timeline
3.1 Disseminate findings to research audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TNTP and partners submit research paper proposal summarizing study results to a national conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation of research findings at 1 or more national research conferences; findings are submitted to at least 1 peer-reviewed journal
3.2 Disseminate findings to public, teacher, and policy audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reports summarizing findings to the Bureau of Indian Education and participating schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentations with at least one participating member from Tribal government schools given at least one national

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner with one participating member from the Tribal government schools to submit at least one proposal to a national practitioner or policy conference 	practitioner or policy conference
3.3 Continue to support the HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring and track scaling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring to schools and districts around the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yearly documentation of new, non-study schools & districts HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring
<p><u>Outcome:</u> HQIM Implementation and High-Impact Tutoring results are shared with both the research and applied communities and are reaching more schools and districts.</p>		

D. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION

D1. Methods Designed to Meet WWC Standards Without Reservations. WestEd will conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation and impact of the *LITE* instructional coherence model intervention. The Partner Director is certified in What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Group Design and Advanced Group Design standards, and the study is designed to meet WWC Standards *without* reservations (WWC, 2022). The project will support a 3-level blocked cluster randomized controlled trial. Our team will randomly assign clusters (i.e., schools) to either a treatment or control condition with equal probability within state and school achievement blocks. Treatment schools will receive the intervention, while schools in the control group will operate under the business as usual (BAU) condition.

Sample, Setting, and Statistical Power. The National Fund, TNTP, and WestEd will partner with the BIE to recruit and onboard 60 of the 96 Bureau operated and tribally controlled BIE schools across Arizona and New Mexico. The BIE reports 100% of students in these schools are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and the percent of students proficient in ELA is 30% and 26% in Arizona and New Mexico. Almost all (96%) schools are classified as rural according to NCES locale code. The project’s target population is high-need students, defined as students

receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 support. We estimate 32 high-need students per school, and 1,920 high-need students across the entire sample. Overall, 5,760 students in grades K–3 will be exposed to the *LITE* model intervention’s high quality (Tier 1) instructional materials. We estimate the study’s minimum detectable effect size (MDES) under varying assumptions (see Appendix J). *Our MDES estimates range from 0.167 to 0.197.* The results indicate that even with 10% attrition at the cluster level, this study is still adequately powered to detect small-to-moderate effect sizes.

Attrition. *Our team will calculate attrition rates at the cluster level, assess the risk of bias due to joiners, and calculate attrition rates at the individual level.* The risk of bias due to joiners is low because we are administering a school-level RCT and examining student-level outcomes. Our team is confident that we can minimize individual level attrition given our expertise coordinating data collection activities in previous work with the BIE. We will use the optimistic boundary and include joiners in the study because they do not pose a high risk of bias. *We will assess baseline equivalence and account for applicable baseline covariates in the impact model if compositional changes exceed acceptable levels. ($g \geq .05$)*

Research Questions. The research questions offered in Table D1.1 (below) are aligned with the project’s logic model, goals, and objectives. Research Questions 1 and 2 are confirmatory. Research question 1 [**RQ1**] examines the impact of the intervention on phonological awareness for high need students in kindergarten and 1st grade. Research question 2 [**RQ2**] measures the impact of the intervention on English language arts (ELA) proficiency for high-need students in 2nd and 3rd grade. Research Questions 3 and 4 [**RQ3 & RQ4**] measure implementation fidelity and document critical factors influencing program quality, adherence to the original design, and treatment-control contrast. Research Question 5 [**RQ5**] measures the cost of the program. Research questions 6 and 7 [**RQ6 & RQ7**] will investigate moderation and mediation effects. Research

Question 6 examines the degree to which effects differ by the following student characteristics: academic achievement level; special education status; and gender. Research Question 6 examines moderation by school-level characteristics, including: school-level achievement; school accountability status (e.g., CSI status); and state. Research Question 7 investigates if the intervention is mediated by tutoring dosage. Research Questions 8 - 10 [RQ8, RQ9, & RQ10] are exploratory. Research question 8 measures the impact of the intervention on student reading self-concept (i.e., reading self-efficacy). Research question 9 estimates the treatment effect on the treated (ToT) by examining if increased tutoring dosage is associated with increased literacy outcomes. Research question 10 examines the effect of the intervention on *all students* in grades 2 and 3 (i.e., Tier 1, 2, and 3 students).

Table D1.1 Research Questions and Outcome Data Source(s)

Research Questions		Outcome Data Source(s)
Confirmatory Impact Questions		
1	What is the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model on phonological awareness among high-need students in grades K - 1?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative data (DIBELS)
2	What is the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model on ELA proficiency among high-need students in grades 2 - 3?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative data (AZ-AASA & NM-MSSA)
Implementation Evaluation Questions		
3	Is the LITE instructional coherence model implemented with fidelity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutoring logs Focus groups Classroom observations
4	To what extent does implementation of the core components of the intervention differ across the treatment and control groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treatment-control contrast (Teacher) survey
5	How much does it cost to implement the LITE instructional coherence model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutoring logs Focus groups Expenditure reports
Moderation and Mediation Questions		

6	To what extent does the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model differ by student and school characteristics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative data (DIBELS, AZ-AASA, NM-MSSA, Student & School Characteristics)
7	To what extent is the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model mediated by tutoring dosage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative data (DIBELS, AZ-AASA, & NM-MSSA) Tutoring logs
Exploratory Impact Questions		
8	What is the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model on students' reading self-concept among high-need students in grades 2 - 3?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading self-concept subscale (Student) survey
9	To what extent does the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model increase with higher tutoring dosage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative data (DIBELS, AZ-AASA, & NM-MSSA) Tutoring logs
10	What is the impact of the LITE instructional coherence model intervention on ELA proficiency for all students in grades 2 - 3?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative Data (DIBELS, AZ-AASA, & NM-MSSA)

Outcome measures. We will use the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (**PSF**) and Nonsense Word Fluency (**NWF**) DIBELS subscales to capture impacts on phonological awareness for 1st and 2nd grade students. *The test-retest reliability of both measures is above .6 (University of Oregon, 2018).* We will use state standardized assessments to capture ELA proficiency, as measured by the **Arizona's Academic Standards Assessment (AZ-AASA)** and the **New Mexico Measure of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA)**, for 3rd and 4th grade students (see Table D1.2). Measures of students' reading self-concept will be collected from 3rd and 4th grade students via the student survey. Cronbach's alpha for this measure has been reported at .77. Appendix J2 presents outcome measure reliability information and WWC outcome domain. *All evaluation outcomes meet WWC standards for outcome measures.*

Table D1.2. Outcomes by Grade Level

Data Source	1st Grade Outcomes	2nd Grade Outcomes	3rd Grade Outcomes	4th Grade Outcomes
DIBELS - PSF	•	•		
DIBELS - NWF	•	•		
AZ-AASA			•	•
NM-MSSA			•	•
Reading Self-Concept			•	•

Note: Students participate in the intervention for two years. Outcome data are collected at the end of both 2-year implementation periods.

Impact Analysis. We will use a two-level hierarchical linear model (students nested within schools) with achievement-level and state (i.e. third level) fixed effects to account for blocking. This analytic approach produces unbiased standard errors and valid statistical inferences in the presence of clustered data (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Missing data will be addressed using multiple imputations following WWC guidance requirements (WWC, 2022). We will report intent-to-treat estimates, moderation and mediation effects, and a Complier Average Causal Effect estimates (CACE) (See Appendix J for a more detailed description of the impact analyses).

D.2. The Evaluation Will Produce Strategies for Future Implementation. This evaluation will thoroughly examine implementation within the context of Bureau operated and tribally controlled BIE schools in the 4-corners region. Findings are intended to inform schools that serve Tribal student populations, and schools that operate in rural or remote areas.

Generalizability and Scalability. Our sample comprises of BIE schools in Arizona and New Mexico and more than 95% of schools are classified as rural. This increases the generalizability of our findings regarding the remaining BIE schools, and rural schools, in the region. *Evaluation results will provide insights to inform and improve future replication and scale-up efforts within remaining schools in Arizona and New Mexico, as well other schools in the 4-corners (i.e. Utah and Colorado).* Schools will remain in the treatment group for two years allowing for a thorough investigation of scale-up mechanisms and adaptations over time (See Table D2.1).

Table D2.1 Instructional Coherence Intervention Evaluation Timeline

		2025-26 SY		2026-27			2027-28			2028-29			2029-30	
		W	S	F	W	S	F	W	S	F	W	S	F	W
Cohort 1	Treatment Group	Coordination & Recruitment		Implementation & Data Collection						Reporting & Dissemination				
	Control Group			Business as Usual & Data Collection			Access HQIM							
Cohort 2	Treatment Group			NA			Implementation & Data Collection					Access HQIM		
	Control Group						Business as Usual & Data Collection							

Control schools will gain access to the refined HQIM in addition to TNTP resources and technical assistance after participating. This ensures that all participating schools gain access to the materials and resources needed to institutionalize the Instructional Coherence Model. Our evaluation will focus on implementation processes and program quality (Dane & Schneider 1998) by (1) tracking how students and teachers experience the intervention, (2) identifying real-time process improvements, and (3) documenting common challenges and best practices

Cost Effectiveness. WestEd will conduct a cost analysis using the ingredients method in alignment with IES guidance to provide information about the cost of implementing educational interventions (IES, 2020; Levin et al., 2018). *The results of the cost study will help education leaders in Bureau operated and tribally controlled BIE schools, or rural and remote areas, financially plan for future replications, or further scaling of the intervention.* WestEd will analyze expenditure reports and track staff time to measure costs within sites and across the sample. Our team will report on school spending by category, per participant costs, and cost-effectiveness measures (Wallcott et al., 2018).

D.3. The Evaluation Provides a Thorough Investigation of Implementation Fidelity.

WestEd will (1) create an implementation fidelity matrix with fidelity thresholds, (2) administer a treatment-control contrast survey to teachers, and (3) conduct focus groups and classroom observations to measure program implementation.

Implementation Fidelity Matrix. The implementation fidelity matrix maps the core components of the intervention to specific indicators, data sources, and scoring thresholds. Indicators will be derived from multiple implementation data sources collected throughout the study, including tutoring logs and attendance data, HQIM usage data, and professional development attendance rosters and coaching sessions. We will establish **thresholds for adequate implementation to measure fidelity**. As an example, high-fidelity schools may be defined as those in which 90% or more of K–3 teachers use HQIM materials, and 80% or more of scheduled tutoring sessions are delivered on time and on schedule. The evaluation team will work with the National Fund, TNTP, and the BIE to define fidelity thresholds that will enable future implementers to understand the implementation standards required to achieve similar student outcomes.

Focus Groups and Classroom Observations. WestEd will conduct classroom observations and focus groups with teachers in the treatment and control schools. Observations will focus on measuring the quality of HQIM implementation, documenting the frequency and structure of tutoring delivery, and identifying unplanned adaptations. The team will conduct focus groups to gather qualitative insights on implementation challenges and contextual factors. We estimate that 240 teachers will participate in the study. Teachers will receive a \$700 participant stipend for administering DIBELS (if applicable), completing the treatment-control contrast survey, participating in focus groups, and allowing evaluators to observe their classrooms. Data collected from observations and focus groups will provide critical evidence to: (1) assess the quality and consistency of HQIM and tutoring implementation, (2) measure the treatment-control contrast, and (3) document adaptations.

Treatment-Control Contrast Survey. To establish treatment-control contrast, we will administer surveys to teachers in both the treatment and control schools posing questions on literacy instructional practices, materials use, tutoring availability, and professional development. Survey data will be analyzed to characterize the counterfactual condition, contrast schooling experiences, and quantify exposure to interventions across experimental groups. Findings from the contrast survey will indicate if the treatment substantially differs from business as usual.

D.4. Evaluation Findings Will Provide Information to Guide Future Replication. In Year 1, WestEd will develop implementation data collection tools to monitor progress, measure implementation fidelity, and document emerging implementation challenges and successes. WestEd will share this information with partners to identify and address implementation issues in real-time, make mid-course corrections, and share promising practices across schools. **Tools will**

also be refined *over time* and shared with subsequent schools that will implement the LITE instructional coherence model.

Formal annual reports will be provided at the end of each implementation year, including comprehensive fidelity analyses, treatment-control contrast summaries, and impact estimates. The final report will include complete intent-to-treat impact estimates, CACE analyses, moderator and mediator findings, comprehensive cost-effectiveness analyses, and detailed recommendations for replication and scale-up. Moderator analyses specifically will inform which students are best served by the intervention (Tier 2 or Tier 3), and mediation analyses will reveal if some or all core components of the intervention are necessary to produce program impacts. CACE estimates will relay information regarding the number of hours needed to see desirable effects, and **these findings together inform for whom, and under what conditions, the intervention is most effective.**

WestEd will also partner with the BIE to convene Bureau operated and tribally controlled BIE schools to share preliminary findings and create a forum for schools to discuss LITE program implementation experiences and co-design solutions to common challenges. This approach is aligned with our dissemination plan and activities. These sessions will generate qualitative insights that complement quantitative data and ensure that evaluation findings are interpreted in context and translated into guidance for replication and scaling.

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