

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS  
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/01/2018 05:00 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Children's Literacy Initiative (U411C180151)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	30	28
<b>Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan</b>		
1. Project Design/Management	50	46
<b>Total</b>	80	74

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - EIR Early Phase Tier 1 (Content) - 2: 84.411C

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

Applicant: Children's Literacy Initiative (U411C180151)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The national significance of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA).
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

#### Strengths:

The significance of this as a national issue was presented by the applicant with reference to research regarding the number of second language learners in Head Start and the number of children in poverty. They also linked that lack of access and engagement by students in pre-school with its later impact on reading levels and high school graduation (Page 1-2).

The project that has been proposed is building on the current work that the organization has completed in the past and expanding the scope of the work. The applicant's organization has demonstrated evidence based practice (What Works Clearinghouse validity) and its application in the development of K-3 curriculum and professional development for teachers. They have also applied their expertise to the development and implementation of a pre-kindergarten program that has targeted early literacy with potential positive impacts. Their proposal will focus on developing curriculum and professional development that will address the full range of developmental needs that pre-kindergarten teachers and students need (Page 2-3). This is a promising strategy, as the applicant has demonstrated past success with similar programming and offers a new strategy that will build on this and also enhance the impact on pre-kindergarten learning and achievement.

The applicant has presented a rational for their project based on the lack of effective pre-kindergarten curriculums available for use, the lack of English and Spanish versions of pre-kindergarten curriculums, and a lack of effective professional development models that are in use. The grant project is aimed at addressing each of these elements (Page 6-7).

The applicant has presented a strategic and systematic approach for the application of this project. It reflects an exceptional and comprehensive approach to meeting the goals of the grant project. The applicant has provided detailed information about their three phase cycle of the development of their programs, descriptions of how they have professional development and coaching plans in place to support the initiative, and an innovative gradual release approach to building leadership capacity that will help in sustaining the project beyond the implementation cycle of the initial grant (Page 9-11).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant has referenced research studies that articulate that a pre-kindergarten education has a positive impact on student learning, but lacks any specific referenced data to support their assertions (Page 1-2). They also lack specific data to support other references about weaknesses in pre-kindergarten education (i.e. High quality pre-kindergarten teachers, access to pre-kindergarten services, lack of certified teachers, and a lack of curriculum and support).

The professional development and coaching weaknesses that currently exist were not well supported by the applicant. They lacked specific details about why these areas are deficient (Page 6-7).

The applicant has referenced its use of a professional learning community to sustain the impact of the project. By only meeting two times per year, the teachers may not have the connection to maintain the level of impact for the long term (Page 11).

**Reader's Score: 28**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the proposed project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**
- (2) 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.**
- (3) The extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has presented a table on page 12-13 that outlines and aligns their goals, objectives, and outcomes. It also provides information on the measures that they will apply to check their progress on meeting these outcomes. The goals, outcomes, and objectives are in alignment with those presented earlier in the grant project narrative.

A management plan has been presented by the applicant in the charts and descriptions on pages 13-15. The elements of the plan (objectives, milestones, and responsible parties).

The management plan will be guided by experienced and skilled leadership whose organization has a history of success with the implementation of similar project (Page 12-15).

The applicant provided details about the teams that will be responsible for implementing the grant project (Page 13-14).

The applicant has presented information on measures that they will apply to gather information on performance feedback and continuous improvement. These will include: field based feedback, focus groups and observations, surveys, and data gathering (Page 17-18).

The plan for dissemination of the materials will include: availability of the project's resources on the applicant's website and presentations at national conferences (Page 18).

**Weaknesses:**

The charts that have been presented on pages 13-15 present confusing information regarding the benchmark timelines for implementation. This is critical information for a large scale and long term grant project.

The process for performance feedback and continuous improvement lacks a formalized description of the process that will be used to review this information and the assignment of staff to guide and facilitate this process (Page 17-18).

The applicant has referenced the use of case studies and a feedback and improvement tool, but provided few details about how a longer term approach like this might be effective for the grant project (Page 17).

The plan put forth by the applicant to disseminate information is a passive approach to engaging with other about the project that they have implemented. It lacks the use of the resources by a large and effective organization to extend their programming directly to other agencies, schools, and organization who might benefit from the results of the grant project (Page 18).

**Reader's Score:** 46

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/01/2018 05:00 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/01/2018 01:26 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Children's Literacy Initiative (U411C180151)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	30	30
<b>Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan</b>		
1. Project Design/Management	50	47
<b>Total</b>	80	77

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - EIR Early Phase Tier 1 (Content) - 2: 84.411C

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

Applicant: Children's Literacy Initiative (U411C180151)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The national significance of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA).
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

### Strengths:

1. The applicant makes a strong case for the national significance of their proposed project. The project's focus is to create a comprehensive, field tested, high quality Prek curriculum in English and Spanish, achieve high fidelity implementation for four year olds and build capacity of district/center leaders to sustain the work of the project in high need urban environments. The applicant provides relevant citations to support the national need. These include references that children who are not kindergarten ready are half as likely to read well by third grade. Low income families' children on average start kindergarten 12-14 months behind their peers in pre-literacy and language development. Provided in support of the project are citations that describe the effects of not having access to well-prepared teachers and the understanding that most prek teacher programs are not covering the knowledge and competencies needed to work effectively with young children. Page 2
2. The proposed project involves the development and demonstration of promising new strategies that build on existing strategies. The use of CLI's has demonstrated impact on Pre-K to 3rd grade teacher practice and student outcomes and will combine CLI's success in embedded PD with its curriculum development expertise in improving literacy practices. The applicant's citations strongly support this initiative. After six months of use after revisions made in field testing in the early literacy curriculum, 512 students in 25 classrooms on average students made twice the expected progress on standardized testing results. This project has two major focuses: building on CLI prek early literacy curriculum development success with its job embedded professional development expertise to create an integrated approach to address this national urgent need for improved quality prek instruction. Components include extensive teacher input and field testing, using insights gleaned from its internal data collection and external evaluation to drive its continuous success. Page 4
3. The proposed project demonstrates a rationale as defined in the NIA. The applicant makes a strong case for their proposed project. Their project is based on high quality research findings that such strategies are likely to improve student outcomes and PD for preschool teachers. Appendix G further embellishes on CLI's theory of action to improve student learning teachers need a developmentally appropriate research based curriculum combined with comprehensive, multiple ongoing forms of professional development. They cite the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning which identifies 13 components that are needed for an effective curriculum, yet only two documented evidence of child outcomes. Research confirmed that there is an overall lack of empirical support for the effectiveness of the two most widely used prek programs, HighScope and Creative Curriculum. Also, a positive component is the fact that increasing numbers of districts implement bilingual education to meet the needs of diverse student and this project will address this field based need. Page 6

4. Tithe proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities established for the competition. The applicant provides concise and relevant responses to this criteria. The project uses a deliberate and systematic approach to using field input and feedback throughout the development process and the project aligns curriculum and professional development to enhance fidelity of implementation and to also build leadership capacity to sustain the project goals. There is a commitment to field initiated development using early literacy expertise with prek content experts from diverse disciplines including social emotional development, deaf students and speech. Another strength is the project's development stage will conduct a total of 20 pilots to understand what works for students and teachers and what proves challenging or absent. Most importantly this project seeks to work with teachers to create services and supports they find helpful but keeping in mind a focus on cost effectiveness. The formation of a PLC for prek leaders to participate in two sessions per year is noted. Page 9

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 30**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the proposed project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**

**(2) 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.**

**(3) The extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.**

**(4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

**Strengths:**

1. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. The three main goals are enumerated in Table 1 and present a comprehensive approach to what the project's intentions represent. There are three main goals with accompanying objectives and outcomes (measures). The goals are consistent with the narrative already presented and continue in this section as well. The implementation goal component 2.3 includes support families in enriching their children's prek experience which recognizes the importance of the family in supporting children's educational program. Page 12

2 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 are provided. The management plan is presented by goal providing further clarity for project implementation with a table for each major goal. Each goal, in support of their efforts contains the goal, the objective number, the milestone and the team responsible for carrying out the plan. Each team code is provided for recognition. Project leadership team composition is detailed and meets monthly. Each team is led by a designated title and their meeting time is also provided. Page 16

3. Performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project. The applicant has a three primary continuous improvement aspects of their project. The development phase, focusing on a series of structured case studies conducted by RFA to inform real time adjustments and processes put in place by CJI to collect, analyze and act on formative data for critical project activities. Page 18

4. The applicant broadly disseminates information on its project so as to support further development or replication. The actual Blueprint curriculum in Spanish and in English will be available to the public to download free of charge from its website including the use of their website to read about the best practices in literacy education. Their LEARN platform for learning has 40,000 users showing the merit of the web site to those seeking information on literacy. Presentations at national conventions from previous years are documented and the intention is to do so for this project. In the near future, CLI is slated to co-present with RFA on the results of RFA's current evaluation of the CLI's Prek initiative at the School District of Philadelphia's Research to Practice Conference sponsored by AERA. Page 17

**Weaknesses:**

1. The applicant does not list a prek student outcome (improved literacy performance measure) based on initial pilot implementation or from a component activity during the five year project period. Page 12

2. The applicant does not provide sufficient details on how and who makes the necessary adjustments to project components during the life of the grant in terms of continuous improvement and performance issues that may arise. Page 18

**Reader's Score: 47**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/01/2018 01:26 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2018 01:02 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Children's Literacy Initiative (U411C180151)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	30	30
<b>Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan</b>		
1. Project Design/Management	50	50
<b>Total</b>	80	80

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - EIR Early Phase Tier 1 (Content) - 2: 84.411C

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

Applicant: Children's Literacy Initiative (U411C180151)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The national significance of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA).
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

### Strengths:

There is a strong case presented for the need to introduce reading and language developmental skills in the Pre-K setting. Research is sourced indicating children who are not kindergarten ready are half as likely to read by third grade. (p.1) Reading proficiency by third grade, further research indicates, is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success. (pg. 1) Children from low income families start kindergarten 12-14 months behind their peers in these same skills. (pgs. 1-2) The figure provided, that 4,250,00 children in the next five years will live in poverty, gives credence to the national significance of this project. (pg. 2)

This project seeks to address this issue by providing quality Pre-K programming as defined primarily by quality teachers who have research based material and hands on support. The applicant states that currently many funded programs do not have highly qualified Pre-K teachers. Furthermore the applicant indicates that only 35 state funded programs require such teachers to have bachelors degrees and that many Pre-K teacher education programs are not effectively educating teacher candidates. (pg.2)

The Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI) seeks to build upon current curriculum targeted for Pre K-3 grade teachers which centers upon professional development and curriculum development. (pg. 3) This is an approach which has had a positive impact upon classroom environment and literacy practices and led to measurable positive effects on literacy development. (pg.3)

The literacy curriculum, Blueprint 3.0 has been field tested and after six months students have made twice the expected progress on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. These are encouraging results and speak to the potential of this strategy as an alternative to existing practices. (pg. 3) Information learned from this pilot will be pivotal in the design, field testing, and development of CLI components. (pg. 8)

Attention given to supporting implementation fidelity through extensive teacher training and coaching is noted. It is a strength that the applicant understands the futility of "one shot" staff development and has planned for multiple trainings of extensive duration which includes virtual and "face to face" coaching by highly trained instructors. (pg. 10)

Rationale is demonstrated in the presentation of the overall theory that student learning is improved when teachers receive developmentally appropriate research based curriculum combined with professional development support. (pg. 5) Research is presented which supports the relationship between appropriate curriculum and academic success, including findings by Workman and Ullrich, 2017, and Phillips et al., 2017.

A strong point is made by the applicant that widely used Pre-K programs do not meet the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning Components of Effective Curriculum. This lends support to the need for alternative strategies. (pg. 5)

This project identifies three goals which directly addresses an exceptional approach to Absolute Priorities 2. To meet this standard they create a comprehensive, field tested, high quality Pre-K curriculum, achieve high fidelity implementation resulting in statistically significant improvements in student learning, and build leadership capacity to sustain work following grant period. Districts identified have a high percentage of minority population, free and reduced lunch, and English learners. (pg. 1) (pgs. 7- 11)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 30**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the proposed project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**
- (2) 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.**
- (3) The extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

**Strengths:**

Three project goals are stated; create high quality Pre-K curriculum, achieve hi-fidelity implementation which improves student learning, and build capacity to sustain work beyond the grant period. (pgs. 11-12)

Each goal is aligned with objectives and outcomes found on Table 1. (pg.12) A means of evaluating each outcome is provided. As an example a survey will be used to gauge the extent that teachers report curriculum to be user friendly (Goal 2.1, bullet 2) (pg. 12)

CLI has extensive experience managing projects that have been implemented with fidelity (pg. 13) In addition they have had successful experience developing curriculum ahead of schedule and under budget. (pg.13)

Tables 2, 3, and 4 on pages 13-15 presents milestones of the project, aligned to specific objectives, and notation of the team member responsible for the overview.(pg. 13-14) A strength of this presentation is the notation of research which supports the utilization of the milestones in Goal 2. (pg. 14)

The Leadership Team is presented as made up of five sub-teams; Content, Operation, Production, Field, and Research and Evaluation. Each team is assigned a team leader. The responsibilities of each team is clearly presented. (pgs. 15-17)

Three strong continuous improvement components are noted. During the Development phase feedback will be attained regarding curriculum, professional development, and online resources, through focus groups, and observations. (pg. 17) Real time adjustments will be made as result of a series of structured case studies. Formative evaluation will consist of

surveys to participants, families, coaches, and focus groups. (pg. 18)

Blueprint curriculum will be published in both English and Spanish allowing for more effective dissemination. CLI has an online platform with 40,000 members in which dissemination information will be posted. CLI will present at a wide range of national conferences in which the findings will be addressed. As such, the dissemination efforts are considered robust. (pg.18)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 50**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/02/2018 01:02 PM