# Ohio Striving Readers Comprehensive

# Literacy Grant Application

**Submitted July 17, 2017**

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## INTRODUCTION

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) declared this late in his life after escaping slavery at the age of 20, serving as editor of *The North Star* – the nation's most influential black newspaper and on his way to becoming one of the world's most inspiring speakers and writers. The quote is as stirring and true today as it was in the antebellum era. Indeed, reading is a foundational skill that supports all learning. There is perhaps no greater purpose for an education system than to support *all* students in acquiring language and literacy knowledge and skills so they can enjoy a full life of learning and success.

Ohio's elected officials—including the governor, legislature and state board of education (see attached letters of support)—along with education leaders—including the state superintendent, local school leaders and educators in every corner of the state—share this philosophy. As a reflection of their commitment, Ohio maintains a diverse portfolio of policies and practices aimed at ensuring *all* students can read:

- ***High-quality, aligned English language arts learning standards*** that are comprised of Early Learning and Development Standards (birth to kindergarten entry) created through the state's $70 million Early Learning Challenge Grant; Ohio's Learning Standards for grades K-12; Ohio English Language Proficiency Standards; and Ohio's Learning Standards Extended for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Each contains a strong language and literacy component.

- ***Aligned system of assessments*** that measure language and literacy development and outcomes using the Early Learning Assessment for preschool-aged children; the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for students entering kindergarten; K-3 reading diagnostic assessments used to understand reading competencies early in a student's

academic career; and Ohio's state tests in English language arts for grades 3-8 and high school end-of-course exams in English language arts.

- *Unit-record literacy data* that can be used to gauge progress, understand impact and guide policy development and continuous improvement. Ohio's data system (known as the Education Management Information System or EMIS) collects preschool through grade 12 literacy assessment information, which is used to prepare literacy achievement and progress reports.

- *Accountability system and report cards* that describe academic performance and student achievement and growth data. The K-3 Literacy Component stands as one of the most important elements on the report card because it shines light on proficiency rates and improvement among struggling readers.

- *Ohio Improvement Process* (OIP) is a tested protocol and process guide supporting focused school improvement across the state and advances the state's Reading Achievement Plan to help districts identify student needs, set goals, identify root causes, develop action plans and monitor continuous improvement.

- *Third Grade Reading Guarantee* (enacted in 2012) policy prescribes intensive intervention to ensure Ohio's youngest learners achieve proficiency and includes the state's K-3 Literacy Framework, which promotes universal screening measures and evidence-based language and literacy instruction and intervention.

- *Strong regional system of supports* including 16 regional State Support Teams (SSTs) and Early Literacy Specialists who deliver literacy-improvement professional development and support to districts across the state. Fifty-three Educational Service Centers (ESCs) also support literacy improvement, planning and implementation.

- *Early Literacy Plan* that includes the Early Literacy Pilot Project, which trains teachers and leaders in 16 high-need districts to implement evidence-based literacy strategies as part of their universal instruction and interventions. The pilot will help Ohio design and implement evidence-based strategies contained in its State Comprehensive Literacy Plan (SCLP).

- *Quality preschool* that includes a *literacy focus* for the state's youngest learners. Ohio's Step Up To Quality rating system ensures publicly-funded, birth to age 5 preschool and child-care programs provide effective learning and development supports, including literacy. The Step Up To Quality standards emphasize practice that develop pre-reading and literacy skills in the state's youngest learners.

Yet, even with these targeted efforts, too many of Ohio's students still lag in language and literacy. In the 2015-2016 school year, for instance, 41 percent of the state's third graders were not proficient in English language arts. That percentage soars to 73 percent for third graders with disabilities.

Ohio leaders stand resolute that more must be done to reach additional students, build capacity across the system and drive literacy outcomes to new heights. Ohio's State Comprehensive Literacy Plan (SCLP) has been designed to do just that. It capitalizes on the state's portfolio of policies and practices by cohesively coordinating and linking efforts for maximum impact. The SCLP includes a needs assessment for Ohio, a theory of action and a logic model to drive the state forward, a continuous improvement model and the following five focus areas:

1. **Shared leadership** that supports successful improvement efforts and nurtures a deep understanding, clarity and focus for literacy improvement activity;

2. **Multi-tiered system of support** that includes resources and responsibilities at the state, district and building levels;

3. **Improving teacher capacity** through focused, sustained and embedded professional development in language and literacy;

4. **Parent partnerships** that support student progress and achievement in literacy; and

5. **Community collaborations** that help drive literacy improvement.

Ohio's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) proposal is formulated to aggressively amplify the state's SCLP by enabling more LEAs to deploy evidence-based comprehensive literacy instruction programs, with an emphasis on serving disadvantaged children from birth to grade 5.

In the pages ahead, the reader will see reference made to three fundamental elements that create consistent points of emphasis throughout the proposal – the Plan, the Program and the People. These simple ideas capture the essence of Ohio's plan for success. The Plan refers to the need to ensure that the work is deliberate, thoughtful and organized in a manner designed to deliver results – with a particular focus on the needs of disadvantaged students. The Plan also implies a focus on strong implementation. The Program speaks to the need to ensure the choice of strategies is made relying on moderate evidence or strong evidence, especially evidence that supports program effectiveness with disadvantaged students. The People emphasizes that educators, coaches, administrators and others must have the understanding and professional development needed to implement effectively and reach maximum impact. Investing in people creates the capacity that allows the work to be sustained long after federal financial support ends.

These points of focus will allow Ohio to take already existing policies and practices, and improvement that is underway, and significantly stimulate even more positive and productive

action, laying the groundwork for many more disadvantaged students experiencing the vision so well-articulated by Frederick Douglass.

To gauge the state's performance, Ohio will measure:

1. The percentage of participating four-year-old children who achieve significant gains in oral language skills;

2. The percentage of participating fifth-grade students who meet or exceed proficient on state reading and language arts assessments;

3. The percentage of participating eighth-grade students who meet or exceed proficiency on state reading and language arts assessments; and

4. The percentage of participating high school students who meet or exceed proficiency on state reading and language arts assessments.

## ABSOLUTE PRIORITY

As addressed throughout this application including in the sections describing State-level activities, the SEA plan for subgrants and the SEA monitoring plan, Ohio's proposal meets the absolute priority with a substantial commitment to ensuring that evidence plays a central role in SRCL subgrants. Specifically, in furtherance of this assurance, Ohio's proposal includes the following:

- *Ohio's competitive subgrant process will require applicants to propose high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction programs supported by moderate evidence or strong evidence.* This is described in more detail in Sec. A *State-level Activities* (p. 17), Sec. B *SEA Plan for Subgrants* (p. 25) and again in Sec. C *SEA Monitoring Plan* (p. 34).

- *Ohio is committed to the use of an independent peer review process to prioritize awards to eligible subgrantees.* The details of Ohio's proposed peer review process are provided in Sec. B. *SEA Plans for Subgrants* (p. 30).

- *Subgrantee applicants will be guided by comprehensive literacy instruction programs (CLIP) that are aligned with the state's comprehensive literacy plan (SCLP) as well as local needs.* Details of this alignment are described in Sec. B *SEA Plan for Subgrants* (p. 25).

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1: Serving Disadvantaged Children**

Ohio has a high-quality plan that clearly prioritizes awarding subgrants that will serve the greatest numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children.

**Key Goal:** Ohio will award subgrants that serve the greatest numbers or percentage of disadvantaged children.

**Key Activities:** The following activities reflect Ohio's commitment to serving the greatest number of or percentage of disadvantaged children:

- *Key Activity – Technical assistance.* Technical assistance provided in the pre-application time frame will emphasize the SRCL grant priority of serving large numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children. Applicants will be encouraged to consider consortium approaches to improve competitiveness of subgrant applications

- *Key Activity – Subgrant application provisions.* The subgrant request for application will include requirements that support and emphasize the prioritization of disadvantaged children. See Sec. B *SEA Plan for Subgrants* at page 28.

- *Key Activity – Grant award processes.* The subgrant award process, described in Sec. B. *SEA Plan for Subgrants* at page 32 indicates the methodology that will be used to give preference

to applications serving large numbers or percentages of disadvantaged students. The prioritization is further elaborated in Sec. D *Alignment of Resources* beginning at page 40.

- *Key Activity – Monitoring.* The subgrant monitoring process includes elements that speak to ensuring that grantees are meeting requirements for serving specified numbers of disadvantaged students. This is described in Sec. C *SEA Monitoring Plan* at page 33.

*Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones.* The responsibilities, timelines and milestone for each of these activities are as stated in the other sections of this proposal as referenced.

**Theory:** If the various components of the proposal, including the technical assistance, request for application, and grant award processes emphasize serving the greatest numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children, then more applications will be attentive to this priority, and ultimately more disadvantaged students will receive evidence-based instruction that is aligned to Ohio's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan. This will support improved outcomes for these students, and contribute to closing achievement gaps.

**Performance Measures & Financial Resources:** The measure that is best related to the goal of this plan is the total number of disadvantaged students served, in absolute terms, and as a percentage of the total number of students served. Creating this prioritization does not require dedicated financial resources.

## COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2: Alignment within a Birth to Fifth Grade Continuum

Ohio has made great strides in aligning literacy policies, practices and approaches between birth through age five and kindergarten through grade five. Ohio has developed birth to grade 5 English language arts standards that speak directly to alignment across the curriculum. Similarly, assessments have been developed that relate to these standards that support further alignment.

**Key Goal:** Through a progression of approaches, the Department will align early language and literacy projects supported by the SRCL grant for children birth to age five with programs and systems that serve students in kindergarten through grade five to improve school readiness and transitions across this continuum.

**Key Activities:** The following key activities will build to strengthen current alignment and improve school readiness and transitions for students across this continuum.

- *Key Activity – Plan alignment:* Early care and education provider subgrantees will be required to align their comprehensive literacy plans with Ohio's birth to grade 5 English language arts standards to ensure linkages and successful transitions through language and literacy professional development focused on evidence-based practices.

- *Key Activity – Partnering:* Subgrantees serving grade K-5 will be required to reach out to local early childcare and education providers (these are not required to be grant partners) to engage in a "Ready Schools" needs assessment and create a Ready Schools plan to ensure local districts are ready to receive young children from their communities.

- *Key Activity – Continue Early Learning Literacy Pilot and related supports***:** The Department will continue the SSIP: Early Literacy Pilot state-level activities focused on foundational skills for reading success. The Department will continue to provide technical assistance and professional development around Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards (birth-kindergarten entry) and Ohio's vertical progression and alignment of literacy standards from birth through grade 3 and continuing through grade 12.

*Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* These activities will be primarily the responsibility of the Department, and will take place at the appropriate points of the overall

subgrant application, award and implementation processes as indicated in other sections of this application.

**Theory:** If Ohio leverages already existing policies and emerging practices, and promotes alignment in subgrant applications and monitoring processes, then students involved in subgrant funded project will be more ready for the transition to kindergarten and will experience greater success.

**Performance Measures & Financial Resources:** Ohio will measure the kindergarten readiness of students involved in subgrant projects that support students birth through age five. Subgrantees engaged in partnerships will utilize allocated portions of the subgrant and/or local funds to engage in alignment activities. ODE will continue to utilize existing funds to maintain and further the work of the SSIP: Early Literacy Pilot and other efforts in place to improve school readiness and transitions for children.

## A. <u>STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES</u>

Ohio proposes a set of state-level activities designed to support and provide technical assistance to subgrantees and collect data and other information to drive continuous improvement and local project evaluation. Ohio's **project objectives and activities** are to: (1) enhance birth to grade 12 literacy outcomes for our most disadvantaged students; (2) implement evidence-based practices with fidelity; (3) ensure subgrantees develop evidence-based literacy plans aligned to the state plan; and (4) enhance data driven decision-making. State and local processes are in place to support these objectives. Upon award, further supports will be realized. Current and projected supports are described in detail below.

**1) SEA Support and Technical Assistance for Subgrantees**

Ohio's proposal leverages and enhances the state's existing **literacy technical**

**assistance support infrastructure** using **tools and resources** that will inform and guide subgrantees as they develop and implement Reading Achievement Plans (local literacy **plans**), identify and specify comprehensive literacy instruction **programs** that include interventions and practices supported by moderate or strong evidence aligned with local needs. These resource also will support the **people** (educators) involved in literacy education to ensure their needs for professional development and knowledge acquisition are met. This infrastructure builds on Ohio's current Early Literacy Pilot (part of Ohio's IDEA State Systemic Improvement Plan) and will continue to expand capacity and improve instruction across all ages and content areas, creating effective implementation of Multi-tiered Systems of Support and universal design for learning principles from birth through grade 12.

## State-Level Technical Assistance and Support Infrastructure

The state's literacy technical assistance support infrastructure is comprised of (1) State staff; (2) regional technical assistance and support providers; and (3) other additional partners. Each of these entities will play an important role in providing state-level supports to subgrantees.

**State Staff.** State staff support will be housed in the Ohio Department of Education's Center for Curriculum and Assessment. Key project personnel include the following, and two other staff supporting Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse, and their resumes are attached to the application submission:

- *Early Literacy Administrator.* Ohio's Early Literacy Administrator, Dr. Melissa M. Weber-Mayrer, will serve as project director for the grant. Dr. Weber-Mayrer collaborates with Department staff and external stakeholders to coordinate the design, development and

implementation of language and literacy supports for Ohio's students. She holds a doctorate in reading and literacy for early and middle childhood and has a combined 20 years of professional educational experience.

- ***Third Grade Reading Guarantee Administrator.*** Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee administrator, Elizabeth Hess, J.D., provides technical assistance to regions, district administrators and school personnel to ensure effective implementation of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

- ***Senior Executive Director of the Center for Curriculum and Assessment.*** Dr. Stephanie Siddens is the senior executive director of the Center for Curriculum and Assessment and oversees early literacy, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, early childhood, special education, social and emotional learning, English learners and prekindergarten through grade 12 standards and assessment. As a member of the Department's executive management team, she will ensure strong and successful communication, collaboration and support across all areas of the Department.

- ***Resource Center for English as a Second Language.*** The Department's Lau Resource Center for English Learners provides school districts and Department staff with tools that support the success of English learners. Leveraging the Lau Resource Center is critical, given that 2.6 percent of Ohio's total public school population is comprised of English learners.

- ***Striving Readers Project Manager.*** Ohio will add one staff member to serve as the project manager for the SRCL grant. The Department has not yet identified the individual who will hold this position.

  **State Staff Activities.** State staff will perform the following activities:

- Coordinate and align literacy-focused activities within the Department and across regional service providers, including materials, professional development and identification of resources.

- Ensure alignment and inclusion of Third Grade Reading Guarantee policies and strategies in the Reading Achievement Plan development process.

- Design and develop tools and resources outlined later in this document, including the Reading Achievement Plan.

- Support the literacy components of the evidence-based clearinghouse.

- Staff and support the Peer-to-Peer Learning Network as described below.

- Design and deliver professional development on how to use data to inform instruction, how to build effective systems of support, how to apply evidence-based practices for reading and instruction and how to train regional staff.

**Other State Activities.** In addition to staff activities, the Department plans grant specific activities that will support applicant and subgrantee activities as follows:

- *Literacy Summits*. The Department will host yearly literacy summits to help subgrantees improve language and literacy instruction supported by moderate to strong evidence. These summit sessions will address— theoretical frameworks for learning to read (including brain research), structures for effective leadership, content elaboration and best practices for data analysis, planning instruction and intervention. Additionally, the summits will support and advance the peer-to-peer network (described later in this section) of educators who share a goal of improving literacy instruction and outcomes for Ohio's most disadvantaged students.

- *Online Forums for District Administrators*. The Department will provide virtual support throughout the academic year for district and building leadership. Administrator online

forums, hosted by the Department and facilitated by local and national experts, will be scheduled quarterly to build the capacity of education leaders. Forum topics will be selected based on subgrantee feedback and Ohio's literacy data analyses. Attendance will be required for all subgrantees. Follow-up surveys will be collected to ascertain how participants use the presented content and strategies to implement their comprehensive literacy improvement plans. This information and other data (adult implementation data and child data) will be collected and shared with regional state support teams and educational service center staff to inform regional technical assistance efforts and sustainability plans.

**Regional Technical Assistance and Support Providers**

Because of Ohio's size and geography, and the diversity of its districts and schools, the state has a well-established system of regional service providers that will be key partners in implementing the Striving Readers grant.

- *Educational Service Centers.* Ohio has a total of 53 educational service centers. They offer expertise in a variety of areas including, but not limited to: special education, early childhood education, early childhood special education, homelessness, English learners, gifted, consortium services for students, related services, career pathways, technology and paraprofessional support, as requested by districts. They provide substantial professional development in a wide range of areas including improvement planning, literacy improvement, curriculum alignment and development, data use and analysis, etc. Under this proposal, educational service centers will continue to provide language and literacy professional development specifically focused on middle and high school literacy across the content areas.

- *Regional State Support Teams.* Ohio has a system of 16 regional state support teams that provide technical assistance and support to districts and schools. The state support teams are housed in 16 of the educational service centers, with direct oversight provided by the Department. As an integral part of the State System of Support, the purpose of these teams is to build the capacity of LEAs to engage in systemic and sustainable improvement for all Ohio students, including those with disabilities and other diverse learning needs. One particular area of strength for state support teams is training schools and districts on the use of the Ohio Improvement Process. In addition, each state support team includes an early literacy specialist who strongly supports the Early Literacy Pilot districts.

Each state support team employs one or more regional early literacy specialists (18 statewide) who provide professional development (data, systems and practices) and serve as systems-level coaches and content coaches for districts. These specialists support and develop literacy coaches, who build capacity within LEAs and support evidence-based language and literacy instruction.

Upon award, Ohio will invest in additional regional literacy specialists to enhance the already developed state systems of support, especially in the regions of the state with the largest populations of disadvantaged students. These staff will specifically support middle and high school literacy plans for instruction across content areas and interventions to meet specific student literacy needs.

**Regional State Support Team Activities**. Ohio will use the state support teams to provide subgrantees with specialized, ongoing support in the form of data-driven technical assistance, professional development on evidence-based language and literacy strategies (i.e., the five components of reading plus writing) and systems-level coaching. Ohio's state support teams will

help support the development and implementation of each subgrantee's proposed evidence-based literacy practices within local Reading Achievement Plans, each subgrantee's local plan for comprehensive literacy instruction. These plans include data analysis to target skill deficiencies, action steps to support evidence-based core language and literacy instruction, leadership strategies to support teacher instruction and student learning, and identifying concrete measures to assess the effectiveness of the literacy plan. Specifically, the teams and regional literacy specialists will provide coordination and support for common systems and practice barriers in school improvement and services for low-performing students focusing on language and literacy development.

**Regional Staff Training.** The Department provides literacy-focused training to an array of state support teams and educational service staff to ensure that literacy concepts are integrated into the services they provide – key people involved in the literacy improvement process. Currently, the state support teams employ early childhood consultants (to support early childhood development), regional early literacy specialists (preschool through grade 3), and Ohio Improvement Process facilitators (supporting improvement planning and implementation in LEAs). These staff receive preschool to grade 3 literacy training to build and support regional understanding of language and literacy content. These professional development opportunities include the Language Essentials for the Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS: Voyager Sopris) professional development, aimed at building knowledge and implementation of evidence-based language and literacy instruction; Reading-Tiered Fidelity Inventory (St. Martin, Nantais, Harms, & Huth, 2015; St. Martin, Nantais, & Harms, 2015), to support strong Multi-Tier Systems of Support; and Implementation Science (Cook & Odom, 2013), which connects theory to practice.

Under the State Comprehensive Literacy Plan, regional staff training will be extended to include birth to school age emergent literacy content (NELP, 2008) and middle and high school content, including core academic language skills (Uccelli & Galloway, 2017) and the culture of literacy (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Ultimately, if Ohio's regional staff deeply understand the difficulties associated with emergent literacy skills, foundational language and literacy skills, and middle- and high-school academic language, then they will be better equipped to deliver vertically-aligned language and literacy professional development. This targeted approach will accelerate the state's efforts to help students become proficient readers (i.e., developing mastery of word recognition and language comprehension skills; Hoover & Gough, 1990). Likewise, regional staff will be better equipped to provide professional development to birth to grade 12 administrators who must buy in to evidence-based language and literacy strategies and build a culture of literacy in their schools.

**Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.** Ohio oversees 12 regional child care resource and referral agencies that support child care providers with using Ohio's early learning and development standards (birth to age 5), including language and literacy. For example early childhood specialists employed by the referral agencies will be provided the opportunity to become trainers in the *Sit Together and Read* evidence-based program that focuses on concepts of print and can be used with families and teachers. This will ensure the early childhood specialists can support Ohio's child care providers using early literacy best practices.

**Other Partners of ODE and Activities**

- *Great Lakes Comprehensive Center.* Building on support for the state's Early Literacy Pilot, a senior technical assistance literacy expert from the Great Lakes

Comprehensive Center will continue to provide guidance, technical support and critical feedback to the Department, State Literacy Team and regional infrastructures. This support will continue to provide an evidenced-based perspective that guides the Department and the State Literacy Team and prioritizes capacity development and sustainability.

- **Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI).** The Center for Teaching Diverse Learners at OCALI provides professional development, technical assistance, consultation and resources for educational agencies, specialized programs, practitioners and families working to improve the quality of life and learning for individuals who have significant cognitive and/or low incidence disabilities. OCALI will provide professional development, on-site technical assistance and coaching to support subgrantees with the teaching and learning of Ohio's students with disabilities.

**Literacy Tools and Resources**

The state's literacy technical support infrastructure and subgrantees will be empowered through the development of various tools and resources. These tools and resources will assist in the design and implementation of comprehensive literacy instruction programs and the identification of interventions and practices that are supported by moderate or strong evidence. They also will ensure that each is aligned to the State Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

**Developing a High-Quality Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Program**

Ohio will expand and improve its current Reading Achievement Plan (local literacy plan) guide to support this proposal. The Reading Achievement Plan provides a template and instructions to support the following:

- Analysis of relevant student performance data from sources including the state's English

language arts assessments, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, reading diagnostics and benchmark assessments, as applicable.

- Analysis of factors believed to contribute to low reading achievement in the LEA.

- Identification and establishment of student performance goals to address student needs and the factors contributing to low reading achievement.

- Strategies to meet specific student needs and improve instruction.

- A staffing and professional development plan that supports the strategies.

The Reading Achievement Plan will be further enhanced to ensure the strategy development process focuses on instructional and intervention strategies based on moderate to strong evidence. This will be done by referencing the use of the Evidence-Based Clearinghouse described below.

The *implementation* process for the plan will be informed by the already-established Ohio Improvement Process and its implementation components. The Ohio Improvement Process helps districts and buildings develop, implement, monitor and evaluate improvement plans unique to each district and targeted to district needs. The process leverages collaborative structures and regional systems to support district and building leaders and teacher-based teams by enacting communication, engagement, data-based decision-making and resource management protocols that drive improvement. The Ohio Improvement Process adheres to the following tenets: (1) A focused plan aligns vision, mission and philosophy; (2) The process is continuous and recursive, and the plan is dynamic; (3) The process relies on quality data interpretation; (4) Leadership teams use a collaborative and collegial process; (5) An efficient communication approach ensures all stakeholders are informed of the progress at each stage; (6) The process produces a focused, integrated plan that directs all work and resources; and (7) The process expects

substantive changes in student performance and adult practices as a result of implementing, monitoring and evaluating the process and plan.

**Identifying and Implementing Evidence-Based Practices – Evidence-Based Clearinghouse**

Ohio is developing a multi-faceted, integrated approach to providing districts with knowledge, data, tools and resources to address their improvement goals with strategies supported by evidence. This approach includes the development of Ohio's **Evidence-Based Clearinghouse**, an online resource that will provide districts with tailored information on interventions and practices that are supported by strong to moderate evidence.

Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse will be practitioner focused, as Ohio educators are the primary audience for the clearinghouse. While academic research plays an important role in establishing levels of evidence, the information, resources and connections to other systems incorporated in the clearinghouse will be designed with the user in mind. The clearinghouse will serve as a critical resource for districts as they complete needs-assessments, identify areas for school improvement and identify relevant interventions supported by appropriate tiers of evidence. The clearinghouse is not meant to be a stagnant archive of information, rather a dynamic, living tool that provides districts and educators with resources they can use on a regular basis to improve student outcomes.

Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse will include summary guides focused on broad topics, practitioner guides that offer examples of how interventions are carried out in districts, schools and classrooms, and tools that connect practitioners to share lessons learned about specific interventions. The Clearinghouse will also include training and communication materials

designed to reach a group of broader stakeholders beyond educators. These training materials will be publicly available to any community partner who might benefit from the Clearinghouse.

The clearinghouse will be organized by high-level school improvement components (e.g., Human Capital Management, Curriculum and Instruction, College and Career Readiness) and designed to help districts make connections among relevant programs and the interventions. For purposes of this proposal, the clearinghouse will also be configured to allow quick access to literacy-specific research with annotations related to the strength of evidence and key components of proven programs.

The Department's director of the Office of Research, Evaluation and Advanced Analytics will manage the overall review process, while an Evidence-Based Clearinghouse Review Team will determine the level of evidence associated with interventions, programs or practices submitted for review.

**Peer-to-Peer Improvement Network**

Implementation will also be supported by a Peer-to-Peer Improvement Network that will encourage educators to forge partnerships across districts, programs and subject areas and share solutions to common challenges. The Network will provide participants the opportunity to share problems of practice and receive real-time consultation with peers. Networks have been proven to be effective ways to leverage collective knowledge among participants with common pursuits. The Network will be connected to the Evidence-Based Clearinghouse, enabling districts and early care and education programs to access strategies and interventions successfully leveraged by other similar districts, schools and programs.

**Ohio's State Comprehensive Literacy Plan**

Ohio's State Comprehensive Literacy Plan uses the following five components to increase language and literacy proficiency: (1) Shared leadership; (2) Multi-tiered systems of support; (3) Teacher capacity; (4) Family partnerships; and (5) Community collaboration. The plan increases regional supports for technical assistance, enhances the Ohio Improvement Process framework, and supports local early care and education programs and school districts as they implement the plan.

**2) Data Collection to Inform Continuous Improvement and Evaluate Effectiveness**

Ohio will collect data directly from subgrantees and leverage already-collected state-level data (for preschool through grade 12) to inform continuous improvement and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of local projects. All subgrantees will be asked to evaluate their local initiatives and include the costs and implementation strategies in their grant applications to the state.

Key state-level evaluation questions, data collection methods, data sources and timelines are listed below. All subgrantees will be asked to collect information locally and report information through an electronic data portal.

- **What percentage of participating four-year-old children achieve significant gains in oral language skills?** There are several measures that will be used to assess children's progress in the birth to age 5 range.
    - Local programs will be asked to identify and use a developmentally appropriate progress monitoring tool or developmental screening tool for participating children ages birth to 5.

- o Preschool programs that administer the Ohio Early Learning Assessment collect language and literacy progress using learning progressions. Subgrantees will be required to administer the assessment and analyze data that is reported to the state.

- o The Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is administered to all entering kindergarten students in Ohio's public schools in the fall of each school year and results are reported to the state. It is the first universal assessment of children entering school in the area of language and literacy based on the end of preschool standards. Local subgrantees with participating kindergarten students will be required to analyze this data that is reported to the state.

- **What percentage of participating fifth grade, eighth grade, and high school students meet or exceed proficiency on state reading/language arts assessments under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA?**

  - o Ohio assesses all public school students using the Ohio State Tests of English Language Arts (includes reading and writing) once each in grades 3-8 and twice in high school (English I and English II). Local programs will be required to use and analyze their state testing data in these areas that they also report to the state in the spring each year. The state will review the progress of each subgrantee relative to the goals that Ohio sets in its ESSA plan (anticipated submission in September) for all students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English learners. Additional assessment data will be reviewed as follows where applicable for participating students.

  - o Ohio's English Language Proficiency Assessment for English learners.

  - o Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities.

- o Additional subgroups of students that Ohio will report for all data include children who are in foster care, homeless, migrant and in military families.

- **What is teacher and administrator capacity for effective language and literacy instruction?** Local programs will be asked to collect information via surveys, interviews and/or assessments on gains in teachers' and administrators' capacity to provide effective language and literacy instruction. Local programs will be required to incorporate this data collection into their local program evaluations and report findings to the state on an annual basis. The state will collect information on teacher and administrator capacity from a sample of grant recipients on an annual basis.

- **Is the program implementing the intervention(s) with fidelity?** Local programs will be asked to use an existing tool or develop a program fidelity tool to determine if the program is implementing the intervention as intended and with fidelity. Local programs will be required to submit this information to the state on an annual basis. The state will follow up with requests for more detailed analyses from a sample of subgrantees on an annual basis.

- **How effective are state and regional supports? How effectively are LEAs implementing their grants?** In the spring of each year, the state will collect data by surveying the teachers, regional early literacy specialists, district coaches and building leadership. These surveys will ask personnel to self-report on several different topics, including: demographical information; engagement with the State Comprehensive Literacy Plan and associated activities; and attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about the activities, the implementation and their impact. Over the course of the three-year funding cycle, a Department literacy specialist, along with the middle and high school adolescent

literacy specialists, will complete a sample of site visits with participating LEAs. These

visits will include focus groups or interviews with administrators, teachers, caregivers

and parents, which will shine light on the implementation of language and literacy

professional development and family engagement. The state also will conduct a set of

focus groups with state support teams, educational service centers and other state support

staff to gain details into implementation processes: what's working, what needs

amending and other factors (intended or unintended) that may be influencing the

successful implementation of an LEA's language and literacy plan.

All subgrantees will provide annual program evaluation and progress reports to the state.

The state will in turn aggregate the information to report results to U.S. Department of

Education annually. Ohio expects to leverage the existing program evaluation for Ohio's

Early Literacy Plan (focusing only on preschool through grade 3) to report on outcomes for

any subgrantees that are participating in Ohio's existing pilots and where these programs

have been awarded additional funds through the Striving Readers grant.

## B.  **SEA PLAN FOR SUBGRANTS**

**Absolute Priority: Goal 1.** Ohio proposes a high-quality plan for receiving applications and

awarding subgrants. The Department has extensive and successful experience with similar

processes as part of its federal *Race to the Top* grant, *Early Learning Challenge* grant, *Charter*

*School Program* grant and many other federal- and state-funded grant programs.

**Key Goals:** Ohio has two key goals for the subgrant process:

*Goal 1- Applicant Awareness and Technical Assistance:* Ensure eligible subgrantees are

**aware of the subgrant opportunity** and have transparent access to **information and technical**

**assistance** to support the development of a successful subgrant application.

*Goal 2 – High Quality Applications:* Ensure that subgrant applications include **high quality proposals** based on:

a) A **local literacy plan** (Reading Achievement Plan) which 1) is informed by a comprehensive needs assessment that is aligned to Ohio's SCLP; 2) provides for professional development; 3) includes interventions and practices that are supported by moderate evidence or strong evidence; and 4) includes a plan to track children's outcomes consistent with all applicable grant requirements.

b) A **Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Program** (CLIP) that reflects the 12 components included in the SRCL grant definition of "comprehensive literacy instruction" and that: 1) includes interventions or practices supported by moderate evidence or strong evidence; 2) is aligned to the SCLP and the local literacy plan; 3) includes interventions and practices which are differentiated and appropriate for children from birth through age five and children in kindergarten through grade 5; and 4) relies on cited studies which are relevant to the project's proposed and identified needs.

c) Serving large **number or percentages of disadvantaged children** including children in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities, and as otherwise defined in the SRCL grant definitions.

d) Using effective quality **LEA improvement processes** and infrastructure and past experience with Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot.

**Key Activities:** Ohio's process for ensuring the submission of high-quality subgrant applications as well as for making subgrant awards will include the following key activities:

- *Key Activity – Pre-Application Process:* Given the importance of a quality local literacy plan, the Department will conduct a pre-application process which will focus on the

development of plans by eligible applicants. Ohio will develop the specifications for local literacy plans (as described in Goal 2(a) above) by enhancing and expanding Ohio's current Reading Achievement Plan guide which is already in use. Applicants desiring to participate in the grant will be required to submit a local literacy plan as a pre-application requirement. The pre-application will not only support a successful subgrant process, but will help build statewide capacity for improving the quality of reading improvement plans generally. Literacy plans submitted as part of the pre-application will not be scored, but will qualify applicants to proceed to subsequent steps in the process.

Interested applicants will be helped to understand the grants focus on disadvantaged students and the importance of serving high numbers of disadvantaged students. Guidance will be provided to applicants serving smaller numbers of students in ways to form a consortium of eligible LEAs and non-profit providers.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department, in consultation with the State Literacy Team, will be responsible for updating the Reading Achievement Plan guide to serve as a guide for local literacy plans. The Department will conduct the pre-application process. Potential applicants will be expected to submit local literacy plans by Dec. 31, 2017.

- *Key Activity – Applicant Technical Assistance:* The Department will design and deliver a comprehensive system of applicant technical assistance. Technical assistance will be designed around the essential requirements of Ohio's SCLP, the requirements of the SRCL grant, and the specific requirements of the Request for Applications (see the discussion below). The state's technical assistance will include the following: 1) a dedicated page on the Department's website with all applicable information for the grant; 2) applicant webinar(s) (recorded and available online) related to aspects of the application process and evidentiary

requirements for proposed comprehensive literacy instruction programs; 3) documentation of answers to frequently asked questions from applicants (FAQs), and 4) pre-determination of evidence through the Evidence-Based Clearinghouse.

Applicant technical assistance will also include the first of a series of annual **State Literacy Summits.** The first Summit will provide technical assistance in applying for the SRCL subgrant and professional development directly aligned to the Ohio's SCLP. LEAs will learn more about Ohio's SCLP and have the opportunity to work with state and regional staff to further analyze their local literacy data and develop local literacy plans for comprehensive literacy instruction. Summit materials and information will be available on the Department's webpage.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department will take lead responsibility for the development and delivery of all technical assistance. Some assistance with this work will be provided by literacy specialists who are employed by state support teams or educational service centers. This Summit will take place in Jan. 2018. The Department will offer webinars, workshops and trainings Jan. to May 2018.

- *Key Activity – Development and Release of Request for Application (RFA):* The subgrant RFA will provide all the specifications needed for applicants to effectively communicate their eligibility, past experience, proposed program, qualifications and budget, as follows:
  - *Eligibility:* Applicants will need to specify their organizational type -- one or more LEAs or non-profit providers of early childhood education (not scored). Additionally, applicants will provide information, which will be scored, demonstrating their record of effectiveness in improving language and early literacy development of children (for each

age/grade range of children served) and in providing professional development in language and early literacy development.

o *Local Literacy Plan:* The applicant will be required to attach its local literacy plan (Reading Achievement Plan). Each plan will be scored on the respective components as identified in Goal 2(a) above, and for the local plan's alignment to Ohio's SCLP (Absolute Priority: Key Goal 2).

o *Comprehensive Literacy Instruction Program (CLIP) Description and Evidence Base:* Each applicant will provide a detailed description of its proposed CLIP as described in Goal 2(b) above, and the process used to select and develop it. Applicants will also provide the rationale for the selection and cite the evidence used to support the approach and its components. The detailed description will include all essential program components and how each component aligns to the identified research. Descriptions will also address planned activities, milestones, timelines, and responsible parties.

o **Competitive Preference Priority 1:** *Population/Numbers of Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged Students Served:* Applicants will be required to provide information about the numbers of students expected to be served. This information, by itself, will not be scored, but will be used to support the prioritization of applications to serve the greatest number or percentage of disadvantaged students. The RFA will emphasize the grant's target to serve the greatest numbers or percentage of disadvantaged students and for applicants to be sensitive to this emphasis. Smaller applicants will be encouraged, but not required, to collaborate under a consortium structure.

- *Program Goals and Measures:* Applicants will provide a statement of program goals and measures. These will be consistent with those listed in the State-Level Activities (Sec. A (2) on p. 21-23).

- **Competitive Preference Priority 2:** *Alignment to other LEA Improvement Activity and Local Improvement Infrastructure:* Applicants will be asked to describe and identify improvement processes and infrastructure currently being used by the applicant. Applicants may describe processes that reflect use of the Ohio Improvement Process (which includes the use of a District Leadership Team, Building Based Teams, Teacher Based Teams, needs assessment, data analysis, strategy development, etc.) or another improvement process or district defined mechanisms that achieve similar objectives as the Ohio Improvement Process (with largely similar components).
  Applicants will be required to show how the proposed CLIP integrates with other school/district improvement plans and activities to ensure integrated and mutually reinforcing improvement activity.

- *Capacity Building and Sustainability:* Applicants will be asked to provide a description of how the selected program will increase the capacity of the applicant to provide high quality literacy improvement programming beyond the end of federal financial participation. Applicants must indicate how the planned program can be sustained in the long term.

- *Budget:* Applicants will be asked to provide budget information including requested amounts and the planned use of funds using standard, federally prescribed, budget presentation formats. Budget information will not be scored. In cases where budget information is unclear or outside required parameters, applicants, upon award, may be

asked to make budget modifications. Applicants will also be asked to divide subgrant requested amounts into categories serving students birth to age five, kindergarten to grade 5, and middle and high school.

  o *Additional Preference Priorities:* There will be two additional preference priorities. First, preference points will be given based on whether the evidence cited reflects moderate evidence or strong evidence. Second, preference points will be given to applicants that are current successful participants in the state's SSIP: Early Literacy pilot project. For these applicants, the plan proposed under the SRCL grant must supplement, not supplant, the current literacy efforts within these districts.

  o *Applicant Assurances:* Applicants will be asked to make assurances about participating in ongoing subgrantee training, evaluation studies, monitoring activities and other similar assurances as may be required to support grant compliance and successful implementation. Assurances are required but not scored.

Each of the above components will be scored unless otherwise noted.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department, in consultation with the State Literacy Team, will be responsible for the design of the RFA which is expected to be completed by January 15, 2018.

- ***Key Activity – Application Review (including Peer Review) and Scoring:*** Applicants will submit applications through the Department's planning portal (designed specifically to support subgrant processes) which will make the review and scoring of the applications simpler and more efficient. Once each application is received it will be reviewed and scored as follows:

o *Technical review:* The technical review process will be designed to check completeness, adherence to requirements of the grant, eligibility and compliance with formatting requirements. Technical review will also include a verification of the numbers of disadvantaged students served and non-disadvantaged students served, as well as the reasonableness of cost estimates given the chosen program approach. If an application fails to meet any of the reviewed requirements, the Department's management will make final eligibility decisions prior to proceeding to the peer review process.

o *Peer Review Process and Scoring:* Each application will be scored by a minimum of three peer reviewers. The review process and identification of reviewers will be selected by a contracted party awarded through the Request for Proposal process. These reviewers will meet minimum and preferred qualifications specified by the Department including expertise in literacy development and education for children birth through grade 12. Peer reviewers will be given training on the peer review scoring rubric, including participation in a mock application scoring and calibration exercise. Peer reviewers will be required to submit pre- and post-review conflict of interest disclosure statements.

Reviewers will also be trained the use of Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse so that reviewers can identify moderate and strong evidence-based approaches commonly found in literacy education programs and identify the quality of the evidence base in an effective and competent manner.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department and Independent Peer Review Contractor will be responsible for the following: Development of the **technical review checklist and review criteria**, development of the **peer-review scoring rubric**, specifying

the **number** of peer reviewers required and the **minimum and preferred qualifications** for peer reviewers to the Department's retained contracted staffing vendor, **reviewing qualifications and selecting** peer reviewers as identified by the contracted staffing vendor, developing and delivering **peer reviewer training**, developing and securing **pre- and post-review conflict of interest disclosure form submissions** by reviewers, **providing access to the state's planning portal**, and **managing** peer reviewers to the completion of the work. Applicants will submit all materials by March 1, 2018. Department staff will conduct the technical review between March 1 and March 20, 2018.  The independent peer review process will begin in late March 2018 and be completed within three weeks.

- *Key Activity – Score Analysis and Subgrant Award:* Ohio seeks to fund applications that are of the highest quality and serve large numbers or percentages of disadvantaged students. After the review process has been completed, a spreadsheet of all scored applications will be created. For **each application**, Department staff will use standard outlier identification practices to determine whether any individual peer reviewer scores on individual scored items (not including competitive preference items) should be removed before scores are averaged within each scored item, and then totaled to form the final score.

The Department will then review the final scores to determine a **quality cut score** to be used for the selection process based on obvious/significant breaks in the score array and a high percentage of total points (preliminarily identified as 75 percent which could be adjusted, as appropriate, based on the numbers of applications received). The Department's Data Governance Committee will review determinations of the quality cut score.

Applicants that meet or exceed the quality cut score will be divided into each of the state's 16 state support team regions. Within each region, awards will be made to applications based on

the largest numbers of students served until the grant funds apportioned to the region have been fully allocated. If apportioned grant funds have not been fully allocated in one or more regions, residual amount will be reallocated to the remaining regions (see the discussion in Sec. D *Alignment of Resources* at p. 43).

A similar scoring process will be conducted for the competitive preference priorities.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department and Independent Peer Review Contractor will be responsible for all scoring and data review and analysis, and for making final award determinations. This work will be completed between the completion of scoring and the award date in May 2018. The Department will also communicate final outcomes to all applicants, and next steps to awarded applicants.

**Theory:** The theory behind Ohio's high quality subgrant plan is that if high quality applicant preparation and support is provided, high quality applications will be submitted which can then be reviewed in a fair and criteria-driven manner to identify the highest quality applications. Among these applications priorities can be established leading to final grant awards.

**Performance Measures for Subgrant Plan:** The performance measure for the subgrant plan is the percentage of applications received that meet the quality score threshold.

**Appropriate Fiscal Resources to Support the Plan:** The project budget contains sufficient resources within the five percent administrative funds for the Department to complete all assigned tasks including securing the services of peer reviewers.

C. **SEA MONITORING PLAN**

Ohio proposes a high-quality monitoring plan to ensure the successful implementation of local projects by subgrantees for the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) grant.

**Key Goals:** There are *three goals* for the monitoring plan as follows:

*Goal 1: Fidelity of implementation and plan alignment.* This goal is focused on ensuring that each subgrantee is successfully implementing, with fidelity, the provisions of its comprehensive literacy improvement program (CLIP) contained in its local literacy plan. (The contents of local literacy plans are described in Goal 2(a) of the previous section of this application; the components of a CLIP are described in Goal 2(b) of the previous section.)

*Goal 2: Performance on plan goals and objectives.* This goal is intended to ensure the success of subgrantee's progress on advancing the measurable performance goals and objectives for the subgrant. Subgrant performance measures are aligned with the state performance measures described in Sec. A (2) (p. 21-23). Each subgrantee's local literacy plan and CLIP must contain specific targets for required outcomes.

*Goal 3: Fiscal Accountability.* This goal is intended to ensure all resources are expended pursuant to budget plans and accounted for in compliance with state and federal requirements, including the requirements of the SRCL grant.

**Key Activities:** In furtherance of the goals listed above, Ohio proposes the following monitoring activities (each activity identifies responsible parties, a timeline and key milestones):

- *Key Activity – Develop Implementation Rubric:* The implementation rubric will be the foundation for all grant monitoring activity. It will be structured to support monitoring in four areas:

  o *Monitoring Area 1 – Fidelity of implementation and plan alignment.* This area ensures that the subgrantee's CLIP is being implemented with fidelity and consistent with the representations made in the grant application. It will address the specifics of subgrantee implementation of key activities including the implementation of CLIP interventions and practices, professional development, data collection and tracking, and project leadership

and administration. It also will support the affirmation that the interventions and practices included in the CLIP a) are aligned with Ohio's SCLP; b) are supported by moderate evidence or strong evidence; c) are differentiated and are appropriate for the age level and grade level described in the approved grant application; and d) are implemented with fidelity and aligned with Ohio's SCLP and the local literacy plan.

- o *Monitoring Area 2 – Performance on Goals and Objectives:* This area of the rubric will ensure that subgrantees are tracking the progress on each of the measures that are included to reflect the goals and objectives of the grants. Subgrantees will need to demonstrate that data being collected is also being analyzed and used for feedback and to inform ongoing implementation and improvement.

- o *Monitoring Area 3 – Fiscal Accountability:* This area of the rubric will ensure that subgrantees have the necessary processes in place to ensure fiscal accountability, and that subgrantees are themselves monitoring fiscal activity in a manner consistent with government accounting best practices.

Each rubric area will include various dimensions related to the purpose of the area, and will be used to inform and guide mid-year reports, desk audits, year-end reports, site visits and other monitoring activity.

*Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* Department staff, in consultation with the State Literacy Team, will develop the implementation rubric. The rubric will be available before the commencement of grant activities, estimated to be June 2018. The rubric will be updated annually by the Department.

- **Key Activity – Design and Development of Monitoring Tools and Protocols:** The Department will engage in the design and development of monitoring guides, tools and

protocols. These will include, but not be limited to, guidelines for mid-year and year-end reports, guidelines for data collection and analysis, site visit protocols, focus group protocols, survey instruments, and other tools as needed. All relevant monitoring information and documents will be available to subgrantees on the Department's website. The Department will also manage a document repository that will be used by subgrantees to upload all relevant documents for monitoring purposes.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department will be responsible for this activity. It will begin upon grant award and have due dates for completion (based on the need for each tool and protocol) throughout the first four months following grant award. Tools and protocols will be updated annually.

- *Key Activity – Subgrantee Monitoring Training:* Subgrantees will receive appropriate and thorough training in all monitoring responsibilities. This training will be conducted face-to-face as well as via pre-recorded webinars for on-demand viewing.

  *Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department will be responsible for designing and preparing all training materials and the provision of training for subgrantees, including the preparation and recording of webinars and posting all materials on the Department's website. Subgrantees will be responsible to participate in training opportunities. Training materials will be designed within the first four months following grant award and updated annually. Training will be provided in June 2018 and annually thereafter.

- *Key-Activity – Mid-year Reporting Process/Desk Review:* All subgrantees will be monitored for fiscal and programmatic grant compliance specific to the SRCL grant through a process of mid-year reporting and a desk review. All mid-year reporting and desk review

requirements will be spelled out in the SRCL grant implementation rubric. Subgrantees will upload documentation and provide required data reports.

The materials and narrative completed by the subgrantees will be reviewed by Department staff. Staff will determine subgrantee compliance on each element of the rubric. Follow-up phone calls will be conducted if clarity is needed on narrative responses or if additional documentation is required to determine compliance.

*Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* Subgrantees will be responsible for the timely submission of mid-year report documentation. Department staff will conduct the desk reviews and follow-up as needed with subgrantees. Mid-year reports will be due on or around Dec. 1 of each program year. Desk reviews will be completed by Jan. 20 with reporting back to subgrantees by Jan. 31.

- *Key Activity – Spring On-Site Visit:* To ensure that each subgrantee is adhering to all program requirements as well as to the terms specified in its approved grant application, the Department will conduct at least one scheduled comprehensive site visit in the spring of each year. During the site visit, Department staff will interview school and district staff, review a subset of financial documents and gather any other data necessary to complete the implementation rubric. The Department will use formal site visit protocols to collect the necessary data. At the end of the site visit, Department staff will meet with subgrantee administrators to briefly discuss overall findings. Subgrantees will receive official site visit feedback (the completed implementation rubric) within 21 days of the site visit.

  *Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* Subgrantees must upload documentation and narrative in early March. Department staff will schedule site visits, review all necessary materials and complete site visits by April 30.

- *Key Activity – Surveys:* Surveys will be administered to support certain key research questions contained in the proposed evaluation approach for this proposal. Three surveys are contemplated: 1) surveys of teachers; 2) surveys of administrators, building leaders and district coaches; 3) surveys of regional support staff.

  *Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* The Department will design, administer and compile the surveys. Surveys will be administered within 30 days of the end of each program year.

- *Key Activity - Year-end Reporting Process:* Subgrantees will be required to file final grant activities reports within 90 days of the end of the budget period. Subgrantees must, at a minimum, report on each project goal and outcome (using defined performance measures), and provide a detailed expenditure report. The Department will specify a format for expenditure reports and ensure that reported goals and outcomes are consistent with those specified in the grant application.

  The Department will review each subgrantee's annual grant activities report and notify the grantee of the report's acceptability and compliance, or specify missing information and request report revisions. Year-end reports will be posted to the Department's website.

  *Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* Subgrantees will be responsible for the completion of year-end reports. Department staff will conduct the reviews and follow-up with subgrantees for missing information or to discuss needed corrective actions.

- *Key Activity – Corrective Action Planning:* Subgrantees found to be non-compliant or deficient on any required items either in the mid-year report, through the desk audit, through the on-site visit, or through the year-end reporting process or at any other point of the grant period, will be requested to provide information on why it is non-compliant and how it plans

to become compliant on identified issues. Subgrantees will either immediately rectify the compliance issue or identify a corrective action to quickly lead to compliance. Subgrantees will be given 30 days to correct deficiencies. Failure to correct all deficiencies may result in early termination of the subgrantee's award, and depending on the circumstances, the Department may pursue necessary actions to reclaim previously distributed funds.

*Responsibilities, Milestones and Timeline:* The Department will manage the corrective-action process. This work will be on-going throughout the grant period.

- *Key Activity – On-Going Fiscal Monitoring:* To ensure all expenses are allowable and within budget, all subgrantees will be paid on a reimbursement basis. Payments will be managed through the Department's Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Planning system to the approved grant budget for each subgrantee loaded into the system. System checks are in place to ensure that budget amounts are not exceeded and that draws of funds are based on properly submitted expenditure reports and appropriate and approved uses of funds. Annual budget reports will be required. Subgrantees are subject to audit by the Ohio Auditor of State.

  *Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* The Department will provide instructions and trainings to subgrantees on the use of the CCIP system and proper procedures for drawing down funds. The Department will also provide the necessary forms and instructions for periodic budget reports. Fiscal monitoring is an ongoing process throughout the grant period, with the most significant fiscal reviews taking place after the close of each budget year.

- *Monitoring Process Update:* Each year, the Department will update monitoring processes, protocols and guides, as well as the implementation rubric itself, based on feedback from program administrators and subgrantees collected through surveys and focus groups.

*Responsibilities, Timeline and Milestones:* The Department will design and develop survey and focus group protocols, and conduct the appropriate surveys and focus groups.

**Theory:** A strong monitoring system is important to ensure effective implementation, and to identify problems and challenges as early as possible. Early identification allows for timely rectification of implementation challenges. Effective monitoring also serve to provide program feedback and inform program improvements.

**Performance Measures (State and Local):** The monitoring plan will be measured primarily by process measures including timely completion of monitoring activity, and gauging the level of non-compliance by subgrantees.

**Appropriate Resources:** Resources to support the Department's activities are contained in the administrative expenses component of the budget. Subgrantees will need to set aside a portion of their grant award to ensure appropriate completion of all monitoring activities.

## D. ALIGNMENT OF RESOURCES

Ohio's proposal is committed to ensuring resources are aligned to articulated SRCL grant priorities, including serving the greatest numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children and awarding subgrants of sufficient size to support effective implementation. The state is also committed to ensuring that the federally prescribed ratios of subgranted funds are maintained.

While adhering to these priorities, Ohio also believes that it is in the interest of the vision behind the SRCL grant program to ensure representation of applicants in various geographic areas of the state and in districts of various types (rural, small town, urban, etc.). Ohio's grant award process prioritizes serving the greatest number or percentages of disadvantaged children in the context of geographic considerations

**1) Target subgrants that will improve instruction for the greatest numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children**

Ohio is committed to prioritize improving instruction for the greatest numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children – and it is committed to doing so with consideration for geographic location and type of district (rural, small town, urban, etc.). Fundamentally, serving the greatest number of students is a function of the cost per student served (over three years). These criteria will be pivotal in making grant awards.

Ohio's commitment to serving the largest numbers of disadvantaged students across Ohio's geography and district types will be accomplished as follows:

- *Encouraging consortia applications for smaller organizations to achieve economies of scale.* There are benefits and great value by having districts and schools working together on literacy improvement strategies. Not only do such collaborations achieve economies of scale, and consequently reduce the costs per student served, but such collaborations foster the development of networked improvement communities and other similar infrastructure that support success and contribute to sustainability. At all steps of the process, Ohio will encourage districts, schools and providers to form consortia, and help them recognize that such approaches are likely to lead to an increased probability of funding as well as a higher probability of implementation success.

- *Ensuring that, regardless of size or costs, only high scoring applications are funded.* Prioritizing large numbers of students must take place in the context of quality. Therefore, Ohio proposes that only those applicants that fall within the established quality cut score be considered for funding. (See the discussion of the quality cut score process in Sec. B *SEA Plan for Subgrants* at p. 32.)

- ***Verify applications' fidelity to identified program requirements and to counts of disadvantaged students to ensure fair representation of per student costs (over three years).*** By placing an emphasis on lower costs per student, the subgrant award process could create incentives for applicants to not implement identified programs with full fidelity or to overestimate the number of disadvantaged students served. Ohio's subgrant plan includes steps to ensure that applications assure fidelity of implementation and have identified disadvantaged students appropriately. This will be part of the subgrant technical review process. Misrepresentations by applicants could lead to grant awards being revoked.

Once applications are submitted and technical verifications are performed, prioritization would take place in the following way.

- ***Quality cut score:*** Only applications scoring above the quality cut score would be considered for award.

- ***Geographic assignment:*** Applications would be placed, based on geographic location, on one of 16 lists reflecting each of Ohio's 16 regional service areas. Applicants who may have boundaries that cross service areas will be placed in the service area for which the largest number of disadvantaged students are located. The total amount of Ohio's request for subgrantee funding -- $33,250,000 – would be allocated to each of the regions proportional to each region's number of disadvantaged students compared to the overall statewide number of such students as computed by the Department. In this manner, regions with higher numbers of disadvantaged students would have more resources to support quality applications, but regions with lower numbers would still have opportunities to participate.

- ***Award by rank, by geography:*** Applications scoring above the quality cut score would be ranked by cost per student served on each regional list. The subgrant award process would

start using the list for each region with the applicant with the lowest cost per student served, and proceed down the list until the allocated funds are exhausted, or no further quality applications remain on the region list. This assures that within each region, those applications serving the largest numbers are funded.

- *Awarding of remaining funds:* Funds left unallocated by geographic area would then be used to fund unfunded but higher ranked (in terms of lowest cost per student) proposals in a statewide pool of quality unfunded applicants.

**2) Award Subgrants of Sufficient Size While Ensuring Required Allotment for Birth-Age 5, Kindergarten-Grade 5, and Middle and High School**

*Subgrants of sufficient size:* Ohio believes that the grant parameters that have been set – minimum requested amount of $450,000 over three years; maximum amount of $1.2 million over three years– is sufficient for applicants to design programs as part of local plans that can be fully and effectively implemented. It will be incumbent on the applicants to ensure, with quality control performed by subgrant peer reviewers, that proposals meet a test of being fully implementable for the requested amount of resources.

*Ensuring adherence to prescribed subgranted funds distribution proportions.* During the grant award process, the Department will ensure that the proportional distribution of funds – 15 percent serving children from birth to age five, 40 percent service students in grades K-5, and 40 percent serving students in middle and high school through grade 12 be preserved. Ohio will accomplish this by introducing another element into the award process.

Each applicant will be asked to identify the amount of each grant request that is allocable to the three categories – birth to age five, grades K-5, and middle and high school. Following the above procedure describe for grant awarding, as each grantee is awarded, Department staff will

maintain a tally of the amount of funding attributable to each category. Once any of the three categories is fully subscribed, only quality applications that support categories with remaining funding will be granted.

## E. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

Ohio has no doubt that this program will yield significant results and benefits. The benefits go beyond simply the numbers of students served, but rather the potential to increase capacity that can ultimately impact all students and elevate language and literacy outcomes statewide.

**1) The extent to which costs are reasonable in relation to objectives, design and significance**

Ohio is requesting $35,000,000 to support its proposal. This investment, however, is not being made in a vacuum. It is being infused into a system that already has laid the foundations and begun the journey to excellence in language and literacy. The state's literacy improvement climate includes the following:

- A **strong and aligned policy foundation**, including high quality standards (that extend from pre-school to high school graduation), assessments (including assessments used in preschool and kindergarten through to high school), data collection and accountability structures, and a specific literacy emphasis through the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

- Familiarity and experience with proven **planning, improvement and implementation tools**, specifically in terms of both the Ohio Improvement Process and the Reading Achievement Plan guide;

- **Regionally deployed literacy-focused technical assistance infrastructure**, in

terms of early literacy specialists in every state support team region, as well as other

staff deployed in Ohio's educational service centers who focus on literacy

improvement.

- **Tools and resources that support evidence based practices,** including the

    Evidence-Based Clearinghouse, Peer-to-Peer Networks, and district experiences with

    a wide range of literacy improvement approaches.

Investing in Ohio ensures that SRCL grant funds are immediately focused on classroom

implementation within a system which is primed to benefit greatly from those investments.

Consequently, the state is ready to achieve the specific objectives identified in the project

design and make a significant difference in specified outcomes.

Additionally, ODE will leverage its current capacity and add additional capacity to

support literacy improvement efforts, and provide technical assistance, professional

development, monitoring and evaluation support to subgrantees to attain the objectives set

forth in this application. Details for the budget for SEA administrative costs can be found in

the attached budget narrative.

**2) Reasonableness of Costs in Relation to Number of Persons to be Served and to the**

**Anticipated Results and Benefits**

Ohio has experience supporting schools and districts in the implementation of literacy

improvement activity. Quality literacy improvement programs typically require investments

in program and curricular materials, professional development for teachers, coaching

services, quality tutoring services, communications, parent engagement activity, and

administrative costs. When determining the estimated number and range of subgrantee

awards for this proposal, ODE considered several factors, including: (1) the cost of

implementing Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot (teacher professional development, literacy coaches, assessments, etc.); (2) the cost of evidence-based professional development in middle and high schools; (3) the costs associated with evidence-based programs and interventions with strong or moderate evidence as published by the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) on the website www.evidenceforessa.org; and (4) The diverse sizes of districts and schools throughout the state. The Department is confident that awarded subgrantees will have sufficient funds to fully and effectively implement their local program proposals.

In this proposal, Ohio is planning to award 30 – 40 grants (spanning three years), estimated to serve a total of roughly 45,000 students with three years of services at an all-inclusive (to the subgrantee) average estimated cost of $750 per student over three years (averaging $250 per year, although first year costs are expected to be higher due to start-up expenses). The average grant is expected to serve 1,000-1,200 students. The total cost allocated for subgrants in Ohio's proposal is $33,250,000.

The number of students served represents approximately 5 percent of the total number of students meeting the definition of disadvantaged in the State of Ohio. However, the awarding of subgrant funds will be made in a way that will offer secondary impacts to a much larger group of students. Ohio expects that, in every part of the state, the knowledge and capacity building that will take place will benefit a wider range of organizations and students. This will be felt, first and foremost, by geographically proximate organizations – schools in the same district or in the same community. The involvement of the state's regional State Support Team and Educational Service Center staff, however, will ensure that the increased capacity also has a regional impact. Consequently, the benefits of this work

will go well beyond the estimate 45,000 students who will be directly served.

F. **QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN**

In the preceding pages, Ohio has laid out a proposal for a robust and promising program to drive improvements to literacy attainment for Ohio's disadvantaged students. In the introduction, Ohio makes the case that the state is fertile ground for this investment of resources. The state's vision for success relies on three key ingredients identified as necessary to having a powerful impact: The Plan, The Program and The People.

In every part of this proposal, Ohio has aligned activities to cultivate these three elements:

- *The Plan:* When organizations are deliberate in identifying needs, understanding data, identifying causes and developing strategies for improvement, they are more likely to be successful. Quality planning is supported through a variety of state described activities including the updating of Ohio's Reading Achievement Plan process, the Literacy Summits, the integration of the Ohio Improvement Process, and others. The subgrant process requires evidence of quality planning, and the monitoring process provides a gauge whether the plan is having an impact and whether adjustments are needed. The resources that are provided are designed to be adequate to make progress toward plan implementation.

- *The Program:* Ohio's goal is to focus on what works. In all of education, the evidence base on literacy instruction and improvement is perhaps the best developed. Just as organizations must be more deliberate in planning, they must be more diligent in identifying practices that work – as demonstrated by moderate evidence and strong evidence. Adherence to proven programs—such as can be identified through the Evidence-Based Clearinghouse, and discussed in webinars and summits—is another pillar of Ohio's proposal.

- ***The People:*** Success cannot be achieved without building the capacity of people – specifically teachers, but including coaches, specialists, administrators and others – to enhance their practice and align it to proven programs. Additionally, the staff at the state and regional levels that support those working in front of students must have the skill and ability to support teachers and administrators in successful implementation. State activities, including those deployed regionally, strongly emphasize the focus on developing people and building the capacity to make a meaningful difference in improving literacy skills in students. This includes proposed training and the development of peer-to-peer networks. This idea is further amplified in the subgrant process to ensure that professional development and capacity building play a key role in quality subgrant applications. The proposal's monitoring plan ensures that capacity building activities are tested and that plans are adjusted should the need be identified for more extensive or focused activity. Each subgrant will provide the resources needed to support effective capacity building.

Ohio is excited by the opportunity to make significant advances in literacy outcomes for disadvantaged students. The proposal presented here will, no doubt, build on the solid policy foundation and the improvement activities that have already begun, and continue to drive Ohio's achievement to higher levels. In doing so, the work will have an impact both beyond the boundaries of the subgrantee entities and beyond the timeframe for which federal financial assistance is provided.

As Frederick Douglass so eloquently declared, "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." There is no issue more critical than ensuring disadvantaged children have the language and literacy skills they need to be successful in learning and in life. Ohio is committed to building its capacity to provide the most effective, evidenced-based strategies tailored to the needs of each

child, and to do so in a way that builds the capacity of the system, the abilities of educators and

experience with quality programming.