

the existing early childhood education programs serving preschool-age children (preschool programs) that it proposes to support with Early Reading First funds. *The peer reviewers will consider the information in the context description of the existing preschool programs, as well as all other information in the Full Application, in evaluating the applicant's responses to the Full Application selection criteria.* This description may be the same description that the applicant included in its Pre-Application, or a revised description, and must include the following information: the ages and number of children being served; demographic and socioeconomic information on those children; information on the type of special needs that any of the children may have; the average hours the children attend the program (hours/day, days/week, and months/year); primary funding source(s) for the program; the basic instructional program; and the number of staff and their qualifications.

The Secretary believes that programs with the capacity and potential to become Early Reading First preschool centers of educational excellence are likely to be preschool programs that currently are stable and effectively attend to the developmental domains traditionally supported by preschool programs, including social, emotional, and physical. The Secretary recommends that applicants demonstrate the program's current capacity in these domains when describing the context of the existing program.

#### *Selection Criteria*

(a) *Capacity and Significance of Project* (up to 15 points). (1) The Secretary considers the capacity and significance of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the capacity and significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The likelihood that the project will become a center of educational excellence for at-risk preschool-age children, as demonstrated by the goals articulated and the program's capacity and potential for achieving those goals.

(ii) The extent to which the project will provide unique research-based benefit to the field of early childhood education, such as through information, materials, and techniques, and the potential for those resources being used effectively in other settings.

(b) *Quality of Project Activities and Services* (up to 35 points). (1) The Secretary considers the quality of the proposed project's activities and services.

(2) In determining the quality of the proposed project's activities and services, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the applicant presents a detailed plan that explains how the project will provide the following activities and services to support the development of language, cognitive, and early reading skills for preschool-age children; and how the project will incorporate strategies that meet the diverse needs of all of the project's preschool-age children (including those with limited English proficiency, disabilities, and other special needs) into those activities and services:

(A) Providing a rich oral language and print-rich environment and developing preschool-age children's oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge.

(B) Preparing and providing ongoing assistance to staff, through professional development and other support.

(C) Providing services and using instructional materials and activities, including explicit, contextualized, and scaffolded instruction, and integrating those instructional materials and activities into the applicant's preschool programs and family literacy services.

(D) Using screening reading assessments or other appropriate measures to determine the skills children are learning and identify children who might be at risk of reading failure.

(E) Helping children, especially those experiencing difficulty with language and early reading skills, to make the transition from preschool to formal classroom instruction.

(F) Involving parents meaningfully in their children's early education.

(ii) The reviewers also will evaluate the extent to which the applicant's detailed plan explains how each of the project's activities and services are based on up-to-date knowledge from scientifically based reading research, with research citations where appropriate.

(c) *Quality of Project Personnel* (up to 10 points). (1) The Secretary considers the quality of project personnel.

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(2) In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The strength of the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project staff.

(ii) The strength of the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of personnel with whom the project will contract to assist in project

activities, including research-based professional development for staff to support children's development of language, cognitive, and early reading skills.

(d) *Quality of Management Plan* (up to 20 total points).

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the management plan, the Secretary considers the feasibility of the proposed project and the likelihood that the project will be able to achieve its expected goals, taking into consideration the strength of any partnership, and using the following factors:

(i) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the goals of the proposed project on time and within budget, including: clearly defined goals, activities, responsibilities, and a timeline for accomplishing project tasks.

(ii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel, including any partnership commitments, are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

(iii) The extent to which the proposed costs are adequate in relation to the proposed activities, the number of persons to be served, and the anticipated results and benefits.

(e) *Quality of the Project Evaluation* (up to 20 total points).

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the proposed project evaluation.

(2) In considering the quality of the proposed project evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective, valid, and reliable performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data in the following areas:

(i) Improvement in classroom environment.

(ii) Improvement in teacher knowledge and qualifications.

(iii) Improvement in teacher instruction and planning.

(iv) Improvement in outcomes for children's development of oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet knowledge.

#### **Paperwork Reduction Act Considerations**

The procedures and requirements contained in this notice relate to an application package that the Department has developed for the Early Reading