

Montana Office of Public Instruction

Comprehensive Literacy State Development
Grant Application

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**Montana Office of Public Instruction
CLSD Application FY2024**

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Need for the Project

The rural context of Montana – with its vast distances and sparse population – is not simply a frontier backdrop for its citizens. Rather, the fabric of each rural community in Montana has a complex and dynamic culture shaped by unique social, economic, political, cultural, and historical relations. As the fourth largest state in the union with just over one million residents, Montana spreads over 147,040 square miles of prairie, rivers, lakes, and mountains and is home to 835 schools and 150,028 students. More than half of the state’s schools have fewer than 100 students, 92 have only one teacher, 65 are considered “one room schoolhouses” and only 6% (51 schools) serve 500 or more students. One in four school systems in Montana average only five students in each grade. Thus, the vast majority of schools and communities in Montana are classified as rural and remote; 75% of our schools are classified as “rural” and 96% of our school districts are classified as “small rural” (*Showalter, Klein, Johnson, & Hartman, 2017*). Many of these schools reside on one of seven American Indian reservations and serve the 11% of American Indian students from twelve federally recognized tribes. In fact, for 85% of elementary rural children, their bus ride exceeds the daily recommended time of 30 minutes. Pressing issues for these rural and tribal schools on the frontier include: lack of equitable resources, low student enrollment, inadequate financial resources, and difficulty recruiting qualified educator(s) therefore leaving students and community members vulnerable to low academic achievement rates and high rates of illiteracy.

Like many states, Montana saw a precipitous decline in literacy rates following the COVID-19 pandemic despite the dedication of educators and resiliency of students amidst school shutdowns and remote instruction. In 2022, fewer than half of Montana students were reading at or above grade level representing a 5 percentage point decline - the largest decline since 1990. Student attendance rates are also an indicator of the long term impact of COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. In the 2022-2023 school year, 16.59% of American Indian students attended school 95% of the time compared to 33.19% for the rest of Montana students. Prior to COVID-19, the dropout rate for Montana students sat at 3.6% or 1,634 students statewide, including 8.4% of students for Montana's American Indian student population. The 2022 school year had a vast increase in dropout rates with overall rates at 4.0%, or 1,920 students. Montana's American Indian student dropout rates increased to 578 students or 10.7%, a more than 2% increase.

When the data is disaggregated, it is apparent that three student groups in Montana are disproportionately impacted further. Advancing educational equity for students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL) is critical to improving long-term outcomes. Overall, 39% of all students in Montana are eligible for FRL. In Montana, 75% of FRL students graduate, a rate that is 20% lower than their non-FRL peers. The disparity is even greater for American Indian students who graduate at a rate of 70% with proficiency rates at just 20% according to 3rd-8th grade English language arts (ELA) statewide assessments - 30% lower than their peers.

There is also a clear need to advance the literacy skills of Montana's growing English Learner (EL) student population. The overall percentage of EL students increased a full percentage point from 2% to 3% in recent years. American Indian languages have the highest number of ELs at 59% of the total, with German at 12% and Spanish at 12%. Out of the 3,134 EL students assessed in the 2023 school year, only 32% of those students made progress, with 2% achieving proficiency. The data for ELs in Montana demonstrate that our American Indian student population struggles with academic language in the content areas. Data collected through the 2023-2024 Montana Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), an annual survey of educators who participated in the current literacy grant, indicated that our most disadvantaged schools are at the basic implementation level for instructional and assessment support for English Learner (EL) students.

Statewide, 14% of all Montana students receive special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), with a 12.28% increase in enrollment of students with disabilities (21,112 total children in 2022-2023) over the past 5 years. American Indian students account for a 3.13% higher rate of the special education student population than the state student population.

Given Montana's rural barriers, pressing issues, and declining student outcomes, including the outcomes particularly for ELs, students with disabilities, and students eligible for FRL, Montana has three profound needs that will be addressed by this project. Currently, Montana students and educators face the alarming distinction of

having: 1) limited access to high quality, culturally relevant instructional materials, 2) a growing set of challenges in creating systems that provide effective evidence-based teacher professional development and collaboration opportunities, and 3) a serious shortage of highly prepared educators teaching literacy, contributing to a growing disparity in rural schools' academic achievement.

Need for Access to High-quality, Culturally Relevant Instructional Materials: Due to the low enrollment of rural schools and a funding model based on a per pupil rate, access to sufficient funding to purchase high quality materials is limited. Montana spends \$12,101 per pupil in expenditures compared to the national average per pupil spending of \$13,494 (\$216 million more per year than in Montana). Montana is ranked 33rd for total revenue (current and capital revenues combined) per pupil (\$13,769), whereas the National average is \$16,202, or \$378 million per year more than in Montana. As research shows, this lack of access to resources has challenged teachers in rural schools to provide quality education for students, particularly during the pandemic. On top of this, Montana has a unique landscape of local control leading to a wide variety of academic instructional materials used across the state. High-quality K-12 instructional materials can meaningfully improve teaching practice and student achievement, especially when paired with professional learning support (*Chingos and Whitehurst, 2012*). Yet, in Montana the authority for textbook selection is a local decision that has a potentially detrimental effect on student learning. Through this grant work, the OPI will develop guidance and provide support to promote the use of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). The OPI will aim to increase capacity of teacher leaders to identify

HQIM literacy curriculum, materials, and assessments, while generating adoption lists as a straightforward mechanism for signaling HQIM.

When selecting HQIM, school officials must also consider if the literacy materials are culturally appropriate, especially given Montana's Native American culture. "Research illustrates that instructional materials, assignments, and texts that reflect students' backgrounds and experiences are critical to engagement and deep meaningful learning" (*Muniz, 2019-2020*). As the Keys to Literacy white paper titled Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction (2021) emphasized, "Students must see themselves in the text they read. Books that are used for read-alouds and student reading should reflect multicultural experiences that validate for students their worth and value at school and in society. Students also need exposure to books that will help them understand the multicultural nature of the world they live in."

Need for Effective Professional Development and Collaboration Opportunities: In these rural communities, Montana educators are eager to expand their reading instructional skills through professional development; however high-quality professional learning is not always readily available. The biggest barriers to professional development participation are the availability of substitute teachers, paying out of pocket to attend learning opportunities, not enough time off of work, significant travel distance, lack of resources, and access to continuous high-speed internet. In addition to having limited access to high-quality professional development, rural educators do not have the opportunity to collaborate with peers and colleagues. This leaves a large portion of

educators isolated in their practice.

The need for continued professional development and capacity building in the state was also identified in the 2023-2024 Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), where educators reported professional development positively impacted their work. Through this survey tool, educators requested that OPI increase in-person offerings, increase communication about opportunities, increase networking opportunities and offer differentiated content around particular topics of interest. Additionally, through the 2023-2024 CNA, our most disadvantaged school educators identified that they have not achieved proficient implementation regarding the support for teachers in examining student data and collaborating in teams to make instructional and intervention decisions aimed at increasing student achievement. By providing professional development geared toward capacity building in these areas, OPI will meet needs identified in the CNA to continue to increase and improve teachers' understanding and knowledge.

Need for Highly-effective Educators in Rural Areas: Based on the 2023 teacher prep review conducted by National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ), Montana educator preparation programs were rated as having implemented on average two out of the five core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Of the six Montana preparation programs assessed, 2 received an A, 1 received a C, and 3 received an F. Overall the review indicates that Montana preparation programs are struggling to prepare aspiring teachers to provide high-quality reading instruction that incorporates evidence-based practices for teaching reading.

Since 50% of the educators in Montana attend a preparation program in Montana, the majority of teachers are inadequately trained in scientifically based reading instruction when they enter the classroom.

Lack of mentorship and support is one of the top five reasons Montana educators leave the teaching profession. Montana's data shows that 738 (89.35%) of Montana's schools experience teacher turnover, and that over 30% of Montana's teachers with less than 5 years of experience leave the profession. Another alarming statistic is that 90.56% of Montana's Title 1 schools experienced turnover, whether transferring to another school, leaving the profession, or retiring. High teacher turnover creates a gap in instructional continuity and support for students, as well as creates vulnerabilities for consistent high-quality learning opportunities for our most at-risk students.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2023): "Recruiting new educators and providing them with sufficient training is necessary but insufficient to ensure all students have access to high quality teachers and principals. The majority of the demand for educators is caused by attrition, indicating the need to directly address educator retention." Strategies to address the causes of teacher and principal turnover include implementing or expanding induction and mentoring programs, providing support from trained instructional coaches, and creating opportunities for collaboration with other teachers or principals.

Furthermore, building opportunities for teacher leadership has been identified as a key

practice in retaining educators. “Research indicates that teacher leadership opportunities can improve teachers’ job satisfaction and provide them a greater voice in their working environment, potentially improving teacher retention.” The award of a new literacy grant will provide an opportunity for Montana schools to create sustainable literacy instructional systems to mitigate the ongoing challenges of teacher shortages, through the use of mentors for early career support and development of career advancement through teacher leaders.

Project Design

OPI’s Project Design ensures that Montana’s educators will have the training and tools in place to apply evidence-based practices, activities and interventions to advance literacy skills, with an emphasis on overcoming disparities for the most disadvantaged students. Ensuring high-quality literacy instruction is addressed in The Montana State Literacy Plan, which focuses on identifying high-need schools and supporting them in the implementation of evidence-based strategies and HQIM in order to accelerate positive student outcomes.

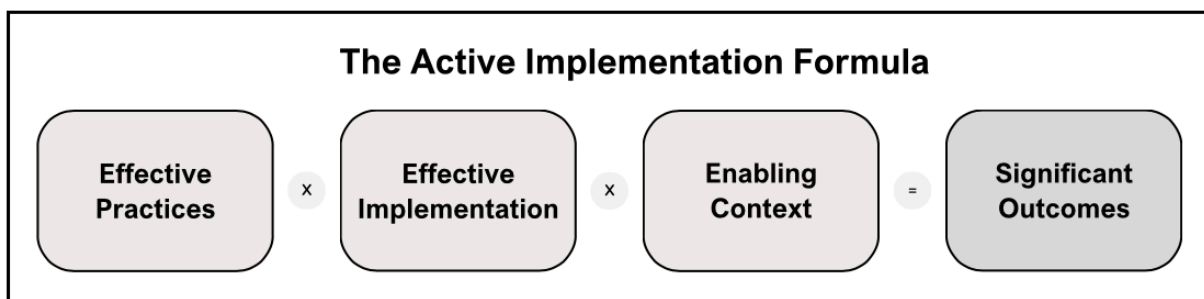
For this project, OPI will support schools by awarding subgrants for implementing strategies utilizing the following What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides, meeting our educators’ needs for specific practices and interventions that meet standards at each grade level:

- *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through Third Grade*, IES (2019);

- *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9*, IES (2022); and
- *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices*, IES (2008).

In addition to supporting subgrantees in utilizing these guides and selecting appropriate evidence-based interventions from the What Works Clearinghouse, OPI will rely on resources from the National Center on Improving Literacy, such as implementation toolkits for serving students with dyslexia, (*NCIL, 2022*) and the evidence-based Active Implementation Framework to ensure the implementation of the project is effective and well-operationalized. Active Implementation is an integrated approach to implementation practice, science, and policy. It was developed from a set of practitioner-scientist activities that span several decades. School change is a complex and multifaceted process. In order to give schools the best possible support to obtain significant outcomes, we will rely on implementation science promoted by National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) and the formula illustrated in Figure 1.

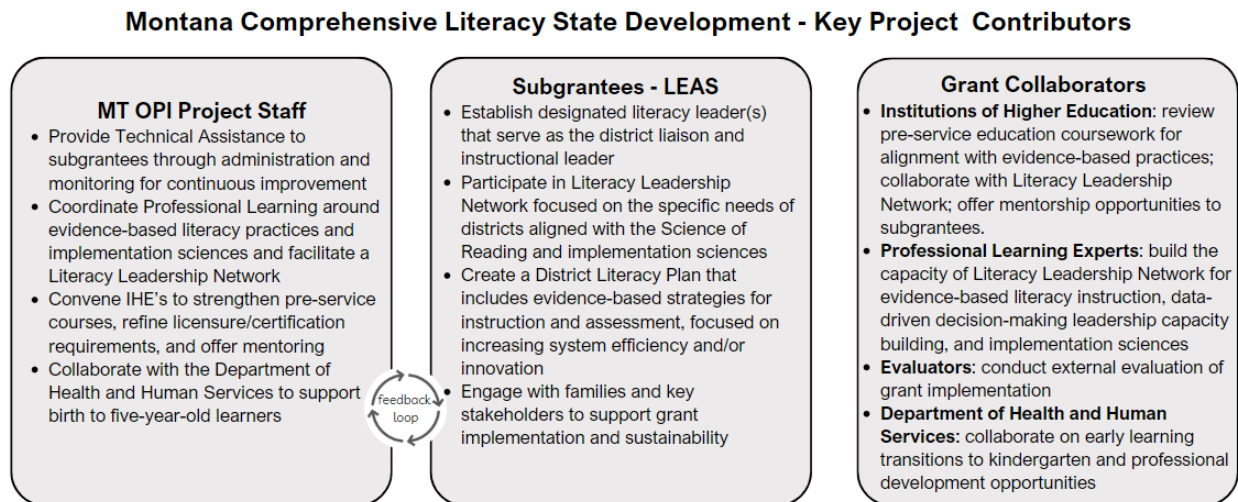
Figure 1. The Active Implementation Formula



This CLSD project is designed to identify and build the capacity of districts serving the highest percentage of disadvantaged students by increasing the number of disadvantaged students who have access to instructional staff trained in the Science of Reading in order to improve student literacy outcomes. The Science of Reading is an interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing, derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. It encompasses research from a wide array of fields including cognitive psychology, communication sciences, developmental psychology, education, implementation science, linguistics, neuroscience, and school psychology. Training on the Science of Reading will provide Montana's educators with the knowledge they need to understand how proficient reading and writing develop; why some students have difficulty; and how they can most effectively assess, teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through intervention and prevention of reading difficulties.

OPI's Project Design leverages key partners shown in Figure 2 to ensure the project meets the geographic diversity and competitive preference priority requirements of the grant.

Figure 2. Key Project Contributors



Each objective outlined in the project design is specific and measurable, and the activities align to either an effective practice (usable innovations), effective implementation (stages and drivers), or creating and enabling context (assembling teams and improvement cycles) in order to provide our schools with the best structure to obtain significant outcomes.

Project Objectives, Rationale and Performance Measures

Project Objective 1: Identify and build the capacity of districts serving the highest percentage of disadvantaged students in the state to accelerate their literacy outcomes.

As an SEA, OPI is committed to ensuring that all students in the state have the highest quality instruction possible in order to reach their full potential. The implementation plan

focuses heavily on identifying the LEAs with the highest level of need to promote equity for underserved students in preschool, elementary school, middle school and high school (**Competitive Preference Priority 3**) and then providing the professional learning and technical assistance for these districts to select and purchase culturally relevant instructional materials with strong or moderate levels of effectiveness to address the impact of COVID-19 (**Competitive Preference Priority 2**). Subgrantee selection will include the following priorities:

- Schools with high percentages of American Indian students (>50%);
- Schools identified by the Montana Accountability System (2023) as schools in need of support and improvement;
- Schools with high percentages of students with disabilities (>12%);
- Schools with high percentages of English learners (>3%);
- Schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (>40% for high school and >50% for elementary school).

By supporting the learning of LEA staff and the implementation of evidence based practices and culturally relevant HQIM, we expect to see improvements in student outcomes.

Objective 1 Performance Measures:

1. OPI will competitively award approximately 30 subgrants to high-need LEAs as identified by the percentage of students living in poverty and students performing below grade level as indicated on state assessments. By June of 2025, all

subgrant applications will be reviewed and funds will be distributed to LEAs selected based on need and high-quality applications.

2. OPI will support eligible LEAs through professional development and technical assistance as they adopt culturally relevant and evidenced-based HQIM and develop a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to identify and meet the needs of all students, especially identified disadvantaged subgroups. By spring of year 4, 100% of subgrantees will have identified and/or purchased culturally relevant and evidence-based HQIM and strategies for all students at all levels of instruction.
3. Increase the percentage of students performing at or above proficiency by 10% as identified by local benchmark measures (PreK-2) or state ELA assessments (3-8 & high school).

Measurement Tools: OPI will use state-approved LEA selected oral language screeners for four year olds, LEA selected benchmark assessments for K-2, the state-approved English Language Arts (ELA) tool for third through eighth grades (Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year or MAST), and the state ELA assessment at the high school level (currently ACT).

Project Objective 2: Increase the number of disadvantaged students who have access to effective educators prepared to implement and sustain scientifically based reading instruction. The OPI firmly believes that the schools with highly knowledgeable skilled educators provide high-quality instruction to students. The implementation plan will focus on ensuring that high-quality professional development is

provided to LEAs for all levels of instructional staff. Professional development focused on the Science of Reading will be provided to classroom teachers in order to strengthen their literacy instruction. Instructional leaders will participate in professional development focused on strengthening their ability to increase capacity, support implementation and lead data analysis and professional development in the future. Key personnel will participate in professional development on selected disadvantaged subgroups through communities of practice in order to strengthen instruction targeted to those groups. Evidence-based resources utilized will include but are not limited to:

- Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School (*IES, 2014*);
- Rubric for English Learner Programs (*Education Northwest, 2018*);
- Supporting Integrated English Learner Student Instruction: A Guide to Assess Professional Learning Needs Based on the *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School Practice Guide* (*IES, 2021*);
- Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably (*Education Northwest, 2016*).

Finally, the SEA will work collaboratively with IHEs (**Competitive Preference Priority 1**) to strengthen pre-service courses and refine licensure/certification requirements to ensure that all teachers leaving Montana educator preparation programs have the knowledge and skills they need to teach reading effectively when they enter the classroom.

Objective 2 Performance Measures:

1. Increase the level of knowledge in the Science of Reading (SoR) by at least 50% in all teachers and school leaders who participate in SoR professional development as measured by pre and post-test results.
2. By the end of year 5, 100% of CLSD schools will have participated in instructional leader development designed to create school leaders whose primary role as an instructional leader is to provide observation and feedback, lead data analysis conversations and team planning, and ongoing professional development in evidence-based literacy practices.
3. By the end of year 5, 100% of CLSD schools will have participated in training to identify and provide literacy specific instruction to underserved populations, specifically focusing on dyslexia and English Learners (**Competitive Preference Priority 3**).
4. At least once per year, the SEA will facilitate collaborative conversations between the SEA and IHE partners to examine the quality of preservice courses related to literacy development, ensure alignment to evidence-based practices, and identify ongoing support for teachers beyond the Educator Preparation Program (EPP).
5. By the end of year 2, the SEA and IHE partners will review and make recommendations to refine licensure/certification requirements related to teaching reading (**Competitive Preference Priority 1**).

Measurement Tools: A selected pre/post survey of teacher knowledge in language and literacy such as the Teacher Knowledge of Early Literacy Skills by Binks-Cantrell or the Educator Knowledge of Reading by Farris and Odegard. Each school will develop a

strategic and sustainable list of staff identified by each building with evidence of training in specific populations. Agendas, training notes and updated course syllabi from participating IHEs will also serve as evidence of the activities required to reach these outcomes.

Project Objective 3: Strengthen systems at both the SEA and LEA levels to provide and implement high-quality evidence-based literacy instruction. The goal of the Montana plan is to create systems that will allow for sustainability beyond grant funding and to create processes for non-funded schools to implement similar plans for improvement. At the school and district level, the SEA will support districts in the development of district and school literacy teams. These teams will help to evaluate the needs of the district and support the implementation of strategies and culturally relevant HQIM across the school. At the state level, the SEA will create Teacher Learning Hub (Hub) courses on evidence based practices to assist funded schools in training new staff. The Hub is open to all Montana educators and will allow non-funded schools to receive this training as well. Additionally, the state will review and update the Montana Literacy Plan to reflect and support schools in the development of high quality Local Literacy Plans to ensure a consistent framework for literacy instruction across the state. Additionally, the OPI and the Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) will meet annually to identify highly effective strategies for professional development relevant to the kindergarten transition. DPHHS is the agency that implements programs using Part C IDEA funds. A 2019 report from DPHHS indicates that while some best-

practices of transition to kindergarten have been adopted throughout the state, others have yet to be widely implemented (*Montana DPHHS, 2019*).

Objective 3 Performance Measures

1. One hundred percent of LEAs will establish literacy leadership teams by the end of Year 1.
2. Leadership Teams, school leaders and teacher leaders/coaches will participate in at least 80% of the Literacy Leadership Network meetings designed to guide site-based implementation and support classroom teachers in the implementation of SoR professional development.
3. The SEA will build at least two additional courses each year in the Teacher Learning Hub to assist schools with implementation and sustainability of evidence-based literacy practices that will be required for educators at each subgrantee school.
4. The SEA will update and publish a revised copy of the State Literacy Plan by July of 2026, utilizing resources from the CLSD National Literacy Center.
5. One hundred percent of participating schools will complete a high-quality Local Literacy Plan that incorporates all culturally relevant HQIM, evidence-based strategies, and family and community engagement and systems developed through participation in the Literacy Leadership Network.
6. The SEA will meet with DPHHS, the state agency responsible for early childhood education, annually to review preK outcomes and discuss next steps
(Invitational Priority).

Measurement Tools: These outcomes will create a series of artifacts such as attendance records from Literacy Leadership Network events, an updated State Literacy Plan, completed courses in the Teacher Learning Hub and reviews of Local Literacy Plans.

Project Implementation Plan

Enabling Contexts: While many school change projects begin with the immediate implementation of Effective Practices, Montana's plan will begin by helping schools establish Enabling Contexts to ensure there is a solid foundation for new evidence-based practices that are selected. Enabling Contexts ensure culturally responsive environments or settings where teaching methods needed for effective practices are in place. Before new practices can be implemented, schools must develop the support systems, such as strong instructional leaders, coaches and/or teachers leaders to help with implementation and established leadership teams to participate in data analysis and action planning. Montana's plan seeks to develop leadership of these three roles through participation in a Literacy Leadership Network.

The first strand of the Literacy Leadership Network will focus on developing school leaders as strong instructional leaders. Hattie's (2009) review of factors that impact student achievement found a mean effect of 0.57 of leadership influences on student achievement indicating that leaders play a significant role in changing outcomes for students. School leaders who take an active role in what happens in the classroom see greater gains in student achievement. Specific sessions of the Literacy Leadership

Network will provide school leaders training in aspects of instructional leadership and provide opportunities for collaboration.

While the role of school leaders is critical to the school improvement process, Dufour and Marzano (2011) argue that no single person has the ability to transform a school. They state that shared leadership from the district, school, and teacher levels must be leveraged to create lasting change. A Wallace Foundation report (2010) found that implementing collective leadership structures had a significant positive effect on student achievement. It also positively impacted teacher motivation, which led to better teacher retention. Therefore, the second prong in the Literacy Leadership Network will focus on developing a shared leadership structure by helping schools develop strong school leadership teams.

School teams will be guided through processes such as data analysis, developing action plans, self reflection and learning how to use tools such as the Continuous Improvement Cycle (Park, et al for The Carnegie Foundation, 2014), the Hexagon Tool (Metz & Louison, 2018), and other tools grounded in implementation science. Literacy Leadership Network (*Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy, IES*) sessions will focus on the activities outlined in Table 1 with session content grounded in evidence-based tools from IES, The National Center on Early Child Development, Teaching and Learning, and the Center for Assessment.

The final strand of the Literacy Leadership Network will focus on developing

instructional coaching. A 2018 meta-analysis indicated that coaching improves teaching and learning for students, and provides increased support for instructional strategies. Considering the remoteness of many Montana school districts and the difficulty in staffing, a full time instructional coach will not be required. However, each district will need to develop a structure to provide coaching using either a dedicated coach, trained teacher leaders or a peer coaching model. These individuals will be a part of the leadership team and will also attend Literacy Leadership Network sessions focused specifically on coaching.

Each school year will conclude with a final session including the full leadership team, where data will be reviewed, goal completion will be analyzed and action planning for the next school year will begin. The goal of this initial work with the Literacy Leadership Network is to ensure there is a solid foundation in every building that will facilitate the implementation of the Effective Practices selected in each district.

Table 1. Montana’s CLSD Literacy Leadership Network/Professional Learning Community: Emergent Literacy Session Topics

Implementation science and building sustainable literacy systems with reasonable goals, timelines, and feedback cycles
Building evidence-based state and district literacy plans

Establishing and refining coaching models and feedback loops for instruction, including identifying key dates and district-determined accountability measures
Conducting data analysis and formulating aligned decision-making
Conducting district self-reflection and goal-setting
Conducting a district literacy assessment audit
How to review high-quality evidence-based curricula and create a repository for recommended materials
How to select and use culturally relevant literacy materials
Improving conditions for learning
Increasing family and community engagement
Designing literacy-based assignments between career-pathway and academic teachers.
High-quality first instruction and plans for remediation and acceleration
Other areas as deemed necessary by each district in their individual action plans

In addition to establishing Enabling Contexts at the LEA level, the Montana team will build the statewide context to help districts with implementation and sustainability. In

response to the statistics on teacher preparation courses cited above and in order to fulfill **Competitive Preference Priority 1**, the Montana team will work with Institutes of Higher Education to strengthen pre-service courses to ensure that teachers entering the field have a solid foundation in the Science of Reading and evidence-based practices. The SEA team will convene a meeting annually with faculty from our major universities to examine course objectives and content to make sure that all teachers have a strong background in the Science of Reading and evidence-based Practices before entering the field. The OPI will work with IHEs to identify early career supports and mentorship for preservice teachers in their first years of teaching. Also, the OPI will partner with IHEs to review and make recommendations to refine licensure/certification requirements related to teaching reading.

The final task intended to build content at the state level is a revision of the State Literacy Plan. The Montana Literacy Plan is currently due for revision, however, Montana is also in the process of adopting new English Language Arts standards. The team will revise the plan when the new standards are adopted in July of 2025. An updated Montana Literacy Plan will provide a current framework for subgrantees to develop their Local Literacy Plans as well as strengthen sustainability efforts.

Effective Practices: While the state will continue to focus on creating Enabling Contexts throughout the implementation of the grant, subgrantees will select and implement Effective Practices. Previous grantees have stated that they jumped to selecting evidence-based materials before they had the depth of knowledge to make the best

decisions. Therefore, the first Effective Practice schools will engage in, is high-quality professional development.

In the words of Louisa Moats, “Teaching Reading is Rocket Science” (*Moats, 2020*). Literacy instruction is complicated and requires a high level of knowledge to be effective. However, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality, only 25% of teacher preparation programs teach all five components of reading. Over 40% of programs are still teaching practices that are contrary to the research (*National Council on Teacher Quality, 2023*). When this is considered alongside data that shows that high need schools have higher rates of inexperienced teachers, the need to increase teacher knowledge is even more important. In addition to increasing teacher knowledge, high quality professional development has also been shown to increase student achievement (*Cole, 1992; McCutchen et al., 2002*). Since our goal is to raise the reading achievement of students in the most high need areas, providing high quality professional development is critical.

The Montana Implementation Plan will have three strands of professional development for participating schools. First, OPI will provide critical training in the knowledge base of the Science of Reading to all CSLD educators. The SEA team will review and develop a list of approved curriculum and professional development so schools can choose the option that best fits their needs. After completing their training in the Science of Reading, schools will be supported as they develop ongoing professional development plans to meet the unique, individual needs of their teachers to provide feedback and

support while teachers implement the strategies with students. Throughout the Literacy Leadership Network sessions, coaches will be guided in how to help teachers analyze the effectiveness of the strategies by analyzing their own students' results.

Second, while many states and projects have focused on elementary teachers for Science of Reading training, Montana identified a specific need to accelerate efforts to reach adolescents at risk of dropping out. Prior to COVID-19, the dropout rate in Montana sat at 3.6% or 1,634 students statewide, including 8.4% of students for Montana's American Indian student population. Three years later, Montana saw a vast increase in dropout rates with overall rates at 4.0%, or 1,920 students - 578 of whom were American Indian students representing nearly 11% of Montana's American Indian student population. In order to address this immediate need (and as part of fulfilling **Competitive Preference Priority 2**), OPI will put a specific emphasis on adolescent literacy by providing training to support implementation of disciplinary literacy in middle and high school. OPI's focus will be on implementing the strategies included in the IES practice guide, "Improving Adolescent Literacy" and tying all content areas into teaching comprehension and writing. Research shows providing support for content area teachers in reading and writing instruction in all content areas is one of the largest levers of enhanced student performance in the upper grades (*Boryga, 2022*).

With Montana's widening drop-out rate among American Indian students, it is imperative that schools receive training and information on purchasing curriculum that supports all learners, particularly those with American Indian students, one of our at-risk subgroups.

Research shows that students who see themselves represented in academic curricula are more successful (*Muniz, 2019-2020*). In addition, selecting curriculum material that is unbiased supports all learners. The OPI will also provide engaging professional development on to use and integrate culturally responsive materials and practices. “When culturally responsive educators validate and affirm students and bring them where they need to be academically, students are more likely to feel recognized, valued for their contributions, and eager to learn.” (*Hollie, 2017*).

Within the professional development for middle and high school teachers, the OPI will help career-pathway and academic teachers to design literacy-based assignments that engage students in reading complex technical and college-readiness-level content and demonstrating understandings through written products (*Bottoms, 2022*). “When students can apply what they've learned in academic courses within a career context, it motivates these learners and increases retention of academic concepts” (*National Research Council, 1999*). This will ensure that every secondary teacher is highly knowledgeable in teaching the literacy of their specific discipline as well as fully capable of supporting struggling readers in their classrooms.

The final strand of professional development will involve targeted professional development and collaboration around specific, disadvantaged subgroups. Each school will identify key staff members to participate in cohort training for specific underserved student populations (**Competitive Preference Priority Area 3**). At a project level, the SEA will provide specific training related to specific underserved populations. Each

year, a different population will be identified and key staff members in each building will participate in targeted training on serving the identified subgroup. The team will also host a virtual community of practice (*Hernaez and Campos, 2011*) each year focused on the identified subgroups. The benefits of communities of practice are outlined in Table 2. These communities of practice will provide opportunities for school personnel to receive short, focused trainings related to the identified subgroups, discuss problems of practice, and participate in collaborative problem solving. The SEA will begin this process focused on students with dyslexia, will move to English Learners and then will select the remaining subgroups based on feedback and need from participating districts.

Table 2. Evidence-Based Benefits of Communities of Practice (*Alee, 2000*)

Helps develop a common language, methods, and models around specific competencies
Extends knowledge and know-how to diverse people
Helps retain knowledge when there are workers leaving the organization
Increases access to knowledge throughout the organization
Provides the significance of sharing power and influence with the organization's formal part
Helps people carry out their work

Provide a stable sense of community with other people in the organization and with the company
Promote a sense of identity based on learning
Helps develop individual abilities and competencies
Provides people with personal challenges and opportunities

Grounded in the knowledge gained from the professional development provided to all teaching staff, the SEA will then guide leadership teams through a materials and assessment audit to identify gaps in the assessments and culturally relevant, evidence-based materials within their buildings. Leadership teams will then return to their sites and will facilitate the selection of evidence-based curriculums, materials and strategies to ensure that all disadvantaged students have access to HQIM that are culturally relevant.

A 2017 RAND report (*Opfer, Kaufman & Thompson, 2017*) examined the instructional materials found in classrooms across the country. They found that most classroom materials were a mix of published curricula, online lessons, self-developed materials and may or may not be well-aligned to standards. Research on the instructional materials has shown that HQIM have a positive impact on student outcomes. (*Chingos & Grover, 2012*). Implementing HQIM was found to have a 0.17 positive effect on student outcomes. Specific curriculum related to the foundational reading skills has an

effect size of 0.60 on student outcomes (*Hattie, 2009*). These effects are even more pronounced for students who receive instruction from less effective teachers (*Jackson & Makarin, 2016*). Considering the data shared above indicating that high poverty districts tend to have teachers who are less effective and have less experience, it is critical that these districts implement HQIM to ensure that students have the best chance of achieving strong outcomes.

The Montana team is committed to ensuring that every participating CLSD district establishes a system of comprehensive literacy instruction, including HQIM at each tier of instruction. The initial adoption of materials will focus on core instructional materials as we are committed to providing the best first instruction for each student in an effort to limit the need for intervention. Beginning the spring of Year 2 the SEA team will work with districts to begin selecting core instructional materials for implementation. These HQIM will be paired with evidence-based instructional strategies from the identified IES Practice Guides so that all students receive the best first instruction possible. After core materials have been implemented the SEA team will work with districts to select high quality intervention materials as needed in each building.

Effective Implementation: The last several years of the grant will mostly be focused on supporting effective implementation. By this time, coaches or teacher leaders will have participated in multiple training opportunities through the Literacy Leadership Network and will have spent much of the early years of the grant establishing relationships with staff in their buildings. These supportive roles will be heavily relied upon to ensure that

every teacher in every school has the opportunity to implement their learning from professional development and can successfully implement the selected evidence-based materials and strategies. By implementing materials slowly and with consistent coaching support and consistent observation and feedback, we hope to strengthen the overall implementation of each component of the comprehensive literacy plans.

For the final piece of the implementation plan, Montana will focus on strategies to retain high quality teachers. One of the keys to ensuring new practices are sustained is ensuring retention of staff. Data from school year 2022-2023, indicates that 93.22% of comprehensive support schools (schools identified in the bottom 5%) and 96.45% percent of targeted support schools (schools that have a subgroup performing like the bottom 5%) had turnover. When teachers and principals are given meaningful decision-making authority, have opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, and are provided early career mentorship and support, they are more likely to be retained in the profession (*Berry, et al, 2019*). In order to meet **Competitive Preference Priority 4**, the Montana team will work with subgrantees to provide high quality mentors to provide individual support to these teachers in addition to the coaching support they will receive. Mentors will help teachers lesson plan, be thought partners in problem solving and support them as they learn how to navigate the education system in Montana. The Montana Team believes that by implementing each piece of the Active Implementation Formula described above, subgrantees will have the best chance at achieving significant outcomes.

Management Plan

OPI draws on experience from administering prior CLSD awards in the development of the management plan for the FY2024 CLSD grant. The budget ensures that adequate human and technical resources will be effectively deployed in a reasonable timeline to accomplish the stated goals and objectives of the project.

Broad areas of management include: (1) execution and monitoring of subawards; (2) project services provision for awarded Subgrantees; (3) tasks for system-wide coordination; and (4) procedures to ensure feedback and continuous improvement for project operation. OPI will utilize the Active Implementation Framework embedded in the Project Design to ensure continuous improvement in the operation and implementation of the project.

The management plan and budget includes funding for continuity of the current Project Director, Rachel Gott, who has successfully overseen the administration of CLSD funding for over 3 years. If awarded, Rachel will continue to oversee the administration and management of this grant, including budget management, program implementation, compliance and reporting. The Project Director will also ensure that funds are allocated appropriately and spent according to guidelines, supervise literacy specialists and oversee the implementation of professional learning while preparing detailed progress reports and collaborating with stakeholders including educators, community organizations and decision-makers to support literacy initiatives. The Project Director will be supported by 2 CSLD Specialists, as well as Institutes of Higher Learning and a professional, experienced evaluator to ensure continuous feedback and improvement throughout the project.

As with the current literacy grant, three leadership members within the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) will provide leadership guidance to the project director and support the implementation of the new CSLD grant: Julie Murgel, Chief Program Officer; Marie Judisch, Senior Manager of the Teaching and Learning Department; and Christy Mock-Stutz, Assistant Superintendent.

The drafted monitoring plan for the project is outlined below.

CLSD 2024 Application Monitoring Plan

Objective 1: Identify and build the capacity of districts serving the highest percentage of disadvantaged students in the state to accelerate their literacy outcomes.

Performance Measure 1: OPI will competitively award approximately 30 subgrants to high-need LEAs as identified by percent of students living in poverty and students performing below grade level as indicated on state assessments. By June of 2025, all subgrant applications will be reviewed and funds will be distributed to LEAs selected based on need and high-quality applications.

Activities	Indicators of Success	Timeline	Responsible Parties
Create and release subgrant application and notify eligible subgrantees	Application includes all required application components All eligible entities are notified of eligibility	Sept. - Dec. 2024	OPI
Provide subgrant application training	Webinars on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Needs Assessment ● PD Plan ● MTSS, specifically identification and comprehensive literacy instruction ● ESSA Evidence levels 	Jan - March 2025	OPI
Subgrantee review/selection	Approximately 30 subgrantees notified of funding and prepared to begin implementation	April - June 2025	OPI Grant Reviewers

Performance Measure 2: OPI will support eligible LEAs through professional development and technical assistance as they adopt culturally relevant and evidenced-based HQIM and develop a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Support to identify and meet the needs of all students, especially identified disadvantaged subgroups. By spring of year 4, 100% of subgrantees will have identified and/or purchased culturally relevant, evidence-based HQIM and strategies for all students at all levels of instruction.

Initiate Self-Assessment of MTSS practices and develop a plan	SEA reviews results and plan with each district	Year 2 - 5	LEAs
Subgrantees engage in curriculum and assessment audit	SEA provide training on ESSA levels of evidence and facilitate audit during Literacy Leadership Network	Year 2	LEAs with support of OPI
SEA creates an optional repository of culturally relevant and evidence-based materials	Reviewers are created and repository is published on the website for all LEAs	Year 2	OPI and reviewers
Subgrantees select and implement culturally relevant and evidence-based curriculum	SEA reviews curriculums during site-based monitoring	Year 2-5 as needed	LEAs with OPI support
<i>Performance Measure 3: Increase the percentage of students performing at or above proficiency by 10% as identified by local benchmark measures (PreK-2) or state ELA assessments (3-8 & high school).</i>			
Collect Baseline data	External Evaluator establishes data sharing agreements with LEAs and collects baseline data	June-Aug. 2025	External Evaluator LEA OPI
Collect data yearly	External evaluator publishes yearly evaluation	Sept./October & May/June Yearly	External Evaluator LEA OPI
Objective 2: Increase the number of disadvantaged students who have access to effective educators prepared to implement and sustain scientifically based reading instruction.			
<i>Performance Measure 4: Increase the level of knowledge in the Science of Reading by at least 50% in all teachers and school leaders who participate in SoR professional development as measured by pre and post test results.</i>			

Establish approved Professional Development providers	SEA conducts review and publishes list of providers	Year 1	OPI
Participating staff take pre-test	Pretest data collected by SEA	Year 2	OPI/LEAs
Subgrantees select and receive PD from providers	Subgrantees receive training	Year 2-5	LEAs and PD Providers
Participating staff take post-test	Post test data collected by SEA	As training is completed	LEAs & OPI
<p><i>Performance Measure 5:</i> By the end of year 5, 100% of CLSD schools will have participated in instructional leader development designed to create school leaders whose primary role as an instructional leader is to provide observation and feedback, lead data analysis conversations and team planning and ongoing professional development in evidence-based literacy practices.</p>			
Schools identify selected school leader for participation	SEA creates roster of participating school leaders	Year 2	LEAs
School leaders attend relevant Literacy Leadership Network events	SEA collects participation data	Years 2-5	OPI & LEA
School leaders and coaches begin implementing learning in school settings	SEA monitors implementation through leadership team meetings and on-site monitoring	Years 2-5	LEAs
<p><i>Performance Measure 6:</i> By the end of year 5, 100% of CLSD schools will have participated in training to identify and provide literacy specific instruction to underserved populations, specifically focusing on dyslexia and English Learners (Competitive Preference Priority 3).</p>			
LEAs identify staff members for participation	Roster of participants created	Years 2-5	LEAs

Coordinate Community of Practice sessions	Calendar of sessions and topics distributed to participants	Years 2-5	OPI
Training is provided through regular communities of practices	SEA collects participation data and monitors implementation through desk and on-site monitoring	Years 2-5	OPI
<i>Performance Measure 7:</i> At least once per year, the SEA will facilitate collaborative conversations between the SEA and IHE partners to examine the quality of preservice courses related to literacy development and ensure alignment to evidence-based practices and identify ongoing support for teachers beyond the Educator Preparation Program.			
State partners convene IHE to strengthen and enhance pre-service courses	Collaborate with IHEs to vet and strengthen course objectives	Years 2-5	OPI & IHEs
<i>Performance Measure 8:</i> By the end of year 2, the SEA and IHE partners will review and make recommendations to refine licensure/certification requirements related to teaching reading.			
State partners convene IHE to refine licensure/certification requirements	Collaborate with IHEs to recommend licensure/certification requirements	Years 2-5	OPI & IHEs
Objective 3: Strengthen systems at both the SEA and LEA levels to provide and implement high-quality evidence-based literacy instruction.			
<i>Performance Measure 9:</i> One hundred percent of LEAs will establish leadership teams by the end of Year 1 .			
Leadership teams are established	Teams convene for baseline data analysis and goal setting	Year 1	LEAs
Leadership Teams participate in Literacy Leadership Network, data analysis and goal setting.	SEA distributes calendar of meetings and collects participation data	Years 2-5	OPI and LEAs

<i>Performance Measure 10:</i> Leadership Teams and teacher leaders will participate in at least 80% of Literacy Leadership Network meetings designed to guide site based implementation and support classroom teachers in the implementation of SoR professional development.			
Plan for Literacy Leadership Network attendance	Calendar of meetings and topics published	Years 2-5	OPI
Convene Literacy Leadership Network	SEA collects participation data	Years 2-5	OPI
<i>Performance Measure 11:</i> The SEA will build at least two additional courses each year in the Teacher Learning Hub to assist schools with implementation and sustainability of evidenced-based literacy practices that will be required for educators at each subgrantee school.			
Identify pertinent topics	Use survey results from subgrantees to determine needed topics	Years 1-5	OPI & LEAs
Create courses	Publish courses in the Teacher Learning Hub	Years 1-5	OPI
<i>Performance Measure 12:</i> The SEA will update and publish a revised copy of the Montana Literacy Plan by July of 2026, utilizing resources from the CLSD National Literacy Center.			
Complete review of current MLP	Use SLP review tool to complete a review of current MLP	Year 1	OPI
Convene team to update the Montana Literacy Plan	Update and publish revised MLP	Year 2	OPI, LEAs, IHEs
<i>Performance Measure 13:</i> One hundred percent of participating schools will complete a high quality Local Literacy Plan that incorporates all culturally relevant HQIM, evidenced-based strategies and family and community engagement systems developed through participation in the Literacy Leadership Network.			
Subgrantees review current Local Literacy Plan	SEA facilitates a review of Local Literacy Plans and discusses next steps with districts during monitoring	Year 2	SEA, LEAs

Teams build each piece of Local Literacy Plan after Literacy Leadership Network sessions	SEA facilities learning on LLP components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment of Needs ● MTSS ● Comprehensive Literacy ● Professional Development 	Years 2-5	LEAs with support from SEA grant specialists
Finalize LLPs	Subgrantees present completed LLPs to SEA.	Year 5	LEAs
<i>Performance Measure 14:</i> The SEA will meet with the state agency responsible for early childhood education (DPHHS) annually to review preK outcomes and discuss next steps.			
SEA convenes meeting with DPHHS to strengthen early childhood programming	SEA and DPHHS review early childhood data and plan for coming year.	Years 2-5	OPI, DPHHS

In addition to overall project monitoring, the Montana grant team will regularly monitor subgrantee implementation. Each subgrantee will be assigned to one grant specialist who will be responsible for regular communication and collaboration with their subgrantees. The grant specialists will provide technical assistance throughout the year with support from the Project Director. Implementation will be monitored through regular collection of documentation such as Action Plans, data and end of year reports. In addition, grant specialists will conduct one in-person monitoring visit each year and one virtual desk monitoring each year. Written feedback will be provided to subgrantees after each official monitoring visit to provide them with strengths and next steps in implementation as well as documentation of any implementation requirements they are missing including a timeline for ensuring implementation is corrected.

Project Services

For all awarded subgrantees, project services for the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant will include the following components: Leadership Development Services, Professional Development Services to Improve Literacy Outcomes for Students, and Technical Assistance Services to identify and implement high-quality, evidence-based literacy curriculum and strategies for at-risk student groups. The SEA identifies the following disadvantaged subgroups: students in schools with high percentages of American Indian students (*Education Northwest, 2018*), students in schools identified by the Montana Accountability System (2023) as schools in need of support and improvement, students in schools with high percentages of students with

disabilities; Students in schools with high percentages of English learners; and students in schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Leadership Development Services: In order to successfully implement new literacy practices, schools must develop support systems. These support systems will include instructional leaders including coaches and mentors, leadership teams, and an effective literacy plan. The SEA will develop a Literacy Leadership Network to provide on-going training to build capacity of school's own personnel as literacy leaders. Research suggests that teacher leaders play a critical role in creating sustainable improvements in teaching and learning, (*Jacques, et al., 2016*). In addition, implementation science research indicates that relationship building is a key component of any change initiatives (*Metz et al., 2021*) Expanding leadership opportunities within schools promotes teacher retention and educator diversity, while providing opportunities for teachers to lead beyond their classrooms. By providing strands of the Literacy Leadership Network training through each year of the grant, the SEA will support LEA's to ensure leadership sustainability during the grant and beyond to support educators in improving student outcomes.

Professional Development Services to Improve Literacy Outcomes for Students:

Professional Development (PD) Services are designed to help at-risk student groups improve literacy proficiency through improved literacy instruction. To ensure equal access and opportunity for disadvantaged subgroups, PD Services will focus on the following Project Design Elements: PD on the Science of Reading, PD on transition

plans to Kindergarten, PD on culturally relevant practices and materials, PD on literacy-based assignments for career pathways; supporting communities of practice focused on selected disadvantaged subgroups, PD on data analysis, PD on educator self-reflection and goal-setting, and effective implementation of the PD services. High quality professional development has been shown to increase student achievement (*Cole, 1992; McCutchen et al., 2002*), and by providing high-quality professional development on the Science of Reading, identification and implementation of evidence-based practices and materials, and PD on disciplinary literacy, the SEA expects to see improvements in student outcomes, particularly those in identified subgroups.

Technical Assistance Services: The SEA will provide subgrantees technical assistance services in the following areas: creating a school leadership team, identifying and implementing culturally relevant, high-quality, evidence based literacy curriculum and strategies for at-risk student groups, creating a local literacy plan, and working with grant partners, including IHEs and early childhood providers (**Invitational Priority and Competitive Preference Priority 1**), to support literacy instruction for all students. The OPI will provide training and support for schools to conduct their own literacy audits before purchasing curriculum. Students who receive instruction with culturally relevant high-quality instructional materials have better outcomes, particularly when they have instruction from less effective teachers (*Jackson & Makarin, 2016*). Guiding schools as they create their own literacy plans, based on their own findings of their literacy audits, while relying on their leadership team's expertise allows schools to determine their needs and select an appropriate curriculum based on those needs. For example,

schools with high teacher turnover may identify that as an area of need, and then have the opportunity to support new teachers with mentorship opportunities through Montana's IHE programs.

Project Evaluation

Education Northwest, a nonprofit educational research organization based in Portland, Oregon, will conduct an independent evaluation of MT OPI's CLSD. Leveraging 20 years of experience evaluating literacy initiatives in Montana, Education Northwest will work closely with MT OPI project staff to ensure evaluation activities complement their administration and monitoring activities and that evaluation instruments have content validity as well as provide valuable formative feedback. The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach, collecting qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources. Analyses will support continuous improvement and assess the extent to which educators in subgrantee LEAs implement grant practices to improve outcomes for preschool through grade 12 students and disadvantaged populations. Education Northwest's Internal Review Board (FWA00005456) conducts expedited reviews of any research projects that use student level, personally identifiable information and is able to ensure ethical evaluation practices.

The evaluation will mirror the Active Implementation Formula (Table 3) to assess the strength with which effective practices, effective implementation, and an enabling context allow significant outcomes to be achieved. Table 3 lists the six research questions by the four components of the formula.

Table 3: Research questions aligned to Active Implementation Formula

Effective practices	<p>1. In what ways were educators introduced to evidence-based and science of reading practices? How were these opportunities received by participants?</p> <p>2. What evidence-based and science of reading practices were addressed in grant-sponsored professional learning opportunities and pre-service education coursework? Are they aligned with What Works Clearinghouse practice guide recommendations?</p>
Effective implementation	<p>3. To what extent did educators engage in evidence-based literacy instruction and in the science of reading?</p>
Enabling context	<p>4. To what extent did district/school leaders build literacy leadership team members' capacity to support sustainable implementation of effective practices?</p>
Significant outcomes	<p>5. Was there a change in student literacy outcomes (PK-12) at schools that received CLSD grant funding?</p>

Sources: [SISEP](#) and Education Northwest.

The mixed-methods evaluation will employ the following data collection tools and will allow for the triangulation of findings.

Document Review: The evaluation team will review professional learning materials (e.g., agendas, slide decks) available from MT OPI (e.g., focused on the science of reading, culturally relevant materials, evidence-based practices, implementation science), the Literacy Leader Network meetings, Montana Teacher Learning HUB website, documentation from the collaborative review of general education and reading specialist coursework, and IES practice guides. In addition, literacy team members will be asked to update a form during each meeting that summarizes effective practices that are being addressed in professional development and coaching.

Observation Log: The evaluation team will develop an online observation form for observers (e.g., school leaders, literacy coaches, instructional consultants, peer coaches) to document the extent to which evidence-based practices supported by grant funding are implemented in the classroom with a level of fidelity/proficiency. The observation form will be supplemental to any tool developed by the school/district and provide a succinct way for data to be submitted to the evaluation team.

Educator Surveys: Three surveys will be administered, each focused on different aspects of grant implementation:

- Professional learning survey: Following any grant-funded professional learning experience (e.g., offered at OPI's monthly Literacy Leadership Network meetings or onsite at subgrantee schools), participants will be invited to complete a survey

that addresses the quality of the delivery and content and respondents' perceptions of the practice(s) related to usability, preparedness, and implementation.

- Non-literacy team survey: At the end of the school year, educators who are not members of the school/district literacy leadership team will complete a survey that addresses aspects of their effective implementation (e.g., confidence, frequency, and fidelity) of practices and enabling context (assembling teams and improvement cycles) related to leadership team members.

- Literacy leadership team survey: In spring or fall 2025 and each subsequent spring, literacy leadership team members will complete a survey that addresses aspects of enabling context. The survey will be based on two documents: First, Education Northwest's Literacy Implementation Continuum (Education Northwest, 2023) from Implementing the Science of Reading - A Framework for Literacy Leadership Development was developed to support instructional leadership in implementing the science of reading. The continuum addresses four key components of effective leadership—Charting the Path, Content Knowledge, Supporting and Monitoring, and Collaborative Literacy Culture—and aligns with key aspects of CLSD leadership, including developing and leading a literacy leadership team, adopting curriculum, developing multi-tiered systems of supports, understanding the science of reading, providing observations and feedback, leading data analysis conversations, and engaging in team planning and ongoing professional development. Second, the survey will be based on the

Practice Guide to Supporting Implementation: What competencies do we need? (*Metz et.al, 2020*). The guide address key principles and competencies in three domains—co-creation and engagement, ongoing improvement, and sustaining change—and will assess the extent to which leaders are building their capacity to develop and enabling context to support sustainable change.

Student Literacy Assessments: Education Northwest will establish a data sharing agreement with MT OPI and any subgrantee district sharing student literacy assessment data with the evaluation team. Education Northwest uses ShareFile, a secure file transfer protocol and will establish accounts for MT OPI and each participating district to upload student assessment data required for the evaluation. Across all assessments (preschool, K-2, and 3-12) the evaluation team will determine the percentage of students deemed not proficient (e.g., tier 2/3, strategic/intensive support, not/partially proficient) and proficient (e.g., tier 1, benchmark support, proficient/advanced) in fall and spring. The analysis will be disaggregated by LEA, grade, and by key disadvantaged student groups (e.g., participation in special education services and English learners). Beginning in 2025-26, for students participating in MAST, either OPI will recommend schools (or the evaluation team will engage in matching to identify a set of students not participating in the grant with similar background demographics as students in subgrantee schools) to identify whether differences exist in proficiency level from one year to the next. The analysis will be

disaggregated by grade by key disadvantaged student groups. These analyses will support the SEA and LEAs in planning their work each fall.

Table 4 aligns the research questions to the data collection.

Table 4. Research questions aligned to data collection

Research question	1	2	3	4	5
Data collection					
Document review	X	X			
Observation log			X		
Professional learning survey	X	X	X		
Non-literacy team survey			X	X	
Literacy team survey				X	
Student literacy assessments					X

Source: Education Northwest

Reporting: The evaluation team will provide MT OPI with two deliverables: (1) To inform continuous improvement efforts, the evaluation team will analyze professional learning survey responses and provide MT OPI with summaries, disaggregated by professional learning experts and LEA, quarterly (e.g., November, January, March, and with annual

report). (2) An annual report will summarize findings from all data collected during each school year, including calculating the performance measure for four-year-old children.

Assurances

The Montana Office of Public Instruction will comply with all required components of the federal application as spelled out in the Notice Inviting Applications. OPI will ensure continuing collection of data through the statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) for goal setting.

The OPI assures that it will use grant funds as described in the NIA such that 95% of funds will be sub granted to eligible subgrantees based on need and high quality applications. Additionally, funds will be distributed as described in 222(f) such that, 15% is distributed to programs and activities pertaining to children from birth through kindergarten entry, 40% are distributed for activities pertaining to kindergarten through grade five, and 40% are distributed for activities pertaining to grades six through twelve.

The OPI assures that it will give priority to subgrants serving low-income and high need students as described in the eligibility criteria laid out in this implementation plan.

The OPI assures that it will provide subgrants to eligible entities serving a diversity of geographic areas, giving priority to entities serving greater numbers or percentages of children from low-income families.