

Literacy Network of Kansas – LiNK Application

Federal Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant Award



Literacy
Network of
Kansas

Introduction

The purpose of the Kansas LiNK initiative (formerly known as the Kansas Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Initiative) is to significantly advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing for children from birth through grade 12. Funds distributed to LiNK projects should focus on making a significant impact on literacy growth and development for disadvantaged children and youth, including English learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

LiNK is organized around four broad goals:

1. Build capacity for impact on literacy at the state, regional, and community levels.
2. Select and support districts and district consortia to submit, implement, and evaluate high quality literacy plans to positively and effectively influence the literacy growth and development of disadvantaged students.
3. Develop capacity to conduct evaluation, implement data-driven decision-making, and collaborate with external evaluators.
4. Develop capacity to implement and sustain high quality literacy practices through ongoing and embedded professional learning.

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS: Districts and District Consortia

RFA No.:	2018LINK
Application Available	February 5, 2018
Total Award Amount	\$27,054,174 over three years
Award Amounts	8 subgrants, each in the amount of \$3,225,000 over three years
LiNK Support Webinars	<p>The LiNK Team is planning a series of webinars to help guide potential applicants through the LiNK application process. The webinars are scheduled for the weeks immediately following the release of application materials. All sessions will be recorded so that participants may view them at a later time. Please use the links below to register for the webinars.</p> <p>Date: February 8, 2018 Topic: Overview of Application Materials Registration: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/d19aa5a4996cb7a266858a512be5123a</p> <p>Date: February 13, 2018 Topic: Birth-12 Needs Assessment & Literacy Plan Registration: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/317a682ff2e927a9dc2040ba88984b7b</p> <p>Date: February 15, 2018 Topic: Partnerships Registration: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/33c8bf3fc31586f834538d7d4481ef37</p> <p>Date: February 20, 2018 Topic: Evidence-based curriculum and instruction Registration: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/1a31adfabb0491904ac87b605f06faf5</p>
Letter of Intent Due	<p>February 23, 2018</p> <p>The letter of intent is optional, and appreciated. This letter will provide the agency guidance that will be useful for planning the application review process.</p>
LiNK Support Workshops	<p>To register for one of these events, click the location name.</p> <p>Date: March 1, 2018 Location: Colby, KS Date: March 2, 2018 Location: Dodge City, KS Date: March 6, 2018 Location: Lawrence, KS Date: March 7, 2018 Location: Manhattan, KS Date: March 27, 2018 Location: Great Bend, KS Date: March 28, 2018 Location: Iola, KS</p>
Application Due	April 18, 2018
Applicants Notified	June 1, 2018
Initial Meeting for Awardees	June 19-20, 2018 (Location, TBD)
Start Date	July 1, 2018

General Overview and Basic Requirements

In October 2015, newly appointed commissioner, Dr. Randy Watson and the Kansas State Board of Education revealed an audacious new vision for Kansas Education: to lead the world in the success of each student. Instead of fitting students into existing systems, programs and protocols, the new vision demands that educators begin by assessing the needs of students, families, and communities, and then work to locate or build flexible systems, programs, and protocols that best serve their school communities.

This comprehensive approach lays the foundation for the Kansas Department of Education's (KSDE's), Literacy Network of Kansas (LiNK), a project funded through the federal Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Initiative. The primary goal of this initiative is to significantly advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing for children from birth through grade 12. In keeping with the goals and purposes set forth by the U.S. Department of Education's Striving Readers Program, the focus of LiNK is to impact the literacy skills of disadvantaged children and youth, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged households.

Eligibility of Applicants

All school districts accredited by KSDE are eligible to apply for funding under LiNK *if* their learner population meets at least *one* of the following criteria:

- a) at least 49% of the children are economically disadvantaged,
- b) at least 15% of the children have documented disabilities,
- c) at least 10% of the children are English learners.

Districts may use their September 20th data OR their end-of-year data to make eligibility determinations. The narrative portion (Part II) of the LiNK application must include information to document eligibility.

Districts serving 5000 students or more may apply individually for funding. Districts serving fewer than 5000 students may apply as part of a consortium.

In order to be eligible for funding through LiNK, applicants must agree to cooperate with a National Evaluation of the federal Striving Readers project. The program staff at the U.S. Department of Education and the Kansas State Department of Education will ensure that national evaluation requirements are in compliance with both federal and Kansas laws.

Program Focus

KSDE will invite applications for funding high-quality comprehensive literacy programs designed to significantly improve literacy outcomes for children from birth to grade 12. The RFA includes all requirements identified by the United States Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and listed in the Federal Register/Vol. 82, No. 93 May 16, 2017, Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program for 2017. It also includes priorities and requirements as described by the Kansas State Literacy Plan, titled *The Kansas Guide to*

Learning: Literacy. As part of their application, districts and district consortia are required to submit plans that include:

- a) Practices, programs, and/or interventions supported by moderate or strong evidence of effectiveness;
- b) A comprehensive birth-grade 12 literacy plan that aligns with the Kansas State Department of Education's (KSDE) comprehensive literacy plan (*The Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy*);
- c) A focus on improving the pre-literacy and literacy skills of disadvantaged children, including English learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities;
- d) A clear plan to align literacy services and instruction for learners birth-age 5 with literacy services and instruction for learners in the K-12 system.

Completion of this application documents the commitment and readiness of applicants to effectively implement a comprehensive process designed to advance literacy skills and support evidence-based, cohesive, and sustainable practices into their systems.

The proposed plans should weave student literacy support together with the spirit of Kansas' vision for birth-grade 12 education. They must align with the Kansas State Literacy Plan, and also should leverage support from state literacy partners with expertise across the birth-grade 12 spectrum to collectively build, implement, and support effective literacy practices to meet the needs of young learners. Partnerships will be key to program success and applicants must demonstrate how they will establish and maintain partnerships with KSDE and its program staff, other LiNK subgrantees, professional learning providers, and community partners.

Optional Letter of Interest

A letter of interest signifies to KSDE that the applicant is interested in submitting a formal application for funding. While the letter is optional and nonbinding, it will greatly assist program staff with planning the application review process.

Optional Application Assistance

LiNK team members will provide optional technical assistance to prospective applicants through a series of webinars and on-site workshops in February and March 2018. These sessions will cover every aspect of the application and encourage team-based attendance from applicants.

Submission Deadline

All application materials should be completed and submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on April 18, 2018. Early submission is highly encouraged. Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of their application materials only after all parts are submitted, and no later than two business days after receipt of all application materials. Questions related to the application process should be directed to Jenni Marlatt at jmarlatt@ksde.org.

Proposal Evaluation

The federal Striving Readers Initiative requires KSDE to organize a competitive process for subgranting funds under LiNK. An independent peer review process will be used to award

subgrants to applicants that meet all requirements in the RFA and earn the highest scores from the independent peer review panel. A scoring rubric will be used by the independent peer review panel to assign points to all applications and to aid in the prioritization of awards. ([See Appendix A](#)).

The application review process is designed to support applicants in the submission of quality proposals and to ensure a fair, thoughtful, and thorough review of all applications. An independent panel of expert peer reviewers will be recruited to score and select LiNK subgrantees. Reviewers may have demonstrated expertise in literacy and language from birth to age 5, Kindergarten to grade 5, middle school, or high school through grade 12. They may also be engaged in the provision of early childhood services, management of instructional programs, use of data to manage and inform instruction, administration of local education agencies and schools, the use of high quality professional development and instructional coaching, conducting of rigorous research, or instruction with disadvantaged children. Every effort will be made to ensure that the panel is comprised of members who are not biased in favor of or against any particular applicant in the state of Kansas.

Peer review panel members will participate in a virtual training session with KSDE project staff prior to the review of district/consortium applications. The training session will include a thorough discussion of RFA components, the scoring rubric, and strong and weak responses to the requirements and recommendations listed in the RFA. Reviewer questions and requests for clarification will be answered and addressed.

Round One Application Review: During round one of the application review process, no fewer than two reviewers will be assigned to read and score each proposal. In cases where the scores of the reviewers are widely divergent, a third reviewer will be asked to review the application. Each reviewer will briefly summarize the strengths and weaknesses of each application reviewed. Evidence-based practices will be reviewed using What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) criteria for moderate to strong evidence. Once all the applications have been reviewed, scores will be averaged and ranked from highest scoring to lowest scoring. Up to 20 top-scoring applicants will move to a second round of reviews.

Round Two Application Review: Each application will be reviewed in accordance with WWC guidelines for moderate to strong evidence. Comments during this round will focus on feasibility, impact, and sustainability. Round two scores will be averaged with round one scores, and applications will be placed in rank order from highest scoring to lowest scoring.

Individual scores and feedback will be verified by LiNK staff, and the applications will be ranked from highest to lowest. The ranked scores will be used to determine which applications will be funded. KSDE will make awards based on the independent review panel's scores.

Application Scoring Rubric

The peer review panel will be provided with an Application Scoring Rubric (ASR). The ASR will use a 7-point scale in round one, and a 4-point scale in round two. Scores will be assigned for each of the RFA's required components with a possible total score of 110 points.

Applicants must respond to all *required* components, and may choose to include or not include items related to the *recommendations* found in the application. The ASR can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Award Notifications

All applicants will receive written notification of their status no later than June 1, 2018, which will indicate the applicant's status as either "Awarded" or "Not awarded." Awarded applicants should plan for implementation to begin in the 2018-19 school year, and project representatives may need to participate in post-award events (e.g., webinar, in-person meeting) in June 2018. While the awarded applicants should anticipate implementing their plan fully as written, applicants may be asked to modify specific program elements in order to better meet the needs of federal or state project goals.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Part I: Online Application – Demographic and Baseline Data Collection

Part I of the LiNK application asks for publicly-available baseline data from your district or district consortium. [Please click here to complete Part I of LiNK application.](#)

Part II: Project Narrative

Part II of the LiNK application must be emailed to kansaslinkgrant@ksde.org no later than 11:59 p.m. April 18, 2018. Early submission is highly recommended.

Submission Guidelines for Project Narrative

Project Narratives must follow these specifications:

Maximum Length	25 pages
Font Style	Times New Roman
Font Size	12 pt.
Spacing	Single-Spaced
Margins	1-inch
File type for submission	PDF
Header	Include district USD number(s) in a header throughout the document. These will be removed for the application review.
Figures and Tables	Meaningful figures and tables are encouraged. Please use 10-12 pt. font, single-spaced. Figures and tables contribute to the 25 single-spaced page limit.
Page numbers	Include page numbers on the bottom center of each page.

Organization of Project Narrative

Project Narratives should be organized into three broad sections – Feasibility, Impact, and Sustainability. Subheadings and explanations of the information that should be included within each section are provided on subsequent pages.

Part II: Project Narrative, Continued

Section A: Feasibility

Local Literacy Needs Assessment ([Click here to see sample needs assessment.](#))

Required: Applicants must provide evidence that a comprehensive, birth to grade 12 needs assessment was conducted within the last five years. The needs assessment should provide information that identifies high priority “problems of practice” in language and literacy for children. It should include information from key stakeholders from the following groups: students, teachers, parents, administrators, and early childhood providers. Needs assessment results should clearly support the district’s/consortium’s proposed comprehensive literacy program.

Recommended: Applicants use the [KSDE-provided birth through grade 12 needs assessment](#).

Management Plan

Required: Applicants need to describe a management plan that details who will be responsible for general grant administration, reporting, and each aspect of implementation including the comprehensive literacy plan, professional learning, allocation of funds, securing and maintaining partnerships, and the continuous improvement plan. The plan needs to describe how team members will collaborate to ensure overall success of implementation and sustainability efforts.

Comprehensive Local Literacy Plan

Required: Applicants must describe how the comprehensive literacy plan(s) aligns with and is supportive of the SEA literacy plan. It should include programs and practices that show moderate or strong evidence of effectiveness. In the absence of strong or moderate evidence in a particular language or literacy area, applicants must show that proposed interventions and/or programs have evidence that shows promise of effectiveness. Priority will be given to applications that include practices supported by moderate or strong evidence over applications lacking moderate or strong evidence.

The LiNK team and its partners will not mandate specific literacy programs that districts must use, but it will provide guidance and support to schools wishing to implement strategies and interventions that align with the Kansas State Literacy Plan ([see Appendix E](#)). The literacy plan aligns with Kansas standards for literacy and addresses students’ literacy growth and development from birth through grade 12.

Recommended: Applicants use the outline provided in the [Needs Assessment Guide](#) to develop their local literacy plans.

Professional Learning

Required: Applicants should describe how they will provide high quality professional learning for educators or other stakeholders. This means that professional learning activities:

- a) are integral to providing educators and families with the knowledge and skills

- necessary to enable children to learn, and to meet the State's academic standards;
- b) are sustained, cohesive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and context-specific;
- c) improve and increase families' and educators' understandings of how to adjust strategies in accordance with learners' needs, appropriately assess learners, use materials, analyze data, support personalized literacy learning, and effectively manage a learning environment;
- d) advance implementation and understanding of evidence-based practices;
- e) are designed to increase learning and achievement in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and language;
- f) include training for parents, teachers, principals, and other school and community-based early learning program leaders in the effective use of technology and its role in literacy growth and development;
- g) include a program or plan for instructional coaching for educators. (The LiNK program staff will be sponsoring virtual instructional coaching as an option for districts/district consortia who wish to participate);
- h) include budget allocation and participation in the state-wide LiNK program meetings, including two in-person annual meetings.
- i) include budget allocation for implementation of a professional learning plan, including local, state, and virtual options.

Recent, Relevant Research

Required: Recent and relevant (e.g., to student populations, demographics, interests, developmental stage) research that supports the applicant's proposed program should be included in the application. The cited studies must support critical elements of the program and, when available, support the level of evidence for the applicant's proposed practices.

Plan for Allocation of Project Funds

Required: Applicants must demonstrate that the applicant's project allocates funds using the following formula:

- a) 15% of applicant's project funds support activities, interventions, and practices for children from birth to age 5.
- b) 40% of applicant's project funds support activities, interventions, and practices for students from Kindergarten to grade 5.
- c) 40% of applicants' project funds support activities, interventions, and practices for students in middle school and high school with equitable distribution of funds between middle school and high school programs.

The remaining 5% of funds may be allocated to any of the four age groups as applicants deem appropriate.

Section B: Impact

Use of evidence-based interventions and practices

Required: Proposed literacy interventions and practices included in the applicant's literacy plan must have at least moderate evidence of support. Moderate evidence is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as evidence that shows a "statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study." Applicants must describe the process they will use to demonstrate the extent that the interventions or practices are supported by moderate or strong evidence. In the absence of strong or moderate evidence in a particular language or literacy area, applicants must show that proposed interventions and/or programs have evidence that shows promise of effectiveness.

Recommended: The majority of proposed literacy practices included in the applicant's literacy plan have strong evidence of support for use with the populations with whom the applicant plans to use them. Strong evidence of support as defined by the U.S. Department of Education means "a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study."

Personalized Learning Practices and Strategies.

Required: Applicants must demonstrate that the literacy plan(s) support(s) evidence-based and personalized instructional approaches for disadvantaged children. The plan(s) should include descriptions of how the following will be implemented:

- a) instruction that is delivered in individual, small group, or discussion groups as determined by individual students' needs;
- b) Kansas Early Learning Standards and K-12 Standards for English Language Arts;
- c) a valid and reliable balanced system of assessments;
- d) continuous professional learning and support for teachers around evidence-based practices for differentiating instruction and personalizing instruction to meet the needs of each student.

Recommended: Each district literacy plan includes strategies to increase students' motivation to read, write, and engage in self-directed learning, strategies that stress the use of language with peers and adults throughout literacy instruction, and a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and environment.

Local Evaluation

Required: Applicants must include budget allocation for, and describe how the district or consortium will identify and retain a qualified external evaluator. The external evaluator should collect and analyze data relevant to state and local program goals, work with project staff to report on adherence to project goals and effectiveness of implemented program elements, and provide data-driven guidance and recommendations to the district or consortium during each of the three program years.

During the application review process, special attention will be given to the particular qualifications and capacity of the evaluators to design and conduct a rigorous program evaluation.

External evaluators must agree to collaborate with the seven (7) other projects' external evaluators in order to develop a set of common measures for all subgrantees in the following four state goal areas:

- Build capacity for and make an impact on literacy growth and development for learners birth-grade 12 through community partnerships.
- Implement high-quality and state-aligned literacy plans, designed locally to meet the literacy needs of birth-grade 12 learners, particularly those of disadvantaged learners.
- Implement strategic plans for cohesive, embedded, ongoing, data-driven, culturally-responsive professional learning focused on high-quality and evidence-based literacy practices.
- Implement data-driven local literacy plans focused on scaling and sustainability beyond the grant term.

External evaluators will be required to attend measurement and progress workshops twice each year. Submitted budgets should reflect all travel and related expenses for the external evaluator.

Targeting of Disadvantaged Children

Required: Applicants must describe how they will identify and serve the greatest percentage of disadvantaged children. The plan must include a description of

- a) in what ways the applicant intends to identify disadvantage children,
- b) in what ways data sources will support the process, and
- c) which staff members will oversee the process.

Alignment of Birth-Age 5 and K-12 Literacy

Required: Applicants must describe the process they will use to ensure that their comprehensive literacy plan(s) is/are closely aligned with the state's comprehensive literacy plan, and that their plan(s) is/are supportive of the state literacy plan. The KSDE comprehensive literacy plan:

- a) addresses the pre-literacy and literacy needs of learners from birth to grade 12;
- b) responds to the needs identified by a comprehensive literacy needs assessment that aligns state policies, resources, and practices with clear goals;
- c) sets high expectations for all learners, including disadvantaged learners;
- d) provides for professional development for all educators in effective literacy instruction;
- e) shows how alignment and progression for each age/grade group occurs, especially alignment between birth to age 5 and K-12 literacy efforts.

Section C: Sustainability

Partnerships

Required: Applicants must describe the current state of partnerships (e.g., with early learning providers, local literacy initiatives, libraries, families), and their plan for using funds to increase, improve, and strengthen partnerships for the purposes of improving birth-grade 12 literacy.

Supplement Not Supplant

Required: Applicants must show that their proposed plan supplements and does not supplant current programs or funding. Initiatives and programs that were previously in place or previously planned using alternative funding sources should not be continued or carried out using LiNK funds.

Recommended: Applicant describes how the proposed literacy project's activities supplement current program expenditures, current literacy efforts, and how the proposed project will strengthen the applicant's overall literacy plan and implementation efforts.

Continuous Improvement Plan.

Required: Applicants must describe how they will use data obtained from the KSDE state summative assessment as well as locally-selected measures to inform a continuous improvement plan for birth through grade 12 literacy. The primary outcome of continuous improvement efforts should be to inform instruction and ensure literacy growth and learning for disadvantaged learners from birth through grade 12. Applicants must describe how they plan to ensure that families, educators, and other key stakeholders receive the results of the evaluations in a timely fashion, consistent with all applicable Federal, State, and other privacy requirements. A detailed plan to track learners' progress over time should also be included in the plan.

Part III. Budget and Budget Narrative

A. Budget Document

A budget document (e.g., spreadsheet) must be emailed to kansaslinkgrant@ksde.org no later than 11:59 p.m. April 18, 2018. Early submission is highly recommended. Budget samples are available for viewing in Appendix C.

Applicants are reminded that allocations must show how spending will be allocated in accordance with federal grant requirements, including:

- 15% Birth-Age 5
- 40% Kindergarten-Grade 5
- 20% Middle School
- 20% High School

The remaining 5% of funds may be allocated to any of the four age groups as applicants deem appropriate.

Salaries and benefits for staff hired specifically for LiNK grant implementation efforts are limited to no more than 25% of subgranted funds.

Budgets must adhere to guidelines provided by the U.S. Department of Education for federal grant spending, as well as state guidelines for each specific grant. Applicants are reminded that the “supplement not supplant” rule applies to these funds.

Examples of allowable expenses for LiNK awards include, but are not limited to:

- Stipends for educators to participate in professional learning experiences relevant to local literacy plan implementation
- Stipends for educators to work on specific aspects of the local literacy plan
- Substitute pay to allow educators to participate in professional learning experiences relevant to local literacy plan implementation
- Salaries and benefits for individuals hired specifically to work on LiNK grant implementation.
- Fees for early learning providers to participate in professional learning experiences relevant to local literacy plan implementation
- Fees for professional learning to support implementation of an evidence-based literacy practice with early learning, K-5, 6-8, and/or 9-12 staff.
- Travel expenses for birth-grade 12 educators to attend professional learning events related to local literacy plan implementation
- Materials necessary to implement a standards-aligned, evidence-based practice that aligns with goals outlined in the local literacy plan
- Materials to support family and community-based literacy efforts, especially for birth-age 5 learners

Indirect cost rates should follow the [KSDE guidance found at this link](#).

B. Budget Narrative

The budget narrative portion of the LiNK application must be emailed to kansaslinkgrant@ksde.org no later than 11:59 p.m. April 18, 2018. Early submission is highly recommended.

Applicants should use the budget narrative as an opportunity to

- a) explain how expenses detailed in the budget document support local, state, and federal goals;
- b) explain how the funds requested support the goals determined as a result of the local needs assessment(s) and identified in the local literacy plan(s);
- c) demonstrate the funds as reasonable and necessary for the purposes of implementing the local literacy plan(s).

Submission Guidelines for Budget Narrative

Maximum Length	No maximum
Font Style	Times New Roman
Font Size	12 pt.
Spacing	Single-Spaced
Margins	1-inch
File type for submission	PDF
Header	Include district USD number(s) in a header throughout the document. These will be removed prior to the application review.
Figures and Tables	Meaningful figures and tables are encouraged. Please use 10-12 pt. font, single-spaced. Figures and tables contributed to the 25 single-spaced page limit.
Page numbers	Include page numbers on the bottom center of each page.

Part IV: Resumes and CVs

Please submit Resumes or CVs for all staff who will be responsible for grant implementation. These documents should be emailed to kansaslinkgrant@ksde.org no later than 11:59 p.m. April 18, 2018. Early submission is highly recommended.

Questions

This concludes the LiNK Application Process. Please reach out to LiNK program staff with any questions about this application or program planning.

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