California Department of Education

Executive Office

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August 10, 2020

**TO:** MEMBERS, State Board of Education

**FROM:** TONY THURMOND, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Update

## Summary of Key Issues

On June 3, 2019, the California Department of Education (CDE) applied for the federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant. The CDE received notification of the grant award on September 27, 2019. This memo details the history of the grant, the work done thus far, and how the timeline has changed due to COVID-19.

### **Background**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 authorizes the CLSD Program. This five-year competitive grant advances literacy skills through the use of evidence-based reading and writing instructional practices and interventions, including pre-literacy. The grant serves children from birth through grade twelve, with an emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities. The grant also has two priorities: (1) projects that include evidence-based family literacy strategies, and (2) projects that increase educational options for groups of students who have traditionally been underserved.

California’s $37.5 million award will be used to leverage and expand existing statewide infrastructure, guidance, and expertise to bring coherence to the system of literacy supports to improve student outcomes over a period of five years.

The CDE’s proposal reflected a cross-division collaboration effort, with input provided by representatives from the English Learner Support, Expanded Learning, Special Education, Early Learning and Care, Career and College Transition, and Improvement and Accountability divisions. The CDE also disseminated a needs assessment survey to all 58 county offices of education (COEs) to obtain a statewide perspective on the needs of local educational agencies (LEAs). COEs, districts, and schools all participated in the survey. Although the survey is now closed, an archived copy is available on the CDE CLSD web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsd.asp>.

The CDE also established formal partnerships with several organizations to not only inform the proposal, but also to assist in carrying out grant activities across the life of the project. These partnerships include the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), California Subject Matter Projects, First Five, and WestEd.

In July 2019, the CDE provided an item to the State Board of Education (SBE), sharing the proposal as it was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Item 10 is posted on the CDE SBE web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr19/agenda201907.asp>.

### **Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Objectives and Commitments**

The CDE has committed itself to a variety of activities, as outlined in the CLSD proposal. Some of this work has been delayed due to COVID-19, so the CDE consulted with the U.S. Department of Education to extend the timeline of activities. An agreement was reached, and work completed towards these objectives and changes to the original proposed timeline are as follows:

#### **Objective 1—Align local and state literacy initiatives through a coordinated effort to build state and local capacity over the life of the project**

The CDE has continued to build internal capacity and external partnerships. Activities for this objective include:

* Hiring one Education Programs Consultant (EPC) to work full-time on the grant project, funded through CLSD funds
* Hosting monthly Literacy Roundtables for CDE staff
* Holding regularly scheduled calls with external partners

Tasks under Objective 1 have largely not been affected by COVID-19, with the exception of hiring the full time EPC, which had been delayed but is now on track to be completed in October 2020. All project-related work thus far has been managed by existing staff in the Educator Excellence and Equity Division (EEED), including one full-time, in-kind EPC, as specified in the project proposal.

#### **Objective 2—Develop and implement an evidence-based comprehensive state literacy plan (SLP) that aligns and integrates state literacy initiatives, content standards, and state guidance documents to support teachers of students, birth through grade twelve**

The CDE, with support from the Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd, convened a group of literacy experts and educators in February 2020 to assist with the interpretation of the comprehensive statewide literacy needs assessment and provide recommendations for the SLP. CDE staff, with input from collaborating partners, then developed a draft SLP and convened a State Literacy Team (SLT) in March 2020 to provide additional input. This team reviewed the needs assessment data, helped to prioritize evidence-based strategies, and identified resources to include within the SLP, ensuring the document may be used as a tool and model for subgrantees and LEAs as they develop local literacy plans. More information regarding the SLT is available on the State Literacy Plan Team web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsdteam.asp>.

The original grant timeline indicated that the CDE would present the draft SLP to the SBE for input in May 2020, and again in July 2020 for approval. However, due to COVID-19, the May Item was removed from the SBE agenda and the timeline was modified (see Attachment 1). The extended timeline has allowed the CDE to seek additional stakeholder input to improve the draft SLP. Assisted by the Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd, the CDE project leadership team also used this additional time to thoroughly review the input from the March SLT meeting and refine the draft. Additionally, the CDE now has an opportunity to convene the SLT a second time in August 2020 to provide input on the revised SLP draft.

The CDE plans to present the draft SLP to the Advisory Commission on Special Education (ACSE) and the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) in summer and fall 2020. The CDE anticipates that the IQC will open a comment period at its September meeting to allow stakeholders to provide additional input on the draft SLP. The CDE anticipates that the draft SLP will be presented to the SBE in a Memorandum in December 2020 and as Items in January and March 2021.

Finally, the additional time has also provided an opportunity for the CDE to leverage the expertise of select SLT members to work on other tasks, such as identifying literacy resources for the online repository and participating in a series of knowledge-building recorded webinars over the summer. This video series will focus on topics such as supporting students with dyslexia and other students who struggle to read, family and community engagement, distance learning, early literacy, and other topics identified by SLT members.

#### **Objective 3—Build local capacity to establish, align, and implement local literacy initiatives that emphasize family and community involvement to address the needs of California’s most vulnerable children**

The CDE will develop a Request for Applications (RFA) that will be released concurrently with the final, approved SLP (see Attachment 1). Literacy support strategies outlined in the SLP will be implemented and studied by CLSD Regional Leads. These leads, COEs selected through a competitive grant process, will select districts to work with over the life of the grant. Kindergarten through grade five districts identified by subgrantees may also be selected by the U.S. Department of Education’s federal evaluators to participate in a national evaluation study. Subgrantees will be identified and awarded by September 2021.

While the CDE has pushed the timeline back in response to COVID-19, the EEED is confident that this additional time will allow for a more thoughtful, responsive, and robust SLP. Additional time will also allow for a more defined RFA that ensures subgrantees have the knowledge and expertise to support statewide literacy reforms and build regional capacity to benefit all California students.

More information regarding the CLSD grant program is available on the CDE CLSD Grant web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsd.asp>.

## Attachment(s)

* **Attachment 1:** Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Timeline

(2 pages)

# **Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Timeline**

| **Activity** | **Original Timeline** | **Current Timeline** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Revise State Literacy Plan (SLP) based on State Literacy Team (SLT) input/meeting and needs assessment data analysis report | March–April 2020 | May–June 2020 |
| Second convening of SLT to gather feedback on updated draft SLP | N/A | August 2020 |
| State Board of Education (SBE) Memorandum to provide a status update on the SLP | N/A | August 2020 |
| Present overview of draft SLP to Bilingual Coordinators Network to receive input and feedback | N/A | August 27–28, 2020 |
| Launch of Knowledge Building Recorded webinar series to build field capacity | N/A | September 2020 |
| SLP draft to Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) for feedback and opening of public comment period  | April 2020 | September 16–17, 2020 |
| Public comment period to gather input and feedback on the draft SLP | April–May 2020 | September 17–October 28, 2020 |
| Present draft SLP to the Advisory Commission on Special Education to receive input and feedback | N/A | October 21–22, 2020 |
| Launch of Technical Assistance webinar series focused on supporting subgrant applicants and awardees | July 2020 | November 2020 |
| IQC reviews proposed SLP revisions based on analysis of public comment and recommends for SBE approval | May 2020 | November 18–19, 2020 |
| SBE Memorandum to provide an update on project activities and overview of draft SLP | N/A | December 2020 |
| Present draft SLP to the SBE | May 2020 | January 13–14, 2021 |
| Present final draft of the SLP to the SBE for adoption | July 2020 | March 17–18, 2021 |
| Post approved SLP to California Department of Education (CDE) website and begin work on final publication with CDE Press | July 2020 | March 2021 |
| Disseminate Request for Applications to solicit applications from potential subgrantees | July 2020 | May 2021 |
| Request for Applications from potential subgrantees due | August 2020 | July 2021 |
| Publication of SLP finalized | September 2020 | July 2021 |
| Announce awards for subgrantees | September 2020 | September 2021 |
| Provide training and technical assistance to subgrantees | October 2020–September 2024 | October 2021–September 2025 |