

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SPARKING EARLY LITERACY GROWTH IN WEST VIRGINIA: SCHOOL READINESS, INSTRUCTION & EXTENDED LEARNING



West Virginia Public Education Collaborative
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Full Proposal Deadline: February 28, 2021



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Grant Snapshot

Grant Title:	Sparkling Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia: School Readiness, Instruction & Extended Learning
Summary:	The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to solicit innovative ideas, initiatives, and interventions to support the early literacy growth of West Virginia children Birth to Age 8 in high-need schools and student populations. Public and private schools, early care and early childhood centers, after school and summer learning programs, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, and other literacy focused stakeholders/communities/community and public organizations are encouraged to apply.
Targeted Learners:	Birth to Age 8
Funding Cycle:	March 31, 2021 – June 30, 2022
Grant Focus:	Funded projects will focus on one of the following: school readiness, instructional practices, and innovations or extended learning.
Grant Priorities:	High-risk student populations/communities and other educational support systems/organizations in need Low-performing schools
Foundation Funder:	Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation; Pittsburgh, PA
Grant Administrator:	West Virginia Public Education Collaborative, Morgantown, WV
Contact:	Donna Peduto, Executive Director West Virginia Public Education Collaborative 304-293-2530 WVPEC@mail.wvu.edu

Section 1: Focus and Priorities

The [Benedum Foundation's](#) mission is "to encourage human development in West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania through strategically placed charitable resources." The purpose of this RFP, disseminated on behalf of the Benedum Foundation by the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative ([WVPEC](#)), is to solicit and fund innovative ideas, initiatives, and interventions to high-need schools and student populations to support early literacy growth of West Virginia children Birth to Age 8.

The primary focus and associated significant priorities of this grant program align to the [West Virginia Transformative System of Support for Early Literacy](#), a legislative mandate supporting schools' strategies to close the 3rd-grade reading achievement gap. The focus and significant priorities of this grant program also align with the Benedum Foundation's strategic initiative of achieving grade-level reading proficiency for all West Virginians. This initiative spans and influences the Foundation's four areas of focus: education, economic development, health and human services, and community development.

This grant funding focus aligns with the work of the WVPEC, which supports public schools through outreach and innovation to foster productive dialogue and respond rapidly to emerging P-20 issues in West Virginia. At the end of the funding cycle of this grant, WVPEC will consider the outcomes of each funded project in collaboration with the WV Board of Education and WV Department of Education to make recommendations to the West Virginia State Legislature for scaled adaptation.

Proposals describing projects that address the grant's significant priorities in novel ways will receive the highest consideration for funding. These priorities are of critical importance in addressing children's early literacy development, not only historically, but also in addressing learning loss attributed to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Public and private schools, early care and early childhood programs, after school and summer learning programs, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, and other literacy focused stakeholders/communities/public organizations in West Virginia are encouraged to apply.

Grant Focus

Projects must align with at least one of the following foci: school readiness, instructional practices and innovations, or extended learning. The West Virginia Department of Education's WV Leaders of Literacy Campaign for Grade-Level Reading website uses the following descriptions to unpack these terms:

- **School Readiness.** In West Virginia, school readiness refers to the process of ensuring children have access to the best available resources before entering first grade. Available resources support children and their families and focus on maximizing children's holistic development from birth. Research shows that learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten. Infants and Toddlers soak up words, rhymes, songs, and images. Most language acquisition occurs prior to children entering school, so it is important to provide a language-rich environment to ensure robust vocabulary development.
- **Instructional Practices and Innovations.** In West Virginia, high-quality instruction must be implemented, and student learning must be monitored from pre-k through 3rd grade. High-quality English language arts instruction during the early learning years involves immersion in a literacy-rich environment to develop awareness and understanding of spoken and written language. Through active participation and developmentally appropriate and engaging learning experiences, students develop competencies in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and media literacy. To support the development of lifelong learning and global awareness, students are given regular opportunities through developmentally appropriate contexts to participate in language experiences, utilize 21st century skills, and equally employ literary and informational texts of appropriate complexity.
- **Extended Learning.** In West Virginia, extended learning is a critical component of the comprehensive approach to reading success by the end of third grade. Research indicates that, on average, literacy skills decline over the summer. However, not all students experience "average" losses, and the summer learning slide disproportionately affects low-income students. Low income

students lose substantial ground in reading during the summer, while their higher-income peers often gain. The decline of knowledge and educational skills during the summer months is cumulative throughout a student’s career and further widens the achievement gap between low- and upper-income students.

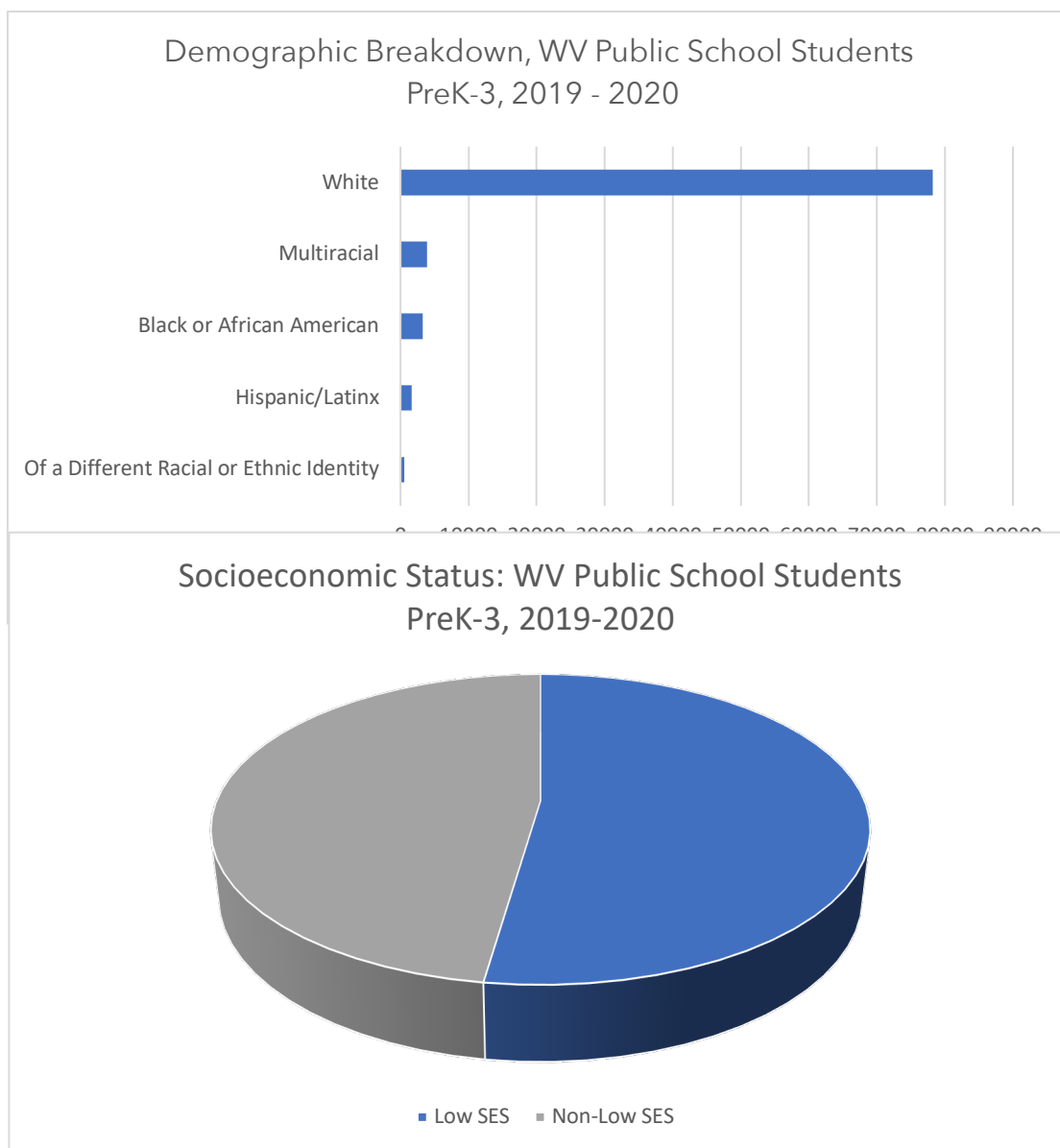
- Afterschool and summer learning programs provide supplemental education and support to help close academic and opportunity gaps among students most in need. Students spend 80% of their waking hours outside of school. These programs support students’ learning by providing transformative learning experiences in unique settings.

Grant Priorities

Projects must address target, high-risk populations of literacy learners. Target high-risk populations include but are not limited to: children and communities in poverty, children in foster care, children in the custody/care of grandparents or other extended family members, children identified as homeless, children with special learning needs, children experiencing trauma and behavioral challenges, children who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and children who are reading and writing below grade level.

WV PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL PREK - 3 STUDENT DATA SNAPSHOT		
	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS
Total Students Enrolled	87,532	4,296
Enrolled in PreK	14,899 total 1,232 three-year-olds 13,384 four-year-olds 273 five-year-olds	656 total
Low SES	45,779	
Homeless	4,034	
In Foster Care	2,305	
Enrolled in Special Education	15,601	
English Language Learners	811	
White Students	78,183	
Multiracial Students	3,872	

Black/African American Students	3,286	
Latinx and Hispanic Students	1,601	
Students of Other Racial/Ethnic Identities	590	



Projects must identify and prioritize low-performing learners Birth to Age 8 in schools, classrooms, populations, and communities. Preference will be given to projects with

collaborative partnerships (e.g., well-resourced or high-performing educational organizations and lower-income or lower-performing educational organizations; community agencies with low-performing or low-income educational groups).

West Virginia schools include:

- 24 districts with 3rd grade reading proficiency rates at or above the state average.
- 3 districts with 3rd grade reading proficiency rates under 25%.
- 270 primary and elementary, Title I eligible, public schools across 54 counties.

Section 2: Guidelines and Preferences

All proposed projects under consideration must take place in the state of West Virginia and explicitly focus on children in West Virginia, Birth to Age 8 (typically 3rd grade). Projects may involve teachers, children, families, and/or communities and must address at least one of **the three grant priority focus areas**:

- **school readiness**
- **extended learning**
- **instructional practices and innovations**

Projects must focus on the engagement of early literacy learners in the range of Birth to Age 8, and the project's target age and learner engagement must be explicitly described in the proposal. Proposals may focus on a specific age or grade range within Birth to Age 8 (e.g., first-grade students, toddlers); individual projects do not need to span the entire Birth to Age 8 range. Preference will be given to projects that include a professional development component as part of the overall project. Partnerships between stakeholders listed below are strongly encouraged.

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- West Virginia public and private school administrators and teachers

- Early care and early childhood education program/center administrators and teachers
- After school and summer learning program administrators and teachers
- West Virginia nonprofit organizations that support children, families, guardians, and communities
- West Virginia universities and colleges (four-year, two-year and community)
- Other literacy focused stakeholders/communities/community and public organizations: include but are not limited to libraries, family healthcare providers, parent associations (PTA), WV legal aid

There are no limits on the number of proposals a school/organization/stakeholder group can submit. There is a limit of one proposal per project director. Projects are not limited to the county where the grant seeker's organization or school is located.

Partnerships

Projects can be implemented in and among any of West Virginia's 55 counties. Applicants are encouraged to consult the metrics of student performance from the West Virginia Summative Assessment 2019 and socioeconomic status information included in the Appendix for providing a rationale for the target population and location.

Collaborative partnerships, especially those projects spanning multiple locations, are strongly encouraged but not required for funding. We believe collaboration between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors may be used to leverage the resources each can bring help solve and resolve common concerns. Letters of partnership support are recommended.

Outcomes and Student Assessment

Projects must identify, in detail, at least two measurable project outcomes.

Project outcomes should align with impact on learners, school, parents, or community. Proposals must specifically identify how the outcomes will directly influence improved literacy skills in the target population (children Birth - Age 8).

One of these two outcomes **must** measure participant (i.e., student and/or teacher, parent/family member/guardian) change/growth/improvement using a pre-post assessment tool (selected by project director/organization). Assessment plans may consist of data collected as part of the organization's existing assessment strategy or include assessment protocols specific to the project. Grant seekers should consult the Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia: School Readiness, Instruction & Extended Learning Resource Guide for additional information on assessment measures.

Budget Considerations

The maximum dollar amount for each funded project is \$50,000.

- Each proposal must include a detailed budget and a narrative that includes the justification of expenditures.
- Funds may be used for personnel, stipends/incentives, equipment and materials, training costs, supplies, travel and other necessary materials. Indirect costs (e.g., organization's facilities and administrative expenses or overhead) line items are not allowed.
- Matching funds are strongly encouraged but not required. To clarify, matching funds, often referred to as cost-sharing, represents an institutional commitment to a project. These matching funds may include in-kind contributions such as reallocating organization resources or staff or inclusion of other outside funding contributions. Matching funds, in-kind, or additional/external funding should be included in the overall budget and explained in the budget narrative.

Grant Timeline

DATE	ACTION ITEM
October 28, 2020	Request for Proposals (RFP) released
Week of November 9, 2020	First technical assistance/informational session
Week of November 30, 2020	Second technical assistance/informational session
January 15, 2021	Intent to apply form must be received by 11:59 p.m.
February 28, 2021	Electronic proposals must be received by 11:59 p.m.
April 15, 2021	Formal notification of awards
1 year	Funding period

Section 3: Pre-Proposal Support

Grant funds will be distributed beginning in the late spring/early summer of 2021. WVPEC is responsible for the grant funding selection, oversight, and management, and all inquiries around the RFP should be directed to WVPEC. Funding decisions will be determined through a competitive proposal review of qualities aligned with the guidelines outlined in this RFP and will be managed by WVPEC. The review committee will include experienced literacy educators from across the state of West Virginia.

To assist grant seekers, WVPEC will host two informational program meetings, provide 1-1 consulting upon request and require a one-page intent to apply form, due one month before the grant deadline. **Engaging in these meetings is strongly recommended.**

- WVPEC will host two technical assistance/informational sessions to review grant guidelines and criteria and to answer questions. The first two sessions, scheduled for Fall 2020, will be virtual, using a Zoom meeting platform. Please

refer to the timeline for dates and login details of these sessions.

- WVPEC will provide support to schools, organizations and groups seeking funding. Upon request, members affiliated with WVPEC representing Marshall University, Shepherd University, West Virginia University, Pierpont Community and Technical College, and the West Virginia Department of Education are available to consult with prospective grant seekers to provide feedback, particularly grounded in a proposal's early literacy components. These conversations should take place during the initial project planning phase of the proposal development. Consulting with University faculty/representatives does not guarantee funding or provide any explicit or implied advantage during the proposal review phase.
- WVPEC **requires** grant seekers to complete a one-page intent to apply form due one month before the grant deadline.

One-page intent to apply form includes tentative plan for focus area, county, participants, project summary, proposed outcomes, and proposed assessment plan.

Section 4: Proposal Submission Process Guidelines, Selection, and Notification

Each innovative idea, initiative, and intervention proposal will consist of three parts: Cover Sheet, Narrative, and Budget (see Appendix). A single PDF file of all proposal components must be submitted through a grant portal accessed at the WVPEC website at <https://www.wvpec.com/>.

Summary of Grant Title Required and Recommended Components	
Required Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must align with at least one of the following foci: school readiness, instructional practices and innovations or extended learning.• Must target high-risk populations of literacy learners.• Must identify and prioritize low-performing learners Birth to Age 8 in schools, classrooms, populations, and communities. Must identify

	<p>which student populations projects are meant to impact the most and provide relevant statistics/information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must take place in the state of West Virginia and explicitly focus on West Virginia children, Birth to Age 8. • Must identify, in detail, at least two measurable project outcomes including a measure of participant (ie., student and/or teacher, or parent/family member/guardian) change/growth/improvement using a pre-post assessment tool [selected by project director/organization]. Projects should measure impact on risk factors that affect target populations. • Must complete and submit a one-page intent to apply form by January 15, 2021. • Must include an organization acknowledgment/signature page (e.g., superintendent, principal, director). • Must submit by February 28, 2021.
Strongly Recommend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative partnerships with other schools, educational groups/organizations, and WV public and community organizations. • Professional learning plan for teachers/providers. • Matching funds/in-kind/cost-share. • Examine impact of Covid-19 on children, Birth to Age 8 • Attend informational Zoom meeting. • Request WVPEC affiliate member 1-1 consulting.

A panel of literacy professionals representing PreK-12 personnel, higher education faculty, and community organizations will review proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation. If a member of the review panel provides 1-1 consulting to a specific grant seeker, that reviewer will not participate in that project's evaluative review.

WVPEC will notify project directors of grant award status by April 15, 2021. If funded, the project director must submit a final report to WVPEC within sixty days of the end of the project year.

Appendix: Proposal Guidelines

Part 1: Cover Sheet (submitted through Qualtrics form)

Dates/timespan for the project:

Project Title:

Proposing School/Organization(s):

Project focus:

☐ Instructional practices and innovations

☐ School readiness

☐ Extended learning

Project Abstract:

Age/Grade Level (select all that apply) ☐ Birth ☐ Age 3 ☐ PreK ☐ K ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3

This project will address these high-risk factors for the student population(s) identified above (please include relative data/description about risk factors):

This project will serve the following West Virginia county/counties:

This project will serve students in the following West Virginia schools, public and community organizations, childcare centers, and other educational groups/organizations/support networks:

Project director information:

Name/Title

Title:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Proposed Overall Budget:

Total amount requested from the title project:

Attach an acknowledgment/signature page from organization's leader (e.g., superintendent, director)

Part 2: Narrative (submitted as a PDF)

Narrative is limited to 20 pages, double spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point font, Times New Roman or Helvetica, excluding budget and budget narrative and appendix items. Use headings to organize the narrative. Narrative should address all of the following:

Project

Describe the proposed project. Be explicit on how this project addresses the funding focus around school readiness, instructional practices, and innovation or extended learning.

Need

Describe specifically the particular needs of the school, community, or population targeted in this project and how the population aligns with this grant's funding priorities (1) high-risk student populations/communities and (2) low-performing schools and other educational support systems/organizations.

Describe any existing early literacy initiatives currently transpiring in the school/organization/educational support network/community.

How will this project address historical student literacy learning decline or the literacy learning decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic/shutdown?

Participants

Who is the target population for this project, and why were they chosen?

- a. How many West Virginia children will the project serve? What is the age group of the targeted student population? What are the high-risk factors experienced by this student population, and which specific ones are focused on in this project?
- b. If applicable, how will the project engage classroom teachers/school professionals?
- c. If applicable, how will the project engage families/community members?
- d. If applicable, please describe any other participating population.

Describe this project's impact on the participants. Specifically describe how you intend the project to impact/address risk factors of the target population of children, Birth to Age 8.

Outcomes

Identify at least two project outcomes. For each outcome, how will success be measured? (If funded, these outcomes will define expectations of a grant.)

- Proposed Outcome 1 and how you will measure success.
- Proposed Outcome 2 and how you will measure success.

Assessment and Evaluation of Student Growth

How will the student population be tracked in the grant-funded period; which assessment protocols will be used to measure growth? Please refer to Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia: School Readiness, Instruction & Extended Learning resource guide.

Implementation and Sustainability

Describe the implementation plan, including a timeline.

- Describe how the project will be sustained after the end date of its funding.

Project Personnel

- Identify the project's key personnel. Include position, email address, expertise area, previous grant experience, and personnel's contributions to the project.

Part 3: Project Budget (Submitted as Excel spreadsheet or table)

A. Proposed Budget Table

All project expenses			Expenses allocated to grant	Costs allocated to other sources		Total
				Cash	In-Kind	
	Project Director					
	Consultants					
	Participants/Incentive					
	Equipment					
	Materials					
	Training Costs					
	Supplies					
	Travel					
	Other (list)					
Total			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Benedum foundation does not allow indirect/facilities and administrative costs on title grant awards. * Questions regarding the budget will be addressed during the technical

assistance sessions and 1 on 1 sessions. Technical assistance sessions will also be posted online after meeting.

B. Budget Justification

a) Project Director –Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is being requested to defray the costs of Dr./Mr./Ms./Mx._____, who will serve as the project director._____ will be responsible for general oversight of the project, including_____ research activities related to the project. He/she/they will dedicate_____ % of his/her/their total effort (_____ months) each year to this project.

b) Consultant –Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is being requested for Dr./Mr./Ms./Mx._____, who will assist the project director with the following activities:_____, and_____. Dr./Mr./Ms./Mx. was selected for his/her/their expertise in_____, which is critical to the proposed research.

c) Participant/Incentive –Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is being requested to provide \$_____ in stipends, \$_____ in travel expenses, and \$_____ in other support costs per year.

d) Equipment–Total Cost \$

Funding is being requested to purchase the following equipment: \$_____ for a _____, \$_____ for a _____, and \$_____ for a _____. Describe how this equipment will be used to meet the project's outcomes.

e) Materials–Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is being requested for materials. Itemize and describe how these materials will be used to meet the project's outcomes.

f) Training Costs–Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is being requested to provide training and to support project participants. Describe how these training costs will contribute to the project's outcomes.

g) Supplies–Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is being requested for office supplies, including basic supplies, _____, _____, and _____ for each year. Describe how supplies are necessary to meet the project's outcomes.

h) Travel–Total Cost \$

Project director/other project staff will be traveling to support outcomes of the project. Budget request support for per diem costs [mileage, lodging, meals] (\$_____) for _____ days in _____, totaling \$_____ per year. Describe how travel costs will contribute to the project's outcomes.

i) Other–Total Cost \$

Funding in the amount of \$_____ is requested for the development of a/an _____. Describe how these other costs will contribute to the project's outcomes.