



Advancing Science of Reading in Indiana

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

October 2022

Lilly Endowment is pleased to announce Advancing Science of Reading in Indiana (ASRI), an initiative to help interested Indiana colleges and universities expand and enhance the use of evidence-based instructional methods aligned with the Science of Reading (SoR) in their teacher preparation programs. The initiative's aim is to improve significantly the reading abilities of Indiana students. Through ASRI, the Endowment has allocated a total of **up to \$25 million for planning and implementation grants** that will be available to colleges and universities that wish to participate in this initiative. The initiative will complement a statewide effort recently undertaken by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to improve reading achievement in K-12 schools by helping current teachers implement SoR-aligned methods in their classrooms.

According to The Reading League, SoR is "a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing." Derived from five decades of research and thousands of studies in multiple languages from across the world in fields such as cognitive psychology, neuroscience and linguistics, "the science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties" (The Reading League, 2022). SoR research has shown that building reading skills requires explicit, systematic and cumulative instruction. Accordingly, SoR features the systematic inclusion of five instructional components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

The Endowment, which has long supported efforts to improve educational outcomes and achievement for students in Indiana's K-12 schools, finds compelling the potential impact of increased use of SoR-aligned teaching methods on reading achievement in Indiana schools and believes that teacher preparation programs in Indiana's colleges and universities can play a vital role in expanding and sustaining this impact.

Background

Learning to read in the early years of elementary school has long been recognized as a critical educational milestone on which all subsequent learning and success builds. Identifying reading achievement as an issue of significant nationwide urgency, The U. S. Congress convened the National Reading Panel in 1997 to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach children to read. The panel, which was comprised of leading scientists in reading research, educators and parents, reviewed thousands of research studies on how children learn to read and determined which teaching methods are most effective based on the evidence. The National Reading Panel's 2000 report remains the bedrock of the aforementioned SoR findings, which have been strengthened and affirmed during the last two decades.

As the awareness and urgency about reading achievement have spread across the country during the last 20 years, research and reporting on the issue have gained momentum and attention. A landmark 2012 report, commissioned by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and authored by sociologist Donald Hernandez, Ph.D., showed that when students fail to become skilled readers by third grade, they are very likely to struggle to succeed in school in subsequent years. Similarly, a 2010 longitudinal study conducted by University of Chicago found third grade reading strength to be a significant predictor of college attendance. Data from the U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics demonstrates that literacy levels impact success in adulthood as well. Adults with stronger reading abilities are more likely to be employed full-time and earn higher wages than adults who struggle to read. As continues to be the case in other states, far too many Hoosier students fail to develop the strong reading abilities that are essential for future learning and success in life.

Results from the Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination (IREAD-3) assessment indicate that overall some 20 percent of Indiana third graders do not possess basic foundational reading skills. Other assessments, however, indicate more troubling results. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures deeper reading and comprehension skills necessary for success in future learning, only 37 percent of Indiana fourth grade students scored proficient or better in reading on the assessment administered in 2019. Significant equity gaps in reading achievement cause further concern. NAEP results for students from racially and ethnically diverse populations and students who are economically disadvantaged were significantly worse than the results for white students and students who are not economically disadvantaged. Only 17 percent of Black students and 24 percent of Hispanic students who participated in NAEP in 2019 scored proficient or better, while 43 percent of white students met that benchmark. Only 24 percent of Indiana fourth graders who are economically disadvantaged and participated in NAEP in 2019 scored proficient or better, compared to 52 percent of their peers who were more economically advantaged.

The Indiana Learning and Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN) English/Language Arts (ELA) assessment provides another discouraging view of the reading abilities of Indiana's third grade students. Notably, in 2022 only 40.7 percent of the state's third graders demonstrated proficiency on this more rigorous assessment that measures reading and writing comprehension beyond the basic foundational reading skills assessed on IREAD-3. Like IREAD-3 and NAEP, significant performance gaps persist for students of color and students from low-income households on ILEARN.

Indiana Secretary of Education Dr. Katie Jenner has identified improving reading achievement as a strategic priority for the IDOE, which has recently launched a new professional development program focused on instructional methods aligned with SoR for current kindergarten, first and second grade (K-2) teachers in Indiana elementary schools. Too few K-2 teachers in Indiana elementary schools effectively use SoR-aligned methods to teach reading. Through this program, school-based instructional coaches will work one-on-one with K-2 teachers to enhance their ability to use SoR methods. IDOE also will offer training and financial incentives for teachers seeking additional professional development grounded in SoR.

Through IDOE's professional development program, which will be expanded through a grant of up to \$60 million from the Endowment, nearly half of Indiana's elementary schools will benefit from the school-based coaching model and a majority of current Indiana K-2 teachers will receive SoR training during the next four years. IDOE and the Endowment believe that this statewide effort has potential to result ultimately in significant increases in reading achievement across all student populations. More information about this grant and the IDOE effort can be found [here](#).

A New Initiative: Advancing Science of Reading in Indiana

IDOE and the Endowment recognize that Indiana’s teacher preparation programs, which collectively produce an average of more than 1,300 newly licensed elementary teachers in Indiana each year, are critical to improving reading achievement in the state. Colleges and universities regularly strive to prepare pre-service teachers to meet the instructional expectations of the Indiana elementary schools in which they will teach. Given the scale of IDOE’s efforts to enhance and expand the use of SoR-aligned methods to teach reading in Indiana schools, it will be important for graduates of Indiana teacher preparation programs to be competent in using these methods to teach reading. Accordingly, through ASRI, the Endowment has allocated a total of up to \$25 million to provide Indiana colleges and universities with resources to enhance or expand the preparation of their students to use SoR-aligned methods of instruction.

Through the initiative, the Endowment expects to approve planning grants for interested and eligible colleges and universities in late 2022 and implementation grants in 2023. Each of Indiana’s accredited public and private colleges and universities offering state-approved undergraduate, degree-granting programs leading to licensure in early childhood education, elementary education and/or mild intervention (special education) is eligible to apply for planning and subsequent implementation grants through ASRI. Although undergraduate teacher preparation programs are the focus of the initiative, the Endowment invites institutions with graduate education programs that are interested in designing and pursuing strategies to enhance those programs with SoR-aligned methods of instruction to contact Endowment staff to discuss the possibility of Endowment support for those strategies before November 14, 2022, the deadline for submitting planning grant requests.

Each of Indiana’s colleges and universities is unique, as are their teacher preparation programs. Through ASRI, the Endowment expects to consider and support a wide variety of activities through both the planning and implementation phases of this initiative.

Planning grants may be used to support short-term (up to one-year) activities focused on enhancing or expanding the use of SoR principles in teacher preparation programs. Some examples of possible activities or purposes that could be funded through ASRI planning grants include:

- An externally conducted evaluation of the extent to which current reading instruction curricula and field-based experiences align with SoR.
- An evaluation of the methods and data used to assess the effectiveness of the program’s recent graduates in teaching reading.
- Travel and stipends for faculty to visit and observe classrooms in Indiana elementary schools participating in IDOE’s SoR coaching model or elementary schools in other states that offer best practices in the use of SoR-aligned methods in reading instruction and/or such support to visit other colleges and universities in Indiana or around the country that have expanded or enhanced the use of SoR in teacher preparation.
- Establishment of and compensation for an interdepartmental team of faculty leaders to conduct a landscape analysis and compile best-practices for implementing SoR-aligned methods in teacher preparation.
- Preparation of an ASRI implementation grant proposal.

Implementation grants may be used to support multi-year activities focused on enhancing or expanding programs to ensure future teachers are prepared to use SoR-aligned methods in reading instruction. Some

examples of activities that could be funded through ASRI implementation grants include:

- Ongoing professional development for faculty, including adjunct and/or clinical faculty, in SoR-aligned methods. Although not required, professional development could be designed in conjunction with other colleges and universities and/or collaborating elementary schools and could include on-site, virtual and/or external opportunities such as conferences.
- Release time and stipends for faculty to engage in curricula evaluation, possibly based on planning activities, resulting in the redesign of curricula, coursework and syllabi to align more with SoR principles.
- Development of a new or visiting faculty position focused explicitly on SoR and/or engaging a search consultant to support the search and hiring process for faculty with expertise in SoR or in designing and implementing curricula, materials and coursework aligned with SoR.
- Identification and purchase of SoR instructional materials to be used in teacher preparation instruction and/or practicum experiences.
- Experiences for pre-service teacher candidates to practice SoR-aligned methods, such as the establishment of a reading tutoring program supervised by faculty with deep knowledge of SoR principles.

There are many more possibilities that could be proposed by colleges and universities for funding through the initiative that would enhance or expand SoR-aligned methods in teacher preparation programs. The Endowment also imagines that many opportunities for collaboration exist with other programs or departments in any given institution, other colleges or universities with teacher preparation programs, local K-12 schools and other organizations that could help to advance reading achievement through SoR-aligned methods in various ways.

The Endowment believes that robust and thoughtful planning can lead to more successful implementation of efforts to enhance or expand the use of SoR in teacher preparation programs. It therefore encourages colleges and universities interested in applying for funding through ASRI to participate in both the planning and implementation phases of the initiative. Guidelines and consideration for submitting planning and implementation grant proposals are detailed in the sections that follow.

Proposal Guidelines and Considerations

Planning Grants

In the planning phase of the initiative, eligible Indiana colleges and universities are invited to submit brief proposals requesting planning grants **ranging from up to \$75,000 to up to \$100,000**. The Endowment will determine the amount of planning grant funding that each applying institution is eligible for based on data from IDOE that indicate the number of graduates who receive Indiana educator licenses in the three areas mentioned above (elementary education, early childhood education and/or mild intervention), as reported to the U. S. Department of Education as required by Title II (Sections 205 through 208) of the Higher Education Act. Specifically, colleges and universities that have a five-year annual average of fewer than 80 educator licenses issued to graduates are eligible for planning grants of up to \$75,000, while those with a five-year annual average of 80 or more such licenses issued to graduates are eligible for planning grants of up to \$100,000.

As noted above, funds from these grants may be used for planning activities focused on enhancing or expanding the use of SoR methods in teacher preparation programs. The Endowment recognizes that some colleges and universities may already fully utilize SoR principles in teacher preparation, while others do so on a more limited basis. Therefore, planning activities are expected to vary widely. For this reason, the Endowment gives the presidents of the colleges and universities and their designees wide latitude in how planning funds are to be used, provided that all activities are focused on the near- or long-term application of SoR principles in teacher preparation.

To apply for planning grants, each college or university is invited to submit a proposal endorsed and transmitted by its president to request an appropriate amount of planning funds **by Monday, November 14, 2022**.

In each planning grant proposal, the college or university should briefly describe in narrative form (in three pages or less):

- The institution's teacher preparation program(s), with a focus on degree-granting programs leading to licensure in early childhood education, elementary education and/or mild intervention (special education).
- The teacher education program's approach(es) to preparing pre-service teachers in these degree-granting programs to teach reading.
- Broad goals the institution may have for its teacher preparation program regarding reading instruction aligned with SoR.
- Potential planning activities related to the enhancement or expansion of SoR in teacher preparation that could be undertaken with support of an ASRI planning grant.
- The amount of planning grant funds requested, based on the funding criteria described above (citing Indiana educator licensure data).

In addition to the narrative outlined above, the applying institution should include a one-page cover letter, signed by the president, requesting ASRI planning grant funds and a planning grant Budget and Budget Narrative (not to exceed two pages). In the letter, the president should affirm that the college or university is committed to enhancing or expanding meaningfully the teaching of SoR-aligned methods in its teacher preparation programs.

The Endowment will review ASRI planning grant proposals as they are received and expects to communicate funding decisions by December 2022.

Implementation Grants

In the implementation phase of the initiative, the Endowment will make funding available to eligible colleges and universities that submit high-quality proposals presenting compelling strategies or programs focused on enhancing or expanding the use of SoR in teacher preparation. As with ASRI planning grants, implementation grant amounts will be determined based on the number of graduates who are licensed in certain areas to teach in Indiana schools. Implementation grants will **range from up to \$500,000 to up to \$1,500,000**, depending on the institutions' five-year annual average number of licenses granted to graduates in Indiana in one of the three areas mentioned above (elementary education, early childhood education and/or mild intervention).

These grant amounts are to be used as a guide for colleges and universities as they prepare implementation grant proposals. The Endowment reserves the right to make adjustments in the amounts of the proposed grants based on institutions' potential for scale and impact and other factors once Endowment staff have an opportunity to review ASRI proposals and fully understand the nature of the institutions' teacher preparation programs.

ASRI Implementation Grant Proposal Amounts:

Five-year Annual Average of Early Childhood, Elementary Education or Mild Intervention Licenses Issued to Graduates	ASRI Implementation Grant Size
Fewer than 20	Up to \$500,000
20 to 79	Up to \$750,000
80 to 99	Up to \$1,000,000
100 or more	Up to \$1,500,000

Although this initiative is invitational and not competitive, the Endowment will only fund proposals that describe compelling strategies to meaningfully enhance or expand the preparation of teachers to effectively use SoR-aligned methods to teach Indiana elementary students to read.

The Endowment will especially favor proposed programs and strategies that will do the following:

1. Evaluate the current state of the institution's existing programs to prepare teachers to teach reading, including the degree to which faculty and students understand SoR, SoR-aligned instructional methods and the research showing the impact that such techniques have had on early reading achievement and equity gaps in reading achievement.
2. Design, refine, expand and/or align curricula and programs to provide students (pre-service teachers) with content and pedagogical knowledge aligned with SoR principles and enable them to apply in practice what they learn in class and to receive feedback on practice from faculty.
3. Provide and incentivize professional development in SoR for relevant faculty, including adjunct or clinical faculty.
4. Establish a quality assurance system that uses data from multiple measures and supports continuous improvement to ensure that pre-service teachers know essential components of structured literacy and can demonstrate effective reading instructional strategies aligned with SoR.
5. Leverage the assistance and consultation of credible experts in SoR-aligned methods.
6. Articulate clear goals that the college or university hopes to achieve with respect to enhancing and/or expanding SoR in teacher preparation.

In making funding decisions, the Endowment will consider each proposal for its feasibility, scale of impact, rationale, sustainability and level of demonstrated commitment of the institution's leadership, faculty and administration to SoR, among other criteria. The Endowment anticipates that ASRI implementation grants will fund proposed programs and strategies for up to three years.

The Endowment recognizes that some colleges and universities may wish to request funding support that would allow them to prepare for and implement proposed strategies as early as summer of 2023, while others may appreciate more planning time. Therefore, the Endowment will accept implementation grant proposals and communicate funding decisions on two different timelines. Applying colleges and universities should choose the timing that best accommodates their plans.

Timeline Options	Submit Implementation Grant Proposal(s) By:	Expected Grant Decision from Endowment By:	If Awarded Funding, Expected Payment By:
Option 1	April 7, 2023	June 30, 2023	July 31, 2023
Option 2	September 8, 2023	November 30, 2023	December 31, 2023

The Endowment may request additional information and revisions to proposals after submission and before grant decisions are made. The timing of the receipt of revisions could impact the timeline of a grant decision and subsequent payment outlined above.

Preparing an Implementation Grant Proposal

Once the applying college or university has completed its planning process and determines the timeline best suited for its plans, it should prepare an implementation grant proposal that includes the elements listed below.

Executive Summary: This is a concise, one-page summary of the proposal. It should include:

1. A brief statement about the institution’s current approach to preparing its students to teach reading.
2. A description of proposed strategies to enhance or expand SoR-aligned teacher preparation.
3. A description of what the institution expects to be different with regard to its approach to preparing future teachers to understand and apply SoR-aligned instructional methods (if it is successful in its application for and implementation of an ASRI grant).
4. The amount of funding requested (based on the funding amounts described above).

Proposal Narrative: In a narrative description of no more than 10 pages (written in 11-point or larger font with 1-inch margins), the applying institution should describe:

- The overall rationale for the institution’s participation in the initiative, including a description of its current teacher preparation program, especially focused on its approach to reading instruction.
- Activities that will take place with support of ASRI grant funds, with a focus on describing how the institution will enhance or expand the inclusion of SoR in appropriate curricula, instruction, course materials, field/practicum experiences, etc. in its programs that prepare teachers.
- Plans to evaluate the impact of the proposed activities during and after the grant period. These plans should include, among other things, the following:
 - › Key outcomes relating to ASRI’s aim that the institution expects to achieve by engaging in the proposed activities along with the performance indicators it intends to monitor to gauge

progress toward the key outcomes. Outcomes and performance indicators can be qualitative and quantitative as appropriate. The outcomes and performance indicators should together demonstrate what will be different, after the grant period is completed, with regard to its graduates' understanding of and ability to apply SoR-aligned instructional methods.

- › A description of the data the institution will use to assess progress toward key outcomes and performance indicators and its approach(es) to data collection and analysis.
- The institution's capacity and commitment to carry out activities identified in the proposal, including a description of the faculty, staff or other personnel that are expected to plan and oversee the implementation of the proposed activities.
- Any collaborators involved (e.g., content experts, partner organizations, other higher education institutions, K-12 schools) and their respective responsibilities.
- Any obstacles or challenges that are anticipated in implementing the proposed activities and how difficulties will be addressed. Please also consider and include as appropriate other factors that could complicate efforts to achieve the desired outcomes.
- A description of how any ongoing activities or programs launched or supported with grant funds will be sustained after the Endowment's grant has been expended.

Budget and Budget Narrative: The applying institution should submit a detailed, one-page line-item Budget and a Budget Narrative of up to two pages to accompany the implementation grant request. The Budget Narrative should describe each line item and explain how it was calculated. In addition, the line-item Budget must meet the following guidelines:

- If the budget for proposed strategies is greater than the grant amount, the college or university should describe other sources of support for the proposed strategies and identify organizations or individuals who may provide such support.
- If the college or university includes indirect costs in its budget, those costs should not exceed 10 percent of the total request to the Endowment.
- If the proposal includes a multi-year funding request, the budget should be arranged in a format that includes line-item totals for each year (up to three years) and the aggregate amount for each line item for the entire grant period. The budget should correspond with the implementation timeline.

Implementation Timeline and Milestones: The institution should provide a one-page summary of the implementation timeline and key project milestones. The timeline may be submitted in a chart format or as a narrative description and should identify key activities and/or milestones along with aligned key outcomes and performance indicators.

Letters of Support: If the proposal includes collaborative activities with other organizations, each of these collaborating organizations must submit a letter of support that confirms the role it will play in the proposed strategies. Such letters should be signed by the collaborating organization's most senior officer and/or board chair.

Appendices (optional): If desired, applicants may submit up to 10 pages of additional information to support the program(s) being proposed. Examples include graphs, charts, research citations, curricula vitae or other relevant documents.

Proposal Submission Procedures

ASRI planning and implementation grant proposals must be submitted in electronic format. Each planning and implementation grant proposal must be transmitted with a cover letter signed by the college or university president. In the letter, the president should affirm that the college or university is committed to enhancing or expanding meaningfully the teaching of SoR-aligned methods in its teacher preparation programs.

In addition, each planning and implementation grant proposal must include a completed [Proposal Information Form](#). All proposal documents must be emailed as a single PDF to reading@lei.org.

The Endowment will review all proposals soon after they are received. As referenced previously, colleges and universities must submit **planning grant proposals by November 14, 2022**. Colleges and universities wishing to submit implementation grant proposals should choose the timeline that works best for them. As outlined above, **the implementation proposal submission deadline options are as follows:**

- **Timeline Option 1:** April 7, 2023
- **Timeline Option 2:** September 8, 2023

No implementation grant proposals will be accepted later than September 8, 2023.

Questions and Resources

Information Sessions: The Endowment understands that colleges and universities interested in participating in ASRI may have questions about the initiative and application process. Accordingly, the Endowment will host virtual information sessions via Zoom video conferencing at three different times in the fall of 2022.

- Monday, October 24, 2022 at 2 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at 2 p.m. (repeat session)
- Thursday, October 27, 2022 at 10 a.m. (repeat session)

To RSVP for one of these sessions, please email reading@lei.org with your name, affiliated college or university, role and preferred session date.

Other Resources: After the October convening and information sessions, the Endowment also will make available resources related to the initiative on the [Endowment's website](#), including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to complement this RFP. The FAQ document will be shared via email with all individuals that participated in the ASRI convening on October 4, 2022, and all who signed up to participate in one of the three information sessions mentioned above.

Finally, the Endowment, with the assistance of IDOE staff and external SoR consultants, has assembled a list of resources relating to SoR (e.g., books, websites, articles). This document is available [here](#).

Questions:

Additional questions regarding ASRI can be sent to reading@lei.org.