Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy

Research Grant Initiative

Request for Application

Title: *Implementation Research to Improve Early Language and Literacy Outcomes*

Overview

Background and Purpose

Research from a variety of disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience, communication sciences and disorders, and education have built our understanding of the strategies, programs, and interventions that support children's language and literacy development from birth through age 8. While this research is useful and informs practice, the full integration and implementation of these best practices has been elusive. The aim of this research grants program will be to better understand successful implementation of evidence-informed strategies.

The Deal Center's research grant initiative supports projects examining the implementation of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices to support the development of early language and literacy within organizations working with children and families from birth through age 8.

The Center welcomes applications across disciplines and study contexts including but not limited to:
- Development and testing of implementation strategies to advance the adoption, implementation, sustainability, and scale-up of evidence-based practices;
- Development and testing of de-implementation strategies to decrease the use of approaches that are not based in science

- Evaluation of the impact of innovative design, content, or delivery methods intended to optimize effective approaches (for example their implementation, outcomes, and/or sustainability);
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of novel approaches that also includes a robust evaluation of implementation outcomes;
- Development and evaluation of research methods to advance implementation science, such as innovative research design, measurement, analytic, and data and knowledge synthesis methods;
- Research on the dissemination of information about effective approaches to improve children's language and literacy outcomes

The purpose of this grant mechanism is to provide funding for research investigating the implementation of early language and literacy practices for children birth through age 8 that create the conditions for all children to be on the path to third grade reading proficiency, as defined by the Get Georgia Reading four-pillar framework of language nutrition, access, positive learning climate, and teacher preparation and effectiveness. Grantees are expected to design and conduct an implementation research study relating to practices that foster early language and literacy within the context of birth through age 8 service and educational systems.

Award limits
 The Deal Center will award up to five research grants. Each grant award is for a maximum of $50,000.00. Grants are issued for one year to include a project period of January 15, 2024 – December 31, 2024.

Timeline

Application Distribution	October 16, 2023
Application + Implementation Science Webinar	November 1, 2023, 12 PM
Application Due Date	November 27, 2023, by 5 PM
Award Notifications	December 15, 2023
Grant Project Period	January 15, 2024 – December 31, 2024
Mid-term progress report due	July 1, 2024
Final report due	No later than January 31, 2025

Requirements

Eligible Organizations

Eligible applicants include University System of Georgia institutions and Georgia state agencies. Applications must reflect a cross-sector collaboration between the primary applicant and at least one partner organization. Thus, Georgia colleges and universities external to the University System of Georgia may apply along with a state agency that is serving as the primary applicant and fiscal agent. Up to three partner organizations can be identified in the application. Examples of previously awarded applicants include: 1) The Georgia Department of Public Health and Emory University School of Nursing, 2) Georgia State University and the Rollins Center/Atlanta Speech School, and 3) the University of Georgia and the Childhood Development Lab at McPhaul.

Content requirements

Get Georgia Reading Pillars

Research from disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience, communication sciences and disorders, and education have increased our understanding of evidence-based practices that support children's language and literacy development. In 2013, Georgia's public and private leaders expanded the conversation to include research from other disciplines such as epidemiology, demography, neonatology, child welfare, health policy, and more. Within this shared understanding of an even wider range of factors that affect a child's path to successful language and literacy development, they created a framework for action that defines the conditions that must be in place so that all children are on that path. This framework consists of the following interrelated pillars:

- **Language Nutrition:** All children experience abundant, positive, language-rich social interactions with caregivers, educators, and peers.
- **Access:** All children—and their families—have access to, and support for, healthy development, emotional well-being, and educational achievement.
- **Positive Learning Climate:** All educators, families, and policymakers understand and address the impact of learning climate on social and emotional engagement and student success.
- **Teacher Preparation and Effectiveness:** All caregivers and educators are equipped with evidence-informed knowledge and skills to effectively engage all children in a developmentally-responsive manner.

Applications should address one or more of the conditions for all children to be on the path to reading proficiently as defined by the Get Georgia Reading four-pillar framework. Specifically, the proposed research plan should make a clear connection to one or more of the pillars indicated above.

Applying Implementation Science

It takes 17 years to turn 14% of original research into services that are routinely provided in community service settings (Balas, 1998; Balas & Boren, 2000; Green et al., 2009). This research-to-practice gap reduces access to quality services in community settings where children and family are being served. Implementation science is the study of the use of strategies to adopt and integrate evidence-based health interventions into community settings in order to improve outcomes and is aimed at bridging this gap. The Deal Center aims to fund research focused on examining the implementation of evidence-based practices that support early language and literacy development in real-life settings. Implementation studies may focus on evaluating factors that aid or hinder the successful implementation of evidence-based early language and literacy practices. Typical problems faced in implementation of evidence-based practices include lack of capacity, resources, policy, or process barriers. Examples of such challenges may include varied or limited provider skillsets, lack of organizational/school capacity, workforce turnover and shortages, funding limitations, and/or policy barriers. At the core of implementation science is understanding and addressing these challenges.

In addition to evaluating strategies to improve the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of early language and literacy programs, implementation science is deeply intertwined with community-engaged and community-based participatory research methods. The Sandra Deal Center values research with a strong history and/or plan to engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the research questions and outcomes being measured are meaningful to families, community practitioners, and broader organizations. Projects should include an explicit statement on methods that will be used to engage with community partners and the role of partners in shaping research questions and outcomes.

By employing an implementation science framework, the following objectives will be achieved:
- Add to the growing field of implementation science to close the research-to-practice gap in early language and literacy development

- Discover the strategies necessary to implement and sustain evidence-based programs, policies, and practices, within agencies, non-profits, schools, and other organizations or systems that are naturally positioned to support early language and literacy outcomes,
- Identify specific examples of strategies to build practitioner competencies and promote high fidelity implementation of innovations that improve children's early language and literacy outcomes through virtual and face to face practices
- Replicate and scale-up safe and effective language and literacy practices, programs, and systems across communities, early childhood and K-12 education, higher education, and all other sectors that contribute to creating the conditions defined by the four pillars fundamental to children's language and literacy development

Applications should describe research that integrates the tenets and methodologies of implementation science to study the adoption, implementation, sustainment, or widespread dissemination of information related to evidence-based early language and literacy practices. Following are examples of implementation science frameworks and implementation science resources:

Overview:
https://impsciuw.org/implementation-science/learn/implementation-science-overview/

Frameworks:
- https://dissemination-implementation.org/
- Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) https://cfirguide.org
- RE-AIM: https://re-aim.org/
- *Implementation Science in Early Childhood Programs and Systems.*

Outcomes:
Proctor, E. K., Bunger, A. C., Lengnick-Hall, R., Gerke, D. R., Martin, J. K., Phillips, R. J., & Swanson, J. C. (2023). Ten years of implementation outcomes research: a scoping review. *Implementation Science*, *18*(1), 1-19.

Submission Requirements

Completed applications should be submitted via Qualtrics to the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy no later than **5pm, November 27, 2023**. Please click on this link to access the application https://gcsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_43l6ZVSzDY0td8W

It is strongly recommended to review the sample application below and to prepare application documents BEFORE visiting the application link. The sample below indicates all information required for application submission.

Preparing Your Application

In addition to preliminary application questions included within the Qualtrics platform (see sample below), you will prepare and upload several documents. All documents, with the exception of investigator CVs/resumes, should be 11-point Arial font with 1-inch margins. *Applications exceeding specified page limits will not be reviewed.* All submitted documents should be in PDF format. Your application should include each of the following documents.

1. **Abstract** (maximum of 500 words) describing the project goals and/or hypothesis, specific aims, research methods, expected results, and relevance to the Get Georgia Reading pillars as described above.

2. **Research Plan** (8 pages maximum). The research plan should address the review criteria specified below and must include the following six sections. Relevant images, tables, and figures can be included within the body of the research plan.
   a. **Impact** – does the project have potential to advance the field regarding fostering early language and literacy within the context of birth through age 8 service and educational systems
   b. **Relevance** – how the project is related to the Deal Center's targeted priority in addressing the Get Georgia Reading Pillars
   c. **Innovation** – describe how the project is novel, ground-breaking, and has the potential to move the field in new directions
   d. **Research Strategy** – specific aims, participant exclusion/inclusion criteria, recruitment strategy, methods and procedures, and statistical analyses to address specific aims
   e. **Investigators' Qualifications** – briefly describe. In addition, investigators CVs/resumes must be provided (see 6 below).
   f. **Environment** – briefly describe the environment and resources that will support the successful completion of the project.

3. **Bibliography:** Provide a list of references, including authors and titles, for all citations included in the research plan.
4. **Budget Worksheet Form:** Complete and upload a budget worksheet form. A sample budget worksheet is provided below. The budget worksheet can be downloaded here. This form will also be available in Qualtrics.
5. **Budget Justification:** The budget justification should provide an explanation for all line items in the budget (4 pages max).
6. **Investigators' Curriculum Vita/Resume:** Upload one file including all investigators' CVs/resumes. Margin and font size rules do not apply to this document and there is no page limit.

7. **Letters of Support:** Upload **one** file including letters of support from relevant partner organizations. Letters should be submitted on an agency letterhead or as a copy of an email including a signature indicating the agency/organization. The letter should include a description of previous collaborations, commitment to the proposed project, and role in proposed project.

Support for Applicants

An informational webinar will be held for potential applicants on November 1st, 2023, at 12 PM. The purpose of this webinar will be to cover the application process, required documents, and answer questions regarding implementation research. In addition, Dr. Katherine Pickard will be presenting an introduction to implementation science. You can join the webinar by clicking this link to register or by saving this zoom link in your calendar: https://gcsu.zoom.us/s/91483023038

Review Process and Criteria

Application Review Process: Reviewers external to the state of Georgia will review and evaluate each eligible application to make funding recommendations. If an external reviewer is assigned an application that includes a potential conflict of interest (e.g., relationships with investigators or affiliation with applicant institution or organization) the reviewer will recuse themselves for that application.

Review Criteria: The following review criteria will be used to evaluate applications. For each category below, applications will be ranked on a 1.0-5.0 scale range with 5.0 representing the highest possible score in each category. Category rankings will be summed for a total review score with a maximum possible score of 25 points.

While not part of the formal scoring, reviewers will also consider the budget and human subjects concerns. For budget, reviewers will evaluate whether the budget is appropriate for

the scope of work. Regarding human subjects, reviewers will also be asked to note whether applications present any ethical concerns.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Impact & Relevance	Will the proposed research and expected results contribute new knowledge or methods to advance the goal of investigating the implementation of early language and literacy practices for children birth through age 8? Specifically, does the application directly address the Deal Center's research requirements as described above? To what extent does this work have the potential to move the field forward?
Innovation	Does the application develop innovative and creative ideas or methods of research, employ novel concepts, approaches or methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area? Does the application challenge an existing paradigm or practice? Will the project application propose ideas or methods that have not been previously utilized or have not been applied in the way that is proposed?
Research Strategy	Is the proposed project well designed? Is application of implementation science apparent and are key components of the sample, methods, and data analytic approaches well described and reasonable? Does the application present a realistic and appropriate project timeline? Are potential problem areas acknowledged and alternative tactics considered?
Investigators' Qualifications	Do the investigators have the appropriate training and expertise to conduct the proposed research? Have they demonstrated satisfactory productivity, relative to stage of career, in terms of peer-reviewed publications and other benchmarks in the area of the proposed research? Have the necessary collaborations been established and documented with letters of agreement?
Environment	Do the performance sites where the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Is the scientific environment conducive to the work proposed, in terms of institutional support, physical resources, and clinical and intellectual resources?

Grantee Requirements: Successful grantees will be required to:

- Submit a mid-term research report.
- Submit a final research report or white paper within 60 days of the end of this agreement. The Deal Center reserves the right to add final reports to our website.
- Present the findings for at least one Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy program or meeting.
- Conduct at least one conference presentation and/or submit a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal to disseminate research finding(s) and implication(s).
- Include Deal Center logos and verbiage to indicate that funding was supported by the Deal Center in marketing and slides. The Deal Center will provide a high-resolution digital file to use on websites, media, promotional material, etc. in the contract for awardees.

Use of Funds: The following list of items are not allowable expenditures for this grant:

- Supplanting (Grant funds must be used to supplement not supplant. In other words, the grant funds must be used for a new initiative or scaling up an existing program)
- Construction or repair of buildings
- Purchase or repair of vehicles
- Food
- Travel for conferences or professional meetings unless given prior approval from the Deal Center for a Deal Center or grant-related purpose.
- Purchase of equipment
- Items not directly related to grant activities

Indirect Costs Specification: The limit on indirect costs associated with the RFA is 10% modified total direct cost (MTDC).

Contact:

For application questions, contact the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy, at 478-445-8500 or galiteracy@gcsu.edu

For questions regarding Qualtrics, contact Joseph Wenke, joseph.wenke@gcsu.edu

Implementation Research to Improve Early Language and Literacy Outcomes

Sample Application

Application must be submitted online through Qualtrics.

The link to the Qualtrics application is:

https://gcsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_43l6ZVSzDY0td8W

Due Date: The application is due no later than 5:00 pm, November 27, 2023.

Information about submitting applications via Qualtrics: Please note that the sample application below is identical to the Qualtrics application. Therefore, we highly recommend that you do **not** click through the Qualtrics version of the application until you are ready to submit. Doing so presents the risk of prematurely submitting your application due to clicking through the questions. The "Back Button" is enabled for ease of navigation. Once you submit your application via Qualtrics, please send an email to the Deal Center's grant coordinator at joseph.wenke@gcsu.edu to confirm your submission so we can ensure that your application has been received.

SECTION I: APPLICANT PROFILE:

Proposal Title:

Principal Investigator
Name:
Organization:
Title:
Phone number:
Email address:

Co-Principal Investigator

Name:

Organization:

Title:

Phone number:

Email address:

You will have the option to add additional co-principal investigators here.

Fiscal Agent

Name of university/agency/organization that will serve as fiscal agent for the grant:

Fiscal Agent Contact Name:

Fiscal Agent Contact Title:

Fiscal Agent Contact Phone:

Fiscal Agent Contact Email:

Partner Organizations (up to 3 partnerships are allowed)

Organization Name:

Mailing Address:

Partner Organization Contact

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Organization Name:

Mailing Address:

Partner Organization Contact

Name:

Title:
Phone:
Email:

Organization Name:
Mailing Address:
Partner Organization Contact
Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:

Request Amount
Request Amount *(amount should not exceed $50,000):*
Upload Abstract:
Upload Research Plan:
Upload Bibliography:
Upload Budget Worksheet:
Upload Budget Justification:
Upload Investigators' Curriculum Vita/Resume:
Upload Letters of Support:

Budget Worksheet Form

Research Grant Initiative for Practices in Early Language and Literacy Budget Worksheet

Organization:
Completed by (name):
Email:
Date Completed:

Personal Services		
Example: instructor, coach, program manager, tutor, consultant		
Type of Service	**Description**	**Amount**

Total		**$0.00**

Travel		
*all travel costs shall be pursuant to the State Travel Policy (Georgia)		
Category	**Description**	**Amount**
Total		**$0.00**

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CENTER FOR EARLY LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
AT GEORGIA COLLEGE

Supplies and Materials

Outline the number of units and unit cost in description field

Category	Description, Quantity	Amount
Total		**$0.00**

Other expenses

Expense type	Description and cost breakdown	Amount
indirect cost @ 10%		
Total		**$0.00**

Grand Total		**$0.00**