



## CLSD Impact Study Frequently Asked Questions

This document contains answers to some frequently asked questions about the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant program impact evaluation that is being conducted by the American Institutes for Research on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education.

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## Study Design

1. **What is the goal of the CLSD impact study?** The goal of the CLSD impact study is to produce evidence about the impact of two years of CLSD funding on student literacy. The findings are intended to be informative to practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers.
2. **Why does the study require a lottery to randomly assign elementary schools to first or second funding groups?** To determine whether receiving CLSD funding leads to improved student literacy, the study will compare schools that receive CLSD funding with similar schools that do not receive funding. The best way to ensure that the comparison is fair is to use a lottery to determine which schools receive funding in the first two years and which schools receive funding in the last two years. We will examine the effect of CLSD funding *on average*, across approximately 20-25 districts (roughly 2 districts in each of the 11 grantee states). The impact study is not focused on effects in any one district or state but, rather, on the average effect of funding across a subset of districts from all grantee states.
3. **Why does the lottery operate by assigning elementary schools to funding groups within each participating district, rather than by assigning schools in some districts to the first funding group and schools in other districts to the second?** Randomly assigning elementary schools within each participating district to the first or second funding group ensures that the schools being compared share the same district context. If we were to randomly assign schools to the first or second funding groups from different districts, differences in districts could affect the results.
4. **What grades are included in the impact study?** The impact study will focus on grades 3, 4, and 5. Elementary schools that include at least two of these grades are eligible to participate. (Other elementary grades, as well as early childhood centers, middle schools, and high schools are not included in the impact study.)
5. **When will the impact study take place?** We assume states will conduct their subgrant competitions in the 2020-21 school year. After states make subgrant awards, we assume districts that win subgrants will implement CLSD-funded activities and programs beginning in the 2021-22 school year and continue to do so for 4 years, ending in the 2024-25 school year. The focus of the impact study is on 2021-22 and 2022-23.

## Eligibility Criteria

6. **Are consortia of districts eligible to participate in the impact study?** It is ideal if single districts participate in the impact study. If a consortium of districts is interested in participating in the impact study, please contact Ellie Fulbeck ([efulbeck@air.org](mailto:efulbeck@air.org) or 650-350-9045) to discuss potential participation.
7. **Are districts that focus their program on “feeder patterns” (that is, groups of elementary schools that all “feed” a given middle or high school) eligible to participate in the impact study?** Yes, districts with feeder patterns are eligible to participate. We will work with districts to discuss the approach to conducting the lottery, taking feeder patterns into account. It would be ideal to conduct a separate lottery within each feeder pattern, so some participating elementary schools in the feeder pattern would be

assigned to the first funding group and some to the second. If a district has two feeder patterns, it would also be possible to use the lottery to assign all participating schools in one feeder pattern to the first funding group and all schools in the second to the second group. Please see [Appendix A](#) for additional information about how districts with feeder patterns could participate in the impact study.

8. **How many elementary schools need to participate in the impact study to make a district eligible?** Districts with four or more participating elementary schools are best-suited for the study. However, districts with two or more participating elementary schools are eligible for the study.
9. **How many students need to be in elementary schools in order for the district to include them in the impact study?** Ideally, elementary schools included in the impact study will have 20 or more students in at least two of the focal study grades: Grades 3, 4, and 5.
10. **Are districts required to include all elementary schools that participate in their CLSD subgrant plan in the impact study?** No, districts are not required to include all elementary schools that participate in their CLSD subgrant plans in the impact study. Ideally, a district would include at least four elementary schools in the impact study but districts are eligible to participate in the impact study provided they include at least two of their CLSD subgrant elementary schools in the study. For elementary schools in the impact study, about half would receive funding immediately and about half would receive funding after 2 years. For elementary schools not in the impact study, districts would fund them as they would if the impact study were not happening.
11. **Are districts required to have an even number of elementary schools included in their CLSD subgrant plan to participate in the impact study?** No, districts may include an odd number of elementary schools in their CLSD subgrant plan and in the impact study. If districts decide to include an odd number of elementary schools in the impact study, the study team will randomly assign about half to the first funding group and about half to the second funding group. For example, if a district wanted to have five elementary schools participate in the impact study, the study team would randomly assign two schools to the first funding group and two schools to the second funding group. The fifth school would be assigned to the first or second funding group randomly, just as the other schools had been. Thus, there would ultimately be three schools in the first or second funding group, depending on the outcome of the lottery.
12. **Are current SRCL subgrantees eligible to participate in the impact study?** Current SRCL subgrantee districts are eligible to participate in the CLSD impact study, as long as they include at least two elementary schools that do not currently receive SRCL funds in their CLSD subgrant plans.

### **Implementing staggered rollout of funds**

13. **What if districts want to fund elementary schools assigned to the first funding group for longer than the 2 year staggered rollout funding period required by the impact**

**study?** Districts are welcome to fund schools randomly assigned to the first funding group for longer than the initial 2 year period. However, schools assigned to the second funding period cannot receive funding during the first funding period (the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school years). This restriction is the only firm condition of the study. Schools in the first funding group can continue to receive funding after the first two years, provided the district has the funds available. Districts may choose to use the funds provided by the study (up to \$15,000 in additional resources will be provided to the district for each participating elementary school) to continue their work. For examples of how districts may allocate funds to schools in the first and second funding groups, see [Appendix B](#).

- 14. Are schools assigned to the second funding group allowed to plan during 2021-22 and 2022-23 when they are not implementing CLSD activities?** As long as schools in the second funding group do not receive funds to implement CLSD activities or programs, it is permissible for them to begin planning during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

### Requirements of participating states

- 15. What extant data are required from the state for the impact study?** No matter how many districts in a CLSD-funded state are participating in the impact study, all CLSD grantee states are required to provide the national evaluation study team with student-level reading/English language arts and math scaled scores and demographic characteristic information for all students statewide in grades 3-8 and one high school grade for 8 years: five years prior to CLSD (2017-18) through the end of the CLSD grant (2024-25).
- 16. Are there any other requirements of states?** In addition to providing the extant data required for the evaluation, we require states to develop a plan with us for communicating about the impact study with districts, provide us with subgrantee information, and participate in an interview in spring 2022.

### Requirements of participating districts

- 17. What extant data are required from the district for the impact study?** If states are unable to provide individual student-level reading/English language arts and math scaled scores and demographic characteristic information for students in participating elementary schools, we will request these data from districts for students in elementary schools participating in the impact study.
- 18. What are the requirements for districts participating in the impact study?** The most important requirement for districts is that they adhere to the results of the lottery and allocate CLSD funds to elementary schools based on the lottery results. Districts must encourage school leaders and reading/English language arts teachers in Grades 3-5 at participating elementary schools to respond to the surveys administered in spring 2022 (school leader survey only) and 2023 (school leader and teacher surveys).
- 19. What are the requirements of participating elementary schools?** The study team requires participating schools to provide lists of school leaders (principals, assistant principals, and literacy leads/coaches) and reading/English language arts teachers in Grades

3-5 at participating elementary schools. Lists will include name and email for the purpose of administering a school leader survey in spring of 2022 and 2023, and a teacher survey in the spring of 2023.

## Compensation for participating districts

### **20. What financial resources will districts receive for participating in the impact study?**

Districts will receive \$15,000 per participating elementary school. Given that districts with four or more elementary schools are best suited to participate in the impact study, districts will receive \$60,000 or more in financial resources. The study team plans to disperse the full \$15,000 per participating school to districts, unless the district requests a lower amount.

### **21. How can districts use the financial resources provided to them for participating in the impact study?**

Districts have discretion over how to use these funds, with some restrictions. Districts may choose to use them to enhance the literacy support and services they offer to schools involved in their CLSD subgrants – *but they may NOT use the funds to pay for CLSD-like literacy-related activities in the elementary schools in the impact study in 2021-22 and 2022-23*. Alternatively, they may choose to use the funds to provide support to non-CLSD funded schools, to provide support focused on other subject areas (e.g., math, science), or to support specific student populations (e.g., students who are English learners). See [Appendix C](#) for additional possible uses of the funds.

### **22. When will districts receive the financial resources for participating in the impact study?**

The financial resources for participating in the impact study will be paid to districts in two installments. The study team will provide half the financial resources to districts when they formally sign on to participate in the study in the first half of 2021 and the other half in the summer of 2023, after we confirm districts have complied with the lottery results during 2021-23 and 2022-23.

### **23. Are there requirements about how districts spend CLSD funds or provide CLSD supports in the second funding period?**

No – it is up to participating districts to determine how they choose to disperse funds in 2023-24 and 2024-25, consistent with their state CLSD program requirements. For example, districts may choose to provide continued CLSD funding to schools assigned to the first funding group, so they can help schools in the second funding group learn from their work during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

## Benefits for participating states

### **24. What are the benefits for participating states?**

States receive multiple benefits for participating in the impact study. First, by staggering the rollout of CLSD funds, states and participating districts will be able to learn about and apply effective strategies and programs from early implementers to other schools in the future. This phased approach is aligned to continuous improvement efforts with which many districts are currently engaged. Second, the study team will provide participating states with a customized report on the impact of CLSD funding in the state that may inform states' future work on student literacy. In addition, the study team will support states' participation in the impact study by providing information about the impact study that can be incorporated in their subgrant application

materials. The study team will ensure that *states retain full control over which districts receive subgrants, based on criteria set forth by the state.*

## Benefits for participating districts

**25. What are the benefits for participating district subgrantees?** District subgrantees receive multiple benefits for participating in the impact study. First, by staggering the rollout of CLSD funds, districts will be able to learn about and apply effective strategies and programs from early implementers to other schools in the future. This phased approach is aligned to continuous improvement efforts that many districts are engaged in currently. Second, the study team will provide districts with \$15,000 for each participating elementary school, regardless of which funding group they are assigned. In addition, the study team will support districts' participation in the impact study by ensuring there is minimal disruption to their implementation of CLSD. In all cases, *district subgrantees will retain full control over which schools receive CLSD subgrant funds, based on their approved CLSD subgrant plan.*

## Other

**26. I have another question that is not answered on this document. Who should I contact?** Please contact the study team:

- Ellie Fulbeck, Deputy Project Director: [efulbeck@air.org](mailto:efulbeck@air.org) or 650-350-9045
- Jessica Heppen, Project Director: [jheppen@air.org](mailto:jheppen@air.org) or 202-403-5488
- Study email address (monitored daily): [CLSD@air.org](mailto:CLSD@air.org)

## Appendix A: Accounting for Feeder Patterns in the Impact Study

A district that organizes its CLSD program based on feeder patterns can participate in the impact study. We will work with each district to determine how to organize its lottery, depending on how many feeder patterns it has and how many elementary schools are in each feeder pattern. For example,

- If a district has **one** feeder pattern participating in CLSD, the study team would enter the elementary schools in the feeder pattern in the lottery as usual.
- If a district has **more than one** feeder pattern in CLSD, the study team would randomly assign schools in each feeder pattern to either the first or second funding group. For example, suppose a district plans to include two feeder patterns in the study: Feeder Pattern 1 (elementary schools A, B, C, and D) and Feeder Pattern 2 (elementary schools E, F, G, and H). Within each feeder pattern, the study team would randomly assign half of the elementary schools to the first funding group and half to the second. In this example, Schools A, B, F, and H would be assigned to the first funding group; Schools C, D, E, and G would be assigned to the second funding group.

Feeder Pattern	Elementary Schools	Funding Group
1		
	A	1
	B	1
	C	2
	D	2
2		
	E	2
	F	1
	G	2
	H	1

While less preferable from the perspective of the impact study, we could consider randomly assigning one feeder pattern to the first funding group and the other to the second, and then choose one or two elementary schools from each feeder pattern to participate in the study.

Feeder Pattern	Elementary Schools	Funding Group
1		
	A	2
	B	2
	C	Not in study
	D	Not in study
2		
	E	1
	F	1
	G	Not in study
	H	Not in study

If a district has more than one feeder pattern in CLSD, not all of them need to participate in the impact study. Further, not all elementary schools within a CLSD feeder pattern need to participate in the impact study. That is fine, provided at least two elementary schools from each district participate.



## Appendix B: Funding Allocation Examples

Here are a few concrete examples of how funding could be allocated to elementary schools in a district that participates in the impact study. These are meant to be simply for illustration; we recognize districts will differ in the number, size, and types of elementary schools they include in their CLSD plan, the amount of funds available for elementary schools, and the number of years they choose to fund schools assigned to the first funding group. The key point for the impact study is that schools assigned to the second funding group should not fund or implement CLSD activities in the first two subgrant funding years – 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The three examples below illustrate how the lottery could work.<sup>1</sup> Each example is based on different assumptions about school size, the amount of CLSD funds, and the number of years of support for schools in the first funding group.<sup>2</sup> In each example, we assume the district wins the subgrant in spring 2021 and spends the subgrant to implement CLSD activities and programs in 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25. The district allocates \$400,000 to elementary schools in its CLSD plan.

### Example A. District with 4 Elementary Schools of Roughly the Same Size with Funds Allocated over 2 Years for Each Participating School

#### Assumptions

- Plan includes 4 elementary schools that are roughly the same size: Schools A, B, C, D. Study team randomly assigns schools A and B to first funding group and C and D to second funding group.
- District allocates \$100,000 to each participating elementary school (\$50,000 per year for 2 years).

Funding Group	Schools	Year 1 2020-21	Year 2 2021-22	Year 3 2022-23	Year 4 2023-24	Year 5 2024-25	Total
1							
	A	(Subgrant awarded)	\$50K	\$50K			\$100K
	B	(Subgrant awarded)	\$50K	\$50K			\$100K
2							
	C				\$50K	\$50K	\$100K
	D				\$50K	\$50K	\$100K

### Example B. District with 4 Elementary Schools of Different Sizes with Funds Allocated over 2 Years for Each Participating School

#### Assumptions

<sup>1</sup> The goal of the lottery is to achieve balance in the first and second funding groups of schools. The best way to achieve balance is to randomly assign individual elementary schools to either the first or second funding group. Across multiple schools, the lottery will ensure that both the first and second funding groups end up with schools that are similar on average.

<sup>2</sup> We recognize that districts may use CLSD funds to support district-wide activities (for example, hiring a literacy coach or providing professional development to teachers) and that schools may not receive these funds directly. Districts should provide any district-level supports – for example, a literacy coach or professional development – only to schools in the first funding group during 2021-22 and 2022-23.



- Plan includes 4 elementary schools that are of different sizes: Schools A and C are large; Schools B and D are small. Study team conducts the lottery, taking school size into account. One large school (A) is randomly selected to be in the first funding group and one (C) in the second funding group. Similarly, one small school (B) is randomly selected to be in the first funding group and one (D) in the second funding group.<sup>3</sup>
- District allocates more funds to larger schools. Large schools receive \$150,000 (\$75,000 a year for 2 years); small schools receive \$50,000 (\$25,000 a year for 2 years).

Funding Group	Schools (size)	Year 1 2020-21	Year 2 2021-22	Year 3 2022-23	Year 4 2023-24	Year 5 2024-25	Total
1							
	A (large)	(Subgrant awarded)	\$75K	\$75K			\$150K
	B (small)	(Subgrant awarded)	\$25K	\$25K			\$50K
2							
	C (large)				\$75K	\$75K	\$150K
	D (small)				\$25K	\$25K	\$50K

**Example C. District with 4 Elementary Schools of Roughly the Same Size with Funds Allocated over 4 Years for Each First Funding Group School and over 2 Years for Each Second Funding Group School**

*Assumptions*

- Plan includes 4 elementary schools that are roughly the same size: Schools A, B, C, D. Study team randomly assigns schools A and B to first funding group and Schools C and D to second funding group.
- District allocates \$100,000 for each participating elementary school. Schools in the first funding group receive funding for 4 years; schools in the second for 2 years.

Funding Group	Schools	Year 1 2020-21	Year 2 2021-22	Year 3 2022-23	Year 4 2023-24	Year 5 2024-25	Total
1							
	A	(Subgrant awarded)	\$25K	\$25K	\$25K	\$25K	\$100K
	B	(Subgrant awarded)	\$25K	\$25K	\$25K	\$25K	\$100K
2							
	C				\$50K	\$50K	\$100K
	D				\$50K	\$50K	\$100K

<sup>3</sup> If districts are interested in supporting elementary schools that differ in size, prior achievement, or student demographics, we could conduct the lottery to take this into account. For example, if two schools are small and two are large, we could choose one of each by lottery to be in the first funding group and one of each to be in the second funding group.

## **Appendix C: Example uses of the funds provided for participation in the impact study.**

Districts may use the funds provided for participation in the impact study to pay for non-literacy activities in the elementary schools in the impact study in 2021-22 and 2022-23, or to provide supports to non-CLSD funded schools, or to provide supports to the elementary schools in the impact study following the end of the 2022-23 school year. For example, districts might use the funds to:

- Purchase non-literacy (i.e., STEM or mathematics) materials or supports for all schools for use at any time
- Purchase any instructional materials or supports for non-CLSD funded schools or schools not included in the impact study
- Purchase any instructional materials or supports to all schools for use following the end of the 2022-23 school year