

**DETERMINATION AND FINDING  
FOR A SOURCE PROCUREMENT**

**AGENCY:** District of Columbia Public Schools  
Early Childhood Education Division (ECED)  
**CAPTION:** Professional Development for PK Paraprofessionals, and Tutor  
Placement Services  
**PROPOSED CONTRACTOR:** The Literacy Lab  
**CONTRACT NO.** N/A

**FINDINGS**

**1. AUTHORIZATION:**

D.C. Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR, Section 1304 and 1700.

**2. MINIMUM NEED:**

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Early Childhood Education Division (ECED) has an immediate need to provide professional development and tutor placement services (a two-pronged approach to providing trained staff to facilitate and support reading interventions for PK children in 10 classrooms across 5 Title 1 elementary schools). The reading interventions provide child-level assessments and targeted interventions to address the foundations skills that children need to be successful readers. First, the contractor will train tutors to facilitate reading interventions in PK classrooms. Second, the contractor will train current PK paraprofessionals on the Reading Corps Tier I reading intervention content and *SEEDS to Early Learning* curriculum. Specifically, the contractor shall provide:

- a) Reading Tutors: Provide Ten (10) PK reading tutors in 5 DCPS Title 1 classrooms (Amidon-Bowen, Aiton, Thomas, CW Harris, and Turner elementary schools), that are certified in the Reading Corps model. Tutors provide Tier 1 literacy interventions.
- b) PK Paraprofessionals: Provide professional development training to a maximum of fifteen (15) paraprofessionals that will be selected to participate in the training program. The literacy professional development activities (Tier 1 interventions and SEEDS training) shall not exceed 20 hours over the course of the school year and may include but need not be limited to: workshops, seminars, webinars and in- classroom coaching support. The contractor shall provide four (4) trainings on days convenient to the paraprofessionals' work schedule and responsibilities and in coordination with the school administrator.

**3. ESTIMATED COST:**

The estimated cost is \$143,000.00 from date of award to September 30, 2016.

#### 4. **FACTS WHICH JUSTIFY A SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT:**

##### **A. Background and History**

In SY 2014-15, ECED participated in a two-year pilot implementation of The Literacy Lab's Pre-K reading instruction model in two high-need elementary schools within DC Public Schools (DCPS). DCPS and The Literacy Lab joined forces based on the shared belief that by providing struggling PK children with supports – delivered by specially trained PK tutors – to develop the skills needed for strong literacy development, these children will make significant progress towards key PK benchmarks and enter Kindergarten prepared to succeed.

ECED supported through coaching the individualized reading instruction, delivered by Literacy Lab PK tutors, to children in 2 PK classrooms at Aiton Elementary School in Ward 7 and 2 PK classrooms Amidon-Bowen Elementary School in Ward 6 in the 2014-2015. 99% of the students at these schools are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch, and over 90% are African-American.

Aiton and Amidon-Bowen are part of the cohort of 40 low-performing schools to which DCPS is providing additional resources to fulfill its public commitment to increase proficiency rates within this cohort by 40 percentage points by the end of 2016-2017 school year. Additionally, DCPS and Literacy Lab entered a separate agreement to implement Literacy Lab's PK model in 2 PK classrooms at Neval Thomas Elementary School in Ward 7 in 2014. 99% of Neval Thomas' students are eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch, and 96% are African-American. Child progress and end-of-year outcomes in language and foundational literacy were promising for the children in the 6 classrooms with a Literacy Lab tutor.

It is our goal to continue providing additional literacy supports at the 3 current schools, and add 2 more schools. School administrators at Turner and CW Harris elementary schools have both shown high interest in having literacy tutors in their PK classrooms. Additionally, moving forward we must think how best to build the capacity of teaching teams (teacher and paraprofessional) within all PK4 classrooms to provide reading interventions that:

- are based in formative assessments;
- are developmentally appropriate;
- is able to be integrated within the school's chosen early childhood curriculum and classroom daily schedule and;
- is sufficiently differentiated to meet the individual needs and progress of all children.

As of now, this model program that places PK tutors in classrooms with teachers and paraprofessionals is financially prohibitive to bring to scale and unsustainable overtime. One way of making this additional literacy support available to all PK4 children in Title 1 schools is to begin the process of training current PK staff in the reading interventions instructional practices and positive adult-child interactions that have been utilized by the Literacy Lab tutors in the past school year. To that end, the Early Childhood Education Division proposes to train and coach a small initial cohort of PK paraprofessionals to support children's early literacy development. By leveraging human resources that are already in the classrooms, children at risk of reading failure will receive more opportunities for targeted early literacy instruction.

Additionally, The Reading Corps interventions provide child-level assessments and targeted interventions to address the foundations skills that children need to be successful readers.

The *SEEDS* curriculum teaches classroom staff how to evaluate and create a classroom that is rich with opportunity for developing literacy skills, and how to seamlessly integrate meaningful literacy-rich exchanges throughout the day. Participants in the *SEEDS* training learn how to make the most of a Read Aloud, how to increase the number of positive verbal exchanges with children, and how to engage a child's family in creating a literacy rich environment at home.

## **B. The Proposed Vendor's Unique Qualifications**

The Literacy Lab, a DC-based 501(c)3 nonprofit, provides a unique two-pronged approach to improve the early literacy skills of pre-K children by training and placing full-time tutors in pre-K classrooms and by training early childhood paraprofessionals. The Literacy Lab is the only certified replication partner of the Reading Corps model in the Washington, DC area and is the only certified *SEEDS* of Early Learning Curriculum trainer in the Washington, DC area. As such, this nonprofit provides a unique service that cannot be fulfilled elsewhere.

The Literacy Lab was selected as the official national replication partner for the Reading Corps model for the DC, Virginia, and Maryland area in 2013 and is the only certified partner in this area. It takes two years of ongoing training and observations for trainers to become certified in the Reading Corps model, and The Literacy Lab is the only organization in Washington, DC or the local area with fully-certified Reading Corps trainers. These trainers train full-time tutors to be placed in pre-K classrooms and also provide ongoing coaching following a structured and research-based model. Each year, The Literacy Lab is evaluated by the Reading Corps and has to maintain high fidelity scores in order to retain its status as the replication partner for DC, VA, and MD.

The Literacy Lab's placement services are unique because it is the only organization with the ability to provide tutors who are fully trained in the Reading Corps model. Since The Literacy Lab is the only Reading Corps replication partner in the area, it is the only organization that can provide these full-time, highly-trained tutors who are certified in this evidence-based early literacy program.

The Literacy Lab is also the only organization in the area with trainers who are certified in the *SEEDS* of Early Learning curriculum. *SEEDS* of Early Learning is a professional development curriculum for early childhood practitioners. In order to deliver the training, trainers must go through a train-the-trainer institute in Minnesota and have at least one year of observing trainings to be able to deliver the curriculum independently. The Literacy Lab is the only organization in the Washington, DC area with trainers who have completed this training and who thus have the ability to deliver the required training.

In light of the above findings, a sole source award to The Literacy Lab is in the best interest of the DCPS, and would be the most efficient and cost-effective procurement method to fulfill the professional development requirement immediately and assist DCPS in achieving its goal.

**CERTIFICATION BY THE OFFICE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS:**

I hereby certify that the above findings are correct and the anticipated cost to DCPS is fair and reasonable.

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Date

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Early Childhood Education Director**CERTIFICATION AND DETERMINATION**

Based on the above certified findings in accordance cited authority, I hereby determine that it is not feasible or practical to invoke the competitive bidding process under Section 402 or 403 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Reform Act of 2010 (D.C. Law 18-371; DC Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR 1304 and 1700.

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Date

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Chief Procurement Officer

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