

FUTURE FORWARD: SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING A STUDENT-CENTERED, TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED EARLY LITERACY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Absolute Priorities.....	3
A. Significance	3
A1. National significance of the proposed project.....	3
A2. Contribution to increased knowledge.....	6
B. Strategy to Scale	6
B1. Specific strategies that address barriers from the past.....	6
B2. Mechanisms to broadly disseminate information to support replication	11
C. Quality of Project Design	12
C1. Conceptual framework	12
C2. Goals, objectives, and outcomes	15
C3. Project design to meet needs of target population.....	19
D. Adequacy of Resources and Quality of the Management Plan.....	22
D1. Capacity to bring the project to national	22
D2. Adequacy of management plan to achieve objectives	24
D3. Cost reasonableness	31
E. Quality of Project Evaluation	32

E1. Methods of evaluation 32

E2. Suitability for replication..... 38

E3. Key project components, mediators, and outcomes 39

References 40

Absolute and Invitational Priorities

Education Analytics, Inc. (EA), and our partners propose to scale Future Forward (FF), a kindergarten through third grade (K-3) literacy intervention that delivers research-based high-dosage one-on-one tutoring and family engagement and has demonstrated strong evidence of effectiveness (**Absolute Priority 1**) for improving student outcomes. Our field-initiated innovation will nationally scale FF to impact a greatly increased number of underserved students (**Absolute Priority 2**) during an unprecedented time of need. Our proposal addresses both learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic (**Invitational Priority 1**) and equitable access to resources for underserved students (**Invitational Priority 2**) in a diversity of rural settings.

A. Significance (15 Points)

A1. The national significance of the proposed project (10 points)

Reading is fundamental, yet significant gaps remain in student reading outcomes. Students without a basic level of reading competency by third grade are more likely to struggle academically, as well as to have social and behavioral issues in subsequent grades. They are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers and more likely to experience negative outcomes throughout their lives, including lower annual earnings and higher potential for mental and physical health problems (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2007; Fiester, 2013). Given the long-term consequences of low reading proficiency, the fact that only 35% of fourth graders across the country were proficient in reading prior to school disruption—meaning over 2.6 million 9-year-olds were not reading proficiently pre-COVID-19 pandemic—demonstrates the magnitude of this national problem (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Struggling students are disproportionately students of color and from families with lower socioeconomic status. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test scores reflect lower proficiency levels for students eligible for the National School Lunch Program, commonly referred to as “free or reduced-price lunch” (FRPL) students, and persistent

achievement gaps between these students and their non-FRPL counterparts (Nation’s Report Card, 2019). Gaps also persist across race and ethnicity, with Black and Hispanic students scoring nearly 30 scale score points behind their White peers in reading in both fourth and eighth grade on NAEP, or the difference between performance in the 50th versus 77th percentile.

This problem has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and growing social unrest over the past year. The effect of the pandemic on student outcomes is under debate, with some early data indicating learning loss may not have been as bad as expected, and other studies showing schools “lost” students during COVID’s disruption. In the spring of 2020, nearly one-third of principals from schools serving primarily children of color reported challenges contacting students and families, while only 14% of principals leading wealthier schools with fewer students of color reported the same struggles. Leaders reported similar challenges during the 2020-21 academic year, finding students chronically absent from virtual, in-person, and hybrid classrooms or never enrolled at all (U.S. DOE Office for Civil Rights, 2021).

In addition to the impacts of COVID-19, ongoing social justice crises, especially around racial justice, have highlighted historical inequities and the disparate treatment of both students and adults in our society. Evidence indicates that these crises are strongly linked: underserved students, especially students of color, are likely to have experienced the most significant challenges due to the pandemic. Last fall, McKinsey estimated that schools predominantly serving Black and Hispanic students had English/Language Arts (ELA) achievement at 77% of normal levels after the 2019-20 school year, whereas schools serving predominantly White students had ELA achievement levels at 90% of a normal school year (Dorn et al., 2020).

Despite all the recent disruption in learning, there is strong evidence for how to solve some of the challenges both related to and predating the past year. Reading is a highly teachable skill: direct foundational instruction—including phonics and word recognition, phonological awareness,

concepts of print, and fluency—has a proven impact on students’ ability to read.

Grounded in this evidence, FF is a cost-effective literacy intervention serving K-3 students, delivering a research-based one-on-one tutoring and family engagement program with demonstrated strong evidence (**Absolute Priority 1**). FF is based on a conceptual model informed by research demonstrating that through frequent, evidence-based tutoring, students build literacy skills necessary to become fluent readers. In addition, through a variety of engagement and support opportunities, families build on students’ development at home and advocate for their children within the school. FF’s combination of literacy education, family support, and advocacy is proven to lead to improvements in reading and attendance that are sustained over time.

The proposed EIR Expansion will nationally scale FF to impact a greatly increased number of students (**Absolute Priority 2**) during an unprecedented time of need. Our proposal addresses both learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic (**Invitational Priority 1**) and equitable access to resources for underserved students (**Invitational Priority 2**) in a diversity of rural settings. The proposed project will scale FF to a national level by providing a substantial majority of its evidence-based programming to diverse communities across at least five states (South Carolina, Kentucky, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Illinois), with an intentional focus on rural schools in each of these states. In **South Carolina**, where the State DOE has offered a letter of support for this project, nearly 20% of students live in households that fall below the federal poverty line, and 62% of students statewide are eligible for FRPL. Across **Eastern Kentucky**, where we will focus our efforts with the support of **Morehead State University**, 22% of children come from households below the poverty line, and 56.8% of students across the state are eligible for FRPL. The rural districts in the **Ozarks**, **Central Wisconsin**, and **Western Illinois** we propose to serve have combined student populations of 10,861. FRPL rates range from 46.2% in Wisconsin Rapids to 79.7% in Aurora, Missouri (see Table 1 in [Project Design](#) for additional information).

FF is uniquely positioned to serve these students' learning needs while addressing the interruption of traditional patterns of education due to school closures and the disproportionate social, emotional, physical, and mental health and academic impacts on underserved student groups over the past year. As States, school districts, and individual schools are actively deciding where to invest unprecedented resources allocated through the Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief funds "to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions..." the proposed EIR will increase awareness of the benefits of high-impact, evidence-based tutoring programs like FF (U.S. DOE, 2021).

A2. The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies (5 points)

The proposed project will make meaningful contributions related to how high-dosage tutoring and family engagement can help mitigate the impact of inconsistent access to instruction, services, and supports, and opportunities to engage families in students' ongoing learning success. The program evaluation will also examine how impacts are successfully reproduced and sustained over time; identify conditions in which the program is most effective, including for whom the program is most effective; and analyze the program's cost-effectiveness (see [Evaluation Plan](#) for details). The proposed project will utilize a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and dissemination plan (see Strategy 3) to share research and lessons learned from the evaluation. Knowledge and understanding of the educational problems our project will address will be shared through content tailored to specific stakeholder groups most interested and affected by the program through a variety of mechanisms, as discussed below.

B. Strategy to Scale (20 Points)

B1. The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application (15 points)

FF is presented with an exceptional opportunity to scale and help meet the national demand for

evidence-based tutoring that improves outcomes for underserved students. Through EIR Expansion grant funding, FF will address previous barriers to scale and lay the foundation for expansion and replication at a national level during and after the grant period.

Barrier 1: Lack of local (school and district) capacity for implementation

A primary barrier to expansion is that the program is not directly managed and implemented by school staff, creating a lack of ownership and full integration into school programming. This barrier is an artifact of FF originating with a third-party community organization serving specific Milwaukee Public Schools, a model that does not strategically transfer capacity to implement the program and phase out intensive external support. Without requiring local (local education agency [LEA] and school) involvement and intentionally building capacity of school staff, the program has only been integrated into school curriculum and classroom practices ad hoc and not viewed by school and district decision makers as essential to achieving goals and outcomes and sustaining and expanding across a region. Continued reliance upon third-party providers also creates inefficiencies in program management (PM) as substantial FF staff capacity is spent working with third-party organizations and navigating relationships between community groups and schools rather than working directly with schools. Because external partners are involved in managing FF, they have a vested interest in maintaining separate management structures outside the school to run the program. Particularly in rural communities where relationships can be key to many successes, working through partners and maneuvering multiple layers of local culture can cause unnecessary difficulties engaging directly with schools.

Strategy 1: Use a Graduated Release Model to develop capacity for implementation

To address this barrier, the EIR Expansion grant will shift program ownership to the school level and build local (LEA and district) capacity for implementation through a gradual release model (GRM) facilitated by FF. School participation will require Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

between FF and both the school and associated LEA, which establishes specific roles and responsibilities for personnel over the course of the grant and commitment to move toward greater levels of implementation ownership: “site implementation” by Year 3 (SY ’24-’25) and “full release” by YR 5 (SY ’26-’27). After the first year of FF direct implementation and site capacity building, sites will participate in a biannual assessment of readiness for increasing ownership based upon a rubric developed by FF staff and the evaluation team, which includes the following measures: 1) resource allocation including funding for key roles (tutors and FECs) and transference of FF PM duties to replace portions of existing school personnel’s job descriptions; 2) school personnel’s engagement with the program (e.g., attending family events, reviewing data); and 3) successfully implementing the program and demonstrating expected impact on student outcomes. Achieving “site implementation” status requires all metrics except for financial resource allocation, though the site must provide a reasonable plan for integrating these roles into the budget. Once a site has been “fully released,” it will retain access to the platform and support at cost, and be required to meet benchmarks measured and tracked in the platform, achieve positive student outcomes, and participate in an annual review to maintain FF affiliation. To achieve transfer of program ownership while retaining fidelity, FF will deliver capacity-building support to school personnel and increase implementation responsibilities when a site has demonstrated readiness as determined by biannual assessment meetings.

Barrier 2: Lack of FF organizational capacity to substantially expand beyond current sites

The current lack of capacity to expand beyond existing sites has been a barrier to achieving the level of scale proposed in this project. Developing partnerships, securing agreements, and onboarding new sites is a time-intensive process that has proven extremely challenging while also ensuring the program is delivered with fidelity through third-party partners. Although building local capacity through the GRM (Strategy 1) will transfer capacity to sites in the long term, the

level of expansion proposed will require FF to redirect human resources from more direct, replicable aspects of management and implementation toward site capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and dissemination. FF staff understand the complexities around developing meaningful and lasting partnerships and have a proven track record of establishing and nurturing such relationships. But given the necessary time investment, processes and tools must be developed to scale our expertise without losing the personal touch necessary to successful relationship building.

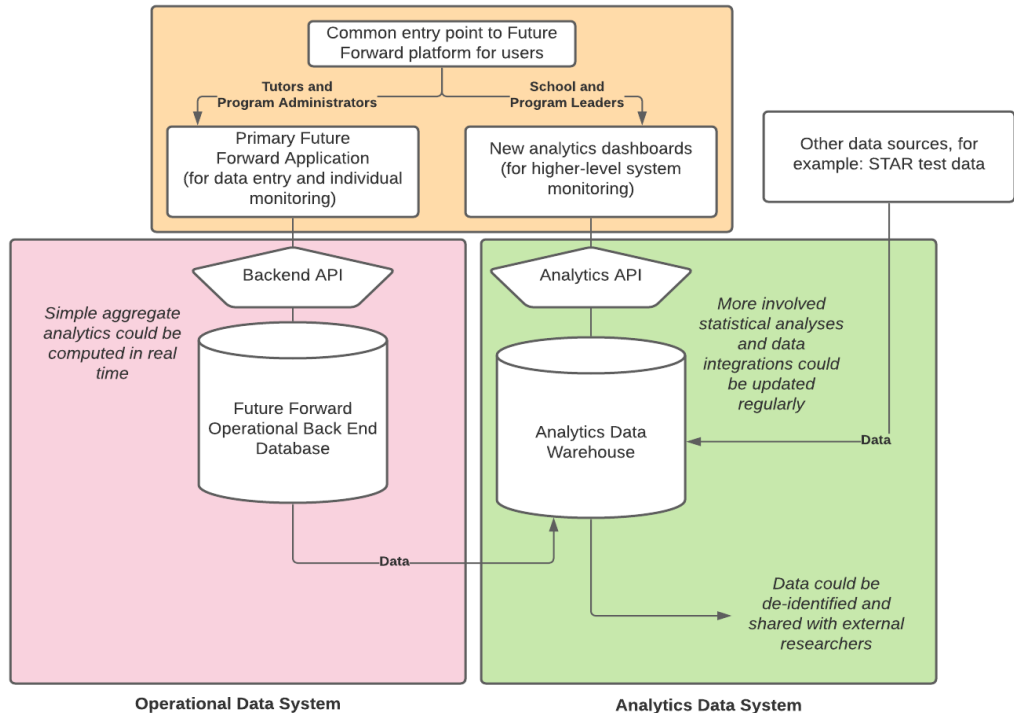
Strategy 2: Strengthen organizational capacity by equipping FF and local staff with a refined FF platform

FF’s online portal, known as “the platform,” was developed and implemented with EIR mid-phase funding. This tool has the potential to strengthen the scalability of the organization through increased utilization of updated functionality. While the platform was built to address FF’s early programmatic and operating needs, it requires enhanced infrastructure for significant scale, needs to allow for integration of additional data sources, does not include necessary reporting features for progress monitoring, and could benefit from a redesign for all user groups in the GRM. EIR Expansion funding will provide resources for a complete redesign of the platform to deliver expanded functionality, including integration with other relevant data and delivery of analytics for use at different program levels, to drive continuous improvement. We would extend the platform not only to report data entered directly back to users but also to expand our ability to report on student progress to audiences, including tutors, school staff, caregivers, and local and national program leaders, using cutting-edge analytics technology. To accomplish this, we would conduct a project including the following efforts:

1. Rebuild existing platform infrastructure to support larger-scale and higher-volume data
2. Engage in user-centered design to improve existing functionality and add new analytics and views available for new user types

3. Build real-time analytics infrastructure to report aggregate information across FF
4. Build a data warehouse to support more in-depth analytics use cases and integration of data sourced outside the platform and allow for reporting new analytics summary views of data in the platform, as well as use of the data for research purposes

This diagram sketches possible architecture for the platform and its data infrastructure:



Data views at the site and district levels

that demonstrate the program is being implemented with fidelity will include attendance at tutoring sessions, family engagement participation rates, and student instructional reading level. This will increase the value for district leaders to understand FF’s impact and return on taxpayer dollars. Redesign of the platform will also allow interoperability with the STAR Early Literacy assessment to pull student test results for reporting, accountability, and continuous improvement. Additional developments that will support expansion at scale may include capabilities around staff training and professional development and ensuring use of short-cycle data tracking and research to identify promising adaptations to the current program model for dissemination (Strategy 3). As a non-profit tech organization, EA is uniquely positioned to build out these enhancements. For an

example of our expertise designing dashboards and building data warehouses pulling from multiple interim data sources, please see a summary of our Rally platform in Appendix J.

Barrier 3: Lack of national awareness of FF as cost-effective evidence-based program

Another barrier to scale has been accessing potential school and district partners and securing partnership contracts. One reason for this barrier is the lack of site-level capacity, as participating schools and districts are generally managed by external organizations and not directly connected enough to implementation to advocate for the benefits of the program across their LEA. The general lack of national awareness of the program may be due in part to FF being a relatively new intervention, only expanding its reach outside its city of origin in the past few years, as well as that it exists alongside other (often less efficacious) programs delivered by companies with established sales teams and networks. Within this market, it is imperative that FF raise awareness of its value as an evidence-based product and target key audiences through specific dissemination mechanisms that address their most pressing concerns.

Strategy 3: Implement a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and dissemination plan

B2. The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication. (5 points)

To address previous barriers to scale and support further program development for replication, FF will design and implement comprehensive stakeholder engagement and dissemination plans (Strategy 3). FF will develop an annual stakeholder engagement plan to identify relevant groups such as key policy and advocacy organizations, researchers, caregivers, educators, administrations, and community groups and engage them. A key component of this engagement work will be the formation of a National Advisory Board comprising representatives from stakeholder groups to provide insight and guidance around program expansion, including growth and development of the FF platform. In designing and implementing these plans, FF will identify each group's most

pressing needs and how we currently serve them and plan how we can adapt to better address various student literacy issues.

Next, FF will develop an information dissemination plan to align each stakeholder group with specific opportunities for dissemination and guide FF staff and the evaluation team develop and share content. This plan will integrate FF's current outreach activities supported by public relations professionals, including digital advertising, content marketing, publicity, and earned, owned, and paid media (i.e., social media, contributed articles, blogs, audio outlets, influencers, news media), both planned and responsive. This plan will also integrate opportunities to share findings from program adaptations not directly funded by the EIR Expansion grant, such as virtual tutoring serving English language learners, as they arise. The stakeholder engagement and information dissemination plans will work synergistically as information gathered with stakeholders will inform the framing of content and program evaluation to increase FF awareness among schools, districts, and national education leaders.

C. Quality of Project Design (20 Points)

C1. The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework (5 points)

The conceptual framework for the proposed EIR Expansion project is represented in the Logic Model (see Appendix G), utilizing a local and organizational capacity-building approach aligned to Coburn et al.'s framework (2013) to scale an evidence-based program. The framework focuses on four interrelated dimensions of scale—spread, depth, sustainability, and ownership—all of which are integral parts of our approach to developing local capacity for implementation and organizational capacity for expansion. The proposed strategy of using a GRM for building local capacity (Strategy 1) ensures *ownership* through well-designed MOUs, which commit participating sites to working with FF to develop the *depth* of capacity needed to effectively implement and *sustain* the program with minimal FF support. This approach will lead to *spread* in

multiple settings as site and district staff become advocates for a cost-effective and impactful program and FF staff spend less time on site management and more on expansion strategy. Both Strategy 2 and Strategy 3 will contribute to these four interconnected dimensions of scale.

The FF program being scaled is grounded in research and has demonstrated strong evidence of success. A recent meta-analysis of studies of high-dosage tutoring showed “consistent and substantial positive impacts on learning outcomes, with an overall pooled effect size estimate of 0.37 SD” (Nickow, Oreopoulos, & Quan, 2020). Furthermore, effect sizes were stronger for teacher and paraprofessional tutoring programs and those serving students in the earliest grades. In practice, this means students could move from the 50th percentile to the 65th percentile in performance with a limited dose of effective tutoring.

Additionally, family engagement can dramatically impact students’ learning outcomes, particularly around reading. Research shows that involvement from a parent or caregiver in at-home learning has more than twice the effect on student test scores than parents’ education levels or socioeconomic status. A meta-analysis of 51 studies found that several parent activities are associated with student academic outcomes, such as parents and their children reading together, checking homework, and parent/teacher communication and partnerships (Jeynes, 2012). Evidence also suggests that family involvement in tutoring programs can improve children’s academic knowledge, skills, and confidence (Bryan, Williams, & Griffin, 2020; Weiss et al., 2009). While outcomes for all students improve with additional family engagement, the demonstrated positive working relationship between the home and school is shown to have an added literacy benefit for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and parents with lower levels of educational attainment (Dearing et al., 2006; Lin, 2003). Increased family engagement leads to increased positive feelings about literacy, which in turn improves literacy performance (Dearing et al., 2006). Literacy benefits also result when parents believe reading is enjoyable and children observe

them enjoying reading to them (Sonnenschein et al., 2000). Family engagement can also drive additional positive outcomes beyond student learning. Getting to know families and the ways their lives are structured outside of the educational setting may lead to a reciprocal relationship that can increase school involvement (Graue & Hawkins, 2010). Family engagement is also closely connected to student attendance. Chronic absenteeism (missing more than 10% of school days) disproportionately impacts students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students of color and predicts both academic and social problems later in students' educations (Chang & Romero, 2008). A U.S. DOE (2016) report on chronic absenteeism revealed that one in six students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14. Research has shown that school, family, and community partnerships reduce chronic absenteeism (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

Our combination of tutoring and family engagement differentiates FF from other programs in both design and impact. Typical tutoring programs focus solely on a student's academic progress. These initiatives aim to create change in a student's reading performance over the duration of the support. However, despite any improvement students may make in reading, the underlying challenges and factors that held students back remain and will likely continue to impact their performance in school in future years. FF addresses the short-term focus on literacy gains while supporting families to address underlying challenges and building positive mindsets and buy-in. FECs engage with families regularly, hosting events and conducting outreach to ensure caregivers understand their children's progress, are supported in learning activities at home, and are equipped with strategies to support children's success.

FF balances consistency in objectives (i.e., for all children to have the literacy tools necessary to thrive, and for all families to have the knowledge and resources to support and advocate for their child) with a unique flexibility in execution. This empowers FF staff to work toward improvement for all students by meeting the specific needs of each child, family, and community. This

individualized approach to student and family engagement runs contrary to the one-size-fits-all approach taken by many tutoring programs and organizations.

C2. The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable (5 points)

Table 1: Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Develop local (school and district) capacity for implementation and gradually release responsibilities based on assessment of readiness (Aligned to Strategy to Scale 1)	
Objectives	Performance Measures
Establish MOUs with partner sites (schools and districts) that identify roles and responsibilities for successful implementation and gradual release (including timeframe for stages of implementation).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of participating sites sign MOUs with FF
Deliver administrative onboarding for partner schools and districts, including identifying a site-based advocate, reviewing staff positions involved throughout grant period, and clearing roles and responsibilities for year 1 of grant; and overview of assessment of readiness for site implementation and full release.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of sites receive onboarding and identify a site-based advocate • Onboarding partners provide 85% or higher positive feedback in surveys • All schools agree to timeline and milestones for site implementation and full release • FF programming launched at all sites fall 2022
Conduct FF overview and initial training at each school and share regular programming results with dedicated staff while FF staff are implementing program for the purpose of building site capacity for gradual release.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of predetermined personnel/district staff attend at least 90% of coaching and training sessions • Coaching session participants provide 85% or higher positive feedback in surveys • Less than 20% of participants require “re-teaching”/ repeated coaching
Develop rubric of school capacity and readiness for implementing and sustaining FF, including metrics for resource allocation,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubric of readiness for implementation agreed on by at least 80% of sites

<p>fidelity of implementation, and positive student outcomes; train local staff on rubric; and secure site commitment for participation in biannual assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubric used to help schools plan for and grow capacity • Rubric designed with focus on student achievement growth as key outcome (vs. procedural elements) • 100% of participating sites are trained on assessment and agree to biannual administration
<p>Collaborate with evaluation team to conduct biannual assessment of school and district readiness for increasing responsibility for implementation and deliver report with implementation status and identified areas of growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of participating schools and districts show increasing readiness in every biannual assessment • 75% of participating schools are ready for site implementation by beginning of 2024-25 school year • 50% of participating schools achieve full release by beginning of 2027-28 school year
<p>Transfer appropriate implementation responsibilities to schools and/or districts that have demonstrated readiness for site implementation or full release on biannual assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of sites that receive site implementation receive targeted supports to progress to full release status • 95% of sites that receive full release status receive platform access and timely support
<p>Outcomes: Local sites (schools and districts) consistently take on increasing implementation responsibilities and achieve higher levels of implementation status (e.g., site implementation and full release) while the FF program maintains fidelity of implementation and impact on student outcomes.</p>	
<p>Goal 2: Strengthen organizational capacity for implementation and expansion by equipping FF and local staff with a refined FF platform (Aligned to Strategy to Scale 2)</p>	
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Performance Measures</p>
<p>Develop additional platform program oversight functionalities (for FF staff, school, and district staff) including reporting capabilities that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of data reporting capabilities are developed

allow for regular progress monitoring, training, and resource sharing.	
Integrate expectations for platform use into roles and responsibilities of FF and local (school and district) staff and conduct training to develop capacity for use. Specific tasks currently completed manually or outside platform by FF staff are moved to platform, including data reporting, analysis, some training, and tutor professional development resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of staff roles/responsibilities include expectations for platform use • Platform analytics demonstrate 90% of Platform users (FF staff, local staff, and parents) use as intended • FF staff time on replicable tasks significantly reduced by platform
Develop access for families to view learning their child is engaged with (lesson plans), how frequently their child is being seen by their tutor (attendance), and if they're making any progress through the process (instructional reading level reports).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family access is developed, deployed, and used by 50% of families in initial rollout • Resources are developed and rolled out to support access and use • Family user rating is 85%
Develop activities and support for families to extend FF lessons at home; provide support and resources for shared read alouds, letter identification, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family use of platform resources is consistent with overall platform use • Family user feedback is positive
Outcomes: Platform use by FF and local staff increases organizational capacity and cost-effectiveness by allowing FF staff to support at least twice the number of schools and spend twice as much time on stakeholder engagement and dissemination.	
Goal 3: Implement the FF program with fidelity in partner sites and improve student outcomes	
Objectives	Performance Measures
Ensure services are offered according to the established timeline and sites have an appropriate level of personnel to support students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 100% hiring, supervising, and training tutors, PMs, and FECs by August 2022 to implement in years 1-2

<p>Ensure systems are in place to collect program data/observations, conduct professional development, and facilitate collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully complete platform redesign with new reporting and monitoring capabilities by 2023-24 school year • Meet biannually with designated school site-based FF advocate to discuss implementation, successes, and challenges
<p>Review parent contact and participation data with FECs to determine the levels of participation and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of FF students and families have at least one family contact per month • At least 50% participation in each of six family events offered per year • Two home visits conducted for each family • Newsletter distributed; two additional engagements (phone call, etc.) per month
<p>Coordinate the collection of data (including observations) and evaluation information needed at the site level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are assessed at entry and exit to FF with STAR Early Literacy screener • Instructional reading level progress regularly monitored • 80% of students demonstrate improved scale score on STAR Early Literacy assessment • Lessons and observation notes recorded in platform indicating growth in instructional reading level for 80% of students
<p>Outcomes: Fidelity of program implementation leads to impact for underserved students in partner sites.</p>	
<p>Goal 4: Increase national awareness of FF as cost-effective evidence-based program through stakeholder engagement and dissemination plan (Aligned to Strategy to Scale 3)</p>	
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Performance Measures</p>
<p>Develop and implement annual stakeholder engagement plan that aligns relevant stakeholder groups to specific opportunities for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop calendar of meetings, conferences, and convenings and achieve 90% FF attendance at planned events

engagement, leads to understanding most pressing needs, and increases awareness of FF as evidence-based program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble FF Advisory Group and achieve 75% attendance at every meeting • Annual increased understanding of FF impact as measured by stakeholder survey
Develop and implement annual dissemination plan that identifies specific stakeholder groups, dissemination opportunities, and plan for developing and disseminating content for highest priority opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop calendar of dissemination products and disseminate 80% of products on time • Annual increase in awareness of FF program as measured by FF and Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education (SREED) web analytics • Annual increase in inquiries from non-EIR sites about implementing the program
Outcomes: Effective stakeholder engagement and content dissemination leads to increased awareness of program and its impact on student outcomes, leading to requests for program expansion from non-EIR sites.	

C3. The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs (10 points)

The proposed EIR Expansion grant will provide an evidence-based program to 1,500 students per year for four years of project implementation across 30 schools in at least five states.

Table 2: Proposed Partner Districts

Region	NCES District ID/ (Locale Code)	Total Student Population	% Below Poverty	% FRPL
South Carolina	N/A	735,998	19	62
Eastern KY	1st and 2nd Congressional Districts	633,000	22	56.8*
				<i>*statewide</i>
Ozark Region, MO	2911340/ (32)	1,911	40.6	74.7
	2915180/ (41)	221	15.8	78.7
	290420/ (32)	1799	15.5	79.7
Central WI	5517070/ (32)	5,112	13.5	46.2
Western IL	1700320/ (32)	1,605	14.3	58.2
	1701381/ (43)	213	22.6	56.8

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2021)

FF's main service offering combines one-on-one tutoring with family engagement to serve struggling readers in grades K-3. Tutoring sessions are rooted in the science of reading (see Appendix J) and customized to meet the unique learning needs of each student. Family engagement builds on work done during tutoring sessions to provide families with the knowledge, tools, and resources to reinforce and supplement learning at home. Through the combination of research-based tutoring and family engagement, FF builds positive relationships with students and families and provides them with highly personalized support. As a result, FF students and families experience increases not only in literacy scores and student attendance but also in their overall attitudes toward and confidence in school.

Our tutoring model provides students with three 30-minute reading sessions per week. Prior to students beginning the program, tutors use a reading assessment to determine each student's starting point in the program's scope and sequence (see sample in Appendix J). Then tutors guide students through systematic acquisition of reading skills. Each lesson builds in a structured and sequential order, with flexibility to adjust depending on students' learning needs, and provides foundational skills necessary for fluent reading. Throughout a student's engagement with FF, tutors use a variety of embedded assessments to ensure students are progressing. In addition to the STAR screener administered at least twice a year, tutors use pre-and post-assessments for each skill unit and administer running record assessments every three to four lessons. These data help tutors adjust instruction and recognize when a student is ready to advance to a new reading level. Tutors are supervised and supported by a program manager (PM), a licensed teacher or professional experienced in youth development and education. The PM provides a minimum of 10 hours of training for each tutor and oversees daily implementation on site, including creating schedules, conducting observations, maintaining reports, and providing professional development and coaching to tutors. The PM also collaborates with school leadership, teachers, and other

district staff as well as FF FECs and families to help the program run effectively.

FF's second major component involves an intensive focus on supporting literacy through family engagement. Building on the significant research base around the importance of family engagement on student outcomes, this part of the model acknowledges that a school system cannot solve all the underlying factors that prevent student achievement on its own, and caregivers must be key partners in their children's learning. At the heart of this effort are FF's FECs who build positive relationships with families through a variety of communication and educational structures, including text updates, newsletters, phone calls, home visits, and family events. Home visits play a particularly important role in developing relationships with families. During this time, FECs welcome families to the program and help them feel comfortable engaging with the team. FECs also host family events focused on building community and demonstrating ways families can support daily literacy activities at home. FF encourages teachers and other school staff to attend and engage in family events. Prior to engaging with families, FECs are trained on five components of early literacy—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—and on how to effectively communicate in family-friendly and context-specific language. This requires a strong understanding of basic literacy components and how those components are tailored specifically to FF.

The proposed FF EIR Expansion project is designed to address the learning needs of underserved students in primarily rural communities as it will employ a substantiated conceptual framework for scaling evidence-based practices. FF has already demonstrated significant evidence of impact with multiple external evaluations over the past decade. First piloted in 2005 and known early in its development as "SPARK," FF had two separate program evaluations have met the U.S. DOE's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards for rigor (2020) without reservations, based on an i3-funded randomized control trial in Milwaukee Public Schools. Evaluations found 1) the

program had statistically significant positive impacts on overall reading achievement, literacy development, and school attendance; 2) the effect was greater for students who started with a greater need for literacy instruction; and 3) the program reduced student absenteeism: participants were absent 5.8 fewer days and were 27% less likely to be chronically absent than control students. Further, the positive impact on students was shown to remain stable one year after the end of their participation: former participants who scored significantly better on the spring 2016 STAR reading assessment had 2.9 fewer school absences during the 2015–16 school year compared to control students (see the **Evidence Form** for effect sizes and significance). As such, the program was classified by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University as one of a small number of literacy interventions that both work and meet the “strong evidence” definitions laid out in the Every Student Achieves Act and earned the highest possible rating (“Statistically significant positive effects found”) from the DOE's Institute of Education Sciences. To date, FF has been able to measure some of these sustained outcomes and validate parts of the model, with three published studies, including two randomized control trials and one multisite regression discontinuity analysis completed while working under our mid-phase replication grant. This impact is seen across traditionally underserved students: of the 222 students who received FF services as part of evaluation in the 2018-19 academic year, 86% of were eligible for FRPL and 60% are Black. Research currently underway is looking at social-emotional outcomes (using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment Social and Emotional Learning assessment), as well as the longevity of current positive outcomes described above.

D. Adequacy of Resources and Quality of the Management Plan (20 Points)

D1. The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period (10 points)

Since FF's inception in Milwaukee, the program has expanded to more than a dozen sites, with multiple studies verifying impact. In 2017, SPARK formally moved under the auspices of EA, a

national nonprofit organization, where it was rebranded as FF. It has primarily been funded by a 2017 EIR grant from the U.S. DOE that will wind down sitework in June 2022. FF is currently led by four full-time EA staff members who make up a highly qualified team with a diverse skill set. Current staff include **Executive Director Kate Bauer-Jones**, responsible for overseeing project implementation, interaction with the DOE, and overseeing sustainability and program expansion. Kate has two decades of education and nonprofit leadership experience, including years spent managing previous EIR grants. **Senior Family Engagement Manager Tia Hatchett** coordinates, leads, and designs training and supports students' caregivers and home learning communities. Her background includes experience in community and family engagement, project management, and conflict management and resolution. **Senior PM Kris Bischoff** is responsible for coordinating tutoring implementation and overseeing all training and professional development for PMs and tutors. Kris began her career as a first and second grade teacher and has worked in adult education helping new teachers understand the science of reading. Tia and Kris have both worked with FF for over a decade, since it was developed as an early literacy program that laid the foundation for our current intervention. **Regional Coordinator Andreana Watkins** oversees geographically focused implementation, working with direct service staff, coordinating with school and district leadership, and overseeing operations (See B for full résumés of all key personnel).

Individual sites are managed by PMs working with FECs and tutors. Many of FF's current sites are managed in partnership with a local community organization directly serving a school system. PMs and FECs may be employees of local community organizations but are supported by FF team members based on their role. In the future, FF intends to employ site-based staff directly and then through school districts as sites are transferred to full release.

The EIR Expansion grant will add another position, **Director of Implementation**, to support program expansion. This position will manage each of the three Strategies to Scale (above) and

ensure the Executive Director and program staff are effectively leveraged. In the first two years of the grant, this position will design and implement processes and tools (e.g., the assessment of readiness for release, verification of fidelity of implementation, and partnership and implementation plan). This position will also interface between EA’s technical and human-centered design team and each user group to ensure the platform meets the needs of users and long-term expansion goals of the project. In years 3 through 5 of the grant, this position will monitor implementation across participating sites and target intensive support, while also managing the comprehensive communication and dissemination plan.

As a part of EA, FF utilizes EA’s platform development, analytics, and back-office capabilities, including finance, human resources, and operations (see Appendix J for additional information). In addition, FF works with external vendors to support non-programmatic functions including communications and advertising, website maintenance, and strategic and business planning.

D2. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (5 points)

Table 3: Management Plan and Timeline

Goal 1: Develop local (school and district) capacity for implementation and gradually release responsibilities based upon assessment of readiness				
Objectives	Output/Performance Measures	FF Staff Responsible	Milestones	Timeline
Establish MOUs with partner sites (schools and districts) that identify roles and responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of participating sites sign MOUs with FF 	Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School advocate identified District commits their portion of funding MOUs signed 	Spring 2022

<p>Deliver administrative onboarding for partner schools and districts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of sites receive onboarding and identify a site-based advocate • Onboarding partners provide 85% or higher positive feedback in surveys • Schools agree to timeline and milestones for GRM • FF launched at all sites fall 2022 	<p>Executive Director, Director of Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF program overview/ awareness training for school staff • Successful year one implementation 	<p>January 2022- June 2023</p>
<p>Conduct FF overview and initial training and share regular results with dedicated staff at partner schools and district while FF staff are implementing program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of predetermined personnel/district staff attend at least 90% of coaching and training sessions • Coaching session participants provide 85% or higher positive feedback in surveys • Less than 20% of participants require “reteaching” 	<p>Senior PM, Senior Family Engagement Manager, Director of Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF implementation staff hired and trained • Biannual update meetings with school/district leadership 	<p>Summer 2022- ongoing</p>
<p>Develop rubric of school capacity and readiness for gradual release,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubric of readiness for implementation agreed upon by at 	<p>Executive Director, Director of Implementation,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF managed implementation begins fall 2022 	<p>January 2022- summer 2023</p>

train local staff on assessment, secure site commitment for participation in assessment.	<p>least 80% of participating sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of participating sites are trained on assessment and agree to biannual administration 	Senior PM, Senior Family Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School advocate, FF Director of Implementation, Executive Director agree on terms of readiness assessment 	
Conduct biannual assessment of school and district readiness for gradual release, and deliver report with implementation status areas of growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of participating schools and districts show increasing readiness in every biannual assessment • 75% of participating schools are ready for site implementation by beginning of 2024-25 school year • 50% of participating schools achieve full release by beginning 2027-28 school year 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF national team representative meets with local staff/school personnel to review implementation data • Timeline for gradual release regularly reviewed and updated for accuracy 	Winter and spring annually
Transfer appropriate implementation responsibilities to sites that have demonstrated readiness on biannual assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of sites that receive site implementation receive targeted supports to progress to full release • 95% of sites that receive full release status receive 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (or more) years of successful implementation with fidelity • School/district staff roles defined and funded 	Fall 2024-ongoing

	platform access and timely support			
Monitor full released sites annually review to ensure fidelity and impact to retain FF affiliation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of full release schools transition to FF platform use • 90% of full release schools retain full release status each year 	Director of Implementation, Senior PM, Senior Family Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New MOU negotiated with full release schools • Annual review of data 	Fall 2024-ongoing
Utilize formative evaluation results to guide GRM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual formative evaluation and reporting from external evaluator 	Director of Implementation, Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual evaluations conducted successfully 	Summer 2023-ongoing

Goal 2: Strengthen organizational capacity by equipping FF and local staff with a refined FF platform

Objectives	Output/Performance Measures	FF Staff Responsible	Milestones	Timeline
Develop additional platform functionalities for users (FF staff, school staff, and district staff) to support implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of platform functionalities are developed 	EA Web Development, Engineering teams, all FF staff advise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project scope detailed and defined • User-centered design process complete • Platform website rebuilt • Trial implementation successful 	Spring 2022-2023
Integrate expectations for platform use in roles and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of staff roles/responsibilities include expectations for platform use 	Director of Implementation, Senior PM, Senior Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full build out of Platform successful 	Fall 2023-ongoing

responsibilities of FF and local staff; provide resources and training to develop capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of staff receive training on platform use relative to their role • FF staff time on replicable tasks significantly reduced by platform 	Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full usage of platform by all FF parties 	
Develop access for families to view data about their child and training to support use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family access is developed, deployed, and used by 50% of families in initial rollout year • Resources developed and rolled out to support access and use • Family rating 85% 	EA Web Development team, Senior Family Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family needs analysis conducted, used to define project scope • Family access view build out complete 	Fall 2022- spring 2023
Develop activities and support for families to extend FF at home; provide support and resources for shared read alouds, letter ID, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family use of platform resources is consistent with overall platform use • Family user feedback is positive 	EA Web Development team, Senior Family Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on family use of platform integrated into family events and contacts • Platform use verified and supported during engagement 	Fall 2022- ongoing
Goal 3: Implement the FF program with fidelity in partner sites and improve student outcomes				
Objectives	Output/Performance Measures	FF Staff Responsible	Milestones	Timeline
Ensure services are offered in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 100% hiring, supervising, 	Director of Implementation,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF local staff hired 	Summer 2022

adherence to the established timeline and sites have an appropriate level of personnel.	and training tutors in years 1-2	Senior PM, Senior Family Engagement Manager, Regional Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All FF staff receive implementation training 	
Ensure systems are in place to collect program data/observations, conduct professional development, and facilitate collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% FF staff input all lesson plans, student and family engagement data into platform 100% FF local PMs, FECs review data weekly 	Director of Implementation, Senior PM, Senior Family Engagement Manager, Regional Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff regularly inputting and reviewing data in platform 	Fall 2022-ongoing
Review parent contact and participation data with FECs to determine the levels of participation and communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of FF families engage in at least one of the following each month: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family event Home visit 2 conversations with caregiver and FEC 	Senior Family Engagement Manager, site FECs, Regional Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enrolled in program Family events begin 	Fall 2022-ongoing
Coordinate data collection and information needed by evaluation at the site level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of identified students meet minimum program threshold of attending two tutoring sessions per week 	Senior PM, site PMs, Regional Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enrolled in program Regular tutoring sessions scheduled Necessary evaluation data 	Fall 2022-ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF staff review engagement, reading level reports weekly 		sent to external evaluator	
Conduct annual evaluation and report findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual evaluation and deliver report 	Evaluator, Project Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report delivered 	Fall 2022-ongoing

Goal 4: Increased national awareness of FF as cost-effective evidence-based program through stakeholder engagement and dissemination plan

Objectives	Output/Performance Measures	FF Staff Responsible	Milestones	Timeline
Develop and implement annual stakeholder engagement plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop calendar of meetings, conferences, and convenings and achieve 90% FF attendance at planned events • Assemble FF Advisory Group and achieve 75% attendance at every meeting • Annual increased understanding of FF impact as measured by stakeholder survey 	Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholder groups identified • Engagement plan drafted • Advisory members engaged • Survey of calendar, opportunities complete 	Spring 2022-ongoing

Develop and implement annual dissemination plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop calendar of dissemination products and disseminate 80% of products on time • Annual increase in national awareness of FF program as measured by FF and SREED web analytics • Annual increase in inquiries about FF from sites not included in proposal 	Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly communicate with external stakeholders via e-newsletter • Attend key conferences/sector engagement opportunities • Evaluator reports disseminated on SREED website, conferences, published in journals 	Summer 2022-ongoing
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D3. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project (5 points)

Over the past three years of implementing FF through a mid-phase EIR, EA has gathered all cost data and conducted existing pricing work, which allows for accurate planning for the costs of expanding the program and ensures they are directly aligned with FF’s stated objectives. After many years of implementation and evaluation, we believe most student impact occurs in the first several months of intervention. For this reason, we will use a semester-long intervention period rather than a full year’s treatment, which will substantially reduce per-pupil costs. All costs are reasonable, are allocable, and will be used to implement the program in the sites and support its long-term sustainability described in **section C3**. Additionally, the cost-effectiveness study conducted as part of the external evaluation will further increase understanding of best practices for reducing cost and allowing greater scale. The attached budget narrative includes a description and justification for all proposed costs.

The primary cost drivers for this proposed work will be the site-level implementation (e.g., hiring tutors, PMs, and FECs; purchasing supplies; supporting sites), site-level capacity building (e.g., training, biannual assessment, coaching), and improvements to the existing FF platform (e.g., incorporating new data, building additional features, conducting a rigorous usability testing method, adding new sites). The platform costs will primarily occur during the first year of the grant and set up the program for success as tutoring begins in fall 2022.

EA will meet this grant's match requirement by ensuring that each school implementing FF commits to match 25% of its award. This match commitment will ensure participating schools and districts are focused on the program's long-term success, support preparation for the increasing implementation responsibilities of the proposed GRM and establish a foundation for a sustainable program model that can expand and scale nationally after federal funding ends.

E. Quality of Project Evaluation (25 points)

E1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) (15 points)

The FF evaluation will capture rigorous evidence of effectiveness; determine whether impacts can be successfully reproduced and sustained over time; identify the conditions in which the program is most effective, including for whom and in which contexts the program is most effective; and examine its cost-effectiveness. The lead investigator, Curtis Jones, Director of the Office of SREED, is not affiliated with EA, played no role in the development or implementation of FF, and will conduct all aspects of the evaluation. The findings will not be subject to approval from EA but will be prepared, reported, and disseminated by SREED.

Using a multi-site randomized control trial with student level outcomes, the evaluation, independently designed and executed by SREED, will meet WWC standards (2020) without reservations. The impact evaluation will answer the following confirmatory contrast questions:

1. *What is the impact of participation of one semester in FF on reading achievement, as compared to the impact of business as usual (BAU) instruction provided by schools?*
2. *What is the impact of participation of one semester in FF on school attendance, as compared to the impact of BAU reading instruction provided by schools?*

And the following exploratory contrast questions:

1. *To what extent is the impact of FF sustained up to 18 months after participation ends?*
2. *What is the impact of FF for students who received the program as intended?*
3. *Is FF more impactful for certain student subgroups?*
4. *Is FF more impactful under different school and program conditions?*

Consent and eligibility: The impact evaluation will occur during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years (years 4 and 5 of the grant). In the fall of 2024, after consenting is complete, and before assignment, schools will organize students to complete the STAR early elementary reading assessment and any local reading assessments. K-3 students who do not have an IEP and are not English language learners will be eligible for the study.

Assignment and Baseline Equivalence Testing: SREED will assign students randomly to study conditions. Assignments will be made within each grade level within each school. With 30 schools in the study and four grade levels (kindergarten and first, second, and third grade) per school, there will be 120 assignment blocks. Of the kindergarten, first, and second grade students, 25% will be assigned to one of four conditions: 1) fall 2024 FF; 2) spring 2025 FF; 3) fall 2025 FF; or 4) spring 2026 FF. Since FF does not serve fourth grade students, half of third grade students will be assigned to fall 2024 FF and the other half to spring 2025 FF. After the first year, as kindergarten students move to first grade, incoming kindergarten students will be invited into the project. To ensure that all newly consented kindergarten students receive FF, half will be randomly assigned to fall 2025 FF and the other half to spring 2026 FF. This assignment strategy will allow all

students who want FF to receive it while also allowing for the execution of a randomized study that meets WWC standards without reservation. Before schools are informed about student assignment, we will ensure that the baseline STAR results for students assigned to each condition are comparable and re-randomize if group differences are greater than a 0.05 effect size. Schools will likely not share the results of their local assessments before assignment. Thus, it is possible that FF and BAU students may not have equivalent baseline local reading assessment results. Local reading assessment contrasts will control for baseline assessment results regardless.

Modeling Strategy: The primary modeling strategy will involve three-level hierarchical linear modeling, with students nested within grade levels within schools. All outcome models will include a robust set of covariates including baseline (start of semester) STAR and local assessment results, baseline attendance (prior to participation in FF), and a vector of student demographics. Benjamini–Hochberg correction will be used to account for the inclusion of both local measures and the STAR assessment to test the impact of FF on reading achievement.

Confirmatory Contrasts: Table 4 summarizes the number of students participating in the study over time. Each school will eventually serve 100 students and the whole initiative, 3,000 students. The first confirmatory contrasts will occur at the end of the fall 2024 semester with the outcomes of 750 FF students compared to 2,250 BAU students. The next set will occur in spring 2025, comparing the outcomes of 750 additional FF students with 1,500 students still receiving BAU reading instruction. The final set of confirmatory contrasts will occur after the fall 2025, comparing the results of 750 new FF students to the 750 students still receiving BAU reading. There will be no confirmatory contrasts after the spring 2026 semester because all students in the study will have received FF. For confirmatory contrasts, the study will employ an intent-to-treat design, including all students for which we have outcome data regardless of how much FF received.

Table 4: Study Assignment to Experimental Conditions

	2024-25		2025-26	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
In each school...				
Current FF participants	25	25	25	25
Current BAU students (never received FF)	75	50	25	0
Former FF participants	0	25	50	75
Total study participants	100	100	100	100
Across 30 schools...				
Current FF participants	750	750	750	750
Current BAU students (never received FF)	2250	1500	750	0
Former FF participants	0	750	1500	2250
Total study participants	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000

Exploratory Contrasts: The assignment strategy outlined in Table 4 will allow the evaluation to measure the sustained impact of FF (**Exploratory Contrast #1**). Sustained impact analyses will occur after the spring 2025, fall 2025, and spring 2026 semesters. In spring and fall 2025, we will compare the outcomes of students who received FF in previous semesters to outcomes of students who received FF that semester and to BAU students. In spring 2026, we will only be able to compare the outcomes of students who received FF in previous semesters to the outcomes of students who received FF that semester. Through these comparisons, we will be able to measure the sustained impact of FF up to 18 months past participation.

The evaluation will also measure the impact of FF on students who receive the program as intended (**Exploratory Contrast #2**). Students at a minimum should receive at least two tutoring sessions each week, and families should receive at least one contact each month. To test the impact of the full FF program experience, the evaluation will use a treat-on-treated modeling strategy, which will adjust impact estimates to the amount of FF students receive.

To test if FF had a differential impact on certain student subgroups (**Exploratory Contrast #3**), student demographic characteristics such as grade level, race, gender, and baseline STAR scores

will be interacted with FF participation. Significant interactions would suggest that FF was more impactful on certain student groups.

To test if FF has a differential impact on students under certain school and program conditions (**Exploratory Contrast #4**), we will identify the school intraclass correlation of each outcome after accounting for student baseline reading abilities. The intraclass correlation measures the amount of program impact that is associated with the school the student attends. Characteristics of the school, discussed in the next section, will be added to the statistical models to test for a significant reduction in the intraclass correlation.

Attrition and Replacement: In previous FF studies, less than 10% of students were lost to attrition during the school year. Thus, the contracts occurring in spring 2025 should have closer to 700 FF participants instead of 750. Previous studies of FF have shown attrition to be a bigger problem between school years, with close to 25% of students changing schools and lost to the study. To counter this, schools will be allowed to replace attrited participants who were assigned to fall 2025 FF or spring 2026 FF. Replacements will likely include students who moved to the school since students were assigned to conditions. Replacement students will be consented and reading assessed before being randomly assigned to either fall 2025 FF or spring 2026 FF. Assignment will occur for all replacement students in the fall of 2025. No missing outcome data will be replaced in the study. Students with missing outcome data will count as an attrited student for that comparison. Missing baseline data will be replaced using the dummy variable replacement method (Puma et al., 2009). We do not expect differential attrition will affect the internal validity of the study but will be tested regardless.

Valid and Reliable Measures: The evaluation will leverage outcome measures with strong validity and reliability evidence that meet WWC standards. School attendance will be measured after each semester. Schools will administer the STAR Early Literacy assessment to all

participants in the fall, winter, and spring of both years. The STAR assessment is an adaptive reading assessment, with high internal reliability (0.95) and strong concurrent validity with other reading assessments and state reading tests (Renaissance Learning, 2021). The evaluation will also use the results from local reading assessments. Reading assessments administered by study schools include the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), the MAP Reading Assessment for Primary Grades (MPG), and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). The PALS is a criterion-referenced, assessment (Invernizzi et al., 2003) with high internal (0.76 to 0.83), inter-rater reliability (0.92), and test-retest (0.92 and 0.96) reliability and strong predictive validity (Invernizzi et al., 2004). The MPG is a norm-referenced assessment with high test-retest reliability (0.70 to 0.90) and predictive validity (0.65 and 0.85; Northwest Evaluation Association, 2009). The DIBELS assessment has high test-retest reliability (0.70 to 0.93) and strong concurrent validity with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (University of Oregon, 2020). Schools will receive a stipend each semester they complete the STAR assessment and share other relevant outcome data with the evaluation team.

Power Analysis: The project will have sufficient power to detect impacts. Each semester will include 120 blocks (four grade levels and 30 schools), with roughly six FF participants and six to 18 BAU students in each. Regarding reading achievement, based on previous studies of FF, we expect 20% of the variance will be explained by block and 40% by covariates. Assuming 0.05 effect size variability, the study has a minimum detectable effect (MDE) of 0.11. With 0.10 effect size variability, the study has an MDE of 0.13. Regarding school attendance, based on previous studies of FF we expect only 10% of the variance will be explained by block and 10% by covariates. With 0.05 effect size variability, the study has an MDE of 0.14. With 0.10 effect size variability, the study has an MDE of 0.15. Pooling results across semesters will greatly increase the study's power. Assuming 0.05 effect size variability, pooled data results in an MDE of 0.07 on

achievement and 0.08 on attendance. With 0.10 effect size variability, pooled data results in an MDE of 0.07 on achievement and 0.09 on attendance.

E2. The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings (5 points)

SREED will collect a variety of data to help EA better understand how to replicate and test FF in other settings and maintain its effectiveness. SREED will observe trainings and survey participants to assess effectiveness and identify possible additional training needs. SREED will collect and analyze fidelity of implementation and attendance data, to identify schools conducting FF well and schools struggling to manage the process. SREED will conduct surveys of principals and school staff to capture their attitudes, understanding, and ownership of FF. Together, these data will be used to identify schools potentially ready to take ownership of FF, candidates for full release, and schools still challenged by its implementation. In spring 2023 and 2024, SREED will conduct site visits with four schools identified as candidates for full release and two schools still developing capacity. These visits will involve direct observation of program activities, interviews with local FF staff, interviews with school staff, and interviews with families. The goal of this work will be to develop a deep understanding of the conditions in schools that facilitate and inhibit the successful implementation of FF and its scaling up. Through site data collection activities, we will also identify specific indicators that will inform the Exploratory Contrast #4 about conditions in schools that are related to FF's impact. These efforts will be used to develop a rubric of a school's suitability for FF and to identify the conditions that need to improve before EA can reduce support.

Implementation reports will be produced each year and shared with EA. These reports will examine the progress of FF moving to scale within each school and across the initiative and the conditions identified within the program's administration and within schools that both facilitate and inhibit effective implementation and the program's ability to scale up effectively. Further,

impact evaluation reports will be posted on the SREED website, presented at national conferences, and published in journals. These reports will include the results of Exploratory Contrast #4 about the local conditions related to the impact of FF. Finally, SREED will conduct cost-effectiveness analyses using the ingredients method, at the beginning and end of the study, to explore how well FF has been streamlined to be less expensive and scalable and if these efforts have resulted in any reduction to its effectiveness.

E3. The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as measurable threshold for implementation (5 points)

The key project components include 1) the tutoring students receive and 2) the contacts made to families. Acceptable implementation at the student level is achieved when the student receives at least two tutoring sessions each week and families are successfully contacted at least once each month. A school has met acceptable tutoring implementation when 80% of its students meet this threshold and acceptable family engagement implementation when 80% of its students' families meet this threshold. The overall initiative has met the acceptable implementation threshold when at least 75% of schools meet acceptable tutoring *and* family engagement implementation. FF is designed to impact the outcomes of school attendance (reduced absenteeism) and reading achievement. The impact of FF implementation on these outcomes is mediated by the relationship of the student with their tutor, the engagement of families in their student's education, and the extent that students increase their engagement with text. Students who have a strong tutoring experience build a trusting and positive relationship with their tutor. Families who are consistently engaged in FF become more engaged in and knowledgeable about their student's education, Together, these both encourage students to engage more with text. Through these mediators, FF positively impacts reading achievement and school attendance (see Logic Model in Appendix J).

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