

**Local Site Research Initiative  
Cohort VI**

Part I Overview of Request for Proposals

Part II Cohort VI Request for Proposals

**Part I**

**Local Site Research Initiative  
Overview of Request for Proposals**

The Local Site Research Initiative is intended to build a portfolio of rigorous, context-specific evaluation studies of local writing project work. A central feature of the NWP model is that the specific design of professional development programs varies according to local needs, reform priorities, school conditions, and research contexts. Each writing project site emphasizes common core principles of effective instruction, while the design and delivery of services is negotiated locally. NWP's goal for the LSRI is to develop a growing body of research that examines local professional development programs based on these core principles and that illuminates teacher practices and student achievement in writing across a range of grade levels, schools, and local contexts.

**The LSRI exists for the following purposes:**

- To build site capacity for conducting research
- To generate research results that are locally useful
- To promote evidence-based planning and decision making as an operating norm within sites and within NWP nationally
- To contribute to the national picture of NWP impact.

**All funded projects must do the following:**

- Focus on an established program (inservice, summer institute, continuity) being implemented within a new environment/location/context
- Involve student writing
- Incorporate some form of comparative reference in the research design
- Commit to three years of participation, including at least two years of data collection and a year for writing and dissemination
- Directly assess student writing (when student writing is assessed)
- Account for the complexity of teacher practice (when teacher outcomes are assessed).

**We welcome (but are not insistent upon) proposals for studies that**

- Address student outcomes in a variety of academic areas
- Address teacher outcomes in areas such as professional knowledge, classroom practice, and collegial relationships
- Address outcomes for specific populations of concern within our network, such as English language learners, students with special needs, students of varying socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as male or female students
- Include analyses that disaggregate findings for various groups such as those listed above

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- Examine any one of a range of NWP program activities such as inservice, the summer institute, or continuity programming
- Involve a variety of stakeholders in research activities (such as teacher-consultants, university faculty, school administrators, and graduate student researchers).

### **Funded projects will be supported by the NWP Research Unit over a three-to-four-year period in the following ways:**

- Annual funding, based on continued performance and available funds, for three to four years
- On-site consulting visits across planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting phases of the study
- Meetings and events (i.e., workshops on research design and data collection as well as analysis and writing festivals for analysis activities) where members of the network will share their experiences and learn from each other
- A national scoring conference for scoring student writing from local sites
- Access to archives of writing prompts, rubrics, and data collection instruments; models of analytical tools; and examples of formats for dissemination of results
- Response and editing for reports and publications.

### **Funded sites will commit to the following:**

- Participating in LSRI events by sending two members of the local research team to each event throughout the funded period
- Convening a local research team including at least one team member not directly affiliated with the site
- Reporting results to NWP and to other audiences (local, policy, publication) and allowing results to be synthesized by NWP
- Sharing knowledge and expertise with other cohort members and future cohorts of the initiative.

### **We invite proposals of two types and invite conversations with site leaders to determine which type is most appropriate:**

- Sites that are not yet ready to launch a research project but are interested in exploring research and evaluation through the LSRI are encouraged to submit a proposal that includes a year for development and exploration, with the expectation of developing a full research plan for the following year(s). Sites interested in an additional year for exploration and development of a research plan should complete the **underlined questions** in Part II below.
- Sites ready to conduct research through LSRI should complete **all** of Part II below. Sites should plan to collect data over a two-year period and to allow a year for analysis and report writing.

*Sites or groups of sites planning to apply should attend session **AM4: Developing Evaluations of Your Programs** at the Annual Meeting on Thursday, November 19, 2009,*

*from 9 a.m. to noon. Online registration through the Annual Meeting Web page is required.*

## **Part II**

### **Local Site Research Initiative Cohort VI Request for Proposals (RFP)**

**Deadline: January 20, 2010**

Sites, state networks, or consortia of sites interested in applying for funding and participation in the Local Site Research Initiative, Cohort VI, must draft a proposal that responds to the guidelines below. Cohort VI research projects are intended to span three to four years, including two years of data collection and a year for analysis and report writing. Funding will be renewed annually based on performance and availability of funds. **You may apply for as much as \$20,000 per year for a total of up to \$60,000 over a three-to-four-year period. Annual funding amounts are dependent on project activities and available funds.** (State networks or consortia of sites should contact research staff listed below regarding funding.)

For substantive questions, contact Paul LeMahieu or Sherry Swain. For questions about the proposal submission process, contact Lois Connington at [lconnington@nwp.org](mailto:lconnington@nwp.org). The site director must submit this proposal electronically to Sherry Swain at [sswain@nwp.org](mailto:sswain@nwp.org) on or before January 20, 2010.

### **PROPOSAL GUIDELINES**

The study must involve an established program being implemented in a new context, location, or environment. The study must examine student writing in some way, and may address either student writing performance or student writing as it relates to performance in other academic areas.

#### **Research Project Title (or Focus)**

Please develop a title that clearly describes the focus of your research study.

#### **Executive Summary (200 words or less)**

Summarize the programmatic focus of your research, the central research question(s), and the key elements of your research design and measures, especially with regard to student and/or teacher outcomes.

#### **Narrative (8 to 10 pages)**

Please address the following:

##### **Focus of the Study (1 to 2 pages)**

Describe the context in which the research will take place. Focus here on the aspects most relevant to the proposed study.

- a. What site program (summer institute, inservice programs, continuity, community/parent programs, etc.) are you studying?

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- b. What are its foci?
- c. What is the history and origin of this program?
- d. How long has it operated?
- e. What are its goals for students? for teachers?
- f. Describe the activities that go on in the program and explain how the activities support the program goals.
- g. What schools/districts will host the research? Provide general demographic information on the host schools or districts and describe any unique qualities that enhance the contexts in which the research will be conducted.

### **Background to the Study (1 to 2 pages)**

- a. What (if any) research on this program does the proposed study build upon? Describe any research activities conducted to date. Describe any relevant findings.
- b. What research in the broader research context does the proposed study build upon?
- c. Why is the proposed study important locally?
- d. Why is it significant to the field?

### **Design of the Study (3 to 4 pages)**

- a. Questions
  - What research questions will focus and guide your study?
- b. Methodology
  - What are your proposed research methods?
- c. Research Participants
  - Briefly describe the subjects participating in each group, program and comparison (students, teachers, etc.).
  - How many subjects will be involved in each group, program and comparison (students, teachers, etc.)?
  - How were the proposed subjects and numbers of subjects decided upon?
- d. Data Collection
  - What kinds of data will be collected?
  - How will they be collected?
- e. Data Analysis
  - What analyses are anticipated? (LSRI encourages disaggregation of outcomes.)
  - What is your rationale for these types of analyses?
  - What established measures will be used? What new measures will be developed? (When writing is assessed, it must be assessed directly. Assessments of teacher practice must give attention to the complexity of teachers' practice.)
  - Why did you select these measures?

**Capacity (1 to 2 pages)**

Describe the capacity of your site to conduct the research as proposed:

- a. Who will have the major responsibility for carrying out the research? Please include contact information for the individual who will serve as the research coordinator / primary researcher for this study (name, title, email, phone, fax, and mailing address).
- b. Who will serve on the research team? Please include names and contact information of research team members.
- c. What roles will each team member play? (Team members collecting data must not be involved in program delivery.) One member of your team should be an independent researcher/evaluator, not affiliated with your writing project site. (LSRI encourages you to consider the inclusion of some of the following on your research team: school administrators, university faculty, graduate students, and teacher-consultants).
- d. Describe the qualifications of the key individuals conducting the research. We are particularly interested in their research training and experience and how this relates to your study. Please attach vitae of the team leader, primary researcher, principal investigator, and independent researcher serving on the research team.
- e. Who will conduct the statistical work associated with your research?
- f. Who will provide technical support, advice, or consultation around research design and methods?
- g. Describe how data associated with the research will be managed at your site. Who will be responsible for data collection, preparation of raw data, data entry, and data storage?
- h. What additional resources (intellectual, human, fiscal, computers/networking, software, meeting spaces, library, etc.) beyond those sought in the grant proposal will be necessary to successfully conduct your research as proposed? How will those resources be secured?
- i. What people or entities apart from the site itself are necessary to complete the research (schools, districts, or agencies that participate or provide data, etc.)? Attach letters of commitment to this research project from any independent people or entities.

**Timeline**

Please include a timeline outlining plans for carrying out various parts of the work. Your timeline can be arranged by months or by chunks of time. We've begun a timeline that includes NWP support and some activities for the first months of your study. Please add items related to recruiting participants for the study; collecting each data element;

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completing your university's human subjects permission process; completing a literature review; programmatic events that affect your study; meetings of your research team; and meetings with your statistician, data manager, outside consultants, school administrators or teachers, and others with a stake in your study. This timeline should reflect the full three to four years of your study although later years will likely be less detailed.

### **2010**

January 20	Proposals due
March	Notice of Awards to Site
March–May	Site Context Study
May 24–28	Research and Program Design Symposium
2010–2011 school year	NWP Research Staff consultations with sites

### **2011**

June	National Scoring Conference for those sites collecting student data in the first year of the study
August	Analysis and Writing Festival
September	Interim report due

### **Required Certifications**

Please address your commitment to the required certifications of the Local Site Research Initiative:

- a. Letters of commitment for attendance and participation in the activities and meetings of the LSRI by two team members
- b. Involvement in the research by the site director
- c. Willingness to submit annual interim reports, and a final report at the conclusion of the study
- d. Willingness to provide findings in a predetermined format to the NWP for synthesis with findings of other studies
- e. Intention to work with the findings in a way that benefits the work of the local site (with local teachers and administrators and with state, regional, and local policymakers)
- f. Development of a clear plan for disseminating results, including publishing findings in appropriate venues and print media.

### **Human Subjects Certification (IRB)**

Please attach a copy of your university's blank form for securing permission to conduct the study. LSRI will provide assistance in completing the IRB application.

### **Budget and Budget Narrative**

You may apply for up to \$20,000 per year over the three-year grant period, with flexibility among the years. (Sites requesting the fourth year for developing a research plan should request less during the initial year.)

Matching funds for LSRI grants are not required.

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State networks or consortia of sites applying for a collaborative grant should call Sherry Swain or Paul LeMahieu to discuss additional funding.

- a. Provide a budget that shows how you will use the monies sought for your LSRI grant proposal in the **first year**. Funds may be used only for research costs, *not* to pay for program elements (e.g., stipends for facilitators of professional development, materials for an institute or workshop).
- b. Provide a budget narrative that details how funds will be used in the first year.
- c. Programmatic funds: describe the source of funds for programs that relate to your study.

### Checklist for Attachment to Proposal

- Letters of Commitment
- Vitae of Research Team Members
- IRB Form (blank)
- Timeline
- Budget and Budget Narrative (as attachment or within body of proposal)