



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 1467

1. Project Title

2. Senate Sponsor

3. Date of Request

4. Project/Program Description

The current proposal will build upon our great successes in FY '23-'24 which supports a (1) significant impact of personalized format and content readability on reading performance for children and (2) a need expressed by our current school partners to bring this work to additional students in Florida schools. The project will expand our understanding of how individualized readability can optimize reading speed and comprehension in K-12 populations and build tools to bring this technology into more classrooms. The Readability Consortium was formed in 2021 with the mission to enhance digital readability for adults and children. This project aspires to reverse current trends in reading loss reported by the U.S. Department of Education by developing individual readability prescriptions for all readers. Adobe is requesting \$1,250,000 for the University of Central Florida (UCF). UCF's The Readability Consortium will engage in individual readability research for 1,200 K-12 students.

5. State Agency to receive requested funds

State Agency contacted? No Yes

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Type of Funding	Amount
Operations	1,250,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	1,250,000

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	1,250,000	83%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	250,000	17%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2024-2025	1,500,000	100%

8. Has this project previously received state funding? No Yes

Fiscal Year (YYYY-YY)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		
2023-24	0	1,000,000	143	No

9. Is future funding likely to be requested? Yes No

a. If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.

b. Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.



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The proposal would fund a self-contained extension to the work of The Readability Consortium, a \$200,000 per year readability research partnership funded by Google and a \$50,000 per year readability research partnership funded by Monotype. This standalone effort would focus on expanding previous research toward a wider range of ages, and tools that teachers could implement in their classrooms.

10. Has the entity requesting this project received any federal assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

If yes, indicate the amount of funds received and what the funds were used for.

Complete questions 11 and 12 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

11. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

- Planning
 Design
 Construction
 N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)?

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

12. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

13. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits	Dr. Ben Sawyer and Dr. Stephanie Day will oversee all aspects of the proposed study. They will be responsible for the implementation of the research design in schools, recruitment, data collection, analysis of the data, and dissemination of research findings. We budget for 2 months of FTE effort for Dr. Sawyer and 6 months FTE effort for Dr. Day.	90,052
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Operational Costs: Other		
Salary and Benefits	Two postdoctoral scholars with expertise in reading and vision science who will implement the research design, data collection & management, and analysis. A full-time project coordinator responsible for assisting with recruitment and coordinating all aspects of the research. Undergraduate research assistants will be recruited for data collection in schools and data entry. Includes both salary and fringe benefits.	496,210



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Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	We budget for individual student licenses to administer a standardized measure of students' reading skills, a classroom set of Chromebooks which can be loaned out as needed to support data collection, and development of a set of on-site mobile reading laboratories, based upon our present equipment, which allow the deployment of eye tracking and electroencephalography capabilities in the classroom. Funds to cover costs of participant research incentives are included.	488,738
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Funds are requested for website management to maintain the research infrastructure of the digital platform for our format diagnostic matching tool software and data. We budget for a web programmer who will develop both a researcher and a district web portal to access our format readability matching assessment.	175,000
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		1,250,000

14. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?

The funding will provide for the further development of tools capable of bringing our technology to more student populations in K-12 settings in Florida, a need expressed by our current partner throughout the state. The education community will gain understanding as to how individualized format and content readability can boost reading performance across childhood and into adolescence. This will include assessing impact for students of varying ages and levels of reading ability, the development of large language models (LLM) to adjust the difficulty level of texts, and documenting examples of implementation, showing how personalized readability can support reading outcomes. The Readability Consortium at The University of Central Florida (UCF) will engage in A) expanded format and content readability research and B) the development of open source tools to be used by researchers and educators, and C) proof-of-concept implementation of these tools in the classroom.

b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

Students in our work will utilize our format readability matching assessment which matches students with their optimal text formats. This year, we will expand this research to additionally assess how large language models (LLM) can be leveraged to adjust the difficulty level of text based on individual student reading levels and develop tools to be piloted by participating teachers. Educators in the classroom, across Florida and The United States, will gain access to a platform designed to deliver format recommendations for students, tools for adjusting content readability, and provide teachers with options to build this capability into the classroom activities. We will also provide teachers with an end-of-the-year workshop to review research findings and for delivering access to the technology developed.

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

This project aims to improve reading performance for children through the use of individualized format and content readability and to develop tools that will deliver this technology to educators to implement directly in the classroom. Citizens in Florida and beyond will benefit from novel, low cost, classroom tools to help children overcome challenges with reading.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

The directly targeted population is 1,200 students and their teachers in Florida schools, with 400 elementary school students, 400 middle school students, and 400 high school students. As we worked to recruit school districts across the state of Florida in '23-'24, many districts expressed the desire to include more students in this project. These funds will allow us to expand the work to 1,200 additional students in Florida in FY '24-'25. Students will be recruited through public schools. Tools created will be built and delivered with the expectation that they could be used by many millions of students.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?



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Expected benefits for this project include (1) knowledge of how personalized text formats and improved content readability can support more optimal reading fluency and comprehension for children by creating a more engaging, personalized, and accessible digital learning environment, and (2) the development and release of open-source tools and materials to be used by schools and for future research. Deliverables include results to be shared in both journal publications, research partners, and schools. All software will be designed to be used at scale by researchers and educators. Documentation for our tools will be made available online. Data on these outcomes will be analyzed by PhD-holding statisticians, through machine learning, item analysis, individual differences, and hierarchical linear modeling techniques. Impact in terms of use of these tools will be tracked and transparently reported through the number of downloads, and the number of districts using the outcome of this project.

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for the contract?

If we are unable to fulfill or complete the proposed project, the funding will be returned to the state of Florida.

15. Requester Contact Information

a. First Name Last Name

b. Organization

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number Ext.

16. Recipient Contact Information

a. Organization

b. Municipality and County

c. Organization Type

- For Profit Entity
- Non Profit 501(c)(3)
- Non Profit 501(c)(4)
- Local Entity
- University or College
- Other (please specify)

d. First Name Last Name

e. E-mail Address

f. Phone Number

17. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. Name

b. Firm Name

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number