



March 7, 2006

TO: CPB Board of Directors

FROM: CPB Management

SUBJECT: Recommendation to authorize CPB management to enter into three Ready To Learn research contracts

Background. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) awarded Ready To Learn 2006-2010 funds to CPB in fall 2005. A total of \$72 million over five years will support new content (for television, web, and materials for schools and childcare centers), concentrated on-the-ground outreach work (through schools, newspapers, community centers, neighborhood groups, and public television stations) in 20 selected communities, and intensive research.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTALS
Content Development and Production	8,383,276	7,099,006	6,288,037	7,023,966	8,409,915	37,204,200
Research and Evaluation	3,542,147	3,047,019	2,781,869	3,033,220	3,429,378	15,833,633
Outreach to Communities	3,446,411	3,443,917	3,438,916	3,436,353	3,432,293	17,197,890
Project Management	302,798	298,333	303,979	319,737	315,611	1,540,457
TOTALS	15,674,632	13,888,275	12,812,801	13,813,276	15,587,197	71,776,180

CPB submitted the proposal on behalf of our main partner PBS, and on behalf of a coalition of talented experts whose excellent workplans, as outlined in the proposals to the USDOE, were a significant part of the reason that CPB was awarded these funds. The experts include researchers Dr. Deborah Linebarger, Dr. Susan Neuman, and Dr. Sharyn Sutton; producers Out of the Blue, Inc., Sesame Workshop, and WGBH/Boston; and strong plans for online content development and a national marketing campaign outlined by PBS.

The USDOE RFPs issued directed that 25-30% of all funds be used for research purposes. Therefore a significant aspect of Ready To Learn 2005-2010 is the establishment of a research base that will identify and measure the success of various elements of Ready To Learn work.

Three research studies are ready for funding. This memo reviews the process by which CPB and the Department of Education selected the researchers who will conduct these studies, provides brief descriptions of each research project, and includes a brief note on universities' indirect cost rates.

Procurement Process. The Ready To Learn RFPs articulated the importance of research and the need for the involvement of the finest scientifically-based researchers. The RFPs also made clear that the success of proposals would be based in large measure on the caliber of the research team.

CPB consulted with leaders in fields of reading and community research, with Dr. Reid Lyon, the leader of the administration's reading initiatives, and interviewed a number of the recommended experts. From these discussions, we learned that Dr. Linebarger, Dr. Neuman, and Dr. Sutton are regarded as the premier researchers in early reading, in reading through media, and in reaching low-income communities. Therefore, we asked Dr. Linebarger, Dr. Neuman, and Dr. Sutton to serve as lead researchers. They enthusiastically agreed. They wrote the research sections of the proposals, and put together an advisory group of highly respected research advisors to serve Ready To Learn through 2010.

USDOE staff and a panel of ten national experts reviewed and offered comments on the CPB proposal. The identity of the experts remains anonymous, but their verbatim comments indicate that the leadership of Dr. Linebarger, Dr. Neuman, and Dr. Sutton was seen as one of the proposal's strongest elements:

- "The applicant's lead researchers are nationally-renowned experts in scientifically-based reading research."
- "The credentials of Dr. Linebarger and Dr. Neuman are excellent."
- "Neuman and Linebarger are recognized experts in their field."
- "It is extraordinary to see that Sharyn Sutton will apply her expertise here."

In addition, comments from USDOE staff make clear that they view the participation of Linebarger, Neuman, and Sutton as one of the strongest aspects of our proposed work. USDOE sees CPB's Ready To Learn proposal as the project that brings these leading researchers to the Department of Education. Subsequent to the RTL award, the USDOE invited Dr. Linebarger and Dr. Sutton to present their work at various meetings in the Department.

Dr. Linebarger's research

Description. Dr. Linebarger will work with producers and online content developers of the Ready To Learn series – Sesame Workshop, WGBH, and Out of the Blue – to test broadcast and online content for appeal and comprehension among the target audience of low income children, ages 2-8. This testing will be shaped around several questions:

- What are the factors that affect the percentage of time children spend looking at the media content? (attention)
- What is the content comprehension (i.e. general recall and recognition)? Do children acquire scientifically-based literacy skills from this media content? (understanding)
- Do children like the media content, including its form and characters? (likeability, and therefore usability)

In the course of her testing, she will develop universal tenets applicable to future production of educational content. These tenets will inform future content developers how content should be produced to maximize both appeal and comprehension of educational goals.

Cost. \$5,133,086 over five years

Dr. Neuman's research

Description. Dr. Neuman will identify the effects of PTV-based school instructional materials on the school readiness of low-income children, and on their reading achievement scores once in school. In a five-year study, Dr. Neuman will use research to both develop and evaluate scientifically-based instructional materials designed to improve the literacy skills of low-income pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children and will assess the impact of those materials on children's reading scores.. These materials will be based on sequenced segments of *Sesame Street* and *Between The Lions*. Her study will:

- Identify the effects of scientifically-based instructional materials on children's school readiness, as defined by oral language and vocabulary development, awareness of letter sounds, visual knowledge of letters and print in pre-kindergarten.
- Explore the extent to which repetitive use of these materials (pre-kindergarten and kindergarten) impacts children's school readiness.
- Identify the effects of scientifically-based instructional materials (including a parent-involvement program) on children's reading achievement as defined by phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in kindergarten.
- Explore whether developmental timing impacts children's reading achievement (pre-kindergarten only vs. kindergarten only).

Like Dr. Linebarger, Dr. Neuman’s research will provide future content creators with guidance in developing programming that can reach the target audience effectively.

Cost: \$5,306,355 over five years

Dr. Sutton’s research

Description. Dr. Sharyn Sutton will lead a team from the American Institutes for Research,, a leading education think tank and research center. AIR is currently conducting more USDOE-funded research than any other research center in the country. They will conduct in-depth community and marketing research in the target locations, and work with stations to connect community partners, new reading materials, and low-income families in substantive ways. During the first year, these are Toledo (WGTE), Oakland (KQED), San Antonio (KLRN), Baltimore/rural Maryland (MPT), and Jackson/rural Mississippi (MPB). Five more markets will roll out each subsequent year. Each year, Dr. Sutton will lead the following work:

- Conduct formative research that encompasses both quantitative and qualitative market research methods, including in-depth target audience analyses, to develop profiles of selected “target communities”
- Develop and test messages and concepts based on market research to stimulate awareness and demand for RTL programs, promotions and the desired end-result
- Develop a comprehensive RTL implementation and communication plan, which will include brand strategies, target audience profiles, message strategies, and local partnership development to support the program’s goals
- Execute the plan through development and dissemination of messages, materials and other needed support (identified through market research), for use by public television stations and community RTL partners in target communities.

Cost. \$4,573,000 over five years

NOTE: University Indirect Cost Rates. Dr. Linebarger’s and Dr. Neuman’s contracts are with the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan respectively, since they are on those faculties; other faculty members, graduate students, and staff will play a role in the research work at each university. The budgets for these two projects include indirect cost rates that are significantly higher than those we normally see in public television. This is because all universities — and particularly with respect to on-campus research projects — charge high indirect cost rates.

The indirect cost rates of University of Pennsylvania and University of Michigan are included below within the context of other indirect cost rates that are regularly applied to federally- or state-funded on-campus research projects:

Harvard University	64%
University of Southern California	62.5%
University of Pennsylvania	57%
Georgetown University	55.2%
University of Michigan	53%
Vanderbilt University	53%
George Washington University	49.5%
Howard University	49%
University of Maryland	48.5%
University of Kansas	48%
Louisiana State University	43%
Mississippi State University	43%

Indirect cost rates are determined periodically from a university's actual cost records through a detailed cost accounting procedure and are audited and approved by the federal government. All universities negotiate these rates with an agency of the federal government, usually the Department of Health and Human Services. The Office of Management and Budget requires these negotiations, monitors them, and requires institutions to use these negotiated rates in every federal or state grant application.

The American Institutes for Research has its own indirect cost rate, negotiated by means of the process described above. A non-profit education organization whose sole business is research would typically have an indirect cost rate that is much lower than a university's. AIR's indirect cost rate is 27%.

Funding Recommendation. The studies described above are significant elements of Ready To Learn, will provide critical and sound research developed and conducted by leading experts that will be an invaluable tool to public broadcasters and educators for years to come. As a result, they are highly anticipated – by the U.S. Department of Education, the reading community, the early childhood community, and the public broadcasting community. They have been vetted in all respects, and favorably, by USDOE, outside reviewers, and CPB staff. CPB management is prepared to negotiate and conclude agreements with the referenced researchers and requests authorization from the Board to enter into negotiations and agreements with the referenced researchers. A draft resolution is attached for the Board's consideration.