

SCOPE OF WORK

Project Abstract

Applicants are required to provide a description of the key elements and primary focus of the project.

Response: The purpose of the Working with the Experts (WWE) project is to increase the State's capacity to prepare and retain highly qualified personnel to provide instructional and related services to students with disabilities. The initiatives for this project include the coordination of professional development activities for related service personnel (speech language pathologists) and delivery and statewide leadership support for professional development and communication with institutions of higher education (IHE) faculty preparing teachers and therapists to support students with disabilities in the educational setting. To assist in supporting improved student outcomes, the project will coordinate six regional in person WWE activities and will provide access to online professional development courses that provide American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA) continuing education units (CEUs) to speech language pathologists (SLPs). In addition, this project will provide support for and facilitate the WWE for Coordinators/Leaders and WWE for SLPs Advisory Committee meetings. The project will coordinate ASHA CEU provision for SLP professional development activities coordinated by WWE and other discretionary projects and school districts. The project will also update and expand the content of speech language resources located on the WWE website. Additionally, the project will provide professional development activities for faculty at IHEs that support the preparation of teachers working with students with disabilities by coordinating the 2018 IHE Summer Institute, developing and disseminating the Plugging In newsletter, and facilitating the delivery of webinars/professional learning communities.

Established Need

Identify the state, regional or district need based on analysis of the baseline data.

Response: According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), employment of speech language pathologists is projected to grow 21.3 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations. An additional 74,680 SLPs will be needed to fill the demand between 2014 and 2024. According to Florida Education Certification Statistics, on July 6, 2014, there were 883 individuals certified in Speech Correction (grades K-12) and 1730 individuals who held certificates in Speech Language Impaired (grades K-12). On May 10, 2015, the number of individuals certified in Speech Correction (grades K-12) was 886 and the number of individuals certified in Speech Language Impaired (grades K-12) was 1960. The number of certified individuals increased in 2015 for the first time in several years, however, statistics over the past two years show a decrease once again. On May 15, 2016, the number of individuals certified in Speech Correction (grades K-12) was 813, and the number of individuals certified in Speech Language Impaired (grades K-12) was 1918. On May 7, 2017, the number of individuals certified in Speech Correction (grades K-12) was 750, and the number of individuals certified in Speech Language Impaired (grades K-12) was 1860. The demand for therapists by Florida schools is greater than the availability of professionals.

According to Wolfgang (2011), there is a nationwide shortage of qualified SLPs with New York, California, Illinois, Florida and Texas having the greatest unmet need. In 10 years' time, there is predicted to be a 27% increase in job openings; and employment for SLPs is expected to grow faster than the average for all other occupations (Edgar & Rosa-Lugo, 2007). This scarcity of SLPs is a nationwide concern because most SLPs are employed in school settings. When schools cannot employ enough qualified individuals, student needs either go unmet or students are served by untrained persons. According to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) (2001), it is anticipated that the number of SLPs that will be needed for