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Executive Summary

Arkansas Reads will have 40 half-time AmeriCorps members who will provide one-on-one basic literacy and ESL instruction, along with identification and recruitment of volunteers to promote sustainability of local literacy councils in 23 county-level sites. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for tutoring 725 economically disadvantaged students; 425 will receive basic literacy education and 320 will receive English as Second Language instruction. An increase in literacy instruction to these students will result in an increase in employability, healthier lifestyles, more involvement in their children's learning, and more engaged community citizens. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 250 new volunteers that will be engaged in providing one-in-one instruction in basic literacy education and ESL instruction. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of economic opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$249,895 will be matched with \$266,161 in state and local public funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

PROBLEM/NEED. Arkansas Literacy Councils is a statewide non-profit that provides support to over 32 community based literacy councils serving 42 counties. Our mission is to empower Arkansas through literacy.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, almost 350,000 Arkansas adults lack the most basic of literacy skills. Of the 1.9 million Arkansans age 25 and over, almost 18% do not have a high school diploma, 6.7% have less than an eighth-grade education. Adults with low literacy skills often cannot effectively negotiate the health care system, read food or prescription labels, fill out a job application, manage finances, or read to their children. It is difficult for such persons to both achieve and retain employment.

Arkansas has high poverty rates, low literacy rates, and an abundance of very rural, poor areas, which are plagued by a lack of corporate or philanthropic resources and hard-to-reach populations. In the same survey, data indicates 18.4% of Arkansans live in poverty, compared to 14.3% nationally. This percentage has increased annually from 5.2% in 2007. Arkansas Reads literacy councils represent both rural and urban settings in culturally diverse areas, and the need for these AmeriCorps members is great--93% of the program service area has a higher poverty rating than the national average, and 57% more than the national average lack basic literacy skills.

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Currently 20 ALC councils have 38 AmeriCorps members serving to provide literacy services to their communities. The counties currently served, including their 2011 unemployment and poverty rates, are: Baxter (8.6, 16.8), Boone (6.8, 16.9), Calhoun (10.1, 16.5), Clark (7.9, 23.1), Conway (7.9, 23.0), Crawford (8.3,18.0), Crittenden (11.6, 26.6), Cross (8.5, 19.2), Dallas (10.3, 21.5), Faulkner (6.7, 14.7), Franklin (6.7, 20.9), Fulton (7.0, 21.4), Grant (7.1, 11.5), Hot Spring (7.3, 20.3), Independence (7.9, 21.4), Johnson (7.0, 20.8), Lafayette (9.6, 24.2), Lee (10.9, 35.2), Little River (7.8, 17.6), Miller (5.3, 21.5), Newton (7.5, 21.3), Ouachita (10.3, 21.5), Pope (7.3, 22.1), Pulaski (6.7, 16.6), St. Francis (10.1, 32.9), Saline (6.6, 10.0), Searcy (8.6, 28.6), Sebastian (8.4, 21.2), Sharp (9.6, 24.5), Stone (9.2, 22.9), Union (9.9, 21.5), Washington (5.9, 20.1), White (8.2, 18.0), and Yell (6.5, 19.5).

Arkansas continues to experience a dramatic increase in immigrants to the state. In 2013, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation conducted a study that found Arkansas ranked fourth among states in immigrant population growth between 2000 and 2010. The 2012 U.S. Census estimates that over 88,000 Arkansans speak English less than very well. AmeriCorps members are needed at local literacy councils to identify and reach out to this population and offer them the assistance necessary to learn to read and write English.

Adult illiteracy is at the root of many societal problems. The National Center for Family Literacy has released a number of statistics and studies that indicate that parents who are poor readers do not read often to their children, and those children are less prepared for learning when they enter school. Further, children of parents with low educational skills are at greater risk of sharing the legacy of their parents' educational, economic, and social limitations. An October 2010 study funded by the National Institutes of Health finds that a mother's reading skill is the single greatest determinant of her children's future academic success. The study concludes that programs designed to improve adult literacy skills can also improve academic outcomes for children and young adults.

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems. Evidence-Based and Measurable Community Impact.

THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL. Individuals who advance their literacy skills are able to make better-informed decisions, progress towards personal goals, and be engaged, productive participants in society. When an individual seeks the services of a literacy council and learns to read,

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write, and do basic math, that individual is wanting to improve their skills so they may lift themselves out of poverty, contribute to improved health care costs, advance their education, find and keep sustainable employment, and function more effectively in their home and community. In order to provide those services, more tutors are needed at the local literacy councils to meet the need.

Arkansans who lack the most basic of literacy skills must first be tutored to a minimum of 6.6 grade reading level before they can enroll in an Adult Education program to achieve their GED. Students come in to literacy councils at all different grade levels ranging between 0.0 to 6.6. A critical part of these local literacy councils' success is one-on-one instruction in a private setting provided by well-trained volunteer literacy instructors. For this reason, Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps members provide an invaluable service to their communities as basic literacy and ESL tutors helping their neighbors take steps toward defeating illiteracy and becoming happy, healthy, informed and engaged community members. AmeriCorps members are crucial to the success, and often times continued availability, of many of our literacy councils located in the less populated counties. Arkansas Reads requests 40 half-time AmeriCorps members to serve at 23 local literacy councils (10 councils have multiple members) with a service area of 37 Arkansas counties (7 councils have multiple county service areas). Many literacy councils have waiting lists of Arkansans who want to be tutored, but the pool of volunteer tutors is scarce. With the assistance of AmeriCorps members, more resources are provided for tutoring as well as reaching out to the community seeking additional tutors to create sustainability.

Since 2004, ALC's Arkansas Reads program has placed members in local literacy councils to address the program's long range goals: 1) provide one-on-one tutoring to increase the number of Arkansans receiving Basic English Literacy instruction; 2) increase the number of people receiving English as a Second Language instruction; and 3) recruit volunteers to create sustainability. AmeriCorps members have accomplished these goals by becoming certified Basic English Literacy and/or ESL tutors and by providing hundreds of hours of invaluable tutoring and volunteer recruitment services, meeting and exceeding program goals. The anticipated outcomes are improved state literacy rates, better-educated parents which will help ensure that children will become more successful in their education, higher rates of GED attainment and secondary education application, a more capable and attractive workforce, and more active and engaged community members. The Arkansas Department of Career Education states that every student tutored in a literacy council and able to go on to obtain their GED

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will see an annual increase of \$7,000 in wages.

The 40 half-time AmeriCorps members requested will provide at least 20-30 hours of service a week at local literacy council. Weekly duties include supporting successful tutor/student matches through intakes; 1 hour one-on-one tutoring of at least 8-10 students each per year, 3 days per week; and group trainings for ESL students. In addition to direct tutoring, members assist with pre-testing to determine a student's current grade level and review with the council director the student's motivation and desired learning goals in order to choose the appropriate curriculum. Finally, members use the training they receive in order to recognize and document student achievements and progress through student attendance records and student/tutor tracking forms. The students are then post-tested to determine increased literacy levels.

In addition to producing these kinds of outcomes, members are vitally important to local literacy council sustainability. Arkansas Reads members identify and recruit volunteer tutors in order to promote sustainability long after their service terms have expired. Members' volunteer recruitment efforts make a dramatic difference in the number of citizens who give their time to tutor students in literacy.

EVIDENCE BASE. Data from the Arkansas Department of Career Education Adult Education Division Report Card (which tracks students in the state's adult education and literacy councils) for July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012 indicates that students served in Arkansas are making educational gains through the tutoring services provided. 79% of the enrolled students who took a pre-test and post-test made educational gains of one or more grade level equivalents. The report also indicates that after exiting adult education/literacy programs, 762 students entered postsecondary education and 1,232 students entered employment.

In 2003, ProLiteracy of America reviewed research on positive outcomes achieved by literacy programs. The report, U.S. Adult Literacy Programs: Making a Difference, provided insights about the value of literacy and adult education programs for both the students and the communities they live in. The findings showed 1) literacy programs help students gain the skills they need to get and keep jobs. Many students who were unemployed at the time they enrolled in a literacy program were employed by the time they left. 2) Literacy programs help adults make significant advances in their

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fight against welfare dependence. The National Institute for Literacy estimates that about 43% of adults with low literacy skills live in poverty. As adults increase their basic skills, they tend to improve their earnings which in turn they will become more self-sufficient. 3) Adults who lack basic literacy skills are much more likely to have healthcare expenses as much as six times higher. 4) Literacy programs improve ESL students chances for employment. Immigrant poverty is growing at a rapid rate, with the number of low income households headed by immigrants. With ESL instruction, this population is able to improve their employability.

Unfortunately there is very little research nation-wide documenting the use of volunteers in adult literacy tutoring. In 1993 Wasik, B.A. and Slavin, R.E. wrote a report on "Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring". The findings from their research on the effectiveness of using certified trainers and paraprofessionals with children concluded that one-on-one tutoring was an extremely effective form of instruction. They also concluded that the primary drawback was the high cost of providing these services. The Arkansas Reads program, with the use of trained members as paraprofessionals, is able to provide results oriented one-on-one tutoring services to adults seeking to increase their basic literacy skills.

The most common curriculum used in Arkansas literacy councils for helping adults learn to read and write is the Laubach Way to Reading (LWR). A variety of studies have shown that this curriculum is highly effective. In a 1988 study titled "An Evaluation of Reading Gains within Illinois Adult Literacy Projects" by Bowren & Dwyer, the reading ability of students using the LWR program increased on average .64 of one grade level in 38 mean hours of exposure to the program. Reading ability also increased .43 of one grade level in 26 mean hours. In 2012 Charles Johnson co-authored a research study on the effectiveness of the LWR program with high school students. In his research, previous studies have shown that older struggling readers are less in need of phonics instruction and more in need of "word study" and "motivation" integrated with fluency, vocabulary and comprehension; key components of the LWR. Students interviewed after post-testing indicated that they had increased self-confidence, increased motivation to read, and an increased desire to learn to read better.

With the addition of Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps members, most who become a source of trained and educated tutors in the LWR, literacy councils have been able to provide more illiterate adults a chance to improve their basic reading, writing, English, and/or math skills so that they may advance their

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education and function more effectively in their home and workplace.

MEMBER TRAINING. Arkansas Reads members are trained at the site and by the state. At the site level, site supervisors train members their first week of service, which includes two days of AmeriCorps specific training and three days of tutor training. The AmeriCorps training includes a review of the service manual provided each member that includes all of the pertinent information and forms needed, such as job description, contracts, and time sheets. Other training topics include National Service, member service expectations, time management, goal setting, and prohibitive activities. Site supervisors role-play with the member when reviewing the prohibitive activities followed by a post-test on prohibitive activities. This method of training allows members to capture the reason for non-participation in these activities. The tutor training includes Basic Literacy and English-as-a-Second Language instruction and is consistent with the curriculum and instruction provided to students at each site. The training is led by a certified tutor instructor and includes modules such as Characteristics and Needs of Adult Learners, Characteristics of Effective Instruction, language acquisition, cultural awareness, lesson planning and speech sounds. The training also involves role-playing activities to help members understand how to tutor and prepare them to deal with the difficulties of training adults at low literacy levels. Following the tutor training, members are paired with an experienced tutor for a few weeks which allows them to get comfortable with tutoring before they are given their own students. Tutor trainings are typically held a number of times per year at each site depending on the need to train new volunteers. Members are encouraged to attend each time they are provided to help them understand more about the service they are doing.

State training is provided to all members in the fall, about a month after the program begins, by the Arkansas Service Commission. This one-day training includes topics such as disability inclusion, citizenship, professionalism, and team building.

Member training is not provided at the programmatic level due to having multiple sites and member enrollment dates staggered. This is difficult especially in the smaller, rural communities. Members are however encouraged to attend professional development trainings with their site supervisors. Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center, a partner with ALC, provides training courses free of charge, year round, covering such topics as Literacy Strategies for Adult Learners, Payne/Jordan Learning Disabilities, ESL Basics, and Computers Basics/PowerPoint.

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MEMBER SUPERVISION. As a multi-site program, member supervision is primarily provided at the site level. Site supervisors, typically literacy council executive directors or a council staff person assigned to manage other volunteers at the council, are experienced volunteer managers and recruiters, and are valuable resources for the member's service experience. Many of our site supervisors have degrees in education and have either focused their career in literacy or retired from education and are sharing their knowledge and expertise by serving in the literacy councils. All supervisors are trained and skilled in literacy instruction, having completed a minimum of 30 hours of tutor training.

At the site level, site supervisors oversee member's tutoring and volunteer recruitment schedules on a daily basis. Site supervisors plan a member's day to include tutoring, as well as speaking engagements and tutor recruiting efforts. Site supervisors are asked to meet with the members at least once a week to discuss any changes or areas of concern.

Site supervisors attend an annual mandatory training in August conducted by the Arkansas Reads program director. The training focus is for supervisors to gain a clear understanding of the AmeriCorps program. During this training, the program director reviews in detail site supervisors duties and member responsibilities. The training provides interactive, small group sessions on topics such as member supervision, reporting, how to use the education award, what does it mean to serve as an AmeriCorps member, and prohibitive activities. During the discussion on prohibitive activities, site supervisors role-play in groups and then present their understanding of these activities to the entire group so that everyone can benefit from the additional learning. Site supervisors will provide this same type of training to their members during their member training the first week of service.

Because Arkansas Reads is a multi-site program, we are not able to see our members on a regular basis. While there is no formal supervision provided by Arkansas Reads, we do communicate with members by phone and email at least 2-3 times a month to informally monitor their activities and concerns. If issues arise that need immediate attention, the program director will do site visits as required. ALC hosts an annual meeting and four regional meetings across the state each year. Members are encouraged to attend these meetings and meet with the program director to share any concerns and best practices.

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COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. In addition to visual identification, members will be equipped with the ability to speak confidently about the mission of their local literacy council and AmeriCorps. Through their training, they learn and are able to share with confidence, the connection between CNCS, their local literacy council and the mission of AmeriCorps. They are encouraged to share that connection and importance to community leaders, civic clubs, and other community partners. Arkansas Reads ensures that the AmeriCorps logo is prominently displayed on all materials and at each of our sites.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING. Arkansas Literacy Councils (ALC) was founded in 1971 as a statewide organization to provide training, professional, and other forms of support to Arkansas literacy councils. In 1991, the Arkansas Legislature recognized the valuable contribution of volunteers in the adult literacy movement by granting state funding to ALC which is used to support a staff and a state office and issue sub-grants to community literacy councils. The current funding is \$675,000 for 32 literacy councils in 47 counties. In addition to managing the grants process for the state appropriation, ALC is responsible for administering a federal sub-grant for training and staff development, providing technical assistance for start up and existing literacy councils in nonprofit and board development, organizing an annual meeting and a statewide conference, facilitating opportunities for improved instructor training, and seeking other funding sources to support improved adult literacy. ALC has also substantial experience in administering AmeriCorps and other federal-funded programs. Not only is ALC currently in its 11th Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps program year, it concluded a six-year AmeriCorps VISTA program in 2005 and administered a grant for 13 ARRA members in 08/09.

The program director for AmeriCorps is Belinda Sanders. Ms. Sanders is responsible for AmeriCorps programming and reporting duties, which include ensuring that day-to-day requirements and support of the AmeriCorps service program are met. She closely monitors the quarterly reports on instruction hours and student numbers served to ensure that members meet their goals. Ms. Sanders has over 15 years of AmeriCorps program management experience including programs with HIPPI and City Year. In 08/09, she came to ALC and has organized and supervised the application process, site supervisor and member trainings since that time.

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ALC's new executive director Nancy Leonhardt is the primary fiduciary contact for the AmeriCorps program. Ms. Leonhardt has an extensive background in non-profits. Her most recent position as Administrative Director included assisting with grants management for a number of foundation grants. She is responsible for reviewing the quarterly reporting information required by ALC on financial expenditures, instruction hours and volunteer recruitment to ensure that all host site councils stay within budget parameters and meet stated goals. She is also responsible for host site and director evaluations to determine if that site should be awarded continued AmeriCorps membership.

Each literacy council is incorporated, has 501(c)(3) status, and a board of directors that meets routinely and functions according to its bylaws. Mid-year and final budget reports, with copies of a financial review, are also required annually by ALC.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY. Arkansas Reads monitors site compliance through monthly paperwork reviews, phone and email communication, and annual visits. Site supervisors are trained extensively on compliance during our annual supervisors training. Upon training completion on compliance regulations, supervisor's initial the documents discussed and given a copy for their files and a copy is retained by the program director. As compliance updates are received throughout the year, they are emailed to the sites with explanations. Through desk audits, we check files for member enrollment information and time sheets, copies of in-kind and match documents, as well as confirm there is a copy of the site supervisors manual. When a compliance issue arises, the site supervisor's manual is referenced to site non-compliance. At annual site visits, we use a site-monitoring tool that includes a checklist of compliance areas including the site supervisor and member's files; steps are taken to ensure members are not engaged in prohibitive activities; training the site supervisor and member participated in; how the site promotes AmeriCorps; day-to-day activities the member engages in; and how the member role is different from other staff or volunteers. We also interview the site supervisor and member to check their knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities and duties. Both the supervisor and member sign a copy of the site visit and must correct any compliance issues immediately.

A programmatic/financial orientation/refresher is conducted at the August Arkansas Reads Site Supervisor training and at the ALC regional meetings. These sessions review time and workload commitments, programmatic and financial reporting requirements, tutoring and recruitment goals

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and overall Arkansas Reads goals. When it comes to site financial and programmatic responsibilities, the Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps program is greatly assisted by the experience that comes from conducting the state and federal funding distribution processes for all local literacy councils for over 17 years. Many of the site supervisors have been with the councils since that time, and conduct member and tutor training, day-to-day operational needs and meticulous reporting on a regular basis. New supervisors receive comprehensive training, and a regional network of experienced site supervisors exists to provide support in the areas of reporting, accounting, volunteer management, and AmeriCorps.

PAST PERFORMANCE. Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps members, like all ALC literacy tutors, must document student achievements and measurable academic goals and members have consistently produced measurable outcomes in previous program years.

The past 3 years Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps members have served 1,875 Basic Literacy students. Of those students, 980, (52%) received 12 hours or more of instruction and met at least one personal goal. During the same 3 years, The AmeriCorps members tutored 1,172 English as Second Language students. 638 students (54%) received 12 hours or more of instruction and met at least one personal goal. Overall, our members have shown an increase in students served and who have met their personal goals. Personal goal examples include reading to children or grandchildren; recognizing and pronouncing words; reading instructions on medications; reading a job description and/or application so that they could apply for a job. These achievements are often life changing for students, and as a result are intensely satisfying for their AmeriCorps member tutors. Our members become dedicated to making sure that the students meet the goals they have established for themselves. For the past 3 program years, members exceeded the goal to instruct at least 400 students per year in Basic Literacy skills as follows: FY11, 35%; FY12, 54%; and FY13, 80%. The goal to instruct at least 300 students in ESL was exceeded as follows: FY11, 7%; FY12, 26%; and FY13, 57%. And each year, goals were exceeded in students who met personal goals and made measurable academic advancements.

In the past we have been concerned about the strength of our newer site supervisors and their dissemination of information to new Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps members. Although we provide them with training and technical assistance, we still have issues with miscommunication of AmeriCorps information. This past year, we have enlisted the help of some of our "veteran" site

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supervisors to mentor the new site supervisors. These "veterans" have served with us for 5 years or more, and some were once AmeriCorps members themselves. They have become great mentors that ALC relies on to help answer questions from a site supervisor's point of view and to share what they are doing at their sites to ensure that all of our members have successful and meaningful experiences.

ENROLLMENT. Each year we filled 100% of our slots. Members are recruited and selected from the areas in which they serve. Our sites do a great job at finding inexpensive, no cost ways to advertise for the AmeriCorps positions. Through community collaborations such as colleges, faith-based organizations, other non-profits and just word-of-mouth, the literacy council's typically have a several applicants for each slot. 80% of our supervisors have served at the site for five years or more. That knowledge and experience has helped them to effectively recruit the best candidates.

RETENTION. On average we have retained 33 or about 87% of our members over the past 3 years. We are constantly monitoring our retention rate and always seeking ways to improve. Retention factors include members moving, unexpected illnesses, family emergencies, or lack of program fit. We have put systems in place to help with retention. Arkansas Reads is a multi-site program, therefore communication is vital to our success. ALC provides constant communication to the members through phone calls, monthly emails sharing information, and clarifying required duties. Through our evaluation process, valuable information is collected so that improvements can be made in training and day-to-day operations, with the resulting goal of improving the members' overall service experience and increasing our retention rate. The most common theme identified has been the members desire to continue service beyond the initial two years. During that time they had just begun to understand and appreciate the goals and mission of AmeriCorps and they have also wanted to stay on to see their students reach their goals. With the increase to 4 terms for part-time members, we have been able to retain members longer.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. Continuous improvement is important to this program and is accomplished through evaluation. Questionnaires are administered to all supervisors and members at the end of the service year so that more detailed data can be collected and used to examine program effectiveness. Data collected includes member effectiveness, reliability, communication skills, tutor training skills and member initiative. Self-evaluations are also completed by members that examine pre- and post-service awareness of civic knowledge, team leadership, community assessment, project

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planning and management and public speaking. Training and testing in these areas encourage members to be civic minded and develop ways to share the word about AmeriCorps and the work that they do. These skills help the member grow not only in their service to the council, but they also become a strong voice in the community for the council.

An area of improvement that was identified in our 2011 evaluation was on-going training throughout the service term. Members are encouraged to participate in tutor trainings, as a refresher course, whenever they are held at the councils throughout the service year.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

COST EFFECTIVENESS. The Arkansas Reads program is a cost effective approach to providing basic literacy and ESL tutoring. Many of the councils are almost entirely staffed by volunteers because of the lack of available funding to hire paid staff. Unfortunately, in many of these counties, the pool of volunteers is not available to meet student needs and it is rare to find a volunteer who will commit to more than 2 hours a week to tutor a student. Arkansas Reads AmeriCorps members provide a reliable workforce that is dependable and available to meet the needs of the growing list of students at a cost that is doable by the councils, particularly those that are smaller with minimal resources.

Based on the Arkansas Department of Career Education policies, the approximate cost to literacy councils to hire part-time paraprofessionals to provide the services equivalent to AmeriCorps members would be \$15K-\$20K annually per person. Not considering the additional time and expense managing additional staff that the councils would incur, the costs would total upwards to \$800K for 40 additional staff members around the state. A prohibitive cost with the lack of funding available.

Arkansas Reads proposes to provide 52% of the financial requirements of this program. The total amount budgeted for the program is \$ 516,056 which accommodates expansion to 40 part-time members, training, travel and supplies, an evaluation module, as well as programmatic operating costs such as host site facilities, personnel, benefits and tax commitments. The CNCS request is \$249,895; ALC will provide \$266,161. The cost per MSY is \$12,495-- 5% below the maximum allowable. The proposed FY14 cost per MSY is a \$51 decrease over FY13 cost per MSY. We continue to provide these services below the maximum allowable despite the service areas' propensity toward impoverished, remote communities with hard-to-reach populations.

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BUDGET ADEQUACY. Arkansas Reads is managed in a high-quality way that takes advantage of free services provided by the Arkansas Service Commission such as site visits, program director meetings and trainings and ALC's partnership with the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center and training opportunities they provide (referenced in member training).

ALC's budget and those of the councils are adequate to support the Arkansas Reads program design. With ALC as the nucleus of the state's literacy network, a unique intermediary is formed so that small, community-based literacy councils with limited resources are able to take advantage of the valuable AmeriCorps program. Most of our sites do not have the staff to provide the ongoing full support, training and resources necessary to run their own programs so they rely on ALC to manage and oversee the program while providing the councils with members to provide the needed services. ALC's major program expenditures go toward conducting council professional and non-profit training, development, and oversight, and in sub granting programmatic funding from AmeriCorps and from the state of Arkansas to the host site councils.

ALC's total funding request for the 12/13 program year was \$495,520. Of that amount, \$238,374 was from the Corporation for a total of 48%. FY13/14 program year is budgeted at the same level as the previous year. This proposed project is calculated at a total of \$249,895 from the Corporation, which is again 48% of the total budget.

Since 1990, ALC has received annually the state-appropriated Grants and Aid to Councils funding in order to provide community literacy councils with funding for program needs, including salaries. Host site councils can use these funds for the AmeriCorps cash match requirements. Councils also use other funding sources for the match such as corporate and foundation grants, United Way funds, individual and board member contributions, and local business and industry philanthropy. ALC additionally receives an annual state leadership grant to assist councils with travel costs, training, and instructional materials and supplies. ALC will continue to seek foundation and corporate grants, as will the county-level local literacy councils.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

In 2011 the Arkansas Service Commission conducted an evaluation on the Arkansas Reads Program. Items noted for consideration were more targeted recruitment, on-going member training, and revisiting the site supervisor training model. Each of these items is being addressed through the site

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supervisors.

As we continue to grow and improve our program, a recognized area of needed focus is a more comprehensive evaluation plan. The literacy councils have very limited resources and capacity to conduct evaluations themselves. Arkansas Reads evaluations to-date have been conducted at mid-year and end-of-year and consist of a survey submitted to members to determine if they are meeting their expectations according to the member contract and their responsibilities at the literacy council they serve. As such, the Arkansas Literacy Council will focus on supporting both statewide and site capacity for outcome evaluation in hopes that it will measure program results and the desired outcomes anticipated in our theory of change; create new understanding about what works and what does not; and produce evidence that attracts additional prospects for funding.

ALC will develop a two-part evaluation of all Arkansas Reads sites in partnership with researchers at the University of Arkansas. Data will be collected through the use of student tracking reports, tutor training logs, pre- and post- skills tests, member evaluations, site visits, and exit interviews. The evaluation will include identification of factors that attributed to or prevented students from completing the goals they set out to accomplish, collection of information on student job search or job promotion, and duration and intensity of student tutoring. In addition we hope to determine the number of students who have completed their GED's, created resumes and interviewed for a job. The evaluation will be designed to measure the program results and provide understanding of how the desired results were achieved or not achieved which can be used to determine if this program is relevant and viable. A second part of the evaluation process will be programmatic and will include evaluation of processes in member selection, development, and management; how the experience has affected a member's life goals; and have the members' added value to the literacy councils where they serve.

Amendment Justification

Not Applicable

Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATION - APRIL 10, 2014

A. PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATION

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1. Not applicable

2. Our executive summary indicates that AmeriCorps members will tutor 725 economically disadvantaged students. Our target numbers are conservatively low due to the fact that we do not know from year to year how many students can be served in a group setting (typically ESL students) vs. the number of students who are served one-on-one which will impact the total number of students served. We also cannot address how many on-going students are still being served at the time the program year begins and what levels they are being tutored at. We also keep the target number conservative in case the member is having to spend more time out recruiting students and tutors than tutoring. We have been fortunate to exceed our target numbers each year and expect to again in this next funding cycle as indicated in our executive summary.

To bring our target numbers closer and to better reflect our growth over the past 3 years, we propose to change our output to tutor a target of 725 economically disadvantaged individuals on job training or other skill development services and we propose to change our outcome of the number of Basic English Literacy and ESL students who will increase their employability to 250. I am keeping that number low as not all students have the goal to increase their employability.

3. Site supervisors will be responsible for educating site volunteers on members prohibited activities. Arkansas Reads will produce a one-pager for site supervisors to distribute to volunteers during tutor training and use to educate them about the activities members can and cannot do.

4. Site supervisors are responsible for completing member evaluations and signing off on member time sheets. After a member has completed their time sheet, the site supervisor will sign off and then the program director will sign off. Member evaluations are completed twice a year. The program director sends the evaluation to the site supervisor. They in turn complete the evaluation, review it with the member and both are required to sign off that they reviewed the document. The evaluation is then sent to the program director for the member's file.

5. The budget requests 40 background checks. Currently all site supervisors and Arkansas Reads staff have completed background checks. If any new site supervisors or Arkansas Reads staff come on

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board, Arkansas Literacy Councils will incur the costs associated with those background checks.

B. BUDGET CLARIFICATION

Arkansas Reads will conduct an evaluation process that will consist of four components: a member survey that will be conducted twice a year (mid-year and end of year); a student survey that will be conducted at end of year; and a site supervisor survey that will be conducted at end of year. The fourth component will consist of quarterly student-tutor tracking reports that each of the sites is required to submit to Arkansas Literacy Councils.

The projected budget cost of \$3000.00 will be used as follows:

Data Evaluator Consultant Fee: \$1,000

Travel to Arkansas Reads sites to interview members, students, and/or site supervisors: \$1,700

Annual subscription to Survey Monkey (survey tool): \$205

Printing Costs for manual surveys: \$95

C. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS CLARIFICATION

1. 20% of slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities. Site supervisors will recruit at facilities such as Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Goodwill Industries, Group Living, Pathfinder, and Easter Seals. All of these facilities provide opportunities for Arkansans with disabilities. Site supervisors visit these facilities and provide flyers indicating that they are looking for members to serve.

2. We are not requesting additional MSYs.

D. NO-COST MSY CLARIFICATION

Narratives

We are not requesting No-Cost MSYs.

Continuation Changes

Not applicable

Grant Characteristics