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Executive Summary

Teach For America-Arkansas (TFA-Arkansas) will have 160 AmeriCorps (AC) members, who will teach for two years in low-income rural communities across Arkansas. At the end of the 1st program year, TFA-Arkansas corps members (CMs) will be responsible for significantly improving the educational outcomes for over 16,000 students, catalyzing for CMs a lifelong commitment to ending educational inequity in Arkansas. In addition, the AC members will leverage an additional 300 volunteers that will be engaged in supporting Arkansas students in our classrooms.

TFA-Arkansas will focus on the CNCS's focus area of education. The CNCS investment of \$128,000 will be matched with approximately \$1.5 million in public funding and \$3.5 million in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Rationale and Approach/Program Design: In Arkansas, educational inequity limits the life prospects of tens of thousands of children growing up in low-income areas throughout the state. Twenty-seven percent of Arkansan children live in poverty- the second highest child poverty rate in the country. In a state where nearly a fifth of the population has less than a high school diploma, and where college graduation rates are consistently lower than the national average, increasing educational attainment is critical to the state's social and economic health. The lack of academic opportunities available to low-income students in underserved communities has significant short- and long-term effects on our state. Lack of academic opportunity has been linked to high unemployment, low adult literacy rates, stalled economic development, and a perpetuated cycle of poverty (Arkansas Child Poverty Update, Reeve 2012). This creates significant costs for health and criminal justice systems, and taxes our economy. The statewide research and advocacy organization, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, states that, "improving education outcomes by ensuring every child has an equal opportunity to learn" is an effective method for fighting poverty.

In Arkansas, the connection between poverty and educational attainment is clear, as less than eight percent of low-income students graduate from college (Arkansas Child Poverty Update, Reeve 2012). In the school districts we place CMs in, on average eighty-six percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Additionally, in these districts, the average child poverty rate is 25%, far above the national average of 18.4% (Census Data).

An inadequate number of highly qualified, exceptional, and diverse teachers in Arkansas is driving

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the deficit of excellent educational opportunities for students. In the under-served communities where TFA-Arkansas serves a number of classrooms go without highly-qualified teachers each year. Sixty-four percent of the districts that we place in are listed in the geographic shortage area by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Geographic Shortage Areas, 2013). The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) defines geographic shortage areas as those parts of the state that require intervention. As such, the ADE developed a plan to ensure equity in: (1) facilities; (2) beginning salaries and school funding; and (3) teacher recruitment and retention. In this plan, Teach For America is listed as a strategy for improving recruitment and retention, specifically addressing teacher shortages in high-need subject areas. Since the 2006-2007 school year, the ADE has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TFA-Arkansas. Our MOU specifically states: "The ADE seeks to recruit qualified new teachers for hard to staff districts and schools in Arkansas, especially the greater Delta and other high-needs districts, and to equip them with the ongoing support and professional development necessary to ensure that they succeed in the classroom." Staffing classrooms with qualified teachers is so persistently challenging and important in Arkansas, that in addition to TFA, other strategies exist, such as multiple alternative routes to certification and teaching opportunities for retired teachers, to help increase the pool of strong candidates. As the Superintendent of Cross County School District expressed in his letter of support "Prior to TFA Arkansas being in our district, we struggled with finding average (if any) applicants for many of our teaching positions, especially at the secondary level. Through TFA Arkansas, we now have the ability to choose the "BEST" outstanding applicant for each position." Research consistently demonstrates that good teaching is the single most important factor in student learning; if schools have access to high quality, effective teachers, the life prospects of those students most in need can significantly improve. A recent article from the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, stated that "The quality of the teachers in our schools is paramount: no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement," (Hanushek, 2011).

In addition to placing seventy-three percent of corps members in geographic shortage areas, all of our CMs teach in subject shortages areas. In Arkansas, there are seventeen subject areas that fall on the list of "shortage areas," (Arkansas Department of Education, Critical Academic Shortage Areas). We currently have about nine percent of our CMs placed in sig schools and twenty-one percent placed in priority schools. The Director of the Center for Leadership and Learning at Arkansas Tech University speaks of the need for TFA in Arkansas in her letter of support. She states, "Traditionally prepared teachers are not available to meet the need we have for a teacher in every classroom."

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Absent the presence of TFA-Arkansas, many classrooms would be staffed by long-term substitutes or courses such as chemistry or biology would simply not be offered. As a result, low-income students would continue to fall further behind their more affluent peers.

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems: As participants in the professional corps program, TFA-Arkansas CMs are particularly well-suited to address the problem of educational inequity for two key reasons. First, we provide low-income school districts with a pool of successful candidates who exhibit the traits of highly effective teachers. Second, in addition to providing pre-service training, we are one of the few teacher providers in the country that continues to give ongoing support to teachers while they are in the classroom. Because of our rigorous selection model and our training focused on student achievement, TFA AC members are consistently reviewed as the strongest new teachers with the greatest impact on student achievement in every subject, as indicated by numerous independent studies. With the support of this AC grant, we can sustain and expand our impact on student achievement for low-income students throughout Arkansas.

Our ability to transform the state of education is measured through the individual impact we have with students across the state. TFA-Arkansas consistently produces results that prove the program's worth to the community. We analyze our impact on closing the achievement gap by comparing the progress of our corps member's students to comparable students in Arkansas' highest performing school districts. For instance, Mr. Burki, who taught math at Meekins Middle School in Stuttgart, challenged his students to outperform their peers in Bentonville. Through strong instruction, careful data analysis, and student investment, Mr. Burki's students ended the year scoring a full 10 percent points higher on their end of year assessment than their peers in Bentonville. Bentonville School District is consistently one of the highest performing in the state, and has received national recognition for having one of the "Best High Schools" in the US by US News. Similarly, Ms. Hart, who taught Environmental Science at Hampton High School, last year, raised her students' scores on their end of year assessment by 40%. These are just a couple of examples of the incredible impact our corps members are making on their students. These results are particularly impressive, given that most students enter corps member's classrooms academically years behind their peers.

Second, through this success with their students, corps members gain added conviction that educational inequity is a solvable problem, and deepen their understanding of the problem and solutions. As a result, we produce and support an alumni force with the conviction to effect the fundamental changes necessary to realize our vision of equal educational opportunity for all.

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According to a 2011 study by Harvard economists Roland Fryer and Will Dobbie, the Teach For America corps experience has a marked impact on racial tolerance, education beliefs, and future career paths.

TFA-Arkansas has produced over seven hundred and sixty alumni, one hundred and forty of whom still live in Arkansas. Of those in Arkansas, over forty percent work in Arkansas' schools as either teachers or school leaders. This is particularly impressive, given that nationally, only about eight percent of incoming corps members indicate a desire to work in education long-term. This is important because we know that in order to transform educational opportunities for our kids; leadership is needed in every facet of Arkansas' educational landscape. Currently, twelve TFA alumni serve as school leaders in Arkansas. One such leader is Scott Shirey, 1998 alum, who is the Director and Founder of the KIPP Delta Public Schools in Helena and Blytheville, Arkansas. Scott was recently named as one of the seven most influential leaders in education by Forbes Magazine. Additionally, a 2010 alum, Jonathan Crossley was recently named the 2014 Arkansas teacher of the Year.

Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact: There is a strong external research base on the effectiveness of TFA CMs and their impact on student achievement, including two large, well-designed and well-implemented random-assignment studies that meet, without reservation, the What Works Clearinghouse Standards. A 2013 study by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) found that students of TFA secondary teachers learned 2.6 months more math in a year than students in the same schools taught by teachers from traditional and less selective alternative certification programs. Additionally, a 2004 study by MPR found students of TFA elementary teachers learned the equivalent of a month's more math in a year than students in the same schools taught by other teachers, and that TFA teachers were at least as effective as their counterparts in teaching reading.

Recent quasi-experimental and correlational studies spanning multiple grade-levels and subjects bolster the case that TFA CMs produce a net gain in student achievement relative to students of other novice teachers, and sometimes experienced ones: In a 2011 article using data from North Carolina scholars at the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, found TFA teachers to be more effective than other teachers, regardless of experience level, in a range of high school subjects. In a 2013 study using data from Texas, Edvance Research Inc. found that students of TFA CMs score higher in mathematics than otherwise similar students taught by novice teachers in middle schools without TFA CMs. In a 2012 study using data from the Los Angeles Unified School District, the

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Harvard Strategic Data Project found first-year TFA CMs more effective than other first year teachers in both math and reading in grades 3 through 9.

Statewide studies ranking teacher preparation programs in terms of their participants' impact on student achievement further validates TFA's logic model and operational strategy. In Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee, TFA ranks consistently among the most effective teacher preparation programs. (Citation in order of mention in the above section: Clark, M. A., Chiang, H. S., Silva, T., McConnell, S., Sonnenfeld, K., Erbe, A., & Puma, M. (2013). The effectiveness of secondary math teachers from Teach For America and the Teaching Fellows programs. (No. NCEE 2013-4015). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc; Decker, P. T., Mayer, D. P., & Glazerman, S. (2004). The effects of Teach For America on students: Findings from a national evaluation. (No. 8792-750). Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.; Xu, Zeyu, Jane Hannaway, and Colin Taylor. "Making a Difference? The Effects of Teach for America in High School." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 30.3 (2011): 447-469; Turner, H. M., Goodman, D., Adachi, E., Brite, J., & Decker, L. E. (2012). Evaluation of Teach for America in Texas schools. San Antonio, TX: Edvance Research, Inc. Strategic Data Project. (2012). SDP human capital diagnostic: Los Angeles unified school district. Cambridge, MA; Noell, G.H., & Gansle, K.A. (2009). Teach For America teachers' contribution to student achievement in Louisiana in grades 4-9: 2004-2005 to 2006-2007. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Board of Regents. Henry, G.T., Purtell, K.M., Bastian, K.C., Fortner, C.K., Thompson, C.L., Campbell, S.L., & Patterson, K.M. (2013). The effects of teacher entry portals on student achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education*.doi:10.1177/0022487113503871; Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Education. (2013). 2013 Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs. Nashville, TN.)

Corps Member Training and Support: The bedrock of our training and evaluation model is a framework we call Teaching As Leadership (TAL), which includes the six strategies that we have found drive effective teaching: (1) setting an ambitious vision; (2) investing students and families in that vision; (3) planning purposefully to meet ambitious goals; (4) executing plans effectively; (5) working relentlessly to achieve set vision; and (6) continuously reflecting and improving.

Corps member training and support occurs in the following ways:

Induction: During induction, corps members learn about Arkansas and begin to develop insights into our unique educational landscape. At induction this past year, corps members went on community

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visits into four towns where we place teachers. They met with school and community leaders, students, and parents and began to learn about and form partnerships with our communities. Corps members also spent a day at Little Rock Central High School, a pivotal landmark in our country's Civil Rights Movement. At Central High School, CMs met with students and learned about the Memory Project, an initiative of Central High School designed to capture the region's oral history. The Memory Project asks current Central High students to interview a relative who lived through the civil rights years. This brings history to life for these students, and students shared this powerful experience with corps members. By introducing CMs to the history of Arkansas, they are able to better understand their students and communities, laying a solid foundation for their next two years. Given the success of last year's community-based induction activities, we're planning a similar path forward for this summer.

INSTITUTE: TFA-Arkansas partners with school districts across the Mississippi-Arkansas Delta to run a summer school program for thousands of students under the close supervision of veteran teachers from the school district and TFA instructional staff. CMs teach in teams while receiving feedback from experienced teachers with proven track records of success. The TFA instructors observe every corps member several times each week, provide them with written feedback, and engage in constructive, problem-solving discussions to help them refine their teaching practice.

While corps members engage in authentic teaching and learning experiences in their summer school classrooms, they also participate in daily curriculum sessions. Through opportunities for practice, observation, coaching and study, as well as careful planning and thoughtful reflection, corps members are prepared to address educational inequity head-on when they are placed in their communities.

TFA-Arkansas staff members focus on building connections with corps members early on and ensuring they feel supported during the rigorous institute training and beyond. This is particularly important as we focus on corps member experience and satisfaction. Therefore, this year regional staff members prioritized attending institute and observing corps members alongside institute staff. This allowed TFA-Arkansas staff members to begin to build meaningful relationships that will continue throughout the two year corps commitment and likely into the corps member's alumni experience.

ORIENTATION: After completing institute, we welcome CMs back together for orientation. During this time CMs set clear and ambitious academic goals and visions for their students. High student expectations are foundational for significant student gains throughout the year. Additionally, CMs

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debrief institute experiences and reflect on lessons learned. During this time we connect CMs to all of the resources available to them, as well as connecting them to partners in their placement communities.

ONGOING SUPPORT: This is provided throughout the year by the Teacher Leadership Development Team, which includes Managers of Teacher Leadership Development (MTLDs) who are paired up with approximately 20 CMs. Our ongoing support and professional development occurs in six major ways: (1) Corps Member one-on-one sessions with MTLDs: MTLDs have ongoing one-on-one sessions where they provide feedback to corps members based on what they have seen during classroom observations. (2) Real-time coaching: We have a Director of Teacher Leadership Development (DTLD) who provides real-time coaching to corps members. During real-time coaching the corps member receiving the training wears an earpiece so that the coach can provide cues and feedback in real time during a live lesson. This is a particularly successful method of training as it allows corps members to be trained in real situations and be directed by a veteran teacher. (3) Monthly Content Learning Teams: Focus on best practices for specific academic subjects. These sessions, led by veteran teachers, are designed to improve teaching practices. Additionally, by working in a small group, CMs share best practices and problem solve with one another, which accelerates learning. (4) Professional Saturdays: Quarterly, CMs attend all-day mandatory professional development sessions that include content learning teams, community meetings, and affinity group discussions, as well as targeted professional development based on data collected by MTLDs. (5) Community Leadership Teams: Teams of CMs placed in the same communities that meet to partner around solving community specific problems. (6) Workshops and Offered Courses: Semester long courses available for corps members to opt into. These courses are led either by MTLDs, staff members, alumni, or veteran teachers, and include offerings such as: "Taking a classroom from good to great" and "No excuses: raising rigor." We require participation in at least one course, and this year it was a testament to their effectiveness that seventy percent of our corps members signed up for more than one.

TFA-Arkansas is going to work directly with the commission to provide entry level training to CMs to ensure they are part of the AC team. Additionally, throughout the training and support cycle outlined above, we embed several opportunities to reinforce key issues of AC training and compliance. During institute and throughout their corps experience CMs are taught to understand educational inequity, how to become better citizens, and the importance of communities. Prohibited activities are reviewed with CMs at TFA-Arkansas' pre-service orientation to ensure that they have clear and solid

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understanding of their responsibilities. We continue to enforce collective compliance at monthly professional development sessions and email blasts. Individual compliance will be monitored by MTLDs who are trained annually on prohibited activities. This training includes a comprehensive explanation of the prohibited activities, examples and case studies of what these activities encompass, and how to detect and report them. Through their regular interaction with CMs, MTLDs are able to review regulations with members and verify that CMs do not engage in prohibited activities. Our placement schools in Arkansas will be provided with an AC orientation guide, which includes information on AC policies and prohibited activities, ensuring that our principals and other school administrators are well versed in AC requirements. Additionally this provides another system to ensure CM compliance, as well as an onsite resource, should they have any questions or want clarification or guidance on any activities they plan to participate in.

CMs also provide supervision and instruction to their classroom volunteers to ensure they have clear expectations, meet goals, and that no volunteer engages in prohibited activities. Finally, each CM signs a statement on our mid- and end-of-year surveys affirming that they have managed and supervised their recruited volunteers and can ensure that no volunteer has engaged in prohibited activities.

Member Supervision: TFA-Arkansas' plan for supervising corps members may differ from the majority of AmeriCorps programs because we are a professional corps. All TFA corps members are college graduates who have gone through a rigorous application process that is designed, in part, to measure their ability to serve effectively in a professional setting. Therefore, our supervision plan focuses on corps member development and evaluation. Additionally, since our corps members work as full-time professional teachers, they are directly supervised by their school principal and other school administration who, as mentioned above, have been provided with an AC orientation guide.

As mentioned previously, every corps member is matched with an MTLT, a highly-effective TFA alumnus/ae who manages a cohort of current CMs. MTLTs not only conduct regular classroom observations and meetings with CMs, but they also build relationships with principals and other school administrators, conducting regular meetings to discuss and align on CM performance. This relationship also provides the space to monitor CM compliance. MTLTs provide an additional layer of support and a high level of supervision to corps members. Our MTLTs are corps members' first point of contact with TFA. They perform regular observations of CM classrooms and meet regularly one-on-one with them.

To be hired, MTLTs must have demonstrated a track record of classroom success and displayed the

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characteristics necessary to be a successful in this role, which include but are not limited to critical thinking, influencing and motivating adults, data analysis, and problem solving.

Commitment to AC Identity: TFA is undergoing an organization-wide rebranding in 2013, giving us an opportunity to further integrate the AC brand in our national and regional marketing efforts. This includes integrating the AC logo on our recruitment brochures and posters, letterhead, and both regional and national websites. Additionally, we will include AC based postings across social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We believe the re-brand and the implementation of these guidelines will help increase awareness of our affiliation with AC members among our network.

TFA-Arkansas is committed to communicating the important role AmeriCorps plays in our community by taking specific steps to promote our affiliation with AmeriCorps. TFA-Arkansas will: (1) Brand all local based publications, including our formal letterhead and donor materials; (2) Brand our regional website with the AmeriCorps logo; (3) Encourage corps members to wear AmeriCorps pins daily, (4) Provide AmeriCorps orientation to partner principals to ensure they understand AmeriCorps and can identify with the brand and program to external constituents such parents, community organizations, district officials, and donors. Additionally, corps members will be encouraged to discuss their AmeriCorps membership and the importance of national service with their students.

In addition to this marketing plan, we are committed to ensuring that each of our professional CMs identify as an AC member. We will continue to provide training and orientation for our CMs at both Induction and Orientation to ensure that they understand AC and can identify with the brand. Additionally, the training we provide will ensure that all CMs can speak about the AC program to external constituents such parents, community organization, district officials, and donors.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity and Staffing: TFA is co-led by Chief Executive Officers, Matthew Kramer and Elisa Villanueva Beard, who work with a national Board of Directors and our eight member leadership team to set TFA's overall strategy and direction. The national Board meets four times annually, and is charged with exercising its fiduciary duties to ensure that the organization is run effectively and within all relevant laws and regulations.

To ensure an appropriate breakdown of responsibilities and a system of checks and balances our finance functions are housed nationally, and this team reports to the auditing and finance committees

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of our board, and works closely with our national and regional development teams and budget trackers to coordinate cash-in and expenses throughout the organization.

TFA has effectively managed large-scale federal grants through both AmeriCorps and the Department of Education (1 SEED grant, 1 I3 grant, and 23 AmeriCorps grants). As our federal funding portfolio has grown, TFA has built significant internal capacity to manage both the financial and programmatic components of a national AmeriCorps program.

TFA-Arkansas is led by Executive Director, Jared Henderson, a fourth generation Arkansan. Jared received an MBA and an MPA from Harvard University and worked for McKinsey and Company, focusing on public education prior to joining TFA. Prior to his current role, Jared served as Senior Vice President of Regional Operations and was responsible for TFA's work in eight states, which included approximately 150 staff members and 1,500 corps members.

Jared directly manages three leadership team members: (1) Senior Managing Director of Partnership and Infrastructure, Matt Reamy, who manages all of the non-programmatic teams and activities and oversees the Community Partnerships Team which consists of one Director and two Managers, the Community Investment Team which consists of one Manager, and the Business Operations Team with one Director. Matt brings nine years of education experience to this role. (2) Chief of Staff, Joseph Moorman, has seven years of education experience and manages program team operations, supports our Executive Director, and oversees three Managers of Teacher Leadership Development; and (3) Senior Managing Director of Teacher Leadership Development, Rachel Cole, with 10 years of experience in education, manages our programmatic team activities, and oversees nine programmatic staff members (Five Managers of Teacher Leadership Development, one Director of Teacher Leadership Development, one Manager and one Director of Values Based Leadership). TFA-Arkansas has 22 staff members and collectively, our management team has over 30 years of experience in education. The Manager of Community Investment and the Manager of Values Based Leadership will work together to co-manage the AmeriCorps program.

Compliance and Accountability: As a long-time AmeriCorps grantee, TFA has developed systems to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps requirements and regulations. First, corps member eligibility components of compliance are housed nationally by our Admissions and Public Partnerships teams. As corps member matriculate into the program, they are required to submit eligibility documentation and go through background checks. This approach to compliance management ensures that corps member have met the eligibility requirements prior to beginning their service.

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Additionally, our Public Partnerships team trains all regional program staff on both acceptable and prohibited AmeriCorps activities, so they are equipped to educate corps members and monitor member activities. Second, trained regional staff provides pre-service training to corps members, which engenders in corps members a deeper understanding of their role as an AmeriCorps member. Additionally, TFA provides school administrators with a handbook that will communicate AmeriCorps rules and regulations and outline the prohibited activities. Our Public Partnerships team is also available for consultation with regions, corps members and site supervisors.

Through site visits, classroom observations, and regular communication with site supervisors, our MTLDs provide oversight of corps members. Due to the frequency of interactions that MTLDs have with corps members and their in-depth knowledge of the prohibited activities, they will be able to ensure that members are operating in accordance with AmeriCorps regulations. Additionally, all incoming TFA corps members are required to sign documents attesting they have read and understand the AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and at the end of the school year all corps members are required to sign a form certifying they did not violate any activities prohibited by AmeriCorps. Principals are also required to certify at the end of the school year that no AmeriCorps policies were violated.

Additionally, our Public Partnerships team conducts regular regional site visits and audits corps member activities and files to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps regulations.

If a TFA staff member or school administrator suspects that a member is engaging in a prohibited activity, they will notify their regional leadership team. Partnering with our Public Partnerships team and legal counsel, the regional leadership team will assess the suspected violation and suspend the AmeriCorps member until the issue is resolved.

Continuous Improvement: TFA-Arkansas is very focused on strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, and is therefore motivated by continuous feedback and improvement. TFA-Arkansas has built relationships with our community stakeholders (community members, parents, students, donors, partner organizations, and government officials). Our Community Partnerships Team (CPT), which is primarily charged with building trust and relationships in our student's communities, leads our work in this effort, with the intent of improving CM and alumni effectiveness. The CPT has three members, each of whom is each paired with an MTLD and each owns a profile of communities. They have relationships with stakeholders in each of their communities. This structure allows the CPT to leverage their relationships to connect MTLDs and CMs to community members

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that can provide support, and insight. Through these relationships, we're able to further involve and invest stakeholders in our work and the broader fight for educational equity. In the past few months, we have met with and heard from a large number of our stakeholders in each of our 22 placement communities. This is only the beginning, and in the coming months we will synthesize what we heard and learned, in an effort to improve our partnerships. We hope to use our AmeriCorps grant to expand our CPT and in turn further expand our impact at the community level.

Throughout the year, we survey CMs, specifically after professional development events, such as the ones described above. Our team reviews this feedback and it informs future sessions. We work continually to implement changes, and address concerns as they surface. Additionally, corps members are surveyed at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to gauge satisfaction and elicit feedback, which we use to adjust our program. Annually, we survey principals to understand how corps members perform as teachers and as members of their school community and how MTLDs partner with school leadership. As with CM surveys, we use this information to inform our goals and strategies.

To ensure that the data we collect informs our strategies and decisions, TFA-Arkansas has established both formal and informal structures. Formally, we go through an annual goal-setting process. We hold weekly regional leadership team meetings and monthly all-staff meetings to share feedback and adjust plans in a timely manner. Over the long term, we utilize this feedback to inform our programmatic vision and goals.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Cost Effectiveness: Teach For America-Arkansas is requesting 170 full-time member slots at \$2,000/MSY through a professional corps reimbursable grant. To support our ambitious student achievement goals as a new stand-alone region, TFA-Arkansas plans to use our additional Arkansas personnel to deepen our community impact. This vision has informed our decision to request \$2,000 per MSY.

Our program design is a particularly cost effective model for increasing student achievement. First, we are providing low-income, hard to staff school districts with a national pool of pre-screened talent they would likely not otherwise recruit. Second, our administrative costs for doing so are substantially lower than those of organizations engaged in similar activities. For example, the Peace Corps' cost per member to recruit, select, train and support is over \$67,000, while those same activities cost TFA \$40,270. Our recruitment costs are less than \$4,000 per corps member -- much lower than recruiting a McKinsey first year associate (\$35,000) or an Army recruit (\$22,898). Third,

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multiple studies have demonstrated that the impact of having a TFA corps member as a teacher is greater than other education interventions. TFA yields a greater return on investment than investing in class size reduction efforts, National Board certification, and teachers who hold master's degrees (The Urban Institute 2009; Nye, B., Hedges, L.V. & Konstantopoulos, S., 2000. The Results of the Tennessee Class Size Experiment. American Educational Research Journal; Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Scores Tell Us, RAND Corporation; Rivkin, S., Hanushek, E, & Kain, J., 2005).

In the current fiscal year, TFA-Arkansas' budget is \$4,800,000. We secure funding to support our corps members from the following two major sources: (1) private donors (individuals, corporations, and foundations) from across Arkansas, including a major, multi-year grant from the Walton Family Foundation; (2) public funding from state and local governments. In order to raise the revenue needed, TFA-Arkansas seeks to diversify our funding base of individuals, corporations, foundations, and state agencies. Our executive director holds many of our key relationships with large foundations and corporations such as the Walton Family Foundation and Murphy Oil. Our CPT meets one-on-one with potential individual donors to build their understanding of our work and to give them insight into our vision for education in Arkansas. We continuously cultivate our existing relationships. We provide donors with timely updates about our work, invite them into classrooms to meet and see CMs in action, and encourage them to host events to help CMs engage with their communities.

Based on our record of success, particularly our strong programmatic outcomes, we are confident that we will be able to raise the funds necessary to effectively run our program. In 2010, Worth Magazine named TFA one of the 10 most cost effective charities in the country. Furthermore, in 2012, Charity Navigator gave TFA a perfect 4-star rating for the tenth straight year. Less than one percent of all nonprofits nationwide have received similar consecutive 4-star ratings, putting us in the 99th percentile of among nonprofits.

Budget Adequacy: TFA-Arkansas' budget supports our program and reflects our priorities. 73% of the budget is spent on costs related to recruiting, selecting, training, and supporting our CMs -- our key program activities. Another additional 8% of our budget supports our work with our alumni. These allocations reflect the emphasis we place on offering schools a highly-qualified, diverse pool of candidates, and providing CMs with the training, ongoing support, and professional development that enables them to lead their students to make significant academic gains. As a professional corps, our CMs do not receive a stipend through AC.

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As described above, TFA-Arkansas pursues a diverse funding base. To date, we have secured over \$3,800,000 putting us well on our way to raising our full budget by May 31, 2014.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. PROGRAMMATIC

1. The grant start date and member enrollment period start date is 9/1/2014.
2. TFA's partnership with AmeriCorps is pivotal to recruiting and retaining high-quality, diverse corps members to serve in our communities' highest-needs schools. TFA is committed to ensuring that AmeriCorps slots are available to all eligible corps members to ensure that we are recruiting and retaining the highest achieving, most effective teachers. Additionally, AmeriCorps membership promotes national service and all-corps identity among all TFA corps members. At the start of the grant application process, TFA projects the total number of corps members for the following year based on anticipated retention rates of current corps members and recruitment targets for new members. TFA determines the number of slots to request on its National Direct grant based on allocation of slots across regions and the likelihood of a specific region receiving state AmeriCorps funding. TFA does not assume that all state AmeriCorps applications will be successful, so some state grant slots are duplicated in the National Direct grant application.

Therefore, the 160 slots requested by TFA-AR may be duplicated on the National Direct grant currently under continuation review. However, the final award decisions regarding each state AmeriCorps grant will ultimately determine how TFA utilizes any additional the National Direct slots will be required for TFA-AR. If TFA-AR is awarded 160 slots through the state grant, it does not necessarily mean the corresponding slots on the National Direct grant are duplicative; these National Direct slots may ultimately be allocated to another region that was unsuccessful in securing a state grant.

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3. This letter of support refers to 1st and 2nd year corps members as well as members who remained teachers for a third year after their two years of service; in other words, these members are third-year teachers, but 1st year AmeriCorps alumni (not current corps members). Please see information under [Professional Corps Clarification](#) for more information on filling a teacher shortage.

4. Only members who teach math and/or literacy will track and report student progress in these subjects. The ED5 performance measure target reflects only a sub- set of the total students who we serve-- those that are taught math and/or literacy.

B. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

1. As the full-time teacher of record, our corps members are charged with increasing the academic achievement of all students in their classroom, regardless of what point in the year a student becomes a member of their class. As such, all students that are in our corps members' classroom on the last day of school will be counted toward ED 2.

2. Arkansas has the second highest child poverty rate in the country, and for the most part, the highest poverty areas are concentrated in the Delta Region of the state. For that reason, we place corps members in 22 school districts in these pockets and we only partner with school districts in which the largest percentage of students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. One of the clearest indicators of this is the percentage of students in each district who qualify for free or reduced price lunch. In each of our placement districts, over 60% of students receive free or reduced priced lunch, and in 45% of our districts, over 90% of the student body receives free or reduced priced lunch. Further, the average household income in the communities we serve is around \$32,000- well below the state average of over \$40,000. Additionally, the average poverty rate in these communities is 24%- well above the national average of 18.4% (Census Data).

3. Teach For America uses an internal system, Student Achievement Measurement System (SAMS), to track student academic progress. SAMS is not an assessment itself, but rather a system we use to aggregate results across all of the assessments that our corps members administer. Because our corps members are working in 48 different regions, in over 600 school districts/charter networks, and teach

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every subject area/grade level, we must be able to aggregate results to evaluate our corps member impact over time and across regions.

We take several steps to ensure the quality of the assessments administered. We recommend, and in many cases provide, our corps members with access to rigorous and standardized assessments like the ACT, Gates-MacGinitie Readings, Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress SAXON and STAR Assessments. In addition, many corps members use their state standardized exams to measure impact, and we expect that number will grow as states utilize assessments aligned with the Common Core. Program staff also review and audit assessments for rigor and alignment. Experts from our national Teacher, Preparation, Support, and Development Team provide training to regional staff and our corps members on the properties of rigorous and aligned assessments, and our regional staff recommend assessments to corps members for use in common subjects and grades.

SAMS is designed to enable us to aggregate and combine onto a single continuous scale all the results on these assessments; we refer to it as a continuous measure because we use it to assess average performance across all corps members rather than the percentage meeting a particular threshold. Improvement is defined as the equivalent of at least one year's worth of growth. Targets include only students who will receive specific instruction in literacy and/or math, which makes of a sub-set of our entire teaching corps. This target is not inclusive of our corps members teaching subjects other than math or literacy.

4. Not all students who complete the program receive specific instruction in literacy and/or math from corps members. Therefore, the target in ED5 is the total number of students demonstrating improvement in math or literacy out of the 7,973 students who receive math and/or literacy instruction from corps members.

5. The Teacher Corps national performance measure has been added.

The performance measure section has been updated.

C. BUDGET

1. The budget has been revised to reflect 160 MSYs at \$800/MSY for a total grant amount of

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\$128,000.

- a. Budget reductions were primarily made in Personnel. These salaries will be covered by other grants and will not be charged to AmeriCorps.
 - b. No new budget items
 - c. Performance measures have been updated to reflect the revised MSYs.
 - d. The Executive Summary has been updated to reflect the changes to MSYs, grant amount, and match amount.
2. Personnel, particularly the MTLDs, are primarily managing and supporting AmeriCorps members, not non-AmeriCorps teachers. However, portions of their salaries are paid by other funding sources and will not be charged to AmeriCorps.

D. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS

1. TFA is committed to providing equal access and opportunities to candidates with legally recognizable disabilities, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the application process in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and similar state laws. We will make our best effort to provide reasonable accommodations for our differently-abled applicants at every stage of the application process. Disclosing a disability or requesting a need for accommodations is a separate and distinct process from admissions and will have absolutely no bearing on a candidate's application status. To further demonstrate our commitment to recruiting and accommodating members with disabilities, TFA has a Disabilities Accommodations Officer who is responsible for ensuring that a qualified individual with disabilities can be a part of our movement. TFA is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to differently-abled corps members through the application process and in the training we provide during the corps experience. As a professional corps, TFA does not have the ultimate hiring authority. However, we do have targeted recruitment campaigns to ensure core diversity and an inclusive selection and recruitment process. Our recruitment team does meet with disability offices at numerous colleges and universities throughout the country.
2. At this time, TFA does not wish to request additional MSYs to fund AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

E. NO COST MSYs: N/A

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F. PROFESSIONAL CORPS

1. As a professional corps program, Teach For America-Arkansas, AmeriCorps members are paid staff employed by Arkansas school districts and charter schools. Similar to any other employment opportunity, our corps members apply and compete for open positions. Across Arkansas, schools hire over 2,000 new teachers annually. TFA is just one avenue for our partner schools to fill vacancies; staffing classrooms with qualified teachers is so persistently challenging and important in Arkansas that in addition to TFA, other strategies are utilized including alternative routes to certification, teaching opportunities for retired teachers, and the Arkansas Teacher Corps. Therefore, our corps members do not displace paid staff, but fill vacancies opened to the general public and that the district is interested in hiring qualified persons to fill.

In Arkansas, TFA works with school and district leadership to fill new and vacant positions through districts' standard hiring processes. Our teachers operate within the structures set up by the school district. We do not receive any special hiring arrangements beyond those permissible by school district officials and school boards. Our Professional Services Agreement(s) (PSA) with Arkansas school districts and placement sites, in part, reinforces that expectation with the following language:

[School District] and Teach For America will collaborate in good faith to facilitate the efficient hiring of individual Teachers, in accordance with the School District's established District hiring practices.

For example, in cases when there is a reduction in force, our corps members, as members of the union and under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, receive the same protections as other teachers and would be subject to that reduction in force in the same manner as other first- and second-year teachers.

2. We believe that it is appropriate for us to sign the certification because TFA works with school district leadership to fill new and vacant positions through the district's routine hiring regulations and protocols. Our teachers operate within the structures set up by the school district. We do not receive any special hiring arrangement beyond those permissible by school district officials and school boards.

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3. TFA AmeriCorps members participate in districts' standard hiring processes. Our corps members are just one of many avenues that school leaders access to fill their vacancies.

Because TFA works with school and district leadership to fill new and vacant positions through the district's routine hiring processes, our teachers operate within the structures set up by the school district. We do not receive any special hiring arrangements beyond those permissible by school district officials and school boards.

Furthermore, there are no special incentives for hiring decision-makers, typically individual principals, to favor our corps members over other qualified candidates. If and when our corps members are selected, it is because these individual decision-makers believe that the individual corps member is the most qualified candidate for the vacant teaching position at their school.

To ensure that we are serving the highest need students populations in Arkansas, TFA works with hiring decision-makers to ensure that we are matching our efforts with district needs. For example, in each of our placement districts over 60% of students receive free or reduced-priced lunch. Seventy-three percent of current corps members are placed in the Arkansas' Department of Education's geographic shortage areas, and 100% of our corps members teach in one of Arkansas Department of Education's 17 subject shortage areas.

4. As a professional corps program, TFA addresses the problem of educational inequity by recruiting and placing high-quality participants as teachers in communities that lack an adequate number of such professionals. We do this in two ways:

First, and most importantly, our corps members fill teaching positions in high-need schools and subject areas, which districts are often unable to fill. In the under-served communities where TFA-Arkansas serves, a number of classrooms go without highly-qualified teachers each year. In our placement districts, demand for corps members outweighs supply by more than 2 to 1. For the coming school year, districts have requested over 150 corps members, and we are currently only able to provide 70. An inadequate number of teachers in Southeast Arkansas has led to persistent teacher shortages which drive the high level of demand for corps members. Sixty-four percent of the districts in which we place corps members are listed in the geographic shortage area by the Arkansas

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Department of Higher Education (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Geographic Shortage Areas, 2013).

In addition, all of our CMs teach in one of Arkansas's seventeen subject shortage areas. Currently, approximately 9% of our CMs teach in SIG schools and 21% teach in priority schools. Absent TFA-Arkansas, many classrooms would be staffed by long-term substitutes or courses such as chemistry or biology would simply not be offered. As a result, low-income students would continue to fall further behind their more affluent peers.

Second, we provide low-income schools access to a national pipeline of candidates commensurate to those teaching in the world's top performing school systems who are participating in our proven-effective teacher training program. We believe that lacking an adequate number of such professionals does not just refer to simply not having enough candidates, but also not having a pool of high-quality candidates from proven-effective sources.

Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality teaching is the most important factor in student learning; effective teachers have a significant impact on children's life prospects. Despite this evidence, low-income students, in Arkansas, are less likely to get effective teachers in their classrooms than wealthier students. Low-income communities have a higher than average need for highly-effective teachers, yet these communities often lack a sufficient supply relative to the level of need. Staffing classrooms with qualified teachers is so persistently challenging and important in Arkansas, that in addition to TFA, other strategies exist, such as multiple alternative routes to certification and teaching opportunities for retired teachers, to help increase the pool of strong candidates.

To further illustrate this point, a 2010 McKinsey study of the world's top performing school systems revealed that 100% of the teachers in those schools come from the top third of college students. In the U.S. only 23% come from the top third; 14% in high poverty schools. The top third refers to those college students that are in top third academic cohort, and are rigorously screened for other qualities believed to be predictors of successful teachers: perseverance, ability to motivate others, passion for children, and organization and communication skills. These skills form the plus in the top-third term coined by McKinsey. TFA provides low-income schools in Arkansas and other cities with a national pipeline of exactly these types of candidates. The average GPA for 2012 TFA

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AmeriCorps members is 3.54, and our extensive interview process screens all applicants for these “plus” characteristics. In fact, a recent third-party study from Will Dobbie at Harvard EdLabs found that our selection model successfully identifies teachers who will have a positive impact on student achievement. The study also found that our selection model is helping to predict which teachers will be most successful in their first year of teaching. The effectiveness of our national teacher pipeline is further reinforced by independent studies in every state that use student achievement data to analyze the relative effectiveness of teacher pathways (Tennessee, North Carolina, and Louisiana), TFA AmeriCorps members are consistently shown to be as or more effective at promoting student achievement at statistically significant levels compared to other new teachers. These results are confirmed by large-scale experimental and quasi-experimental studies.

In Arkansas, hiring decision-makers, typically individual principals, have a choice of who to hire for vacant teaching positions at their schools. TFA works with school and district leadership to fill new and vacant positions through the school’s routine hiring processes, thus our CMs are competing for open positions with other non-TFA affiliated applicants. We do not receive any special hiring arrangement beyond those permissible by the IPS collective bargaining agreement. If and when our corps members are selected, it is because these individual decision-makers believe our corps members are the most qualified for the vacant teaching position at his or her school.

6.25 Clarification

- 1) The executive summary has been revised to reflect the amount awarded.
- 2) As the full-time teacher of record, TFA AmeriCorps members are charged with increasing the academic achievement of all students in their classroom, regardless of what point in the year a student becomes a member of their class. However, for ED5 only students who have been present in the class for 6 months or more will be counted toward the target. Students who enter the class significantly after the beginning of the school year will not be assessed for improved academic performance under ED5
- 3) The assessments previously state (state assessment, AIMSweb, Brigance, Developmental Reading Assessment, Fountas and Pinnel Benchmark System, Gates-MacGinitie Readings, McLeod GAP Reading Comprehension, Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress, STAR

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Assessments) noted for ED5 are a mix of nationally-recognized standardized assessments and curriculum-based assessments, and as such we believe they meet the requirements of this performance measure. State standardized tests are administered at the end of the prior year and then again at the end of the current year and are consistent with the pre/post measurement strategy selected for this measures. We will work to obtain all test data in a time frame that enables us to meet AmeriCorps reporting requirements.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics