

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Teach For America -- Oklahoma (TFA-OK) will have 415 AmeriCorps (AC) members who will serve as full-time teachers in low-income schools and early childhood centers in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Lawton, El Reno, and Muskogee. The AC members will be responsible for increasing academic outcomes for over 26,000 students. These experiences will catalyze the AC members' lifelong commitment to expanding educational equity. In addition, AC members will leverage an additional 415 volunteers to engage in supporting Oklahoma students in our classrooms.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$314,155, while not requiring a match, will be supplemented by \$3,146,664 in public funding and \$7,658,150 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Problem/Need: In stark contradiction to the tenets of a democratic society, a child's zip code unjustly predicts his or her educational outcomes and life prospects. The consequent class-based gap in academic achievement manifests itself as early as kindergarten, where students from low-income communities enter the classroom having heard, on average, 30 million fewer words than their peers growing up in more affluent communities. As children move through the system, the gap continues to widen. Of the more than 660,000 public school students in Oklahoma, almost 60% qualify for the free or reduced lunch meal program, a common indicator of poverty. Over 60% of Oklahoma schools receive Title I funds, another indicator of poverty.

Educational inequity is an extremely pressing problem in Oklahoma. For instance, only 19% of fourth grade students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch scored proficient or above on the 2012 reading exams. Meanwhile, this number is over twenty points higher for students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (Kids Count Data Center. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Sept. 2013). A 2011 report from the Oklahoma Educational Indicators Program states that 23% of Oklahoma students drop out between 9th grade and graduation. Meanwhile, many of those who do graduate are not prepared to enter college or the workforce. This is evident in our state's average ACT score. Although a student must score at least a 20 on the ACT to be admitted to any of Oklahoma's regional four year universities, and a minimum score of 24 is required for admission into Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, the average student of color scored an 18.5 on the 2011 ACT. Meanwhile, their white peers scored a

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21.6. Of the students who took the ACT in 2011, 55.7% would not be eligible for admission to any of Oklahoma's public four-year universities by means of the standard admissions process. Once students enter college, the problem of educational inequity continues; only 43% of Oklahoma students who start college graduate within six years. This number drops to 25% for African-American students, 33% for American Indian students, and 35% for Hispanic/Latino students (Oklahoma High Schools Alliance for Excellent Education, September 2013). These dropout rates drastically limit these students' life prospects and threaten Oklahoma's vitality.

An inadequate number of highly qualified, exceptional, and diverse teachers widens the deficit of excellent educational opportunities for low-income students in Oklahoma. 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 improve significantly. Within the schools in which TFA-OK places corps members, an inadequate number of teachers manifests itself in the form of teaching positions that remain vacant well into the school year, an inability to retain the highest performing teachers, and under-qualified teachers teaching in high-need subjects such as math, science, special education, and English as a New Language (ENL). For instance, just one week before the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, Tulsa Public Schools had over 90 vacant teaching positions. The shortage of teachers in the state is well documented. Talia Shaul, Tulsa Public Schools' (TPS) Chief Human Capital Officer, stated in October of 2013 that "The teacher shortage across the state has caused a greater need for teachers in TPS, especially with 36 current vacancies." Furthermore, Oklahoma City Public Schools had over forty vacancies and the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. Chuck Tompkins, the district's Executive Director of Human Capital, commented that "With a growing teacher shortage in our district, many of our principals ask for Teach For America teachers every year." To fill these vacancies, Oklahoma City Public Schools reported in March that, for the first time, they had to commence teacher recruitment efforts outside the state to bridge the teacher shortage gap.

In addition to meeting the general teacher shortage in the state, TFA-OK places 33% of AC members in math, science, special education, and ENL, subjects that have a shortage of qualified teachers throughout the country and in Oklahoma. Additionally, 41% of AC members teach in Oklahoma's priority schools, including 86% of the priority schools within our placement districts. We also place in 76% of Oklahoma's School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools.

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems: Our mission is to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity in Oklahoma by enlisting our nation's most

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promising future leaders in the effort. We recruit outstanding recent college graduates and professionals who commit two years to teach in urban and rural areas and become lifelong leaders in pursuing educational excellence and equity. With extensive training and support, our CMs work relentlessly to ensure that students growing up today in low-income communities are given the educational opportunities they deserve. As alumni, our AC members are a powerful force of leaders who act on the conviction and insight they gain from their teaching experience, working in education and all other sectors to effect the fundamental changes needed to ensure that all children have an equal chance in life.

As participants in the professional corps program, TFA--OK AC members are particularly well-suited to address the problem of educational inequity. As mentioned previously, Oklahoma schools face a massive teacher shortage, and our program is able to provide low-income school districts not only with teachers, but with teachers who have proven leadership skills and track records of success. Our intense selection model is designed to screen for characteristics in applicants that are proven to lead to positive results in classrooms. TPS Superintendent Keith Ballard is a vocal supporter of our work, stating that "Because of our relationship with Teach For America, we are able to bring some of the country's most talented young professionals into our classrooms and their impact on student achievement is palpable." In Oklahoma City, Tracy McDaniel, school leader of KIPP-Reach College Preparatory, also commented on the important role TFA-OK plays in low-income schools: "Teach For America provides a critical source of well-trained teachers who are helping break the cycle of educational inequity."

Beyond providing a pipeline of talent to schools across the state, we are one of the few teacher providers in the country and the only one in Oklahoma that provides intense, consistent support to teachers while they are in the classroom. We work with our placement schools and districts to ensure that we provide targeted support to meet the unique needs of each placement site, strengthening our relationships with the schools we serve and, oftentimes, the overall structure of the system. In fact, Superintendent Ballard said, "We leverage what we learn from TFA and our corps members in terms of best practices and improve the support we provide to all of our teachers." Currently, AC alumni work in both TPS (Mark Modrcin, 2009 AC member) and Oklahoma City Public Schools (Whitney Wallace, 2011 AC member) to strengthen teacher evaluation and support systems.

Evidence demonstrates that AC members are an effective means through which to address educational inequity in Oklahoma. AC members teach and lead in a wide range of subjects and grade levels, and are achieving strong results with students in low-income areas across the state. In large

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part due to the leadership of AC members and alums, several schools in Oklahoma have experienced dramatic improvement. For instance, Lighthouse Academy is a charter school located in a low-income community in Tulsa where over 90% of its students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The school is led by Jamila MacArthur, a 2005 AC alumna. In its charter year, over 50% of the teachers were TFA-OK alumni or current AC members, and the school led students to impressive academic results. For example, in AC member Keptah St. Julien's fourth grade class at Lighthouse Academy, students gained nearly 2.5 years' worth of reading levels in one year, with some children gaining 11 reading levels in one year. On end-of-year exams, 70-80% of Lighthouse students scored proficient or advanced on their state tests, putting the school on par with the top elementary schools in the state. This student success is not limited to Lighthouse, as AC members have achieved tremendous results with their students in every grade and subject matter. Over each of the past three years, TFA-OK AC members have led their students to an average of 1.4 years of academic growth in just one calendar year.

Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact: There is a strong research base on the effectiveness of TFA AC members' 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 AC members 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 AC members score higher in mathematics than otherwise similar students taught by novice teachers in middle schools without AC members. In a 2012 study using data from the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Harvard Strategic Data Project found first-year TFA AC members more effective than other first year teachers in both math and reading in grades 3 through 9.

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Statewide studies ranking teacher preparation programs in terms of their participants' impact on student achievement further validate 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., 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., (2013); Decker, P. T., Mayer, D. P., & Glazerman, S., The effects of Teach For America on students: Findings from a national evaluation. (No. 8792-750). Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (2004).; 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: 447-469 (2011); Turner, H. M., Goodman, D., Adachi, E., Brite, J., & Decker, L. E., 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 (2013); Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the State Board of Education, 2013 Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs. Nashville, TN (2013)).

Member Training: In order to ensure that our AC members have the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective teachers, we have a thorough training and support model that begins three months before they begin teaching and continues throughout their time in AmeriCorps. All of our training and support is based off of our training and evaluation model called Teaching As Leadership (TAL), which includes the six strategies that we have found (through extensive research) 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 their vision; and (6) continuously reflecting and improving.

Our pre-service training, historically known as summer institute, traditionally provides AC members with five weeks of intensive training focused on developing their skills as teachers and leaders. AC members teach summer school classes within the district, receive comprehensive feedback

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and coaching from a designated staff member, and take classes on pedagogy. This year, TFA -OK is piloting a new program for pre-service summer training. Oklahoma regional pre-service training will be designed and executed by the Oklahoma regional team, which historically has been run by national staff. Regional ownership of pre-service training will be unique and tailored to Oklahoma's students, communities, and corps members. Specifically, we believe that this pilot will provide a more seamless continuum of corps member training and support, foster stronger relationships between corps members and their communities, and ultimately strengthen the quality of summer school instruction that we provide to Oklahoma City students.

An important new addition to our pre-service training is a focus on learning about the communities in which AC members will teach and live. Every element of pre-service training is designed to connect AC members to their community and its history. Our AC members' strong understanding of the context and culture in which they serve informs how they approach their work and builds cultural competency. Additionally, AC members will build foundational relationships with their students' families as every Friday of pre-service training will be spent in their placement city, where they will have the opportunity to learn from locals through both formal experiences (such as panel discussions led by local civic leaders; guided tours of museums, memorials, and other cultural and historic sites; presentations by health and human services professionals on issues affecting the local population, etc.) and informal experiences (dinner with parents and family members of local students, attendance at community gatherings, small group discussions with local veteran teachers, etc.).

In addition to community immersion events, AC members teach summer school within the Oklahoma City Public School system as part of a two-person collaborative that is supervised and mentored by both a veteran teacher and a TFA staff member. These teachers provide continuous feedback to develop AC members' skills. AC members also attend regular afternoon and evening training sessions. Training topics include: classroom management and culture, instructional planning and delivery, student evaluation, and parent investment planning.

After their pre-service training, our AC members will return to their placement communities, where they will continue to receive strong support and build on the foundation they received during the summer. AC members are matched with a Manager of Teacher Leadership Development (MTLD), a TFA staff member who was a former high achieving teacher. MTLDs conduct observations of AC members' classrooms and provide them with tailored feedback and support. They work with AC members to review student data to identify trends and find solutions to problems or gaps in student

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achievement. Each MTL D manages a cohort of 30 AC members and serves as the primary point of contact with TFA. They perform regular classroom observations (ranging from 15 minutes to multiple hours), regularly meet with AC members to review student data with a focus on progress to date, and provide strategies for overcoming current challenges. MTL D cohorts are assigned in school clusters, so all the AC members at one school are managed by the same MTL D. This allows the MTL D to become deeply embedded in a few schools, as opposed to having surface knowledge of many schools.

Throughout the year, AC members will also attend professional development sessions designed and implemented by our Content Directors and Specialists. Training topics throughout the year including: curriculum development, lesson planning, student engagement, and diversity and inclusiveness trainings. Additionally, through our partnership with the George Kaiser Family Foundation and the University of Oklahoma - Tulsa, interested AC members can pursue their Masters in Education at a discounted rate.

Throughout the training and support cycle outlined above, we embed several opportunities to reinforce key issues of AC compliance. Prohibited activities are reviewed with AC members at TFA--OK's pre-service orientation to ensure that they have a clear and solid understanding of their responsibilities. We continue to enforce collective compliance at monthly professional development sessions and email blasts. Individual compliance will be monitored by MTL Ds 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 AC members, MTL Ds are able to review regulations with AC members and verify that they are not engaging in them. Our placement schools are provided with an AC orientation guide, which includes information on AC policies and prohibited activities. To ensure easy access, this information is also available on our district and school partnerships' website. Ensuring that our principals and other school administrators are aware of these activities provides another system to ensure AC members are not engaging in these activities, as well as an onsite resource, should they have any questions or want clarification or guidance on any activities in which they plan to participate.

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

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Member Supervision: As professional corps members, all TFA-OK AC members are college graduates who complete a rigorous application process designed, in part, to measure their ability to work effectively in a professional setting. Our AC members work as full-time professional teachers; they are directly supervised by their school principal. Therefore, our supervision plan focuses on AC member development and evaluation.

As mentioned above, MTLDs monitor individual compliance in collaboration with each site's principal (or site director, in the case of our early childhood centers). MTLDs are trained annually on the AC program, and this training involves an in-depth look into the prohibited activities where they explore what each prohibited activity could look like in a school setting, look at examples and case studies, and learn how to detect and report them. Meanwhile, our placement schools are each provided with an AC orientation guide, which includes the AC prohibited activities. This guide is provided to them by both the MTLD with whom they will be working. The AC prohibited activities are also discussed at our principal orientation meetings, which are held throughout the summer by our Manager of School and District Partnerships (MSDP). The MSDP's job is to cultivate relationships with principals, and she works closely with our AC program director to plan these orientations and relay important information throughout the year. AC information is included in each of our monthly principal newsletters, as well as on the School and District Partnerships website.

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identity: The aim of the AmeriCorps orientation we provide for our AC members is to ensure that, from the beginning, they are not only aware of the fact that they are AC members, but that they are proud of it and appreciate both the benefits and the responsibilities that come with their position. This year, we are revamping how we promote the AmeriCorps brand within our organization and our partners. As before, the AC logo will be visible on our program t-shirts, letterhead, website, and all local based publications. Our AC members will wear AC shirts at all service opportunities and display AC signs in their classrooms, ensuring that the communities where they work know they are AC members. While our AC members are required to abide by their schools' professional dress code, each AC member will wear an AC lapel pin daily, serving as both a reminder to the member and those they interact with that they are a part of the national service movement. Beyond that, our principal orientation will lead to a strong understanding of the AC program at each service site. We will also prominently display the AC logo in our offices and each staff member's email signature will include a link to the AC website, guaranteeing that our donors and all others we come in contact with are aware that we are an AmeriCorps program.

### **Organizational Capability**

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Organizational Background 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 8 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.

Our finance functions are housed nationally; this team reports to the auditing and finance committees of our board, and works closely with our national and regional development teams and budget trackers to coordinate revenues and expenses throughout the organization. This structure allows for an appropriate breakdown of responsibilities and a system of checks and balances, ensuring accurate financial accounting, coordination of fundraising and spending, and the accurate tracking of all finances.

Additionally, our region is led by our Executive Director (ED), Lance Tackett. As ED, Mr. Tackett manages the operations of the regional site, sets regional vision, and oversees execution of our program to ensure that we meet the unique needs of the communities where we work. Mr. Tackett leads 43 staff members and directly supervises the heads of each functional team. TFA-OK has four functional teams: 1) Teacher Leadership Development, 2) Alumni Affairs, 3) Operations, and 4) Growth, Development & Partnerships. Mr. Tackett also works with our regional advisory board, which provides guidance, assists in fundraising, and invests other community leaders.

TFA has effectively managed large-scale federal grants through both AmeriCorps and the Department of Education (a SEED grant and an I3 grant). 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. At the national office, our Public Partnerships Team has a number of well-qualified specialists available to meet and guide regional staff on AmeriCorps compliance, budget creation, and general grants management. Additionally this team works in close partnership with our Research and Evaluation, Student Achievement Measurement, Technology, Legal, and Teacher Preparation, Support and Development teams to provide on-going trainings, assistance, and guidance for all regional staff positions via conference calls, regional and national conferences, and on-line tutorials to ensure compliance with all grant requirement and regulations. Regionally, we receive funding from the State of Oklahoma to assist in our plans for rural expansion.

Compliance and Accountability: As a long-time AmeriCorps grantee, we have systems in place to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps requirements and regulations. First, AC member eligibility components of compliance are housed nationally by our Admissions and Public Partnerships teams.

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As AC members matriculate into the program, they are required to submit eligibility documentation and go through background checks. This approach to compliance management ensures that corps members meet all eligibility requirements prior to beginning their service.

Additionally, our Public Partnerships team trains all regional program staff on both acceptable and prohibited AmeriCorps activities, so they are equipped to educate AC members and monitor member activities. Second, trained regional staff provides pre-service training to AC members, which engenders in AC 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, AC members, and site supervisors.

Through site visits, classroom observations, and regular communication with site supervisors, our MTLs will provide oversight of AC members. Due to the frequency of interactions that coaches have with AC 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 AC 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 AC 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. Furthermore, 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.

Past Performance: During the 2012-13 school year, TFA-OK made progress towards our goal of solving educational inequity in Oklahoma. Over 11,500 students in corps member classrooms improved their academic performance by mastering a year's worth of content during the school year, surpassing our target of 8,100 students. Meanwhile, over 5,000 students made over a year's worth of growth in one year. We met our goal for the number of students who completed the year in AC member classrooms, as well as the number of former AC members remaining in the education field after their term of service, with 37 of our alumni remaining in education. We also were able to successfully place 200 AC members as teachers in high need public schools, and we surpassed our goal

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of 190 AC members completing their service as teachers, retaining 197 of our AC members during the year.

Staff transitions are a continuing challenge. Over the past three years, we have had three different AmeriCorps program directors, as the organization provides opportunities for growth and vertical movement. As such, each new staff member to manage this grant has confronted a steep learning curve. To ensure the smooth transfer of knowledge, TFA's national AmeriCorps team has been extremely involved and helpful with training the new AmeriCorps staff. Additionally, our new staff members are working to capture historical knowledge and codifying new knowledge. Our new staff is committed to the successful management of this grant.

In the last completed program year (2011-2012), TFA-OK filled 100% of the slots on our state grant. We retained 98.5% of these AC members, a much higher retention rate than the estimated average retention for first-year teachers in low-income communities in general (82%) and the overall average for all first-year teachers regardless of school setting (86%) ("No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children," National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, Washington, D.C. (2003)). This also represents an 8% improvement over the previous year's results.

Although TFA-OK's retention rate is higher than the national average, we are constantly working to improve our program and thus our retention rates. We work vigorously to improve our selection process to make sure we select members who will relentlessly pursue our mission in the face of steep odds. Additionally, we regularly survey our members on their satisfaction with their initial training as well as the support they receive regionally throughout the year. These surveys are used to inform and differentiate our training, which ensures AC members have adequate support and that the topics addressed at our trainings are relevant to the unique context of each AC member. Additionally, each AC member is invited to attend at least one dinner hosted by a member of their city's community, allowing them to form even stronger relationships within their service community. We also host citywide dinners at the end of each semester to celebrate the successes of the past few months. Beyond that, throughout the year each MTLT will host or plan different events for their AC members to better get to know each other and their community.

Continuous Improvements: TFA-OK is dedicated to continuously improving and increasing effectiveness. As an organization, we consistently request feedback from our AC members, staff, and school and district leaders. Our AC members fill out surveys after every professional development session and we use the feedback provided to fine tune our future sessions. On a larger scale, our AC members fill out two surveys a year on Teach For America as a whole.

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Regional staff members are asked for feedback in various forms throughout the year, but most specifically through quarterly surveys gauging how people are thinking and feeling about our regional priorities. Our leadership team meets monthly and discusses the feedback they have been receiving from their team during weekly check-ins, as well as the results of the quarterly survey data.

We meet regularly with district and school leaders throughout the year, both formally and informally, and we use this time to discuss what is going well, along with what changes we can make to improve results immediately and for the upcoming school year. At the end of each school year, we meet with our district leaders to discuss how the year went and brainstorm ways to fine-tune our training and support systems. Additionally, principals at our placement schools have the opportunity to fill out a survey about their experiences with our AC members, on top of the end-of-year conversations they have with our staff.

At the end of each year, our Teacher Leadership Development Team and School and District Partnership Team analyze all of the feedback they have received throughout the year from various stakeholders and use the information gleaned from these different sources to create a strategic plan for the upcoming school year. In recent years, the feedback we have received has led to many large changes to our organization, including the way we structure MTLTD cohorts, the creation of our Instructional Leadership Team, and the decision to create a regional pre-service training.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

Cost Effectiveness: Teach For America--Oklahoma is requesting 415 full-time member slots at \$757/MSY through a professional corps fixed amount grant, which falls well below the maximum amount that can be requested.

Our program design is a particularly cost effective model for not only providing teachers for low-income classrooms, but also for increasing student achievement. First, we are providing low-income school districts with a national pool of pre-screened talent they would not reach otherwise. Second, our administrative costs for doing so are substantially less 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, 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. &

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Konstantopoulos, S., "The Results of the Tennessee Class Size Experiment," American Educational Research Journal (2000); Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Scores Tell Us, RAND Corporation; Rivkin, S., Hanushek, E., & Kain, J., (2005). We are also cost effective when compared to a local Oklahoma university which serves as another source of teachers for schools in Oklahoma. This university spends three times the amount per teacher preparing their cohort than we do.

We value the public resources we receive, and we work hard to ensure we use these funds efficiently -- for every public dollar we receive, we leverage \$3 in private investments. Our estimated FY14 budget is \$11,780,000; this AmeriCorps grant would comprise approximately 3% of this budget, requiring us to depend on other sources to raise the additional funding necessary to support our corps members.

In order to raise the revenue we need, we seek to cultivate relationships with individuals, corporations and foundations who are interested in advancing their communities and who see education as the key way of doing so. We meet one-on-one with potential donors in order to build their understanding of our work and give them insight into who we are, what we believe, and what our vision for education is in Oklahoma. We continuously cultivate our relationships with existing donors by meeting with them and providing them timely updates about our work, inviting them into classrooms to meet and see corps members in action, and encouraging them to host events to further interface with our volunteers.

Additionally, our development team works to strengthen current relationships with foundations, corporations, and individuals, while seeking out new potential supporters of our work. We currently receive funding from the majority of large foundations in both Tulsa and Oklahoma City, and we meet regularly with these foundations to discuss what other foundations might be interested in donating to our work and the best ways in which to engage them. Our board of directors has been instrumental in this work, as the executive directors of three of Oklahoma's largest foundations (Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, and Inasmuch Foundation) sit on our board.

We have spent the past two years creating a stronger base of individual supporters. Our aim here is to not only raise operating funds, but also create champions for our kids who understand both the reality of education today and our students' potential to achieve great success. Through our Sponsor A Teacher and Pioneering Pathways programs, individuals are matched with an AC member and follow their success throughout the year. AC members interact with their sponsors through letters, phone calls, video updates, conversations over coffee and lunch, and classroom visits. Now in its second year,

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the Sponsor A Teacher program has proved effective not only at targeting and retaining donors, but also at involving individuals on a deeper level, with sponsors inviting their AC member over for holidays, helping plan academic activities for their AC member's students, and volunteering in their AC member's classroom.

Given our proven record of success and strong program and development operations, 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. Additionally, in 2012, Charity Navigator gave TFA a perfect 4-star rating for the twelfth straight year.

TFA-OK's budget projection for FY14 is \$9,585,973. Halfway through the current fiscal year, we have raised \$7,330,393, which is 76% toward our goal, with \$2,255,580 more to raise.

Budget Adequacy: The budget for TFA-OK is designed to adequately support its programming and to align with its mission. 75% of the budget represents costs directly related to CN recruitment, selection, training, and support - which include costs related to personnel, trainings, and CM meetings. These allocations are reflective of the program's needs for ongoing support and professional development, which enables CMs to lead their students to make significant academic gains. The remaining 25% of the budget is allocated for alumni development and support services. Expenses within this allocation are associated with alumni-related activities and regional office operations.

In total, we raised \$4,418,200 in FY13, which was a shortened fiscal year. This total was comprised of dollars from: FOUNDATIONS: In FY13, we raised \$2,669,717 from foundations in Oklahoma, which comprised 60% of our regional budget. We are utilizing our network of current supporters to identify connections, to secure meetings with new foundations, and to create opportunities for TFA to share our work with a broad range of foundations. CORPORATIONS: Last year, we raised \$772,000 from corporations, which comprised 18% of our regional budget. To ensure that prospective corporations understand that TFA can provide a significant return on their investment, we are creating unique partnership opportunities that align with Oklahoma's vast array of STEM corporations, enabling them to see the important role we play in creating a skilled and educated workforce. INDIVIDUALS: In FY 2013, we were able to raise \$148,560 from individuals within (or connected to) the Oklahoma community, which comprised 3% of our regional budget. We plan to hold events in FY14 to further expand our pool of potential supporters and to increase awareness of TFA among new networks of individuals. SCHOOL PARTNERS: In addition to our fundraising efforts noted above, we received \$483,000 from our school partners to help offset the training and recruitment costs of the TFA-OK teachers working in their schools. These funds

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comprised 11% of our regional budget. PUBLIC: In FY13, we were granted \$344,924 in AmeriCorps funds in Oklahoma, which comprised 8% of our regional budget.

We are confident that we will be able to raise enough funds to cover all program costs.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

Short-Term Expected Outcome: Teach For America (TFA) aims to attract and select highly motivated individuals with a record of success and place them in schools where they are needed the most. We anticipate 415 AmeriCorps members (ACMs) exhibiting characteristics that are predictive of success in high-needs schools in Oklahoma. Furthermore, we expect to see these individuals gaining knowledge and skills to teach in low-income schools while also developing the conviction that the educational inequity problem is solvable and that all children can achieve at high levels.

Research Questions: 1. Does TFA successfully identify and select individuals who are predicted to be most successful in the classroom? 2. Does TFA successfully train individuals to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions that will make them most effective in the classroom at a high-needs school?

Evaluation Methodology: research question 1: TFA employs a rigorous selection methodology that screens applicants for 7 characteristics that are predictive of classroom success and assigns a fit score to assess whether an applicant will be an effective match with TFA's work and mission. This assessment is based on information supplied by the applicants in their application (e.g., academic records, leadership experience) along with multiple rounds of interviews and sample teaching sessions. The data collected from this 2-4 month process will be converted into a fit score, which will show that those who are ultimately selected by TFA to teach in high-needs schools are those who are most likely to succeed in the classroom. research question 2: ACMs who are selected to teach are required to complete a administered in the middle and end of the academic year for each of the two years of the program. This allows TFA national staff members to assess the types of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and opinions that corps members have acquired through the TFA experience. These surveys will cover data from all 415 ACMs and the results will be analyzed to assess whether TFA's various training and support mechanisms successfully prepared ACMs to teach in high-needs schools.

Implementation of Evaluation Results: Results from both the selection model and the ACM surveys will be used to reflect and improve upon TFA's existing practices. For instance, if the evaluations find

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that individual or groups of ACMs do not achieve academic growth from their students at a reasonable and ambitious rate, extra support and mentoring will be made available to ACMs, while TFA's training model will be reassessed and improved for the next cohort of ACMs.

Medium-Term Expected Outcome: Although the majority of TFA ACMs enter the classroom without a background in education, through intensive training and ongoing support, they become effective teachers who impact student achievement. Based on historical data records of TFA's success in Oklahoma and the comprehensive training and support afforded to ACMs, we expect to see ACMs consistently increase the academic achievement

Research Question: of their students, often by upwards of 1.5 years or more of grade growth in one school year. Research Question: To what extent -- directionality and magnitude -- do TFA ACMs have a positive impact on student achievement?

Evaluation Methodology: TFA tracks the progress of its ACMs and their students using an internal system called the Student Achievement Measurement System (SAMS). Student achievement data included in this evaluation are collected in collaboration with state and district partners. Members of TFA's national SAMS team records and analyzes whether ACMs meet subject and grade level-specific benchmarks. Effectiveness will be measured in terms of student academic gains produced by the ACM by the end of the school year. A second evaluation method that will be employed to measure the effectiveness of TFA ACMs is the biennial National Principal Survey that is commissioned by TFA and is conducted by an external evaluator, Policy Studies Associates, Inc. in 2011 and 2013, for example, principals who have one or more TFA ACMs working in their school include were asked about ACMs' impact on student achievement in comparison to other teachers, both novice and experienced. The principals' insights provide an additional measure of ACM effectiveness in the classroom.

Implementation of Evaluation Results: By analyzing the student achievement data for all ACMs and reviewing principals' ratings of ACM performance, we will be able to discern whether TFA teachers have a positive impact in the classroom. Furthermore, we will be able to see which ACMs might need additional support to improve their performance. For those who need additional support, TFA will work with them and provide additional resources on an ongoing basis to improve their classroom effectiveness. Data from these evaluations will also be incorporated into decisions about programmatic

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improvements for upcoming years.

Long-Term Expected Outcome: TFA has a two-prong theory of change. The first prong -- to increase student achievement of the nation's most academically vulnerable students -- is addressed by the research questions and proposed evaluation methodologies of our short-term and medium-term objectives. The second prong -- to build a movement that addresses the structural roots of educational inequality from both within and outside of the classroom -- is addressed by our long-term objective: we expect to see that TFA alumni remain involved in education at all levels in various sectors, such as policy and system leadership, beyond their 2-year corps commitment.

Research Question: Does the TFA experience impact the lifelong trajectory of its corps members so that they continue to work towards solving educational inequity?

Evaluation Methodology: Every year, TFA sends out a survey to all of its alumni in order to collect Methodology information about their career trajectories after completion of their 2-year corps commitment. By analyzing the results of this survey, we will be able to discern what percentage of our alumni work directly in the field, or in related fields, of education and in what capacity. This is one indicator of whether TFA is successful in fostering lifelong leaders in education.

Implementation of Evaluation Results: Depending on the specific needs of the region, the results of the alumni survey can be used to start or improve initiatives such as "Teach Beyond Two" (where ACMs are encouraged to and given support to stay in the classroom beyond two years), LEE (Leadership for Educational Equity -- a sister organization of TFA that assists alumni in developing leadership capacity to get involved in education policy work), and recruiting and training alumni to become principals in high-needs schools through our Principal Leadership initiative.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATION 2014

The budget has been adjusted to reflect 370 MSYs at \$757/MSY for a total grant amount of \$280,090. This adjustment reflects the anticipated number of corps members we will be able to enroll based on

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current recruitment and admissions data. This section has been updated.

Performance measures have also been adjusted to reflect the revised MSY request. This section has been updated.

### 1) PROGRAMMATIC

#### PROFESSIONAL CORPS

a) As a professional corps program, Teach For America-Oklahoma's (TFA-OK) AmeriCorps members are paid staff employed by Oklahoma school districts and charter schools. Similar to any other employment opportunity, our corps members apply and compete for open positions. 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. For 2014-15, Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) is hiring over 350 new teachers, and the district has asked for 70 more corps members than we are able to supply. Our corps members are just one of many avenues for the district to fill vacancies. TPS and Oklahoma City Public Schools are reaching outside the state to recruit teachers, and TPS is working with TNTTP to help fill vacancies.

In Oklahoma, 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 Oklahoma 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 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.

b) We believe that it is appropriate for us to sign the certification because in districts where there are

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collective bargaining agreements in place, these agreements govern the ways in which districts hire new teachers, including TFA teachers. Because TFA works with school 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 collective bargaining agreement. We do not receive any special hiring arrangement beyond those permissible by collective bargaining agreements.

c) TFA AmeriCorps members participate in districts' standard hiring processes. 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 the school board.

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 Oklahoma, TFA works with hiring decision-makers to ensure that we are matching our efforts with district needs. For example, in each of our placement schools over 60% of students receive free or reduced priced lunch; almost 90% are schools where over 90% of the student body receives free or reduced priced lunch. Over a third of our corps members teach in the US Department of Education's identified subject shortage areas of math, science, special education, and English as a New Language (ENL), and members teach in 76% of Oklahoma's SIG schools.

d) 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, our corps members often fill teaching positions in high-need subject areas and schools, which districts often find difficult to fill. TFA-OK places 33% of AC members in math, science, special education, and ENL, high need subject areas as defined by the U.S. Department of Education.

## **Narratives**

Additionally, 41% of AC members teach in Oklahoma's priority schools, including 86% of the priority schools within our placement districts. We also place in 76% of Oklahoma's School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools.

The state of Oklahoma is experiencing an inadequate number of teachers to fill vacancies across the state. This disproportionately impacts high-need schools and widens the deficit of excellent educational opportunities for low-income students. For example, just one week before the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) had over 90 vacant teaching positions and Oklahoma City Public Schools had 40. Right now, in early April, nearly 30 TPS classrooms still remain without a permanent teacher. While there does not need to be a proven shortage for TFA to place in Oklahoma, this region having an inadequate number of professionals has led to a persistent shortage of teachers and has resulted in increased demand from our current schools and from new schools.

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 have are participating in our proven-effective teacher training program. We believe that "lacking an adequate number of such professionals" does not just refer to communities that simply do not have enough candidates, but also to communities that do not have 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 are less likely to get effective teachers in their classrooms than wealthier students; they are far more likely to have teachers who scored poorly on college and licensure exams. 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.

The effectiveness of TFA's national teacher pipeline is further reinforced by independent studies - in every state that uses 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.

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In Oklahoma, 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. 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. To date, the principals in our partner schools overwhelmingly indicate they are satisfied or extremely satisfied with corps members and that they would hire a corps member if there was a vacancy at their school.

### 2) PERFORMANCE MEASURES

a) We have deleted ED 15, as it is duplicative of ED 5. Our target for ED 5 includes only the number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math.

b) Improvement is defined as the equivalent of at least one year's worth of growth. ED5 target includes only students who will receive specific instruction in literacy and/or math, which makes up a sub-set of our entire teaching corps. This target is not inclusive of our corps members teaching subjects other than math or literacy, thus this target is ambitious, given the number of students that being taught math or literacy.

c) 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 46 different regions, in over 600 school districts/charter networks, and teach 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 state assessment ACT, Developmental Reading Assessment, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, Envision Math, Everyday Mathematics, Fountas and Pinnel Benchmark System,

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Gates-MacGinitie Readings, Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation, Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Scholastic Reading Inventory, 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.

d) 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.

e) All TFA-Oklahoma corps member placements are conducted under the auspices of a contractual agreement with our placement partners known as a Professional Services Agreement (PSA). These documents stipulate that TFA-Oklahoma will not allow corps members to be placed in schools that are not considered high poverty relative to the student population elsewhere in the placement district, or where less than sixty percent of the school's student population receives a free or reduced priced lunch.

Of the schools TFA-Oklahoma currently places in, all have over 60% of students receiving free and reduced priced lunches, 97% have 80% of students receiving free and reduced priced lunches, and 88% are schools where over 90% of the student body are receiving a free and reduced priced lunches.

100% of our corps members are placed in Title I schools.

### 3) STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS

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a) What 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.

b) At this time, TFA does not wish to request additional MSYs to fund AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

4) MSY WITH NO PROGRAM FUNDS ATTACHED: N/A

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A

### **Grant Characteristics**