# PART I - FACE SHEET

## APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)

**1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:**

Application [X]   Non-Construction

| 2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS): | 3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 06-JAN-11 | STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER: N/A |
|---|---|---|
| **2b. APPLICATION ID:** 11AC122307 | **4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:** | **FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:** 09ACHMS0010002 |

**5. APPLICATION INFORMATION**

LEGAL NAME: Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

DUNS NUMBER:   006886618

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):
MS Institutions of Higher Learning
3825 Ridgewood Road, Suite 334
Jackson MS 39211 - 6453
County: Hinds

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):

NAME:  Ronjanett M. Taylor

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (601) 432-6380

FAX NUMBER:  (601) 432-6983

INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: rtaylor@mississippi.edu

**6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):**
646000783

**7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:**
7a.   Other

7b.   State Education Agency

**8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).**

[ ] NEW          [ ] NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTE

[X] CONTINUATION     [ ] AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): [ ] [ ]

A. AUGMENTATION          B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION     D. OTHER *(specify below):*

**9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:**
**Corporation for National and Community Service**

**10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:** 94.006

**10b. TITLE:**  AmeriCorps State

**11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:**
America Reads-Mississippi

**11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):**

**12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):**
America Reads-Mississippi is a statewide program covering Congressional Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4 in high poverty, low academic achieving schools.

**13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE:** 08/01/11     **END DATE:** 07/31/12

**14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.**Applicant [MS 003]   **b.**Program [MS 003]

**15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:** [2]

| | |
|---|---|
| a. FEDERAL | $ 4,546,305.00 |
| b. APPLICANT | $ 2,383,083.00 |
| c. STATE | $ 0.00 |
| d. LOCAL | $ 0.00 |
| e. OTHER | $ 0.00 |
| f. PROGRAM INCOME | $ 0.00 |
| g. TOTAL | $ 6,929,388.00 |

**16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?**

[ ] YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:

DATE:

[X] NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

**17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?**
[ ] YES   if "Yes," attach an explanation.    [X] NO

**18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.**

| a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Hank Bounds | b. TITLE: Commissioner | c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (601) 432-6380 |
|---|---|---|
| d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: | | e. DATE SIGNED: 05/17/11 |

# Narratives

**Executive Summary**

America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) will continue its efforts to increase the reading skills of students, encourage public support for literacy, and help to increase the number of certified teachers in Mississippi. ARM is currently on track to meet its performance measures that include: School Day Tutoring, After school Tutoring, Volunteer Recruitment, and Member Training and Development. Three hundred and fifty (350) AmeriCorps members serve as full-time reading tutors in 82 partnering schools. ARM members assist classroom teachers in meeting the literacy needs of an average of 3,500 first through third grade students. Members recruit community volunteers and engage youth in community service projects. Members also received valuable educational and professional training and skills.

The following minimal changes are being proposed in this continuation application for program years 2 and 3.

Personnel: In an effort to reduce program costs, the Administrative Assistant position that was vacated in Spring 2010 was deleted from the grant budget for this grant cycle. Program duties associated with this position were assigned to the remaining office staff. The majority of these duties have been assigned to the Assistant State Director, Special Projects coordinator and the Finance Specialist. Each staff member has undertaken the responsibilities of effectively managing the assigned fiscal tasks while continuing to manage the tasks and duties specific to their primary area. For this reason, the program is requesting a 3% increase for each of these positions. Additionally, two staff has received state-approved increases for educational attainment.

Programmatic and Member Support: In order to sufficiently fund the grantee share of member costs, the annual Life After AmeriCorps (LAA) Training and Service Celebration has been deleted. LAA and service reflection are included in regular regional member trainings throughout the program year. The final regional training will also include additional member service recognition. The ARM program has made the required budget adjustments for member living allowance, health insurance, and liability

coverage.

Performance Measures: the program is opting into the National Performance Measures pilot to track and measure school day tutoring (Aligned - Outputs ED1, ED2, Intermediate Outcome ED5).

## Rationale and Approach

### A. COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED

There still exists a real need for reading tutoring services for children in Mississippi.  Efforts are on-going to combat deficits in education, and literacy in particular.   Data comparing literacy rates from 2005 and 2007 revealed that only 18% and 19%, respectively, of Mississippi fourth graders were reading at or above proficiency (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2007). Mississippi also continues to rank below the national average in improvements made to decrease poverty and teen births.   State data confirms this: 29% of children live in poverty, 62% higher that the national average and teen births are 61% higher (2009 Kids Count Data Book).  Recently, these trends have been compounded by the state of the nation's economy. In 2006, it was reported that 42% of Mississippi children lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment, 33% higher than the national average.  High unemployment and high poverty create academic challenges for young children whose families face these obstacles.

In Mississippi, 42% of young children who live in poverty have parents who do not have a high school diploma (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2008).  Less educated parents are more likely to lack the financial means to provide educational and other basic necessities for their children.  There is a 25 point gap between children from low and high income families on reading comprehension scores (The Nation's Report Card: Reading, NCES 2007).

Not only are the students of Mississippi in need, but many of its adult citizens lack economic and educational opportunity as well.  The adults, some of whom are the parents and caregivers to the students we've described, face insurmountable odds and are weighed down by their own non-existent or incomplete education, extreme poverty, and a crippled economy.  According to the most recent US

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Census data in 2000, only 16.9% of Mississippians hold a bachelor's degree. In September 2009, the state's unemployment rate was 8.8 (6.3 in 2007); and in the counties where America Reads-Mississippi AmeriCorps members serve, the average is 10.97, 15% higher than the national average (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007 and Mississippi Department of Employment Security, September 2009). The need also exists to provide service opportunities that translate into educational opportunities, resulting in a better quality of life for Mississippians and an improved contribution by our state to the nation. For this reason, the America Reads - Mississippi program has added a national performance measure in the Economic Opportunity for AmeriCorps members.

A1. COMPELLING NEED: AMERICA READS-MISSISSIPPI (ARM) SCHOOL SITES

When the data sets discussed above are compiled for the counties where ARM members currently serve, the need becomes increasingly clear. As a multi-site program, ARM maintains collaborations with five regional university offices located at Alcorn State University (ASU), Delta State University (DSU), Jackson State University (JSU), Mississippi State University (MSU), and the University of Southern Mississippi (USM); which enables the program to provide much needed tutoring services in 33 of the 82 Mississippi counties.

ARM is seeking to extend its reach to include two additional counties in north Mississippi. This proposed sixth region of ARM will be housed at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. This is a unique opportunity in that the University of Mississippi (UM) is the first university to request to be an ARM university partner. The university has committed both monetary and in-kind match for personnel salary and member training. The UM region would serve Quitman and Panola counties, both having a BEALE Code of 6. In these counties, 29% of the population lives below the poverty level, 59% have a high school diploma while only 11% have a BS degree, and the average income is $28, 597. The average unemployment rate for these counties was 11.5 in September 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007 and Mississippi Department of Employment Security, September 2009). These counties would greatly benefit from having an ARM region located at UM to serve struggling students, as well as provide service

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to the community, and educational and professional skills development to some of its citizens.  Most importantly, the targeted elementary schools in these two counties are "at risk of failing" or are on "academic watch" as identified by the latest accountability standards of the Mississippi Department of Education (2009).

Twenty-eight (28) of the 33 counties served by ARM, including the 2 counties that would make up the UM region being proposed,  meet the BEALE Code as being rural or severely economically distressed, according to the most recent data from the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (2003).   This source also states, "Compared with children living in families above the poverty line, children living below the poverty line are more likely to have difficulty in school, become teenage parents, and as adults, earn less and be unemployed more frequently."

ARM targets schools with a high percentage of low academic achieving students.  Seventy-five percent of current ARM service sites have been identified as "at risk of failing", "academic watch", "low performing", or "failing" according to the latest accountability standards of the Mississippi Department of Education (2009).  Taking a look at the demographics of each ARM region, the counties included reveal the following:

ASU -- 55% African-American; 70% high-school graduates while only 14% with BS Degree; $13,774 per capita income; $29,076 median family income; and 26% below poverty level.

DSU -- 69% African-American; 61% high-school graduates while only 15% with BS Degree; $12,020 per capita income; $29,657 median family income; and 36% below poverty level.

JSU - 66% African-American; 80% high-school graduates while only 27% with BS Degree; $17,785 per capita income; $28,162 median family income; and 23% below poverty level.

MSU - 46% African-American; 66% high-school graduates while only 14% with BS Degree; $14,284 per capita income; $31,928 median family income; and 25% below poverty level.

USM - 30% African-American; 72% high-school graduates while only 15% with BS Degree; $14,950 per capita income; $36,067 median family income; and 19% below poverty level.

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UM (Proposed)- 58% African-American; 59% high-school graduates while only 11% with BS Degree; $11,946 per capita income; $28,597 median family income; and 31% below poverty level. Statewide, the average ARM community is 55% African-American, with 29% of the population below poverty (compared with 13% nationally and 20.7% statewide) and has a per capita income of $12,931 (40% lower than the $21,587 national average and 18% lower that the $15,853 state average). Sixty-five percent of the populations in counties served by ARM have a high school diploma while only 14% have earned a Bachelor's degree (www.quickfacts.census.gov). Additionally, 69% of school children in Mississippi are eligible for the National School Lunch Program according to the National Center for Education Statistics 2007 State Snapshot Report. All of these statistics combined reveal the need and added benefit of having ARM members serving in local schools as reading tutors. Members receive exposure to the education profession and gain valuable skills and preparation. This exposure, along with training provided by the program encourages and increases the member's desire and readiness for higher education, also increasing the likelihood that the member will pursue a bachelor's degree.

ARM targets those with the greatest need and has demonstrated since 1998 that a statewide corps of "tutors with a mission" can make big differences. ARM school partners were asked to communicate the impact of the ARM program. Their responses further confirm the need for this type of AmeriCorps program providing full-time one-on-one and small group reading tutoring. The results from the 2009 End of Year Program Satisfaction Survey reported 100% satisfaction overall with the program's mission and goals, quality of programming, AmeriCorps member service, cost effectiveness, and general positive differences America Reads-Mississippi makes for students, families, schools, communities, and the AmeriCorps members themselves. The top three program strengths reported by respondents were 1. Improved the reading skills of struggling students through one-on-one tutoring; 2. Availability, dedication, and reliability of AmeriCorps members; and 3. Effective and regular trainings help members become leaders and teachers. The top three areas for program improvement by survey respondents were 1. Limit the amount of meetings- members were out of the building a great deal (trainings,

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projects); 2. Professionalism training for members; and 3. Reduce paperwork and increase the living allowance.

When asked on the survey to describe the impact if the program is not refunded, comments included: "The effects would be detrimental. Our students, school, and community would be at a disadvantage. Students would not receive daily one-on-one tutoring, this resulting in lower test scores in reading." Site Supervisor, Liberty Elementary

"Fatal. The ARM members help teachers in so many ways. They help provide remediation activities that a classroom teacher does not have a chance to provide." Classroom Teacher, West Tallahatchie

"We wouldn't be able to accommodate at-risk students with the quantity of one-on-one instruction that they need." Federal Programs Director, Aberdeen School District

"Detrimental. We require any and all assistance possible to increase the vocabulary and comprehension components of reading for our students." School Principal, William J. Berry Elementary

There still exists a real need for reading tutoring for Mississippi's students. America Reads-Mississippi has a strong and documented track record of providing quality service that produces results. Students tutored by ARM members improve their reading skills, behavior, attitudes towards school, and completion of homework as indicated by the classroom teacher (ARM Classroom Teacher Survey, 2008). These results are directly related to the structure of ARM tutoring; one-on-one and in small groups, with members serving during the school day. Members are able to provide individualized tutoring to students who need it, working together with teachers to outline a tutoring plan that will address the students' reading deficits. ARM requests AmeriCorps funding to continue serving the students, families, and communities of Mississippi.

B. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND MEMBER ROLES

The compelling needs described above require deliberate efforts to assist local school districts in providing daily reading interventions that go beyond what the classroom teacher can accomplish with students needing additional help. America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) requests 350 full-time AmeriCorps

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slots. ARM is requesting the same number of member slots, although we propose to add UM as a new region. The current slots will be redistributed across the six regions, with UM having twenty education award only slots (EAO).

ARM's decision to maintain 350 member slots while proposing to add a new region was based on the following factors: identified need in the proposed counties and the invitation from UM; the program's current capacity to effectively and efficiently manage and support members; the program's ability to maintain 75/25 percentage split between stipended and EAO slots; and the implementation of specific tasks toward long-term sustainability goals, including time to enhance cultivation of and secure new funders before increasing the corps size.

Member roles will include serving as reading tutors for academically at-risk students, planning community strengthening projects, and recruiting volunteers to meet local needs. Specifically, ARM members will provide services from August 1 through July 31 at approximately 85 local partnering school sites across the state and services will include: 1. Reading tutoring for first through third grade students during the school day; 2. Tutoring before and after school and in the summer; 3. Recruiting volunteers for school and community service projects; 4. Participating in national service days by conducting service projects to meet local needs (September 11th National Day of Service & Remembrance in September, Make a Difference Day in October, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January, Read Across America Day in March, Global Youth Service Day in April, AmeriCorps Week in May); and 5. Attending program-sponsored, school-sponsored, and state-sponsored trainings.

Program-sponsored trainings begin with a program orientation for both members and site supervisors that clearly address program and AmeriCorps policies and procedures. This training includes reviewing prohibited activities and policies regarding non-duplication and non-displacement requirements. To ensure that members do not violate program and AmeriCorps policies, program staff and site supervisors regularly monitor members and check member timesheets to assess service description of activities.

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Member activities are supervised by on-site supervisors at partnering schools. School service sites are recruited, supported and managed by seventeen (17) ARM regional program staff whose offices are located on the campuses of six public universities - ASU, DSU, JSU, MSU, USM, and UM (proposed as the sixth regional office); and four (4) central office staff at the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), ARM's legal applicant.

Long-standing partnerships with school service sites and public universities have targeted three objectives which come together to add value to the existing activities of IHL. First, ARM meets local education needs through the instructional support services provided by AmeriCorps members. This builds upon IHL's initiative that "every student who comes to us will be successful" and validates the contribution of ARM service to provide early interventions encouraging better academic preparation for students. Second, school partners provide a service location where members serve with a certified teacher, and among other education professionals, who mentor and help distinguish the member's role from that of other instructional staff or other volunteers. This also ensures that members are serving in their indented capacity and do not displace or replace school staff or other volunteers. Third, ARM university regional staff and school partners work together to provide training and support for the members educational and professional pursuits leading to well prepared, certified teacher candidates. The second and third objectives are extensions of IHL's initiatives to "increase non-traditional and part-time students", "produce more and higher quality school teachers and leaders", and "halving the achievement gap for lower income and minority students" (IHL Strategic Initiatives, 2008). In an article released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in July 2009, one of the indicators used to assess breaking the cycle of poverty was "strengthening education and job training." The article stated, "To pull their families out of poverty, adults also need opportunities to prepare for better paying jobs and career advancement." ARM partnerships and program goals seek to do just that.

In addition to tutoring, volunteer recruitment, and training for all members, America Reads-Mississippi will continue to provide specialized training for members interested in becoming certified

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teachers through the Future Teacher Corps: 70 current members who are Jr. or Sr. level Education majors will receive training and materials to assist them in becoming certified teachers. A survey of current members indicated that eighty-five percent of the Corps wants to become a certified teacher. Since 1998, 2,564 former ARM members have successfully completed 1700 hours, making them eligible for the AmeriCorps Education Award. Of this number, 133 have been identified as certified teachers in his/her own classroom or were hired as an Assistant Teacher in the school where they served.

C. MEASUREABLE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

For this grant cycle, America Reads-Mississippi will be using standard performance measures for school day and extended day tutoring, volunteer recruitment, and member training. ARM will address the Economic Opportunity for AmeriCorps Members Priority Area, with National Performance Measures #14 - Number of AmeriCorps members who have their high school diploma or equivalent but have not complete a college degree prior to their term of serve; and #17 - Number of members that complete a college course within one year after finishing AmeriCorps.

-School Day Tutoring (Aligned Performance Measure): 350 ARM members will tutor 3,500 students (OUTPUTS) per day in reading (10 students per member) resulting in 90% of tutored students showing improvements in their attitudes towards school, behavior, and class work (INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME) as reported by classroom teachers; leading to 90% of ARM-tutored students in grades 1-3 scoring in the "approaching expectation," "at expectation," or "above expectation" range on the literacy portions of the Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) by the end of the school year (END OUTCOME), and 75% of ARM-tutored students in grade 3 scoring at least at the Basic performance level in reading on the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2) (END OUTCOME).

The CPAA is a computer-based assessment and reporting program selected by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to be used in the K-3 initiative. (Description taken from the CPAA website, "Mississippi K-3 Assessment Program", http://www.childrensprogress.com/about-us/press-releases/mississippi_k3_assessment.shtml, 2009). The MCT2 is the assessment requirement of MDE

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and is based on four performance levels which are: Minimal, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced (Descriptions taken from the MDE website document, "Interpretive Guide for Teachers and Administrators", http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/osa/mct2/MCT_IG_Final.pdf, 2009). Members will also report tutoring data on the America Learns website, including number of students tutored and number of tutoring hours.

As a result of program evaluation, ARM has the greatest impact with first grade students and good results with students in second and third grades. Eighty-nine (89) out of 103 first grade students were given both the pretest and the post test with all students achieving gains as reflected on the GRADE Comprehension Composite (ARM 2008-2009 Reading Gain Composite Evaluation Report, page 15). For this reason, and from a desire to maximize the impact of ARM AmeriCorps member service, ARM proposes to provide tutoring services for first - third grade students, exclusively. This revision will allow for more grade-specific tutor training for members. ARM will communicate this improvement plan to current school site and district partners during the annual mid-year school partner meeting coordinated by each regional university ARM office.

-After School Tutoring: 350 members will tutor 1,400 students after school in reading (4 students per member per week) resulting in 90% of ARM tutored students improving their attitudes toward school, class work, and behavior as reported by classroom teachers on mid and end of year evaluations. Members will also report afterschool tutoring data on the America Learns website, including number of students tutored and number of tutoring hours.

-Volunteer Recruitment: 350 members will collaborate with community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations and others to recruit 25,000 volunteers who will volunteer 125,000 hours assisting with local school and community projects, as well as National Service Day Projects (September 11th Service and Remembrance Day, Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Read Across America Day, Global Youth Service Day, and AmeriCorps Week); performing such duties as posting event announcements and recruiting community volunteers; benefiting 95,000 people. ARM members

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report volunteer recruitment efforts using the America Learns website, the ARM website to submit service day reports, and event sign-in sheets. Program staff will track and verify volunteer recruitment hours monthly.

   -Member Training and Development:  350 members will participate in regular program-sponsored trainings at six university centers around the state conducted in collaboration with state agencies, partnering universities, and community and faith-based organizations with members rating the quality of training at least a three (good) on a four point scale.

D. PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

   On-going assessment is conducted for programmatic, fiscal, and member-related progress/accountability.  America Reads-Mississippi identifies programmatic strengths and weaknesses by conducting statewide staff meetings held in Jackson at the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), ARM's legal applicant.  Staff reviews and evaluates key program indicators such as member retention, member hours and successful completion, and progress in meeting performance measures.  Quarterly progress reports, bi-annual partner satisfaction surveys, bi-annual university and school partner feedback meetings, and an annual evaluation by an independent evaluator to assess reading gain, are utilized to gain feedback, identify and resolve problems, and re-evaluate strategies for continuous improvement.  Additionally, ARM uses the America Learns website (www.americalearns.net) to receive weekly feedback from members on tutoring, volunteer recruitment, and member development progress and needs.

   Regular feedback is also provided to ARM AmeriCorps members.  Program staff conducts regular monitoring visits to school sites and staff also maintains daily contact with members and site supervisors through email and phone communications.  Formal member performance evaluations are conducted twice a year including a member self-evaluation, site supervisor evaluation of the member, and program staff evaluation of the member.  Members also receive monthly service-hour reports to keep them informed of target hours and their progress towards 1700 hours.

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ARM central and regional offices are supervised through designated university education and community development departments. Included are the Office of Academic and Student Affairs at IHL, Departments of Education at ASU, JSU, MSU, USM; and the Center for Economic and Community Development at DSU. ARM is proposing to add the University of Mississippi (UM) as a sixth regional university site, which would be supervised by the Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction. ARM central and regional offices participate in regular university departmental meetings, staff performance appraisals, and regular programmatic and fiscal audits.

E. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The ARM program was designed in 1998 by a diverse statewide task force made up of higher education, K-12, and state and community leaders. Since that time, ARM has continued this tradition of regular input from stakeholders, formally and informally, through meetings, surveys, and reports. Member teams at each school give presentations to local school boards, Parent/Teacher Association groups, and other community and civic groups to inform stakeholders about the impact of AmeriCorps service.

In identifying the target communities to receive ARM AmeriCorps service, program staff contact and present a proposal to local school districts to learn of their expressed needs and capacity to partner. Additionally, schools are involved in the planning and implementation of the program by recruiting and recommending potential members, selecting students with academic need based on school data, and providing site supervision for members once the school becomes a partner.

ARM has also cultivated strong partnerships within the higher education community. Five Mississippi public universities currently serve as host sites for regional ARM offices, as well as the program being administered through the Office of Academic and Student Affairs at IHL. The partnerships, which began in 1998 with just two regions, have grown to include ASU, DSU, JSU, MSU, and USM, with UM proposed for 2010-2011. The partnerships were established to provide ARM members with access to higher education options, training and development to pursue educational and

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professional goals, and to enhance relations between the universities and the surrounding communities through member community service. University partners provide office and meeting space, as well as administrative support. Together, the partnerships provide training and support for members' educational and professional pursuits leading to well prepared, certified teacher candidates, as well as other types of professions. According to 2009 America Learns program data, eighty-five percent of ARM members want to become certified teachers, and many will go on to teach in the schools where they once served as members. Examples of other career aspirations include Respiratory Therapy, Social Work, and Nursing. Regular member training takes place at the universities and upon completion of the program ARM members are using the AmeriCorps education award to attend Mississippi colleges and universities.

Across the three-year program period, ARM will continue to engage community partners, including partnering school districts, school sites, universities, and agencies such as the Red Cross in their ongoing roles as training and information providers, consultants on programmatic activities, service and host sites, collaborative partners for local service projects, and liaisons to other community agencies. Other partners such as local businesses and government offices will continue as partners that provide guidance for future programmatic and fiscal direction, and securing additional funding sources.

F. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

Starting in 1998 when the program began, ARM staff worked closely with the more established Campus Link AmeriCorps Program. Other collaborations included the Mississippi Early Literacy Corps, Delta Reads Partnership, Delta Service Corps, Living Independence For Everyone (LIFE), and AmeriCorps*VISTA. During this program year, the ARM JSU region partnered with the newest National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) campus to build ramps, paint, sort clothing, and assist in the food pantry at the Stewpot Community Center for Make A Difference Day.

Within the last two years, ARM has served as a designated mentor to several new MCVS AmeriCorps programs, providing assistance with programmatic, fiscal, and member management, helping to

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develop training and supervision plans, as well as conducting member orientation sessions.  These

programs included The Piney Woods Changing the World Team, Boys and Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast,

Grenada School District Learning Quilt, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central MS, Public Policy, and St. Rose

Revitalizing the Recovery.  ARM does not receive funding from any other Corporation for National and

Community Service (CNCS) source.

For PY 2010-2011, ARM proposes to collaborate with the Campus Link AmeriCorps program on

programmatic and training activities that involve ARM's focus on grades 1-3 and Campus Link's focus

on grades 6-8.  These efforts seek to ensure that students receive effective transitional support from

elementary to middle school, and efficient use of grant funds is maintained in providing services for

identified needs to Mississippi communities.  ARM and Campus Link can assist partnering schools with

locating additional services for the grades not served (4th -- 5th).  The programs will provide separate

program and fiscal support to members but have agreed to share training materials and program data,

as well as conduct periodic joint staff meetings and training events when topics and scheduling are

aligned for both programs.  ARM has committed to serve as a mentor for Campus Link if both programs

are funded.  The benefit of this collaboration is that each program can inform the other's work in terms

of planning, advocacy, evaluation, and training.

G. POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

There is great potential for replication of the ARM program.  ARM serves as a model for new

AmeriCorps programs and regularly shares program generated materials and documents that can be

easily adapted to most program designs.  Visit the ARM website at www.americareadsms.org for an

overview of program implementation.  Useful tools that other programs could replicate include the host

service site partnering information and application, reading tutoring tips and other member

development tools, and contact information for ARM program staff.

ARM indicated several activities in the 2007 re-compete grant application that would be completed

over the three-year grant period to seek support to expand and replicate the program.  Of the seven

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activities identified, five have been performed either directly or indirectly. ARM presented a programmatic update to the IHL Board in November 2008; secured access to student data from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) for reporting reading gain in May 2009; presented information sessions to key legislative and congressional staff on the benefits of AmeriCorps to Mississippi children and communities in March 2009; met with Mr. Claiborne Barksdale of the Barksdale Reading Institute and secured in-kind tutor training for members in April 2008; and ARM was invited by the University of Mississippi to host an ARM region on their campus in March 2008. ARM has replicated the university regional office model and now manages the program decentralized from five university regional offices. In this grant application, the University of Mississippi is being proposed as the newest university to become an ARM regional office. The remaining two activities were: 1. meeting with the Higher Education Literacy Council, the Early Childhood Institute, and local foundations; and 2. exploring ARM's transition to a multi-state program. ARM will make appointments with at least one literacy-related agency and one local foundation to begin conversations about potential partnerships and funding opportunities. Additionally, having reviewed the program's current capacity, pursuing an expansion to a multi-state initiative is not being considered at this time. The program will continue to work with the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) and state agencies to explore additional options for replication.

**Organizational Capability**

A. SOUND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. ABILITY TO PROVIDE SOUND PROGRAMMATIC AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT

Since its inception in 1998, ARM has benefitted from sound programmatic and fiscal oversight by being centrally administered at the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), the state's governing body for all public four-year universities, and by regional implementation at five university centers at Alcorn State University (ASU), Delta State University (DSU), Jackson State University (JSU), Mississippi State University (MSU), and the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). A sixth region is proposed for

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2010-2011. The proposed sixth region of ARM will be housed at the University of Mississippi (UM) in Oxford. This is a unique opportunity in that the UM is the first university to request to be an ARM university partner. The university has committed both monetary and in-kind match for personnel salary and member training. ARM is requesting the same number of member slots (350) although we propose to add UM as a new region. The current slots will be redistributed across the six regions, with UM having twenty education award only slots (EAO) serving in Quitman and Panola counties, both having a BEALE Code of 6.

ARM's decision to maintain 350 member slots while proposing to add a new region was based on the following factors: identified need in the proposed counties and the invitation from UM; the program's current capacity to effectively and efficiently manage and support members; the program's ability to maintain 75/25 percentage split between stipended and EAO slots; and the implementation of specific tasks toward long-term sustainability goals, including time to enhance cultivation of and secure new funders before increasing the corps size. Adding UM expands ARM's connections with public higher education institutions in the state.

State agencies and higher education institutions have the sound infrastructure in place to manage large grants. Operating from educational agencies provides a wealth of resources for member development, assistance to members in carrying out service duties, and program organization and management. ARM, IHL, and state universities undergo annual state audits and have several layers of financial and budget oversight in place. ARM has received high marks each year on both fiscal and program management audits, with special commendations provided for adherence to state and federal regulations. The IHL Office of Contracts and Grants provides guidance and staff from the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) regularly monitors and audits the program to ensure compliance.

Policies, procedures, and other accountability measures have been refined over the last eleven years so that the program runs smoothly, meeting all state and federal requirements. ARM practices

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continuous improvement seeking more efficient, higher quality, and cost-effective ways to manage and administer the grant.  A testament to this is ARM's designation as a mentor to new programs.  Within the last two years, ARM has served as a designated mentor to several new MCVS AmeriCorps programs, providing assistance with programmatic, fiscal, and member management, helping to develop training and supervision plans, as well as conducting member orientation sessions.  These programs included The Piney Woods Changing the World Team, Boys and Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast, Grenada School District Learning Quilt, Boys and Girls Clubs of Central MS, Public Policy, and St. Rose Revitalizing the Recovery.

Central office staff maintains daily contact with regional university staff.  Regional university staff, in turn, maintains daily contact with school site supervisors and members.  Staff makes regular site visits to school service sites and address issues and concerns on an as needed basis either at the school site or when members are at the university center for training.  Members, site supervisors and program staff receive up to date program information and complete monthly service timesheets and reports via the password-protected section of the program website.  ARM contracts with the America Learns website to provide an extensive data base of tutoring strategies for members available at www.americalearns.net and also provides weekly feedback to staff concerning progress toward performance measures and other information needed for program evaluation and continuous improvement.

Member service sites are selected based on need- such as academic deficiencies and need for tutorial assistance as well as poverty level and percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch.  School sites must also be able to fund a cash match and provide quality oversight for the members.  Several schools select former members who have become certified teachers or teacher assistants to be the site supervisor, based on their knowledge of the program and success as a member. Schools complete a program application which clearly specifies the expectations of the sites as well as the service the program provides for the sites.  The school site application can be viewed at www.americareadsms.org.  Most of the sites are public schools having sound instructional and fiscal infrastructure.  Relationships

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with current and past school sites are excellent; many sites have partnered since 1998 when the program started. Sites are monitored at least monthly, meetings are held twice a year for site supervisors and principals, and an orientation is conducted at the start of the year as well as an end of year training and service celebration. School service sites proudly display banners, mission signs, planner/manual, and other program and national service materials with the AmeriCorps and ARM logos. ARM strives to ensure that all members and school personnel (and parents and community members who come into the schools), regardless of region or school site, understand the importance of AmeriCorps and their role in national service. We may be separated by distance, but not by mission.

2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STAFF

The program is centrally administered at IHL in the Office of Academic and Student Affairs. IHL is led by a Commissioner who reports to a Governor-appointed Board of Directors made up of a diverse statewide group that meets monthly. The ARM central office has four full-time staff: State Director, Training Director, Finance Director, and Special Projects Director. The ARM State Director reports to the Assistant Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs. The program is implemented regionally at five universities (sixth region proposed in this application).

ASU supports 90 members with a full-time Regional Coordinator, two full-time Member Field Support Specialists, a Special Projects Coordinator, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. MSU supports 90 members with a full-time Regional Coordinator, two full-time Member Field Support Specialists, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. JSU and USM each support 50 members with a full-time Regional Coordinator and a full-time Member Field Support Specialist. DSU supports 50 members with a full-time Regional Coordinator, a full time Member Field Support Specialist, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. The additional staff person at DSU provides administrative support that is not provided through the host university site because the DSU regional office is located at the Center for Economic and Community Development which is housed off of the main campus as a stand-alone center. The proposed sixth region at the University of Mississippi would have one full-time Regional

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Coordinator and will be housed in the Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction.

In-kind staff support is provided through IHL's Department of Finance and Administration. University in-kind staff support is provided through each university's Sponsored Programs Office as well as their Finance Office.

Program Directors, Coordinators, and Field Support Specialists all have Master's Degrees in education or a related field. Several are former classroom teachers and administrators with years of school-based experience. Five staff are former ARM AmeriCorps members who earned their college degrees with the help of the AmeriCorps education award before joining the program as staff. The average staff tenure with the program is six years.

Staff development is ongoing, including guest speakers and trainers at state staff meetings, staff development provided by MCVS throughout the year, workshops and trainings sponsored by partnering universities as well as the Office of Academic Affairs at IHL, the annual State Reading Association conference, and regional and national AmeriCorps trainings and conferences. Staff performance appraisals are conducted annually and specific training needs are addressed for individual staff through this process. Finally, all staff participates in the national service listserv as well as the state MCVS listserv to remain current in program-related news and information.

3. PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT OR IMPROVEMENT

Assessment of internal systems is on-going, with multiple components. Specific assessment activities include:

*Monthly review of all fiscal reimbursement records by ARM Regional Coordinator, regional university finance office, ARM State Finance Director, IHL grants and contracts office, and MCVS finance personnel.

*Annual staff performance appraisals.

*Bi-monthly regional reports to assess regional progress related to member retention, members on track with hours, sound financial/budget management and reimbursement reporting, training evaluations by

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members, frequency and quality of school and member site visits, ability to meet deadlines, collection of cash and in-kind match, progress toward meeting the program's performance measures, relationships/collaborations with schools and communities, and member files.

*Bi-annual statewide program evaluations completed by members, partnering school staff, and other key stakeholders.

*Annual meetings with university and IHL financial and grants management staff to continue to build strong relationships with other stakeholders and to seek feedback for continuous program improvement.

*Bi-annual meetings with school site supervisors, principals, and school superintendents for feedback and to strengthen relationships.

*Bi-annual monitoring visits of regional offices including checking member files by both MCVS and central office IHL ARM staff.

*Annual state audit of program fiscal and member records to ensure compliance.

   Regular feedback is also provided to ARM AmeriCorps members.  Program staff conducts regular monitoring visits to school sites and staff also maintains daily contact with members and site supervisors through email and phone communications.  Formal member performance evaluations are conducted twice a year including a member self-evaluation, site supervisor evaluation of the member, and program staff evaluation of the member.  Members also receive monthly service-hour reports to keep them informed of target hours and their progress towards 1700 hours.

4.  PLAN FOR EFFECTIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

   Technical assistance is provided to the program in the following ways:

*Fiscal - IHL and university fiscal staff, independent auditors, MCVS fiscal staff, consultants, Corporation training

*Programmatic - consultants, network of program directors and MCVS program director's training, MS Department of Education, Barksdale Reading Institute, MS Teachers Center, Corporation trainings

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School personnel attend orientation training and a mid year and end of year evaluation meeting. They are also invited to member trainings and team leader trainings. Results of member surveys help staff design a training calendar for the Corps based on their unique needs; however, in general, the training covers all aspects of AmeriCorps and program requirements and rules, performance measures, tutor training, life after AmeriCorps, volunteer recruitment and community capacity building, professional skills, citizenship and civic engagement, and national service days and community service project planning and implementation. ARM members utilize the America Learns website to indicate training needs, as well as, assistance needed in performing service obligations. Regular monthly site visits are made by program staff to school sites.

B. SOUND RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS AN ORGANIZATION

1. VOLUNTEER GENERATION AND SUPPORT

For the 2008-2009 program year, ARM members recruited 26,465 volunteers, who served 135,014 hours, valued at $2,734,033.50, as calculated by the 2008 Independent Sector Volunteer Hourly Value of $20.25 per hour. These projects (five national service days and a multitude of local and school-sponsored projects) benefited 103,814 people. Recruited volunteers are local residents who return year after year to assist member teams, schools, and students with local projects that meet local needs. ARM members receive training in volunteer recruitment and then recruit parents, students, school staff, local agencies and businesses, and others to join them in service. Additionally, former members continue to serve by returning to the service site as volunteers, supporting the efforts of the active member teams.

For the current program year, AR members have recruited 4,205 volunteers, who served 16,484 hours, valued at $333,801, as calculated by the 2008 Independent Sector Volunteer Hourly Value of $20.25 per hour. Member teams have implemented one national service day project for Make a Difference Day which benefitted 51,650 people.

Members recruit community volunteers to provide support of school activities, particularly those involved with parents and families such as the Parent-Teacher Association and Parent Education

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Centers.  Most schools have a school "Volunteer Coordinator" on their payroll.  Rather than duplicate the school's efforts, members assist this person to make sure that volunteers are properly screened, trained, supported, and recognized for their contributions.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

As previously stated, ARM staff have served as mentors for staff of new AmeriCorps programs.  In all five regions and the central office, ARM staff serves in leadership positions with other community agencies including, PTA Vice President; Parents for Public Schools Leadership Institute participant, mentors to beginning Higher Education Doctoral students; President, Mississippi Community Development Group; MS District Assemblies of God Disaster Response Team, First Book Advisory Board member, DSU Gender Studies Group member, President, church-sponsored organization; youth summer camp counselor; Institutional Representative, Women in Higher Education- MS Network (WHEM); Treasurer, Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. local chapter; Governor's State Inter-Agency Coordinating Council for Early Interventions; IHL Commissioner Search Advisory Committee; and Founder/Recording Secretary, Mississippi Jazz Foundation.

3.  SUCCESS IN SECURING MATCH RESOURCES

ARM generates cash match from partnering school districts.  When recruiting new school districts, the match requirement is clearly communicated. Schools submit member request forms and site applications indicating their ability to meet the match requirement.  For the current grant cycle, ARM has collected 100% of cash and in-kind match from school partners each year, and is on track for this program year, despite budget cuts.  During the current program year, with notification of extremely deep cuts, ARM is closely monitoring the collection process.  Correspondence was sent to school district partners expressing our consciousness of their challenges.  The letter was a good faith effort to encourage schools to maintain tutoring services that reflect their commitment to strong and consistent academic instruction.

ARM realizes that budget cuts to school districts that are already economically distressed can mean

challenges with maintaining partnerships.  For this reason, ARM requested an alternative match in its 2009-2010 continuation application, requesting 31% match vs. the 42% required for a program in its 8th year.  This would consider the Program Location for ARM by the location of school district partners and not the location of the program's legal applicant.  On December 15, 2009, ARM was notified that the alternative match percentage was granted at 31% and, if ARM is refunded, it will take effect in the 2010 - - 2011 program year. The most immediate affect of the alternative match will be less of a burden on school districts to generate and document in-kind match.  However, ARM desires to also reduce the cash match collected from school partners so that less of the program's grantee share depends on the already distress districts.

   In sum, America Reads-Mississippi has a proven track record of program and fiscal strength including:

*fully recruited each year with expansion from 200 to 350 full-time members;

*waiting list each year of schools and potential members;

*success in meeting all, and exceeding most, performance measures;

*strong and long history of partnerships with parents, schools, universities, state agencies, community groups, faith-based organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders;

*collection of 100% of cash and in-kind match each year, with clean annual fiscal and program audits; and

*more than tripled the number of school partners and key stakeholders.

C. SUCCESS IN SECURING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

1. COLLABORATION

   ARM has also begun cultivating partnerships with community agencies to generate programmatic and fiscal support.  Currently, the JSU region has secured a partnership with Stewpot Community Services and Jackson Public Schools (JPS).  The community center provides after-school tutoring for some JPS students and agreed to fund the cash match for AmeriCorps members, who would continue to

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serve full-time during the day at the school but would serve in the community center's after-school program.  This partnership is a win-win on all fronts.  The school district was relieved of the financial match obligation but maintained the services provided by ARM members.  The community center received qualified, trained tutors who were familiar with their student's academic instruction plan and could continue working with them beyond the school day.

These new partnerships have the potential to extend beyond the schools and into the community where lasting impact can occur, even beyond the presence of federal funds.  Each of ARM's current regions is seeking to develop at least one similar partnership for the 2010-2011 program year, increasing these formal partnerships from one to five.  The conversation has already begun in the MSU region with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Starkville and Columbus, MS and in the USM region with the Literacy Institute at USM.

2. LOCAL FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the ARM grantee share is made up of in-kind contributions.  University partners at Alcorn State University and Jackson State University provide in-kind for personnel expenses.  All partnering university sites, school sites, and ARM's legal applicant all provide in-kind for space usage.  Additionally, in-kind for member supervision is also provided through the time committed to the program by school site supervisors.  In-kind staff support is provided through IHL's Department of Finance and Administration.  University in-kind staff support is provided through each university's Sponsored Programs Office as well as their Finance Office.

ARM's proposed sixth region will expand the scope of in-kind to include member training.  The University of Mississippi (UM) has committed to waive the tuition fees for the twenty (20) EAO members to take a course in Reading Strategies to enhance their tutoring abilities.  These members are education majors attending UM through the ASPIRE program which offers classes in the evening and on weekends.  This will allow the members to serve full-time during the day as reading tutors. It will generate $25,440 in in-kind.

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3. WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

The community stakeholders in the ARM program include local school districts, the Mississippi Department of Education, IHL and the university partners, as well as community agencies such as the Red Cross, Stew Pot Community Services, and other local AmeriCorps programs.  These stakeholders have invested in the ARM program by providing training facilitation, community service opportunities for members, sharing resources and information, assisted with volunteer generation of college students, and help the program involved diverse populations in service.

**Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS

For PY 2010-2011, ARM received approval for an alternative match percentage of 31%.  ARM serves 33 of Mississippi's 82 counties.  ARM has successfully met the match percentage requirement each year, yet not without a consciousness of the burden to partnering districts.   ARM has an obligation to foresee the impact of this on our partnering school districts and those who may seek to partner in the future. Using Beale codes, local poverty and unemployment rates, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) evaluated ARM's request against the criteria to determine if an alternative match for the locations of the school districts was allowable. The evidence ARM provided revealed that 28 of the 33 counties met the Beale codes requirements to use the alternative match scale.  ARM will report grantee match at 33% for the 2010-2011 program year.

1. CORPORATION COST PER MEMBER SERVICE YEAR (MSY)

ARM has maintained a lower cost per member each year of the current grant cycle. For PY 09-10, the cost per member is $12,473, below the Corporation's Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY) of $12,600. The cost per member for PY 2010-2011 will be $12,995, below the Corporation's Cost Per Member Service Year of $13,000.

Figures from the 2008-2009 program year calculate the benefits to cost ratio as 3.88, by dividing the benefits ($16,959,910) by the costs ($4,365,705).  This means that the ARM program yields $3.88 in

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benefits for each Corporation (federal) dollar invested. The ARM rate of return is calculated as benefits minus costs divided by net benefits. In ARM's case it is $16,959,910 minus $4,365,705 = $12,594,205/16,959,910 giving ARM a rate of return of 74.3%--an excellent rate of return!

2. DIVERSE NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the ARM grantee share is made up of in-kind contributions. University partners at Alcorn State University and Jackson State University provide in-kind for personnel expenses. All partnering university sites, school sites, and ARM's legal applicant all provide in-kind for space usage. Additionally, in-kind for member supervision is also provided through the time committed to the program by school site supervisors. In-kind staff support is provided through IHL's Department of Finance and Administration. University in-kind staff support is provided through each university's Sponsored Programs Office as well as their Finance Office.

ARM's proposed sixth region will expand the scope of in-kind to include member training. The University of Mississippi (UM) has committed to waive the tuition fees for the twenty (20) EAO members to take a course in Reading Strategies to enhance their tutoring abilities. These members are education majors attending UM at the Desoto Campus which offers classes in the evening and on weekends. This will allow the members to serve full-time during the day as reading tutors. It will generate $25,440 in in-kind.

Partnering school districts fund a $4,230 cash match for each stipended ARM member. One hundred percent (100%) of the cash match has been collected since 1998 with proper documentation. State in-kind support is additionally provided by the value of site supervisor time and the value of space ARM members use for tutoring. One hundred percent (100%) of the in-kind match has been collected since 1998 with proper documentation.

3. DECREASED RELIANCE ON FEDERAL SUPPORT

ARM is committed to seeking a more diverse funding base for long-term sustainability. The regional university ARM advisory councils and the state ARM advisory council are charged with finding other

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sources of funding and the means to ensure long-term program sustainability.  ARM is also working

with the IHL Public Relations Director to develop an impact campaign to use to generate funding and

support.   The impact campaign will highlight student academic success leading to future academic

pursuits and improved quality of life and contributions to society of AmeriCorps members.  The state of

the nation's economy has made it difficult at this time to request funding from other state sources such

as IHL and the Department of Education.  ARM maintains support from local school districts and not-

for-profit, independent owned childcare providers, as well as other community agencies.

4.  BUDGET ADEQUACY

    The budget was carefully designed to properly support the ARM program while still keeping the cost

per member down.  The budget includes adequate funding for the following key components of an

AmeriCorps program's budget:

-staff salaries, fringe, travel, and training;

-member living allowance and support costs;

-member recruitment, training, recognition, travel, supplies, and materials;

-expenses associated with the program's performance measures;

-program equipment and supplies;

-contractual and consultant services; and

-administrative costs.

    This budget is directly linked to the program's outcomes which are as follows: tutoring students for

improved academic performance; recruiting volunteers to strengthen schools and communities; and

assisting AmeriCorps members in completing their service hours, preparing for educational and

professional pursuits, and developing a life-long ethic of service.

**Evaluation Summary or Plan**

On-going evaluation is an important part of the America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) program enabling

the program to make continuous improvement as needed. The most recent independent evaluation (PY

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2008-2009) is attached, conducted by the Center for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) at the University of Mississippi.   The evaluation is comprised of reading gain data from two sources:  pre- and post-assessments for ARM tutored students from eight randomly selected school sites and Mississippi Curriculum Test, 2nd Edition (MCT2) data.   The evaluation report also includes program generated self-assessment in the areas of program effectiveness, volunteer generation, member development, and cost effectiveness.

If funded, ARM will continue the contractual agreement with CERE to conduct the program evaluation to assess Reading gain for this grant cycle, resulting in some longitudinal data to report for performance measure outcomes.

**Amendment Justification**

N/A

**Clarification Summary**

2011-2012 PROGRAMMATIC AND BUDGET CLARIFICATIONS

1. Reduce the funding level, MSYs slots to reflect 2010 levels: $4,546,326 and 350 Slots

The ARM program has reduced the federal budget request to level funding.  The new federal share request is $4,546,305 with these changes being reflected in the budget narrative.  The program originally requested level service slots of 350 slots.

2. Please combine all lodging, per diem/meals and travel for a given training into one line item.

The ARM program has combined the budget items by event/programmatic item.

3. Please verify that the criminal history checks conducted for members and staff will include an FBI fingerprint check in addition to the state registry check and the NSOPR.

The ARM program has included language in the budget narrative to verify the full criminal history check including an FBI fingerprint check, the state registry check and the NSOPR.

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4. Education Award Only (EAO) Members Receiving Liability Coverage

All ARM AmeriCorps members (Stipend and EAO) receive liability coverage in accordance with the AmeriCorps Provisions and Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service Contractual Agreement. EAO members are covered during the regular school day by the partnering school district where they serve. However, during after school tutoring and service hours, service projects and member training on university campuses, the members are covered by the program at a reduced rate. EAO member coverage costs $6 per month, less than the full coverage received by full-time stipend members (who are not covered by the school district) which is $12 per month. PLEASE NOTE: EAO member liability coverage is NOT FUNDED WITH FEDERAL FUNDS. The coverage is funded 100% through Grantee funds.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASURES - Please remove applicant development measures that do not reflect the program's primary member activity.

The ARM program has removed the After School Homework Help, Volunteer Recruitment, and Member Training and Development performance measures.

2010-2011 BUDGET CLARIFICATIONS

1. Please confirm that no staff listed on the budget will engage in fundraising. This confirmation is needed because all staff are on the grant at 100% utilization and fundraising is not an allowable grant expense.

RESPONSE: All America Reads -- Mississippi program staff, whose time is 100% charged to the grant,

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are not permitted to engage in any fundraising activities, during normal work hours. In addition to this, no fundraising activities can be charged to the AmeriCorps grant. The budget narrative reflects 100% usage.

CLARIFICATION STATEMENT ADDED TO BUDGET NARRATIVE: This position does not engage in fundraising activities.

2. Please provide cost basis for all trips (including travel to CNCS sponsored meetings).

RESPONSE: ITEMIZED COSTS ADDED TO BUDGET NARRATIVE

Travel to CNCS-Sponsored Meetings: estimated itemized costs include: Airline Ticket: 1ticket @ $611 = $611; Meals: 5 days @ $46/day = $230; Lodging: 4 nights @ $234 = $936; Registration: 1 staff @ $175 = $175; Airport Parking: 4 nights @ $12 = $48; Total=$2,000

3. Please justify the mileage rate of $ .55 which is greater than the federal rate. Otherwise, reduce to $.50.

RESPONSE: Mileage rates ON ALL TRAVEL LINE ITEMS for mileage have been changed to $.50.

4. Please itemize separately and explain direct service supplies for members to tutor and mentor students, national service days, etc.

RESPONSE: REVISED LINE ITEMS TO SEPARATE COSTS:

DIRECT SERVICE SUPPLIES FOR MEMBERS TO TUTOR STUDENTS during the day and during after school/extended day. Supplies include items such as paper, glue, scissors, dictionaries, construction paper, sentence strips, reading games, etc. (350 members x $50 = $17,500)

b. DIRECT SERVICE SUPPLIES FOR MEMBERS TO CONDUCT NATIONAL SERVICE AND LOCAL PROJECTS. ($1,250 x 7 projects - $8,750)

5. Please remove program staff gear.

RESPONSE: The budget has been adjusted to reflect the removal of program staff gear.

6. Please explain ACT Work Keys Test and Scoring costs.

RESPONSE: To meet the No Child Left Behind requirements for tutoring programs, the MS Department

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of Education approved proficiency test (ACT WorkKeys) is administered at local universities and community colleges to potential members with less than the required two years of college. The fee is $50 per test and includes scoring.

LANGUAGE ADDED TO BUDGET NARRATIVE: ACT WorkKeys Test and Scoring (MDE approved proficiency test): To meet NCLB standards for tutors, test given to new stipended members without two years of college- 100% Cash Match: (23% of Corps = 81 members) x $50 each

7. Please justify what appear to be excessive office supply costs.

RESPONSE: As a statewide program, ARM is implemented out of six regional offices located on university campuses throughout the state with the central office positioned at the MS Institutions of Higher Learning. Supplies have been budgeted to support the administration of the program at all seven locations for a twelve month period. Costs are based on the number of members and service sites supported by the regional offices.

LANGUAGE ADDED TO BUDGET NARRATIVE: Office supplies for administration of state/regional decentralized offices based on number of members/school service sites supported.(paper, pens, printer cartridges, software)

8. Please explain the consultant costs for ongoing program evaluation. Please include the costs for consultants only in this section. Member training costs should be included in the member training section.

RESPONSE: This expense has been moved to member training. It has been determined that all activities provided by this vendor constitute member training.

9. Please explain the training materials and supplies for staff meetings and other staff trainings.

RESPONSE: ARM conducts state staff meetings and regional program meetings to ensure effective program management and dissemination of program information. During state staff meetings, ARM provides training and information for staff related to tracking progress on meeting performance measures, member tutoring, member management, program management and fiscal management.

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Since ARM is a decentralized program that is implemented from six regional offices located on public university campuses and at the MS Institutions of Higher Learning, supplies and materials are essential for each meeting. The program utilizes online meetings to reduce costs associated with face to face meetings.

REVISED LINE ITEMS TO SEPARATE COSTS:

a. GoTo Meetings (online webinars): $486/flat rate for 1year of

on-line meeting services

b. Training materials and supplies for state staff meetings related to managing member activities, volunteer recruitment, fiscal oversight, & professional dev. (i.e. books, videos, and publications)

Materials for 21 staff x $40.90 = $859

10. Please provide justification for space allocation used by members as a 100% match in-kind contributed to the program.

RESPONSE: The 100% match in-kind refers to the type of match, specifically, 100% in-kind and not cash.  The school districts throughout the state provide space for members to tutor students during the day and during after school.  Members usually share this space with a teacher or a designated space will be provided just for the members. Documentation for space in-kind match is calculated using the fair-market rental analysis and is submitted in a letter from a realtor.

11. Please verify that education award only members will be provided health insurance.

RESPONSE: ARM insures health insurance for EAO members is provided by their respective school district or agency. This requirement is part of the Memorandum of Agreement with each partnering school district/agency.

LANGUAGE ADDED TO BUDGET NARRATIVE- MEMBER SUPPORT COSTS: 87 EAO members -- health care for these members is provided by school service sites

2010-2011 PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATIONS

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1. Please explain the roles and activities of the Education Award Only members. How are they the same or different from the roles of other members?

RESPONSE: The Education Award Only (EAO) ARM members are different from Stipended ARM members in the following ways:

a. EAO ARM AmeriCorps members are assistant teachers who are paid by school districts or not-for-profit educational agencies to provide academic support for students. Stipended AmeriCorps members (SAM) receive a living allowance from the AmeriCorps grant, as well as health/liability coverage and childcare (if eligible).

b. Because EAO members are paid by the school district, the EAO member is allowed to serve as a substitute teacher but he/she does not count these hours on the AmeriCorps timesheet. Regional program staff review timesheets monthly to ensure substitute teacher is not counted.

c. EAO members only receive liability coverage from the AmeriCorps grant.

All ARM members (SAM and EAO) perform the same member activities which include: one-on-one and small group tutoring, after school tutoring, planning and implementing service projects, conducting citizenship and civic engagement activities with students, and attending member orientation and regular trainings.

2. Please remove program coordination duties from the role of Team Leader. It should be the role of program staff to coordinate team activities, projects, conduct team meetings, and collect program info and reports.

RESPONSE: ARM program staff at the central and regional offices coordinates team activities and projects, and conducts team meetings during school site visits.  However, with 85 school service sites across the state, it is imperative that one member at each school site function as the main team contact person with which program staff communicates and the on-site supervisor collaborates to schedule team meetings, organize local and national service day team projects, and ensure that all programmatic information is submitted accurately and on time.  All ARM members are directly supervised by an on-

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site supervisor who oversees the coordination of these activities. Team Leaders do not operate as a substitute for the on-site supervisor or for program staff, but as a peer liaison for communications.

3. Please explain how the program meets all of the tutoring requirements (see § 2522.900-2522.940 and the Serve America Act).

RESPONSE: ARM meets all of the CNCS tutoring requirements as follows: 2522.900) The primary goal of ARM tutoring is to increase student academic achievement in reading.  ARM members plan and conduct one-on-one and small group tutoring sessions based on the students' academic need.  ARM members meet regularly with the classroom teacher to discuss the tutoring needs and design tutoring plans; 2522.910) ARM members meet the basic qualifications to serve as a tutor based on the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires the member to have two years of college or pass the State approved proficiency test for Assistant Teachers (in Mississippi, this is the ACT WorkKeys Test) and ARM members successfully complete pre-service orientation, tutor training, and in-service member trainings; 2522.930) the ARM program maintains proficiency test documentation in the member file for each member who takes the ACT WorkKeys Test and documentation of earned college hours and completed college degrees for members with higher educational attainments; and 2522.940) ARM meets the requirements for programs in which AmeriCorps members serve as tutors. Selection and qualification criteria are provided for members in the member application, program manual and member contract. Measures and tools to assess student progress are identified in the program performance measures and documented in the program manual, school service site application, and school district memorandum of agreement.  The program certifies that tutoring curriculum and member tutor training are composed of high-quality, research-based content as both are conducted with materials designed by the Mississippi Department of Education and other literacy professionals.  Members are supervised by principals, classroom teachers, reading specialists, or other educational professionals, each of whom signs a site supervisor contract.

4. Please explain the member role in member recruitment and selection. How much time are members

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engaged in this program management role?

RESPONSE: Recruitment is primarily done locally, by school site personnel and program staff with input from parents, community members, and ARM members.  ARM AmeriCorps members are involved in the recruitment process by encouraging others to apply and by serving on selection committees at school service sites.  The member recruitment process formally begins in mid May and continues through mid-September, with many ARM AmeriCorps teams organizing information sessions in May during AmeriCorps Week.  During this time, selected ARM members devote approximately fifteen hours (10 hrs for AmeriCorps Week planning and implementation and 5 hrs for meetings/interviews/selection) to the recruitment and selection process.

5. Please confirm that the program ensures that members are US citizens or lawful permanent residents prior to selecting them for service.

RESPONSE: The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning coordinates the monthly living allowance payment process for ARM stipended AmeriCorps members.  Through this process, the US citizenship or lawful permanent residency is confirmed using e-Verify for each prospective stipended member.  All prospective members, whether stipended or education award only, submit a birth certificate, social security card, and unexpired photo identification, all of which are maintained in the member file at the region program offices, as well as in the ARM central office.

6. Please describe your plans for, or evidence of, rewarding members and for demonstrating member satisfaction.

RESPONSE: In addition to the ARM Life After AmeriCorps Training and Service Celebration, designed to reward members for their service and help solidify their next steps, evidence of rewarding members and for demonstrating member satisfaction can be found in the results from member training and program evaluations. For the 2008-2009 program year, 97% of ARM members rated the trainings as excellent or good. The Service Celebration is described in detail on pages 19-20 in the Member Outputs and Outcomes section of the application narrative.  It should be noted that serving as an ARM member

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for a second year is not automatic.  Members must successfully complete the year, be in good standing

with the program and recommended by the school service site.  For the 2008-2009 program year, the

Corps of 350 included 177 first-year ARM members.  Of this number, 127, or 72% of first-year members,

returned as a second-year member for 2009-2010, further demonstrating member satisfaction and

evidence of being rewarded with the opportunity to continue to serve in ARM.

7. Please describe a well-designed plan or systems for organizational (as opposed to program) self-

assessment and continuous improvement.

RESPONSE: As legal applicant for the ARM program, the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

(IHL) conducts organizational self-assessment through daily tracking of grant activity by the Office of

Contracts and Grants; primary supervision and bi-annual staff performance appraisal by the Office of

Academic and Student Affairs; and submits to departmental and organizational audits.  All contracts

and grant applications are routed through the agency system for review by the Office of Contracts and

Grants, the Attorney General's Office, and the Commissioner's Office.  Additionally, the Board of

Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning meets monthly to review and assess current

organizational practices for Mississippi's higher education system, of which the ARM grant is a part,

having regional program offices on five (a sixth region is proposed in this application) pubic university

campuses. The System operates from a working strategic plan that is periodically reviewed and revised

for continuous improvement to serve Mississippi students and communities.

8. Please describe a reflection component to be added to your training or service activities to promote

and sustain post-service, an ethic of service and civic responsibility.

RESPONSE: The America Learns website is currently used to provide ARM members with regular and

ongoing opportunity for reflection.  The program generates reflection questions that ARM members

respond to via America Learns.  ARM members also complete an evaluation following each member

training session.  This feedback is used to revise member training and development and service project

activities, as needed to address member training or project planning needs; to develop Life After

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AmeriCorps training topics and tips for members; and to evaluate the effectiveness of member training.

For the 2010-11 program year, this process will continue and a training session for members on facilitating member reflection at the conclusion of service projects, will be added in conjunction with training on Planning Service Projects/Volunteer Recruitment.  Currently, two ARM alumni members serve as chapter leaders for AmeriCorps Alum chapters and regularly post photos of program events, share information about local projects, and encourage former members to continue to volunteer. ARM Alums who are currently working in partnering schools also assist with service projects, three former members are now service site supervisors, and five former ARM members are program staff members.

9. Performance Measurement: National Performance Measure

RESPONSE: ARM selected one area: Economic Opportunity for AmeriCorps Members

To equate the number of members (MSY) in this priority area, ARM will subtract the number of members WHO WE ENROLL WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE (AA OR HIGHER) FROM THE TOTAL 350 SLOTS. For example, PY 09-2010 250 members do not have a college degree (103 passed the ACT WorkKeys Test; 147 had 48 college hours); and 100 members have a college degree.  This will generate:

NPM #14 -- the number of AC members who have their high school diploma or equivalent but have not completed a college degree prior to their term of service;

ARM will track all 350 members to generate:

NPM #17 -- the number of members that complete a college within one year after finishing AmeriCorps.

**Continuation Changes**

Continuation Changes

    The following minimal changes are being proposed in this continuation application for program years 2 and 3.  The program has also provided updates on Member Enrollment, Rentention, and Success in Securing Community Support.

BUDGET AND MATCH-- PROPOSED CHANGE

These adjustments will apply to PY 2 and 3.

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PERSONNEL: In an effort to reduce program costs, the Administrative Assistant position that was vacated in Spring 2010 was deleted from the original grant budget narrative for this grant cycle. Program duties associated with this position were assigned to the remaining central office staff.  The majority of these duties have been assigned to the Assistant State Director, Special Projects Coordinator and the Finance Specialist.  Each staff member has undertaken the responsibilities of effectively managing the assigned fiscal tasks while continuing to manage the tasks and duties specific to their primary area. For this reason, the program has included a 3% increase for each of these positions. Additionally, two regional program staff members have received state-approved increases for educational attainment.

MEMBER SUPPORT COSTS: The ARM program has made the required budget adjustments for member living allowance, health insurance, and liability coverage for PY 2. Any increases required for PY 3 will be made as needed in the next continuation application.

For the 2010-2011 current program year, the ARM program has collected 96% of cash match and is submitting documentation monthly for site supervisor time and space in-kind. In-kind match collection data will be reported in the first progress report that is due in January 2011.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES - PROPOSED CHANGES

The program is proposing to opt into the National Performance Measures pilot to track and measure school day tutoring (Aligned - Outputs ED1, ED2, Intermediate Outcome ED5).

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT--PROPOSED CHANGES

Previous program years have concluded with an end of year,  statewide Life After AmeriCorps (LAA) Training and Service Celebration.  This training included sessions on pursuing higher education, continuing to serve (and joinng AmeriCorps Alums), starting a small business, and home ownership options.  This training serves as the culminating service reflection. In order to sufficiently fund the grantee share of member costs (related to the increased living allowance) for program years 2 and 3, this training is being changed from a statewide training to a regional training held at the end of the year at

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each of the ARM regional university centers.  The training topics mentioned above, including member

reflection, will be maintained.  For the current 2010-2011 program year, this end of year training will be

facilitated as a statewide training as indicated in the grant application and budget narrative.

VOLUNTEER GENERATION--UPDATED INFORMATION

For the 2009-2010 program year, ARM members recruited 23,796 volunteers, who served 59,813.79

hours, valued at $1,247,117.50 as calculated by the 2009 Independent Sector Volunteer Hourly Value of

$20.85 per hour.  These projects (six national service days and a multitude of local and school-

sponsored projects) benefited 109,318 people. The figures for the number of volunteers recruited and

the number of volunteers hours served did not meet the target goals for the year.  The program

recognized in the final quarter that volunteer participation was declining.  The program is addressing

this for the new grant cycle by more closely projecting and tracking volunteer participation on a monthly

basis.  ARM members have received training on volunteer recruitment and are receiving assistance from

program staff through site visits.

For the current 2010-2011 program year, ARM members have recruited 9,183 volunteers, who served

18,349 hours, valued at $382,577, as calculated by the 2009 Independent Sector Volunteer Hourly Value

of $20.85 per hour.  Member teams have implemented two national service day projects for 911 Day of

Remembrance and Make a Difference Day which benefitted 19,574 people.  ARM members are receiving

training and support to recruit volunteers and implement national service days and local service projects

for the remainder of the program year, including MLK Day, Read Across America Day, Global Youth

Service Day, and AmeriCorps Week projects.

MEMBER ENROLLMENT--PROGRAM UPDATE

The ARM program has been 100% recruited for all previous program years and is 100% recruited for

the 2010-2011 program year. The program's recruitment period begins as early as March, five months

prior to the program start date.  This allows ample time for the program to meet with current school

partners to provide training on member recruitment.  ARM school partners recruit their own members

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so that the individuals serving in the schools are individuals the school has selected, based on

AmeriCorps and ARM eligibility requirements.  Program staff is very active in this process by reviewing

applications and conducting follow up interviews for recommended candidates to ensure that the best

suited applicants are selected to serve as AmeriCorps members.

MEMBER RETENTION--PROGRAM UPDATE

   For the 2009-2010 program year, ARM retained 88.4% or 312 members that completed the program

and received either a partial or full education award.  America Reads- Mississippi (ARM) has established

a new program policy in our on-going efforts to increase member retention.  This new policy requires all

members enrolled after September 15th to develop and implement a comprehensive "service plan of

action "demonstrating a distinct plan to be on track with service hours within 90 days. Program staff

will assist members in completing the service plan and will review the plans each month through

December to ensure that members are on track.  Getting members on track early increases member

satisfaction and confidence toward service, and reduces the stress and pressure that normally leads to

resignation and or termination. The program plans to continue this format for PY 2 and 3.

SUCCESS IN SECURING COMMUNITY SUPPORT--UPDATED INFORMATION

   The ARM program plans to include two new partnerships: SCHOLASTIC Books (planning in PY 2

and implementation in PY 3); and the ARM Volunteer Network (planning PY 1 and implementation in

PY 2 and 3).

SCHOLASTIC PARTNERSHIP

  The program is actively pursuing partnership/sponsorship opportunities with Scholastic Books.  The

Scholastic initiative is called REAL (Read, Excel, Achieve, Lead) and it trains and places community

members in classrooms to share their experiences with Reading--who taught them to read; what they

like most/least about reading while growing up; and what their favorite books are.  The initiative

provides a book for the mentor and each student, along with discussion guides for both. The semester-

long initiative includes 4 reading sessions so each student in each class will receive 4 books to start

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his/her own personal library. ARM and Scholastic are working on a reduced or no cost agreement for the book sets. The Scholastics representative for Mississippi is assisting with locating local sponsors to fund the project. ARM will begin with existing school partners (82 schools) to engage ARM members as well as recruited volunteers as mentors to facilitate reading sessions.

ARM VOLUNTEER NETWORK

ARM has contacted ten local businesses to determine their interest in an employee volunteer program where ARM would provide information on local ARM-sponsored and national service program-sponsored service opportunities. Local businesses would give their employees time away to volunteer in an ARM school or with an ARM community project. The ARM state director is a member of the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) Cross Stream Council and will provide information to the Council to coordinate the volunteer efforts across streams of service. During the 2010-2011 program year, ARM will develop a survey for each business to complete to ascertain which businesses currently have an employee volunteer program, the number of hours business are willing to allow employees to volunteer, ways the business can help promote literacy awareness, and which businesses currently have a literacy program or where the business sponsors literacy/education programs at elementary schools. The results of this survey will be included in the 2nd progress report for the 2010-2011 program year.

# Performance Measures

**SAA Characteristics**

☐ AmeriCorps Member Population - None  ☒ Geographic Focus - Rural

☒ Geographic Focus - Urban  ☐ Encore Program

**Priority Areas**

☒ Education  ☐ Healthy Futures

*Selected for National Measure* ☒  *Selected for National Measure* ☐

☐ Environmental Stewardship  ☐ Veterans and Military Familie

*Selected for National Measure* ☐  *Selected for National Measure* ☐

☐ Economic Opportunity  ☐ Other

*Selected for National Measure* ☐  *Selected for National Measure* ☐

☐ Disaster Services

*Selected for National Measure* ☐

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas  350

**Service Categories**

Tutoring and Child (Elementary) Literacy

Other Education

Community-Based Volunteer Programs

# National Performance Measures

| Priority Area: | Education |
| --- | --- |

**Strategy to Achieve Results**

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)
350 full-time AmeriCorps members will provide one-on-one and small group reading tutoring during the school

day in approximately 85 high-poverty schools across Mississippi.

**Result: Intermediate Outcome**

Result.
350 full-time AmeriCorps members will provide one-on-one and small group reading tutoring during the school

day in approximately 85 high-poverty schools across Mississippi.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED5: Students w/ improved academic performance.

Target : 80% of ARM-tutored students in grades 1-3 will improve by 1 reading grade level based on

reading proficiency on the school-selected Reading Assessment.

Target Value:        2520

Instruments: school-selected Reading Assessment

PM Statement: 350 America Reads-Mississippi AmeriCorps members will tutor one-on-one and in small groups 3,500 low-academic achieving first through third grade students each school day (10 per member on average per day) with 80% of tutored students improving by 1 reading grade level based on reading proficiency on the school-selected Reading Assessment.

**Result: Output**

Result.
3,150 (or 90%) of tutored students will complete participation

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED2: Number of students who complete an AC ED program.

Target : 3,150 (or 90%) of tutored students will complete participation. The students however will not

necessarily be the same from year to year.

Target Value:        3150

Instruments: America Learns online weekly survey, classroom teacher evaluation

PM Statement: 350 America Reads-Mississippi AmeriCorps members will complete tutoring activities with at least 3,150 (or 90%) low-academic achieving first through third students.

**Result: Output**

Result.
3,500 students (on average) will be tutored each school day

Indicator: ED1: Students who start in an AC ED program.

Target : 3,500 students tutored each school day.  The students however will not necessarily be the

same from year to year.

Target Value:        3500

Instruments: America Learns online weekly survey, classroom teacher evaluation

PM Statement: 350 America Reads-Mississippi AmeriCorps members will tutor 3,500 low-academic achieving first through third grade students, one-on-one and in small groups, each school day (10 students per member per day).

# Required Documents

| **Document Name** | **Status** |
|---|---|
| Evaluation | Already on File at CNCS |
| Labor Union Concurrence | Not Applicable |