

**APPLICANT FEEDBACK - Program Design**

2011 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

<b>Legal Applicant:</b> Arkansas Literacy Councils, Inc., Arkansas Reads	<b>Application ID:</b> 11AC123753
<b>Below are the comments from each External Peer Reviewer that read and evaluated the application. While Reviewers did engage in discussion about their evaluations, consensus was not required as part of their review. Therefore, there may be differing views in their feedback on the quality of the proposal.</b>	
<b>COMMENTS:</b> The applicant identifies a need for a large number of people that lack basic literacy skills, and details ways in which tutors can help. The applicant provides a clear strategy for recruitment of members. The applicant does not give a thorough description of member qualifications, only that the member must have a GED or high school diploma. The applicant has measurable outcomes that have been exceeded in past years.	
<b>COMMENTS:</b> The Arkansas Reads project develops a very clear link between the lack of adult literacy and its effect on numerous social issues such as the inability to understand the health care system, read food or prescription labels, fill out a job application, manage finances, retain employment, children are less prepared for school, increased participation in crime, inability to obtain a job that pays a living wage, and the legacy associated with families passing these traits to their children. The applicant cites relevant data from many sources that effectively describes the problem.  Arkansas Reads describes a clear plan of selecting AmeriCorps volunteers which are selected from the areas they serve by the local community literacy council boards and site directors. This is done to ensure that volunteers represent the diverse backgrounds of these areas. The applicant does provide specific outcomes in regard to the number of individuals within targeted groups to be served and the number of weekly hours of contact time (twelve) to be delivered. The applicant describes measurable outcomes for program goals, but is unclear in identifying the instrument to be used for evaluation. The applicant describes how AmeriCorps volunteers will be selected from the areas they serve by local boards and site directors. These volunteers will serve as role models and examples to the community members they serve. A clear set of selection criteria is used for screening volunteer applicants: required to have a high school diploma or GED; speak the language of those they serve; and race, age, gender, and volunteer background are all considerations. The applicant is unclear about the use of technology and the internet to increase their recruiting efforts.	
<b>COMMENTS:</b> The application is comprehensive in identifying and describing problems of illiteracy in the	

Arkansas community and the need within this targeted community to address the prescribed problem. The applicant does an effective job in utilizing citation to further support the need for service in the aforementioned community. The applicants recruiting process represents a process that will incorporate diversity and expertise in the provision of services by the volunteers. The applicant lacks full demonstration of the qualifications of the recruited members. The applicant provides projects to address outcomes that are measurable and obtainable by the provision of services identified. The applicant leaves some question as to the use of Census data and whether more current data could have been utilized. The use of educational data to support illiteracy trends was not provided.

**COMMENTS:** The applicant documents the compelling need for services to the adult population in Arkansas where it estimates that 400,000 of its residents lack basic literacy skills. The applicant further provides data to support its claims that adult literacy is a major problem for a large percentage of Arkansas residents many of whom have incomes below the poverty line, or live in the Mississippi River Delta where up to 1/3 of the residents have minimal literacy skills. The applicant is planning a year-long recruitment process and describes how it will recruit a diverse corps of members who are representatives of the target area and students served. It also includes specific details on the sources of prior recruitment efforts. The applicant provides data that demonstrates the effectiveness of its project design in past years where it appears that it has sometimes exceeded projected goals for student literacy, number of volunteers recruited and number of students served. The applicant's modified performance outcome program is tailored to accommodate its half-time approach to service delivery and the projected outcomes are consistent with the approach and outcome of prior year data as reflected elsewhere in the proposal. Some of the applicant's data is outdated and, as such, may not reflect current trends. For example, the applicant uses Census Data from 2000, U.S. Agriculture Data from 2008, and U.S. Education Department data from 1995-2000. The applicant does not fully demonstrate how it will ensure that members recruited meet the educational qualifications/specification requirements of this NOFA. The applicant only states that potential applicants must have a high school diploma.