

# Arkansas Imagination Library

## Case for Support





During the last 25 years, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has significantly influenced Arkansas's children. Arkansas was the fourth state in the nation to provide statewide access to free, age-appropriate books mailed to children ages 0 to 5.

In 1995, Dolly Parton, through the Dollywood Foundation, launched Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to benefit the children of her home county in East Tennessee. Dolly's vision was to foster a love of reading among her county's preschool children by providing them with the gift of a specially selected book each month. To date, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) mails free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to over 1.7 million children each month. These books are mailed directly to the homes of children, ages 0 to 5, in participating communities within the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the Republic of Ireland.

In 2002, local communities throughout Arkansas started county affiliates to deliver books in the natural state. By June 2016, local affiliates were delivering 16,700 books in 54 counties in Arkansas. In July 2017, Governor Asa Hutchinson provided a one-time gift to create the Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL), a statewide 501c3 nonprofit organization that works with local affiliates to expand the program. As a licensed partner of DPIL, ARIL's goal is to increase literacy in Arkansas by ensuring all young children across the state may participate in the Imagination Library. Over the past three years, ARIL has worked with local affiliates to grow the program from 54 to all 75 counties; increasing the number of children receiving books from 16,700 to over 47,000.

By providing books at no cost to families, the Imagination Library increases childhood literacy rates, fosters a love of books, and promotes a culture of reading among underserved families in high-risk communities of Arkansas.

Arkansas Imagination Library is a partner that aligns with the mission to support childhood literacy. Here is the ARIL case for support and proposal. We hope you find the data compelling and agree that a partnership is an excellent strategy to establish the importance of reading in homes, schools, and communities in Arkansas.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [cgreen@arimaginationlibrary.org](mailto:cgreen@arimaginationlibrary.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlotte Green".

Dr. Charlotte Green  
Executive Director

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# HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

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In 1995, Dolly Parton launched Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (an initiative of the Dollywood Foundation) to benefit the children of her home county in East Tennessee. Dolly's vision was to foster a love of reading among her county's preschool children by providing them with the gift of a specially selected book each month. To date, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) mails free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to over 1.7 million children each month directly to their home from birth to age five in participating communities within the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the Republic of Ireland. Dolly's homegrown effort is now a part of thousands of communities' early childhood strategies and is increasingly a vital part of educational policy for states, provinces, and territories.

In the United States, the Imagination Library has grown to reach children in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. State-wide coverage was established in Tennessee in 2004, North Carolina's in 2017, Ohio in 2019; Arkansas, Oklahoma, and West Virginia in 2020, and Delaware in 2021. In all other states, the program is available in communities where a local partner has teamed up with the Imagination Library. Those partners can be nonprofits, state agencies, school districts, or a public library system. Any child from 0 to 5 is eligible to enroll. Local partners are responsible for promoting their program, enrolling children who live in their geographical area, and securing funds to cover the cost of the books and shipping (\$25.20 per child per year).

In return, DPIL chooses, sources, and ships the books to all registered children; addressed to them, at no cost to the child's family. A panel of early childhood literacy experts, nicknamed Dolly's Blue Ribbon Panel, selects the age-appropriate books, which are organized around themes and concepts, and include two bilingual Spanish-English books per year. Audio and braille versions of the books are also available. The choices range from time-tested titles like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter to contemporary classics such as Newbery Medal winner *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Pena.

In 2002, local communities throughout Arkansas started county affiliates to deliver books in the natural state. By 2016, the local affiliates were delivering approximately 16,700 books each month to children in Arkansas. In July 2017, Governor Asa Hutchinson provided a one-time gift to create the Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL), a statewide 501c3 nonprofit organization that works with local affiliates to expand the program. As a licensed partner of DPIL, ARIL strives to increase literacy in Arkansas by ensuring all young children across the state may participate in the Imagination Library. Since 2017, ARIL worked with local communities and grew the program from 54 to all 75 counties; increasing the number of children receiving books from 16,700 to over 47,000, and getting quality books to children in rural communities that may not have a school or public library.

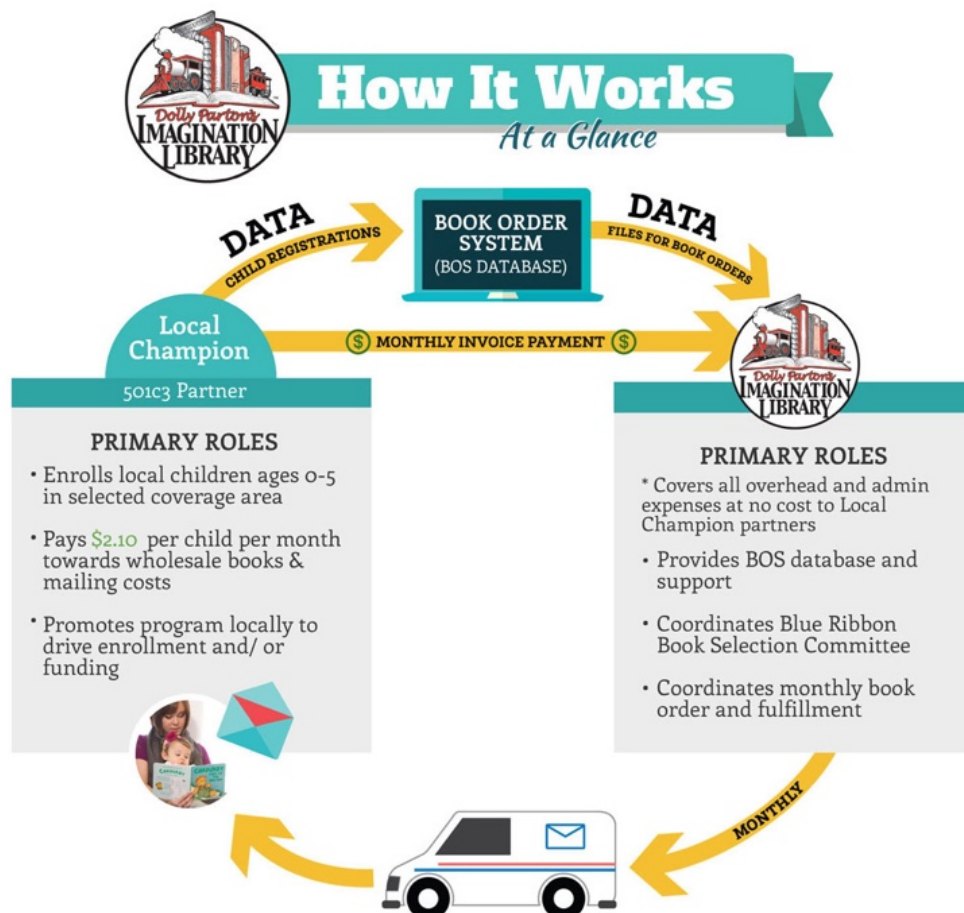
By providing books at no cost to families, the Imagination Library increases childhood literacy rates, fosters a love of books, and promotes a culture of reading among underserved families in high-risk communities of Arkansas.

# DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY – OVERVIEW: HOW THE IMAGINATION LIBRARY WORKS IN ARKANSAS

Each month, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) mails a high-quality, age-appropriate book to all registered children, addressed to them, at no cost to the child's family. Countless parents have shared how excited their child is when a new book arrives each month. Many groups and individuals work hard behind the scenes to make that special moment possible for each child.

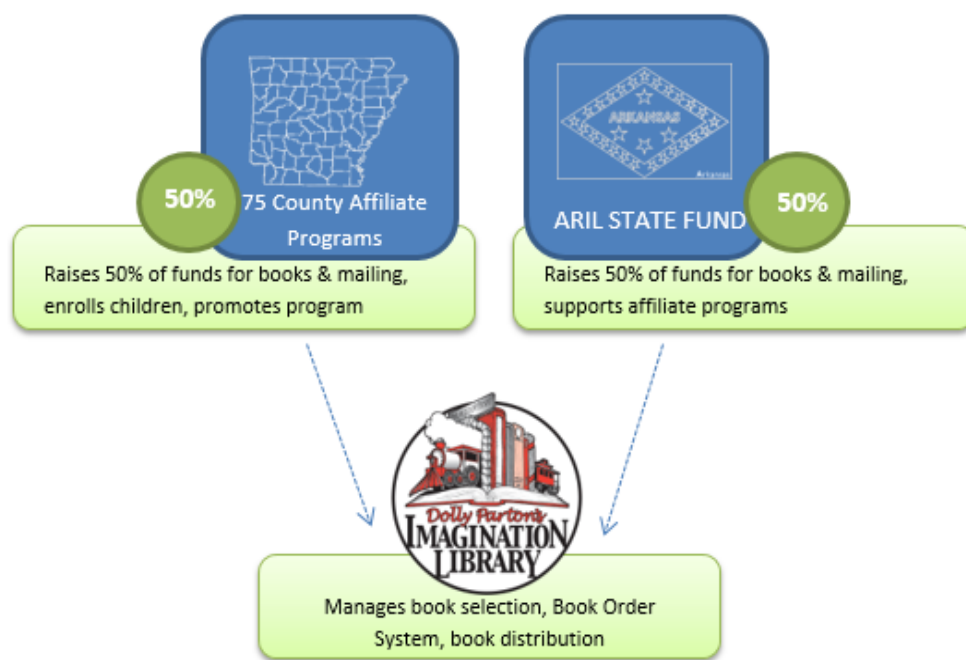
DPIL chooses, sources, and negotiates wholesale pricing for the books and shipping. DPIL also provides and manages a custom book order system for all affiliates, creating a foundation that makes the whole process work. This process makes the Imagination Library affordable and easy for communities to implement. The partnership with DPIL encourages community buy-in because local donations go directly to book purchases rather than administrative overhead.

Local affiliates are responsible for promoting the program, enrolling local children, and raising funds to cover half of the cost of books and shipping (\$25.20 per child per year). Imagination Library affiliates in Arkansas save approximately 90% in costs by running this direct mail book-gifting program. Affiliates are successful mainly through grassroots efforts by highly devoted volunteers who have seen the success of the Imagination Library over and over again. This is a graphic explaining the shared responsibilities.



Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) works with DPIL and the local county affiliates to provide support for the success of the programs in Arkansas. ARIL supports county affiliates through fundraising, marketing, matching dollar programs, relationship building, logistical support, community engagement, program promotion, communication of best practices, capacity building by providing trainings and managing resources. ARIL does not directly enroll children into the program. However, as a statewide organization, ARIL can access greater resources and apply for larger amounts of funding than local affiliates. In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, ARIL has funding from a federal grant that covers 50% of the cost of books for every affiliate, leaving local affiliates to fund the remaining 50% of expenses. Grant funds ensure that ARIL can help Arkansas affiliates continue intentional enrollment growth by reducing the financial burden at the local level.

Below is a chart further explaining the partnership between DPIL, ARIL, and county affiliates.



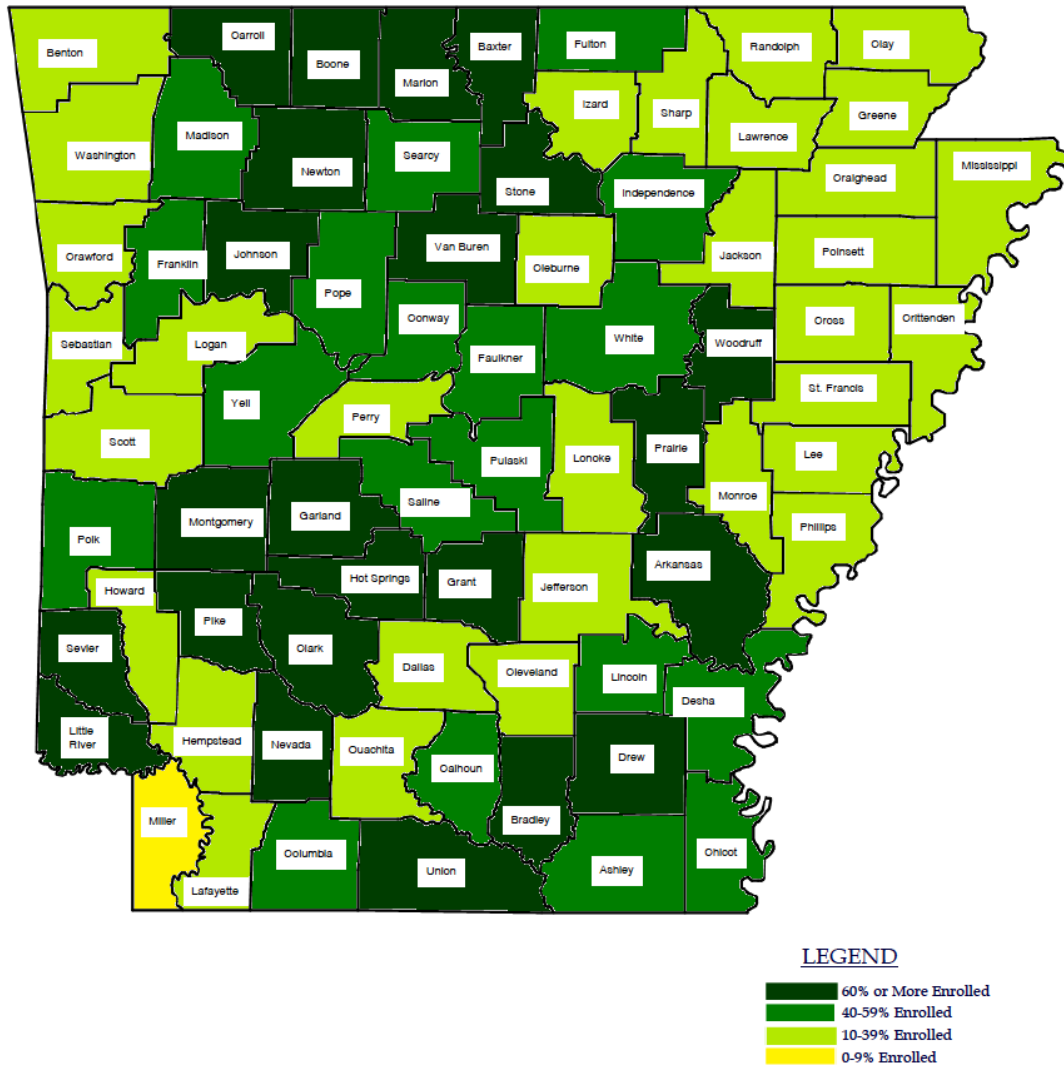
Our program's strength lies in the efficiency of this three-organization partnership. The program's simplicity makes it unique among other reading programs. Community leaders can easily partner with the program because of the structure and support that minimizes implementation cost. Parents and communities can understand the program, and become excited about bringing it to their communities. Its affordability, scalability, and demonstrated impact on student achievement makes the Imagination Library a sustainable program for communities to implement.

Today all 75 counties in Arkansas have local Imagination Library affiliates that champion their communities. Based on national research, a healthy program will serve a minimum of 60% of its 0-5 population. For Arkansas, that number is approximately 118,612 children under the age of five. Currently, Imagination Library is serving over 47,000 children in Arkansas.



The following is a map of coverage areas across Arkansas where children are currently able to register for the Imagination Library. The green counties represent areas where students living anywhere in the county are able to enroll. Shades reflect the percent of coverage within the county.

### Arkansas County Coverage Map



Local Arkansas affiliates are separate, individual 501c3 organizations or school districts in a community that desire to champion early childhood literacy through this program. These organizations are not limited to, but include, preschools, school districts, community foundations, chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, libraries, childcare facilities, literacy councils, junior leagues, foundations, United Way chapters, and other non-profit organizations.

ARIL continues to work with local affiliates to ensure all children in the state of Arkansas receive books by promoting literacy through various strategies. With three employees dedicated to working with all Arkansas county programs, ARIL provides fundraising and human resource support to local affiliates to help implement and manage the Imagination Library program in their area. Below is the detailed list of affiliates throughout the state of Arkansas that currently serve as the local affiliate champion in all 75 counties.

<b>County</b>	<b>Local Champion/Organization Name</b>
Arkansas	Imagination Library of Arkansas County
Ashley	Crossett Friends of the Library
Baxter	Imagination Library of Baxter County
Benton	United Way of Northwest Arkansas
Boone	Boone County Imagination Library
Bradley	Bradley County Friends of the Library
Calhoun	Hampton School District
Carroll	Carroll County Rotary Youth Literacy Foundation
Chicot	Rural Community Alliance
Clark	Rotary Club of Clark County
Clay	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Cleburne	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Cleveland	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Columbia	Magnolia Junior Charity League
Conway	United Way of Central Arkansas
Craighead	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Crawford	United Way of Fort Smith
Crittenden	Crossroads Coalition
Cross	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Dallas	Rotary Club of Fordyce
Desha	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Drew	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Faulkner	United Way of Central Arkansas
Franklin	United Way of Fort Smith
Fulton	Thayer Development & Improvement Organization, Inc.
Garland	Imagination Library of the Ouachitas
Grant	Kick Start Sheridan, Inc.
Greene	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Hempstead	Hope School District
Hot Spring	Hot Spring Imagination Library
Howard	Arkansas Preschool Plus
Independence	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Izard	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Jackson	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Jefferson	United Way of Jefferson County
Johnson	River Valley United Way
Lafayette	Indeependent Economic Development Council
Lawrence	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Lee	Crossroads Coalition
Lincoln	Southeast Arkansas Imagination Library
Little River	Ashdown Community Foundation, Inc



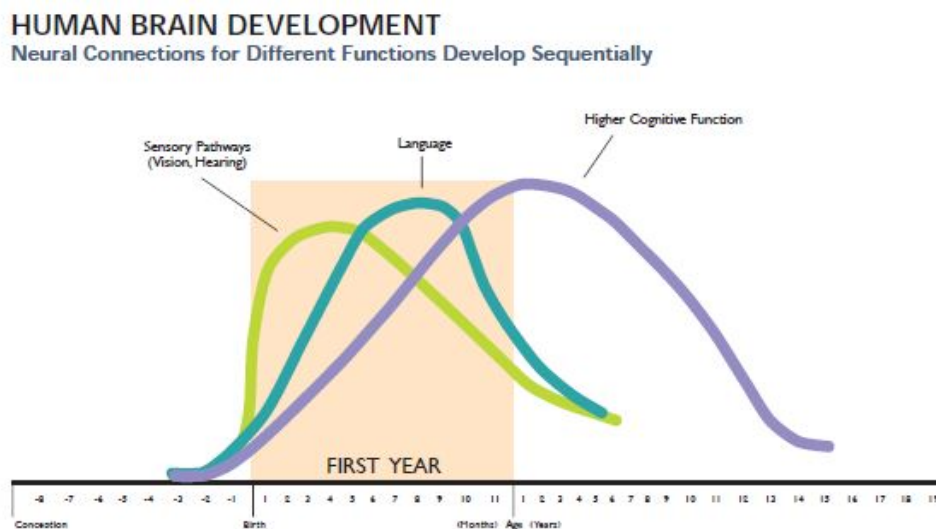
Logan	United Way of Fort Smith
Lonoke	Carlisle School District
Madison	United Way of Northwest Arkansas
Marion	Arkansas Preschool Plus - Marion County
Marion	Bull Shoals Lakeview Rotary Club
Miller	United Way of Texarkana
Mississippi	Crossroads Coalition
Mississippi (Blytheville Gosnell Area Only)	Blytheville Chamber of Commerce
Mississippi (Osceola Only)	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Monroe	Crossroads Coalition
Montgomery	Imagination Library of the Ouachitas
Nevada	Nevada County Imagination Library
Newton	Newton County Friends of the Library
Ouachita	Camden Fairview School District
Perry	United Way of Central Arkansas
Phillips	Crossroads Coalition
Phillips (Elaine Only)	Elaine Community Opportunity Seekers
Pike	Imagination Library of the Ouachitas
Poinsett	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Polk	Quality of Life Outreach
Pope	River Valley United Way
Prairie	Margaret Fisher Literacy Challenge
Pulaski	Pulaski County Imagination Library
Randolph	United Way of Northeast Arkansas
Saline	Imagination Library of Saline County
Scott	United Way of Fort Smith
Searcy	Searcy County School District
Sebastian	United Way of Fort Smith
Sevier	Southwest Arkansas Imagination Library
Sharp	United Way of North Central Arkansas
St. Francis	Crossroads Coalition
Stone	United Way of North Central Arkansas
Union	United Way of Union County
Van Buren	Van Buren County Reads
Washington (Greater Fayetteville)	Fayetteville Public Education Foundation
Washington (Greater Springdale)	United Way of Northwest Arkansas
White	Literacy Council of White County
White (Pangburn Only)	Pangburn School District
Woodruff	Margaret Fisher Literacy Challenge
Yell	River Valley United Way

# RESEARCH

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## Early Learning Research

Several decades of research demonstrate that positive early learning experiences help prepare children for kindergarten and later academic success. The human brain develops rapidly during the first few years of life. Research shows that 85% of a child's core brain development occurs before the age of three. This “wiring” shapes infants and toddlers’ ability to learn to read and think critically. Because of that fact, as early as age three, a child’s vocabulary can predict third-grade reading achievement. Recent studies have shown the importance of early reading, by connecting greater home reading during the prekindergarten period with later development of brain areas supporting mental imagery, narrative comprehension, and oral language skills (J. S. Hutton, 2015). Parents who read 1 picture book with their children every day provide their children with exposure to an estimated 78,000 words each a year. Cumulatively, over the 5 years before kindergarten, children from literacy-rich homes hear 1.4 million more words during storybook reading than children who are never read to (J. Logan, 2019). Early learning experiences also influence health, social, and economic outcomes. Below is a graph displaying the rapid growth of human brain development during the early stages of life.



However, poverty diminishes brain growth in these earliest years and half of all babies in the U.S. live at or near the poverty line. Many low-income infants and toddlers have limited exposure to early literacy and social-emotional skills. By age two, lower-income children are already behind their peers in listening, counting, and other skills essential to literacy. By age 5, a typical lower-class child recognizes nine letters of the alphabet, compared to 22 for a child from a middle-class family.

Young children whose parents read to them, tell stories, and sing songs become better readers and perform better in school. However, more than half of Arkansas children start Kindergarten unprepared, lagging their peers in critical language, math, and social-emotional skills. In Arkansas, just 47% of parents or family members read to their child each day, and 58% tell stories and sing to their children ages birth to five. DPIL has commissioned research that shows children and families who participate in the program increase these critical educational activities and opportunities

## Having books in the home prepares infants and toddlers to become lifelong readers.

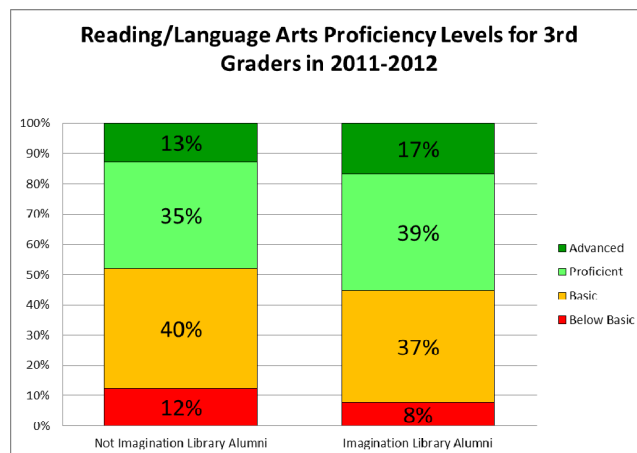
Exposure to books at an early age leads to improved literacy throughout life. In fact, research indicates that having books in the home is twice as important as the father's education level for developing reading skills. However, 61% of children from lower-income families have no children's books in their homes. In lower-income neighborhoods, the ratio of books to children is one book for every 300 children, far below the ratio of 13 books per child in more affluent neighborhoods. With 26% of Arkansas children living below the federal poverty level, and 53% living under 200% of the federal poverty level, ARIL desires to minimize the impact poverty has on children's access to books.

Research indicates the dramatic correlation between the number of books in the home and future academic achievement. In a 2014 study, researchers concluded that children growing up with a home library, even as small as 25 books, got 2.4 more years of education than children from bookless homes, independent of their parents' education, occupation, and class. Building up a child's home library boosts their academic performance, leading to improved test scores, and makes them 19% more likely to complete college. This same study found that regardless of how many books the family already has, each addition to a home library helps the children get a little farther in school. However, having books in the home has a greater impact on children who come from homes where books are rare (M.D.R. Evans, 2014). In many cases where books are rare in the home, the Imagination Library is the primary source of books in a home.

## U.S Studies of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

After launching in 1995, DPIL quickly became popular in many communities, thereby birthing a love of reading in preschool children across America. As communities signed up to collaborate with the program, more and more families engaged in reading with their children at home. As the children of these families entered kindergarten, schools began noticing the positive impact on kindergarten readiness and grade level reading.

In 2009, a study in eastern Tennessee investigated the relationship between Imagination Library students and their kindergarten peers on a Kindergarten Literacy Assessment. The study followed 3,352 children total, with 1,778 children participating in the program and 1,574 not participating in the program. The results revealed a significant difference between the performance of the Imagination Library alumni and the performance of their peers. The alumni scored higher percentages in the advanced performing categories and had lower percentages in the lower performing categories. The chart shows the percentage scored.

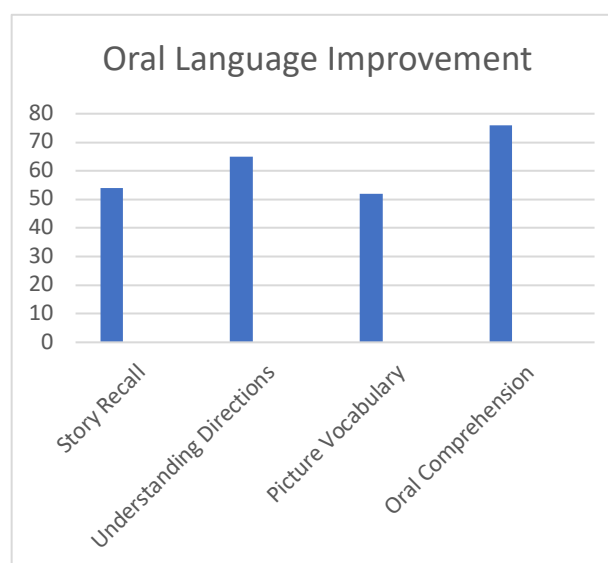
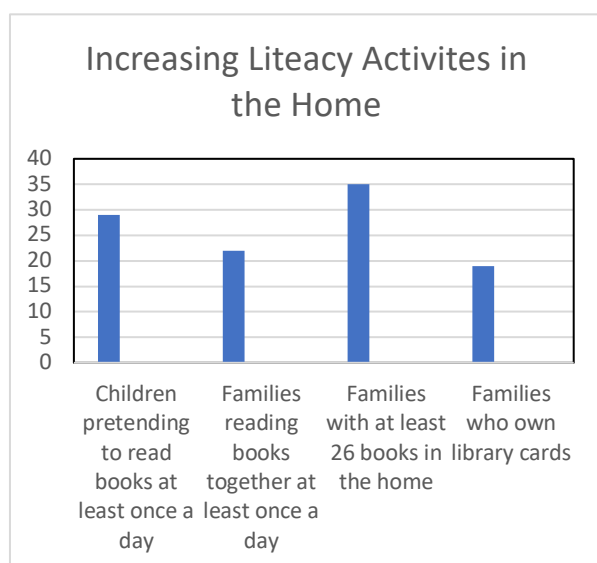


The study also compared the two student populations among various demographics found within the group. The subgroups included gender, race, income, and special needs. **The results continued to show the students exposed to the Imagination Library outperformed the students who did not access the program.**

In 2015, a research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) Program provided 35,000 free books to high-needs families with children ages birth to 4; connected families to libraries, literacy resources and activities. The project, supported by the Department of Education, was conducted by Parents as Teachers, one of the nation's most respected family support organizations influencing more than 240,000 children annually in all 50 states, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Results indicated that combining literacy-enriched parents with the Imagination Library program improved the overall literacy environment in homes, including more families reading books together one or more times every day and more children pretending to read books on their own.

The project revealed two major results: 1) Increased parent-child literacy activities among parents with children birth through age four, and 2) Improved oral language skills of children at 4 years of age. Below is a chart showing the percentage growth in targeted areas based on the implementation of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. There was a 29% increase in children pretending to read books; 22% increase with families reading books together at least once a week; 35% increase with families having more than 26 books in the home; and 19% increase with families owning a library card.

Results also revealed an improvement in oral language skills in children scoring below normal range at pretest. **Children scored at normal range at posttest. There was a 54% increase in story recall, 65% increase in understanding directions, 52% increase in picture vocabulary, and 76% increase in oral comprehension.**



An additional study conducted by LeMoynes College confirmed the Imagination Library has benefits that support school readiness. Their 2015 study, supported by the Center for Urban and Applied Research, revealed that parents were more likely to read frequently to their children the longer they stayed enrolled in the Imagination Library program. When comparing those families enrolled for 4 months or less versus more than 4 months, they found that reading 3 times a week or more jumped from 59.7% to 85.2%. The percent that read to their child daily doubled from 29% to 59.3%. With more advanced statistics, they found that each month a child is enrolled increases the likelihood that they will be read to daily.

Another fascinating dimension to this study was the examination of children not born in the United States. These children are less likely to be read to on a daily basis. **However, this**

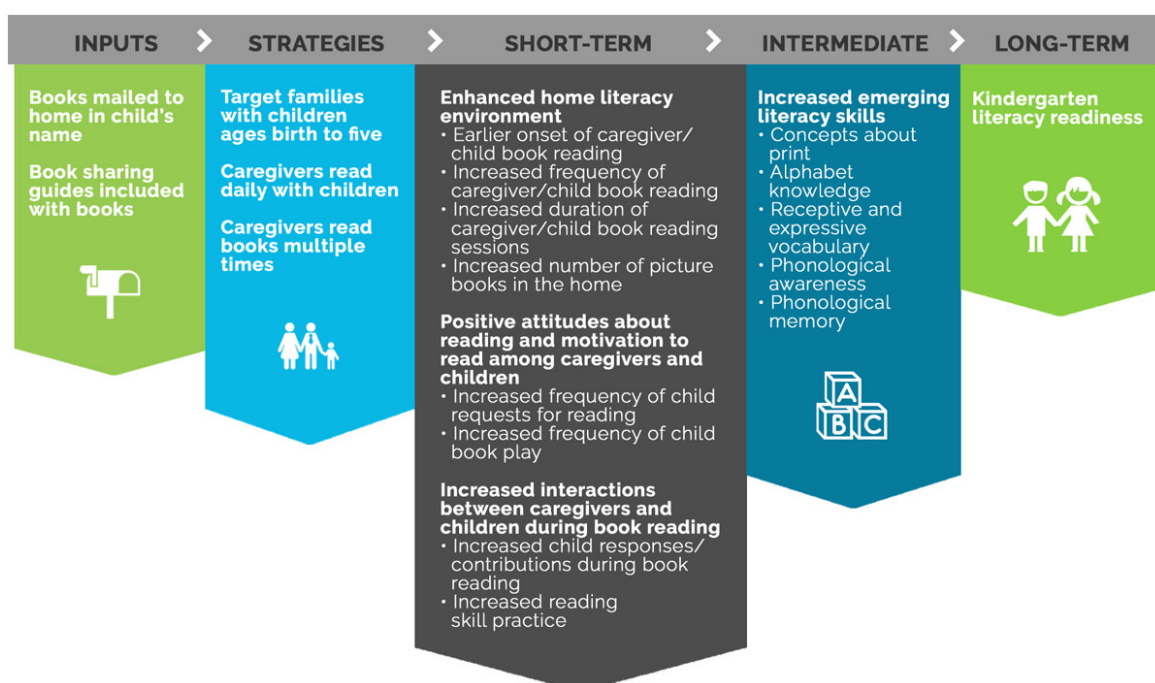
research revealed that after a few months the native and non-native experiences were nearly identical – in other words the non-native children were being read to as often as those children born in the United States.

In addition to improving literacy scores and kindergarten readiness, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library also received the coveted Best Practice Award from the U.S. Library of Congress in 2014 for addressing social barriers to literacy. Not requiring any proof of income maximizes the access of children of low-income families, since having to provide documents and paperwork can discourage even qualifying families from participating.

The studies referenced above are just a fraction of many research projects conducted at the local level. All of them point to the same general conclusions: more families read more often to their children and, in turn, this leads to children who are better prepared to learn in school.

## Logic Model

*Based on Imagination Library Research Findings and Literature Review.*



## Arkansas Studies

Young children whose parents read to them, tell stories, and sing songs become better readers and perform better in school. But more than half of Arkansas children start kindergarten unprepared, lagging their peers in critical language, math, and social-emotional skills.

**According to the Arkansas Community Foundation’s Aspire Arkansas Report (2019), only 38% of Arkansas third graders are proficient in reading.** This program will contribute significantly to increasing this statistic longitudinally over the next ten years as children who have access to the Imagination Library enter the Arkansas Public School System. Third grade is considered an important milestone in a student’s career in terms of reading proficiency and is correlated to whether a student will graduate from high school. The Aspire Arkansas report indicates that, in school districts in distress, third grade reading proficiency levels are below the state average.

Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) is working with the University of Central Arkansas to provide research on the program's impact to guide literacy decisions in Arkansas. Initial findings showed that although the Imagination Library is a program free to all demographics and does not have any income requirements, low-income families were less likely to enroll in the program. In response to the research data, ARIL was intentional in seeking collaborative partnerships to ensure **all** children in the state received books. ARIL worked to minimize the impact poverty had on Arkansas children's reading, and was able to change data positively in less than two years. Below is the result of the study that compares strategic growth from October 2017 to March 2019.

### Original October 2017 Study:

- Represented 56 counties in Arkansas
- Approximately 16,700 children across the state of Arkansas

As the poverty level of the county increased, the number of students in the county enrolled in the Imagination Library decreased. The data revealed as the poverty level increased one percent the number of students enrolled decreased by .40. Implications from that statistic is; if there were 10 students enrolled in the lowest poverty county there would be zero students enrolled in one of the highest poverty counties.

### March 2019 Study:

- Represented 71 counties in Arkansas
- Approximately 29,443 children across the state of Arkansas

The new study reveals that, as poverty levels increased by one percent, the number of students enrolled decreased by .27. Implications from the current statistical data is that if there are 10 students enrolled in one of the lowest poverty counties there will be 3.3 students enrolled in one of the highest poverty counties. **This represents a 33% increase in enrollment of families living in poverty in less than two years.** Investment in high-quality early childhood programs for at-risk children from birth to age 5 delivers a 7-10% annual return on investment through improved education, health, social and economic outcomes, increased productivity, and the reduced need for social spending. **ARIL will not only create a culture of reading for all children, it will work to minimize the impact poverty has on children's reading success.**

ARIL believes that with continued work and strategic partnerships with communities and local Imagination Library affiliates, we will continue to close the poverty gap in regards to access to books. Our local affiliates do a great job creating partnerships within their communities, but ARIL desires to leverage statewide partnerships to provide additional support to local affiliates. Currently, ARIL has several state partnerships, including hospitals, banks, and the Arkansas Community Foundation. For instance, a hospital partnership provides funding and promotes literacy at birth. An example of that partnership is with St. Vincent birthing hospital, located in Hot Springs, which provides three years of funding for every baby born at its hospital. Nurses in the delivery unit talk to parents about the importance of reading and provide the opportunity to enroll in the program. That partnership provides funding for a child from birth to age three in any Arkansas community where the program is active. An example of a banking partnership is First Security Bank (FSB). At FSB, a child can enroll in the Imagination Library at any branch in Arkansas and First Security will pay the \$25.20 cost for that child's first year of books. ARIL



works with the Arkansas Community Foundation to help raise funds and provide granting opportunities for local affiliates.

These statewide strategic partnerships, when combined with local affiliates which provide venues that encourage parental involvement, greatly assist ARIL in fostering a culture of reading in the state of Arkansas. **ARIL is creating a culture of reading at home and promoting parental involvement in children's literacy through age-appropriate books delivered directly to families' mailboxes each month.** Outside the home, ARIL is helping create a culture of reading with both state and local partnerships in each Arkansas community by connecting local affiliates to potential partner organizations, community leaders and educators, policymakers and funders, and parents and caregivers. ARIL is also working to spread DPIL's best practices to every county in the state. **Because early learning experiences also influence health, social, and economic outcomes, DPIL's book-gifting program also improves overall quality in early childhood.**

## **Two Generation Approach**

The DPIL program model of providing free, high quality, age-appropriate books directly to a family's home creates a two-generation approach in which both parents and children are impacted and encouraged to value education and literacy. Two-generation approaches focus on creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both children and the adults in their lives together. The books are mailed to the home for children to experience the excitement of receiving an item in the mailbox. Parents are motivated to engage with children who are excited and want the book read to them. The books are a regular literacy touchpoint into the home that creates a reading routine, excitement around reading for children, and an urgent reminder for parents to read with their children.

This fosters increased positive interaction in the way parents spend time with their children. Since the Imagination Library begins at birth, there is an earlier onset of parent/child book reading. The monthly deliveries of books encourage increased frequency of reading. The child wants to be read to more, leading to more time spent reading together and playtime between parent and child. Spending more quality time with your child often allows a parent to be more conscious of their children's reading skills and interests. The establishment of reading routines can bring about increased stability, emotional well-being, and improved atmosphere in families facing difficulties.

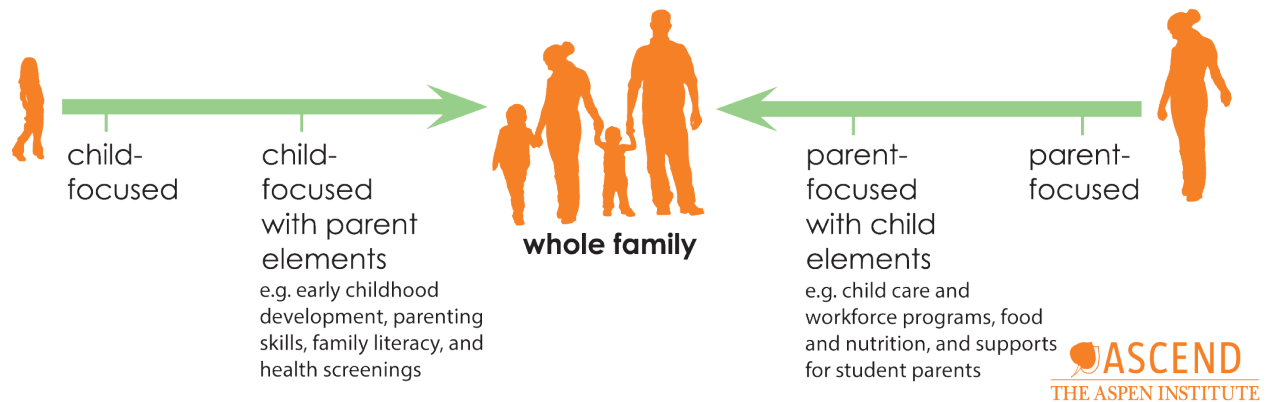
The Imagination Library books also have a family literacy component in each book, providing suggestions for parents on how to engage with the words beyond the page. Each book has a section on the inside front or back cover with book-specific reading tips, prompts, and guidance for parents or caregivers. They include topics and questions parents can ask their children during multiple readings and after reading activities, which encourage parent-child engagement. This is especially important for parents that may have low literacy levels or do not know how to read actively with their child. Parents have reported that they read aloud more to their children and were more comfortable reading because of the Imagination Library.

Some communities report an increase in enrollment in adult literacy programs with the implementation of the Imagination Library. Growing adult literacy awareness in the home provides a platform to strengthen adult literacy and vocabulary awareness. Adult literacy is the beginning of workforce development. ARIL has many partners to support the two-generation approach. The partnerships with community organizations, churches, schools, and preschool

centers allow access to parents to provide necessary information to build literacy awareness that not only promote the parent as a child's first teacher, but also develops a culture of family literacy that positively impacts work development. The Imagination Library program strategically creates an environment where both parents and children are reached and encouraged to value education and literacy. Below is the graphic that explains the Two-Generation model.

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### The Two-Generation Continuum



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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**ARIL has four goals to ensure an effective implementation plan for delivery:**

**Goal 1: Provide support to ensure healthy affiliates in all 75 counties.**

Since the establishment of the state office in August 2017, ARIL has worked with local affiliates and Arkansas communities to grow the number of counties served. ARIL met our goal of coverage in all 75 counties in 2020. Now ARIL is focusing on strengthening affiliate infrastructure, growing enrollment and fundraising capacity, and engaging communities through current partners and potential new partnerships.

**Goal 2: Serve 60% or more of the total 0 - 5 population in Arkansas.**

Since 2017, the number of children receiving books has more than doubled, increasing from 16,700 to over 47,000. ARIL continues to work with all Arkansas counties to grow the number of enrolled children to 118,612 - 60% of the children in the state of Arkansas. After reaching the 60% goal, ARIL will continue to grow the number of children receiving books in the state. ARIL desires for ALL children ages 0-5 to receive books.



**Goal 3: Provide 50% matching dollars to support affiliates.**

ARIL works with DPIL and the local county affiliates to provide support for the success of the programs in Arkansas. In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, ARIL has funding from a federal grant that covers 50% of the cost of books for every affiliate, leaving local affiliates to fund the remaining 50% of expenses. Grant funds ensure that ARIL can help Arkansas affiliates continue intentional enrollment growth by reducing the financial burden at the local level.

**Goal 4: Provide research to show the Imagination Library's impact on the culture of reading and grade-level reading to gain sustainable funding.**

ARIL has access to national research from the Dollywood Foundation and partners with the Arkansas Department of Education and the University of Central Arkansas to analyze enrollee data on an ongoing basis. These collaborations allow ARIL to conduct research on the program's impact to guide literacy decisions in Arkansas, and to establish local and statewide data to support sustainable funding for the program.

ARIL is currently working with local school districts, DPIL, and the Arkansas Department of Education to produce a comparative analysis of children that have gone through the Imagination Library program (as far back as 2010) and determine benefits received by these children from being in the program, based on performance and testing scores throughout elementary school. This objective will be measured by research analysis: By December 2021, ARIL expects our comparative research and data analysis will demonstrate that enrollment in the Imagination Library increases kindergarten readiness and literacy test scores.

# SUSTAINABILITY

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The Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) has been successful in growing a strong base of county programs and positioning for a rapid scale-up across the state of Arkansas. By creating partnerships with other nonprofit and civic organizations, the program model is successfully sustained using financial plans and national best practices offered by Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL).

ARIL understands the importance of building both public and private funding for the sustainability of this program. Initially, ARIL sought public dollars to provide matching funds to local Arkansas affiliates. ARIL has an exit strategy from receiving public dollars by building an endowment to ensure sustainability. A thirty million dollar endowment is required to provide a sustainable local match for all Imagination Library affiliates in Arkansas. An endowment fund is an investment fund established by a foundation that makes consistent withdrawals from invested capital. The capital in endowment funds is generally utilized for specific needs or to further a organization's operating process. The endowed fund for ARIL will support the operational costs and provide matching dollars for local affiliates to reduce the cost of books.

ARIL hired a fund development director to oversee the growth of the endowment, in addition to securing grants and other funding opportunities. ARIL started that endowment with private asks from local philanthropists, businesses, and foundations. Our endowment account currently contains \$1.2 million of the thirty million dollar goal. At thirty million, an endowment will produce interest enabling ARIL to sustain a 50% match for all Arkansas affiliate programs.

According to the most current U.S. Census, there are 197,687 children under the age of five in Arkansas. Research by DPIL reveals that 60% of the population will enroll in the program. 60% of 197,687 is 118,612 children, which gives us Arkansas' target population. It costs \$25.20 each year to enroll a child in the Imagination Library program. To strengthen the impact and sustainability of local Arkansas affiliates, the state office would like to reduce the local costs by 50% (\$560,442 for the first year). To scale the delivery system of books to reach a minimum of 60% of the 0-5 population in Arkansas by the end of Year 3, nearly \$3 million is needed to pay for the total cost of books and mailing. This will allow 118,612 Arkansas children (60% of children under the age of 5) to enroll in the Imagination Library.

ARIL understands the progression of scaling a statewide program. The table below is the 3-year budget progression to scale the program to deliver books to a minimum of 60% of children in Arkansas.

<b>Year 1</b> <b>(Growth from 20-30%)</b>	<b>Year 2</b> <b>(Growth from 30-45%)</b>	<b>Year 3</b> <b>(Growth from 45-60%)</b>
Current enrollment is at 26% (47,000). Projected enrollment growth from 40,000 to 59,000.	Projected year enrollment growth from 59,000 to 89,000.	Projected year enrollment growth from 89,000 to 118,612.
<b>50% Book Match:</b> <b>\$560,442</b>	<b>50% Book Match:</b> <b>\$952,752</b>	<b>50% Book Match:</b> <b>\$1,326,380</b>
<b>Total Book Cost:</b> <b>\$1,120,884</b>	<b>Total Book Cost:</b> <b>\$1,905,505</b>	<b>Total Book Cost:</b> <b>\$2,652,761</b>

**Other funding sources for ARIL include:**

**Foundation grants** – Curry Foundation, Hussman Foundation, Hennessey Foundation, Rebsamen Foundation, Arkansas Community Foundation, Sturgis Charitable Trust, Nora Roberts Foundation, and Arkansas Humanities Council..

**Federal grants** – Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program (in partnership with Arkansas Department of Education)

**State Grants** – Arkansas DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Literacy and Outreach grant

**Organization/Individual contributions** – First Security Bank, CHI St. Vincent's, Conway Regional Hospital, ongoing endowment campaign.

**Local Affiliate Programmatic Grants** (received by ARIL for our local affiliate Imagination Library book costs):

King Foundation, Alzheimer Foundation, United Way Heart of Arkansas, Bob White Memorial Foundation, Schmeiding Foundation, Arkansas Black Hall of Fame Foundation, Union Pacific Foundatrion, Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund, Baum Foundation, and the Carl & Alleen McKinney Charitable Trust

# BUDGET AND DESCRIPTION

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## Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) Organizational Budget Fiscal Year 2021 (January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021)

<b>Income</b>	<b>Current Budget</b>
State Government Grants	\$100,000
Foundation Grants	\$65,000
*Proposed grant request: XYZ Foundation	
Contributions/Donations	\$1,524
<b>Total Budgeted Revenue</b>	<b>\$166,524</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Personnel	\$152,935
Operations	\$7,349
Facilities	\$2,240
Travel	\$4,000
<b>Total Budgeted Expenses</b>	<b>\$166,524</b>

\*highlighted in yellow is grant money spending.

### **Budget Description**

**1. Personnel** (\$152,935) expenses include one contracted Executive Director, two part-time employees, and accounting support. The two employees, an Affiliate Resource Director and Fund Development Director, support the expansion of the program through fundraising and technical assistance to local affiliates.

**2. Operations (\$7,349)** – costs include office supplies and materials, payroll expenses, telephone, printing, copying, postage, software, website maintenance, and advertising/promotion.

Arkansas Imagination Library's (ARIL) goal is to increase the number of children enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. ARIL respectfully requests funding to promote parental involvement, literacy, and education to children, ages 0 to 5, in Arkansas. Requested funding will be used to support general operational costs of the organization.

**3. Facilities** (\$2,240) ARIL pays \$2,240 annually for office rental space at the Little Rock Junior League Nonprofit Center.

**4. Contract Research Services** - ARIL is contracting with an independent research facility to work in partnership with ARIL, DPIL, the Arkansas Department of Education, and the University of Central Arkansas to produce a comparative analysis of children that have gone through the Imagination Library program and determine benefits received by these children from being in the program, based on testing scores throughout elementary school.



**4. Programming** - Although local affiliates are excited about enrolling as many children as possible, a lack of funding can hinder that from happening. Enrollment in the program is at no cost to parents, so financial support must be available for students to enroll, and it is a multi-year commitment. Lack of funding in a local community often effects the number of children that can be enrolled.

According to the most current U.S. Census, there are 197,687 children under the age of five in Arkansas. Research by DPIL reveals that 60% of the population will enroll in the program. 60% of 197,687 is 118,612 children, which gives Arkansas' target population. It costs \$25.20 each year to enroll a child in the Imagination Library program. To strengthen the impact and sustainability of local affiliates, the state office has matched the local costs by 50%.

**5. Travel** (\$4,000) expenses include mileage reimbursement for central Arkansas travel, car rental costs for statewide or national travel, and air travel when necessary. Travel also covers registration for conferences, meals, parking, etc. ARIL staff typically travel statewide to meet with affiliates and partners, and speak with potential funders. ARIL staff travel an average of 431 miles per month = 5,172 miles x \$.58 per mile (IRS standard) = \$3,000.

#### **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) Match for One Year**

<b>Expenses per year</b>	<b>With DPIL</b>	<b>Without DPIL</b>
Books & Postage, Database, Book Selection, & Operations (for 595 children to receive 1 book a month at <b>\$25.20*</b> per year)	<b>\$14,994</b>	<b>\$131,019</b>
<b>*Cost Breakdown per Book</b>	<b>With DPIL</b>	<b>Without DPIL</b>
Average Retail Cost per Book	\$1.45	\$13.00
Fulfillment and Postage	\$0.65	\$2.60
Database, Book Selection, Operations	\$0.00	\$2.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2.10</b>	<b>\$18.35</b>
<b>Total x 12</b>	<b>\$25.20</b>	<b>\$220.20</b>

#### **Budget Description**

The budget above shows a comparison of what it would cost to run a direct mail book gifting program with the matching support of DPIL and without the matching support from DPIL. This includes only the expenses associated with books, postage, database, book selection, and operations. It does not include expenses for staff, facilities, utilities, equipment, office supplies, advertising, or travel. Imagination Library affiliates in Arkansas save approximately 90% in costs by running this program in partnership with DPIL.

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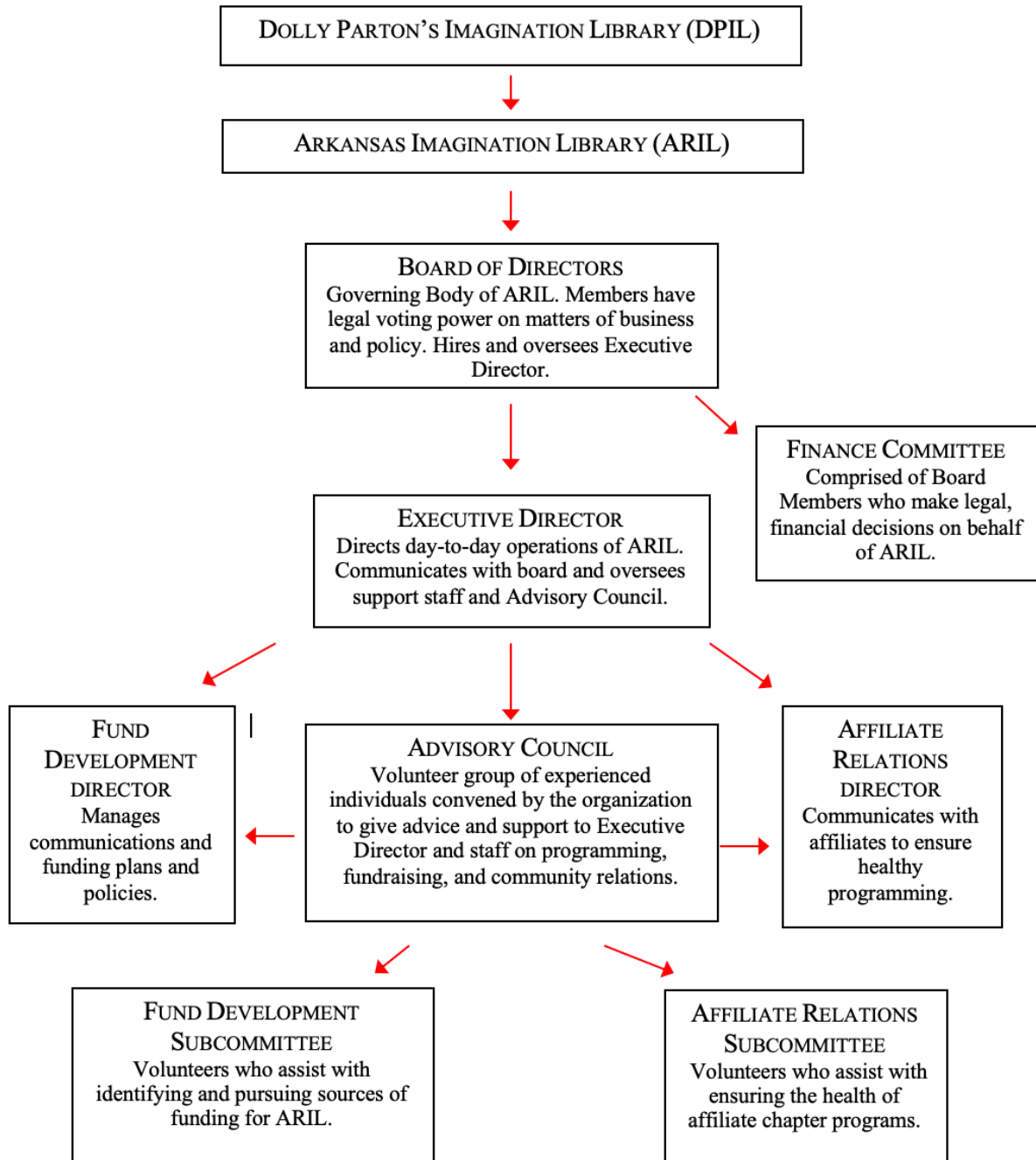
# APPENDIX

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## Board of Directors

	Salutation	First Name	Last Name	Board Title	Place of Employment/Associations
1	Mr.	Jerry	Adams	President	Arkansas Research Alliance, President/CEO
2	Dr.	Houston	Davis	N/A	University of Central Arkansas, President
3	Dr.	Linda	Eilers	N/A	University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Clinical Associate Professor of Childhood Education
4	Ms.	Jackie	Govan	N/A	Arkansas Head Start-State Collaboration Office, Collaboration Director
5	Mr.	Eddie	Herndon	Finance Chair	United Way of Fort Smith Area, President
6	Mrs.	Lizanne	Rockefeller	N/A	President and chair of the Winrock Group Inc. and Winrock Farms Inc., Philanthropist
7	Mr.	Derek	Lewis	N/A	CEO of DL2 Consulting, Healthcare Consultant, and Philanthropist
8	Mr.	Lavon	Morton	N/A	former ArcBest Senior VP, Accountant, current Ft. Smith City Director Ward 3
9	Dr.	Bobbie	Hart	N/A	Hope School District, Superintendent of Schools
10	Mr.	Fred	Leonard	N/A	State Farm Leonard Agency, Owner
11	Mr.	Clarke	Tucker	N/A	Poynter Tucker Law Firm, Lawyer, former AR State Representative
12	Dr.	Richard	Valentine	N/A	Valentine Consulting, LLC, President, former College President

# Organizational Chart





## 2021 BLUE RIBBON SELECTIONS UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The first book a child receives is **The Little Engine That Could™** (customized version)  
The month a child turns 5 they will receive **Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!** (customized version)  
Titles on this list are subject to change.



### GROUP 6 Children born in 2016

Last Stop on Market Street  
Daniel Finds a Poem  
Spend It!  
The Tale of Peter Rabbit

Violet the Pilot  
+ Blue Sky White Stars  
• First Day Critter Jitters  
+ My Papi Has a Motorcycle

Max Explains Everything: Soccer Expert  
• Old Rock (is not boring)  
At the Mountain's Base



### GROUP 5 Children born in 2017

Milo's Hat Trick  
• Find Fergus  
Raccoon on His Own  
The Night is Yours  
The Ring Bearer

• When the Storm Comes  
The First Strawberries  
The Beach is Loud!  
• + Brick by Brick  
• Goldilocks and The Three Bears  
Llama Llama Loves to Read  
+ Coat of Many Colors

### GROUP 4 Children born in 2018



Goodnight, Numbers  
• A Story for Small Bear  
My Dog Laughs  
The Rabbit Listened

Max & the Tag-Along Moon  
• Play with Clay  
• + Baby Builders  
Hair Love

• Families Belong  
Police Officers on Patrol  
• Three Little Pigs  
+ The Snowy Day

### GROUP 3 Children born in 2019

I Am a Rainbow  
+ I Hear a Pickle  
Little Excavator  
Just Like My Brother  
One Leaf, Two Leaves, Count with Me!

Squeak!  
Play with Me  
+ Red House, Tree House, Little Bitty Brown Mouse  
Sleep Train

There's a Hole in the Log at the Bottom of the Lake  
Shh! Bears Sleeping  
Llama Llama Gram & Grandpa



### GROUP 2 Children born in 2020

Good Morning, Farm Friends  
Where is Your Nose?  
Corduroy's Shapes  
+ Sassy: Baby's First Words

• Sleep Tight with the Very Hungry Caterpillar  
+ I Love My Daddy Because  
The Home Builders  
Little Poems for Tiny Ears

Vehicles (Picture Show)  
Sassy: Let's Count  
Llama, Llama Red Pajama  
Good Night, Gorilla



### GROUP 1 Children born in 2021

Sassy: Bedtime for Baby  
The Pudge Pat-a-cake Book  
Baby! Talk!  
Look at the Animals

Who Says Quack?  
The Pudge Book of Mother Goose  
The Pudge Peek-a-boo Book  
+ I Love My Mommy Because

+ Baby Sounds  
• Llama Llama Hide & Seek  
I Love You, Spot  
Night-Night Forest Friends



Penguin  
Random House  
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS

• Signifies a new book to the program  
+ Signifies a bilingual English / Spanish title or Hispanic Content