

Early Literacy 2022

Arkansas Imagination Library

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Application Form

Basic Information and Instructions

Arkansas Community Foundation is working to support community-based projects that improve early literacy. Each of our 29 affiliates will be making grants, but their timelines will vary.

Each affiliate will develop its own process for selecting grantees; therefore, it's important for applicants to contact your local affiliate office to learn more about the local grant process. You can find local office information here.

Who's Eligible

- 501c3 nonprofit organizations, schools and government entities are eligible to apply. Other community organizations may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Applicant organizations must be based in, or provide direct services in, one of the counties served by our 29 affiliate offices.

Who's NOT Eligible

Each request is considered on its own merit. However, the following types of request generally are not considered:

- Projects that address sectarian religious purposes
- Projects that are political in nature or have a political bias
- Scholarships or fellowships for formal education at any level
- General operating support outside the specific project or proposal
- Support for organizations that do not qualify for tax-exempt status

What We're Looking For

Grant proposals should be aligned to support early literacy for all children in Arkansas by addressing one or more focus areas below:

1. Parent and Community Engagement – Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers and most important advocates. Research tells us that schools with strong engagement from parents and caregivers exhibit better academic performance and higher school attendance.

2. School Readiness/Early Childhood - In Arkansas, only about half of kindergarten students are considered ready for school when they arrive in the classroom, which makes them less likely to read on grade level by the end of third grade. Supports for youth and families ages 0-5 such as home visiting, Pre-K programs, and other efforts to strengthen early learning, boost brain development and improve children's literacy skills, pay major dividends down the road.

3. Classroom Instruction - A child spends six to seven hours each day in the classroom during the academic year. The skills a teacher brings to the classroom are based on a range of factors that include teacher preparation programs, ongoing professional development, coaching and support from school administrators, and years of experience. Elementary teachers must have deep knowledge of evidence-based strategies for teaching reading, as well as the skills and supplies to implement them so they can prepare students to read on grade level.

4. Attendance – When children attend school regularly in the early grades, they are more likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade and less prone to dropping out of high school. In Arkansas, more than one in 10 students in kindergarten through third grade are chronically absent, which is defined as missing ten percent of the school year. In Arkansas, that equals 18 days of school, or just two days a month.

5. Summer learning Loss - For some children, summer vacation means camp, family trips and visits to museums, parks, and libraries. Other children may find that when schools close, healthy meals and engaging learning activities are out of reach. Many kids, particularly children from low-income backgrounds, lose as much as two to three months of reading skills each summer. Known as the “summer slide,” that learning loss can add up, leaving some children 2.5 to three years behind their peers by fifth grade.

6. Whole-child supports – There are many family and community factors that influence a child’s ability to learn and grow to achieve their full potential. When communities fully support and meet the needs of youth and families, children are better able to engage in their education.

Guidelines

All information requested must be included or the proposal will not be considered.

The following factors are considered, although not exclusively, in reviewing proposals:

- Alignment with one or more of the six focus areas that support Early Literacy (parent and community engagement, school readiness/early childhood, classroom instruction, attendance, summer learning loss, whole-child supports)
- Potential benefit to the community
- Capacity of the organization to achieve the results outlined
- Evidence of a plan for evaluating the project
- Innovation and creativity of the approach

We welcome proposals submitted as a collaboration between two or more organizations; however, a formal collaboration is not a requirement.

Selection Process

Each of our Community Foundation affiliates will develop its own process for selecting grantees; there is not a single standardized grant cycle that applies to all affiliates. Therefore, we recommend contacting the affiliate in your area to confirm their local process before submitting an application.

A grantmaking committee of local leaders from each affiliate county will select the grantees awarded in its area. Your proposal should demonstrate how your project will have a direct impact in the affiliate county service area for youth ages 0-8. (For example, if you are applying to Carroll County Community Foundation, your proposal should explain how your project will benefit early literacy in Carroll County.)

Grant amounts will vary by affiliate. Please contact your affiliate to learn more about preferred funding ranges.

Early Literacy Application Questions

Is the affiliate office to which you're applying currently accepting proposals?*

Note that not all affiliates will accept proposals at the same time; therefore, we recommend that before you continue further with your application, you contact the affiliate in your area to learn more about their local process for selecting early literacy grants. You will find affiliate contact information [HERE](#).

Yes

Name of County*

To which affiliate office are you applying?

Monroe

If your organization is a nonprofit, what school(s) and district(s) will be impacted by your project?*

Brinkley School District, Clarendon School District

Focus Area(s)*

Indicate the area(s) of focus your project will address and what your organization proposes to do with the grant funds?

Parent and Community Engagement
 School Readiness/Early Childhood
 Summer Learning Loss
 Whole-child Supports

Project/Program Summary*

Please give a description of the project/program for which you are requesting funding. What strategies, activities, etc. will you use?

Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works with local affiliates to expand the Imagination Library program. As an official partner of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), our mission is to increase literacy in Arkansas by ensuring all young children across the state may participate in the Imagination Library. ARIL believes literacy begins at birth, the benefits of a home library go far beyond the books, and parents/guardians are a child's first and best teacher.

ARIL respectfully requests \$2,016 to promote parental involvement, literacy, and education to children, ages 0 to 5, in Monroe County. We will utilize requested funds, along with the 50% cost-matching grant from ARIL, to sustain and grow enrollment numbers, and provide 1,920 books to at least 160 children in Monroe County. ARIL will partner with the Monroe County Children In Trust, the GIA Foundation, and the Mid-Delta Health clinic in Clarendon to increase enrollment and raise awareness of the program and the importance of reading to children from birth. 100% of the requested grant will be used to purchase and mail books. Enrolled children will receive one new, high-quality, age appropriate book per month until their fifth birthday, at no cost to families. Books are mailed directly to each child, with their name on the label, which makes the book gifting experience special.

By August 2023, ARIL will have sustained and increased enrollment to 250 children to cover 58% of the total 0 to 5 population (430) in Monroe County. 100% of the requested Monroe County Community Foundation grant will be used to purchase and mail books.

Local affiliates are responsible for promoting the program, enrolling children, and securing funds to cover the cost of the books and shipping (\$25.20 per child per year) in their county(s). Child enrollment data entry and administrative duties are performed by dedicated local volunteers, allowing all funds raised to go directly to purchase books for local children. DPIL chooses, sources, negotiates pricing, and ships the books to all registered children. Existing partnerships through ARIL and DPIL are utilized to keep costs extremely low and maintain a high return on investment.

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

Children Served*

How many children will be served/impacted by the strategies/activities?

250

Demographics*

Describe the demographics of the children such as age/grade, gender, race/ethnicity, and any other relevant data.

ARIL serves all families with children, ages 0 to 5, currently living in Arkansas. ARIL serves all genders, races, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status with a program that is free of cost for all families. For this specific program, children enrolled in the Imagination Library reflect Monroe County's general population (6,879 total) – 48% male, 52% female; 54.5% white, 42.3% black, 0% Hispanic, 0.2% Asian, 0.7% Native American, 0.5% Other, and 1.9% two or more races.

ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, are households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the state (the ALICE Threshold). Of Monroe County's 3,326 households, 27% earn below the Federal Poverty Level (with 52% of children living in poverty) and another 23% are ALICE, for a total of 50% living below the ALICE Threshold.

Although the Imagination Library is a program designed for children, with no restrictions due to demographics, ARIL understands the most vulnerable populations are the ones that are in the greatest need of the monthly book delivery. As we work to enroll all children regardless of income, we strategically partner with organizations that will assist in reaching children in vulnerable areas. The Imagination Library program minimizes the impact poverty has on children's access to books. By providing access for pre-k children to education and literacy in their home, meeting the families where they live, ARIL is removing barriers that limit future financial stability among the ALICE population for an entire generation.

Since the beginning of the Imagination Library program in Monroe County, ARIL has mailed 2,810 books to 179 children, of which 54 have graduated out of the program. ARIL provided 1,274 books to 160 children in Monroe County from just August 2021 to August 2022. Currently, Monroe County has 120 children enrolled in the Imagination Library program, or 28% of the total 0 to 5 population (430).

(Numbers are from the 2021 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau; the ALICE Report for Arkansas, 2018; and the Aspire Arkansas Report, 2019.)

Background*

What research and best practices informed your approach described above? What is your organization's experience with the project/program for which you are seeking funding? How long have you been doing the project, and what results have you seen? If the project is new, tell us why you've chosen to use THIS approach.

According to the Aspire Report (2019), only 38% of Arkansas third graders are proficient in reading - specifically 11% in Monroe County. Third grade reading proficiency is considered an important indicator of whether a student will graduate from high school. Research shows that 85% of a child's core brain development occurs before the age of 3, when their vocabulary can predict third-grade reading achievement. Recent studies have shown the connection between increased reading in the home during the pre-k period with later development of brain areas supporting literacy skills (J.S. Hutton, 2015). Early learning experiences also influence health, social, and economic outcomes. Additional research indicates the dramatic correlation between the number of books in the home and future academic achievement. A multi-year study 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 (Evans, M.D., 2014, 2017).

DPII is an evidenced-based, best practice program (Library of Congress, 2021 & 2014) that helps to prepare children for kindergarten and later academic success. Impressive program results report that children enrolled in the program score significantly higher in reading comprehension and vocabulary measures than their peers - not only in kindergarten, but also in second and third grades (Samiei, S., 2015).

Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) was able to complete our first impact study in 2021. ARIL partnered with ADE, the Dollywood Foundation, the Arkansas Research Center, and UCA to analyze student achievement among students that participated in the Imagination Library - going back to 2010 - and those students that did not participate in the program. This initial comparative research and data analysis demonstrates that enrollment in the Imagination Library decreases retention, and increased kindergarten readiness and third grade literacy test scores. Preliminary Findings Show:

- A. DPIL students on average score higher on all sections of standardized tests (ACT Aspire, QUALLS) than non-DPIL students.
- B. DPIL students are 24% less likely to be required to repeat kindergarten than non-DPIL students.
- C. DPIL students are 28% less likely to be held back in third grade than non-DPIL students.
- D. DPIL students have a 18.26% higher rate of proficiency on ACT Aspire than non-DPIL students.

Partners*

If you will collaborate with partners, list those organizations and describe their roles and responsibilities. If you're not working with partners then just type N/A.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) was established in 1995 in Parton's home county in Tennessee to foster a love of reading and increase early childhood literacy rates among local children ages 0 to 5. Today, the Imagination Library mails free, age-appropriate books to over 2 million children each month in participating communities. In 2019, the Crossroads Coalition launched a DPIL affiliate program for Monroe County families, with support from various local partners, donors, foundations, businesses, hospitals, libraries, and school districts. Currently the affiliate is in transition, but ARIL will have the new affiliate in place before December 2022. This will not impact the continuous monthly book mailings or enrollment of new children.

Since the beginning of the Imagination Library program in Monroe County, ARIL has mailed 2,810 books to 179 children, of which 54 have graduated out of the program.

Local affiliates are responsible for promoting the program, enrolling children, and securing funds to cover the cost of the books and shipping (\$25.20 per child per year) in their county(s). That cost is cut in half due to the cost-sharing grant provided by ARIL. Child enrollment data entry and administrative duties are performed by dedicated local volunteers, allowing all funds raised to go directly to purchase books for local children. Local affiliates save approximately 90% in costs by running this direct mail book gifting program in partnership with DPIL. DPIL chooses, sources, negotiates pricing, and ships the books to all registered children. A panel of early childhood literacy experts selects the age-appropriate books and include two bilingual Spanish-English books per year. Audio and braille versions of the books are also available. Existing partnerships through ARIL and DPIL are utilized to keep costs extremely low and maintain a high return on investment.

Local volunteers help raise awareness and enroll children in Monroe County through partnerships with Brinkley and Clarendon School Districts, Monroe County Library, Monroe County Children In Trust, the GIA Foundation, and the Mid-Delta Health Clinic in Clarendon. Pediatrician Dr. Jenny Kelly, her colleagues, and nurses, explain the importance of reading to your infant, share reading tips with parents, and help parents enroll children into the Imagination Library program at the clinic. Several of these partners are also donors.

Outcomes*

What outcome(s) for children does your organization propose to achieve and how will you know you have achieved them? Describe any measurables that your organization will use to track progress.

Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) will provide measurable program outcomes to demonstrate the impact of this grant through increased enrollment/books delivered and increased childhood literacy rates.

Success of the program will be measured by the number of books distributed to children, ages 0 to 5, in Monroe County. If awarded, a \$2,016 grant from the Monroe County Community Foundation, along with the 50% cost-match from ARIL, will allow us to provide a total of 1,920 books to 160 children during the grant period. Each child will receive one high-quality, age-appropriate book per month, for 12 months, at no cost to participating families.

Another measure of success will be an increase in enrollment. Currently, Monroe County has 120 children enrolled in the Imagination Library program, or 28% of the total 0 to 5 population (430). By August 2023, ARIL will have sustained and increased enrollment from 120 to 250 children to cover 58% of the total 0 to 5 population.

Third grade reading proficiency scores measure long-term change resulting from the program, as shown in the background statement. ARIL will continue annual analysis of the data and provide these results to funders. However, because the program directly serves children from birth to age 5, for the purposes of this grant report, ARIL will additionally report on the program's effectiveness by providing the total number of children that receive books; a listing of all book titles; and qualitative data from participating children, parents, teachers, and volunteers.

Timeline*

What is the timeline by which you propose to achieve the outcomes listed?

The baseline for measuring long-term program outcomes (third grade reading proficiency) is the percentage of children who read on grade-level before the beginning of the grant (before being enrolled in the Imagination Library Monroe County). In 2019, third graders in Monroe County scored as proficient on the (NWEA/ACT Aspire) exam, as follows:

Brinkley School District – 9%
Clarendon School District – 15%

(Source for third grade reading data: Arkansas Community Foundation Aspire Arkansas Report, 2019, <https://www.aspirearkansas.org/education/grade-3-reading>.)

The baseline for measuring the program output is the number of children who receive books prior to the beginning of the grant. As of July 1, 2022, a total of 120 children are enrolled in the Imagination Library in Monroe County. As soon as grant funds are awarded, books will be ordered for delivery to Monroe County children. Books are ordered and mailed monthly through the DPIL Book Order System. For example, books ordered by September 1, 2022 will be delivered to children in October 2022.

ARIL expects enrollment to increase slowly in the first few months of the grant period as we put in place the new affiliate leader, and then increase steadily throughout 2023. Our first milestone will be March 2023, when we believe enrollment will reach 200. Books will be mailed directly to children's homes once a month, for 12 months, at no cost to families.

Currently, Monroe County has 120 children enrolled in the Imagination Library program, or 28% of the total 0 to 5 population (430). By August 2023, ARIL will have sustained and increased enrollment from 120 to 250 children to cover 58% of the total 0 to 5 population (430) in Monroe County. 100% of the requested Monroe County Community Foundation grant will be used to purchase and mail books.

All grant funds will be utilized by July 31, 2023.

Budget

Below is a hypothetical scenario showing how you would use the information to answer each question in the budget section.

For example: My organization's total operating budget is \$500,000 for the year. I'm asking for after school programming support, the total budget of which is \$25,000. I'm asking my local affiliate office for \$2500 to support the cost of software and salaries. I have \$10,000 in other funding from Bill Gates Foundation which I've applied for but is not confirmed. The \$2500 from my local affiliate will pay for 1 software program and additional salary expense for a teacher aide.

What is your total Project (or Program) budget?*

This number is the total amount your org will spend for the project or program you're asking the local community foundation to support.

\$4,650.00

What amount are you requesting from the Community Foundation?*

\$2,016.00

Please explain what specific items you will pay for using a Grant from the Community Foundation*

This could be materials, equipment, technology, meals, salaries/wages, mileage reimbursements, printing, contractor fees, other. The total amount should equal the number you entered above under "What amount are you requesting from the community foundation?"

Arkansas Imagination Library (ARIL) respectfully requests \$2,016 to promote parental involvement, literacy, and education to families in Monroe County. Requested funding will be doubled by a 50% match from ARIL, to provide 1,920 books to at least 160 children, ages 0 to 5, in Monroe County. 100% of the requested Monroe County Community Foundation grant will be used to purchase and mail books to these children.

The cost per book, including postage, is only \$2.10. And when paired with the ARIL 50% Cost-Share Grant, the cost per book is \$1.05. Therefore, a \$2,016 grant will allow us to purchase and mail a total of 1,920 books during the grant period.

What amount, if any, are you requesting from "other sources" for this project/program?*

If you don't have "other" funding for your project, enter a zero (0).

\$2,634.00

List your "other sources of funding".*

Include org name, amount requested, and if funding is requested or confirmed. (If you don't have "other" funding for your project, enter N/A).

Arkansas Imagination Library 50% Cost Matching Grant - \$2,325, confirmed
 Mid Delta Health - \$1,000 in kind, requested
 Monroe County Children In Trust - \$1,000 requested
 Monroe County Community Foundation - \$2,016, requested

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

No files were uploaded