

Literacy Coalition gaining help from AmeriCorps, receives grant

by [Tia Lyons](#) | Today at 12:00 a.m. - 6/28/2022

Literacy Coalition-South Central Arkansas, based in Camden, is accepting applications and interviewing candidates for its first AmeriCorps VISTA program.

As a new grantee of AmeriCorps, LCSCA has been awarded funding from the national AmeriCorps organization to operate the new, local program, which will begin in the fall. LCSCA expects to welcome five new AmeriCorps VISTA members, said Linda Nelson, LCSCA executive director.

The Literacy Coalition has hosted AmeriCorps members since 2009.

Members previously provided direct service to tutor learners and participants. With the new AmeriCorps program this fall, VISTAs will not directly engage participants.

They will instead serve as capacity-builders and each VISTA will be assigned to and be responsible for a special anti-poverty project.

LCSCA said AmeriCorps VISTAs do not fill employment positions with any related agency. Not only are VISTAs volunteers with the Literacy Coalition, they are also national service members who receive modest benefits from a federal government agency. Positions with the AmeriCorps VISTA program are one- year, 365-day-a-week service posts that are supervised and evaluated.

LCSCA said serving with AmeriCorps VISTA is a "wonderful opportunity" and working with the literacy council "is rewarding."

AmeriCorps VISTA is ideal for people who are at least 18 years old, want to serve their local communities and take a year to explore career or educational options, while gaining valuable experience and professional development.

For their service, VISTAs will receive a bi-weekly living stipend, medical insurance, childcare assistance and the choice of an end-of-year educational award or cash stipend. Members who move 50 or more miles to serve will receive a special travel/moving allowance.

LCSCA will accept applications and interview candidates until July 25 or until all five positions have been filled.

Nelson said two of the five positions have already been filled and the council is working to hire three more VISTAs.

"We are looking for diversity members. We are looking to hire black males, Hispanic males and females, white females. I'm looking for three more with diversity," Nelson said. Newly recruited VISTAs will begin training on Aug. 29.

LCSCA serves Union, Ouachita, Calhoun and Dallas counties.

To learn more about or apply for available AmeriCorps VISTA positions and benefits, visit <https://www.literacycoalitionsca.org/news> or call 833-GO2-READ (833-462-7323).
Grants

LCSCA also announced that it recently received two grants, totaling \$14,600, from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation to support adult and family literacy programs. An \$8,000 grant will be used for the LCSCA's RISE (Reading Into Self Elevation) Initiative and a \$6,600 award will be applied to the E3RPlus Project, a startup program for the LCSCA.

"Each year the Dollar General Literacy Foundation's support helps ensure that direct service to adults in the communities we serve can be provided," she said. The E3RPlus is an anti-poverty program that will assist unemployed and underemployed single parents with children, ages 3 - 6, Nelson said.

The rolling, six-week program begins in the fall and aims to give children a head-start on their education and help parents navigate the educational system for their children, while setting their own career and life goals, Nelson explained.

"We want to help the parents think about their own career goals and what they want to do for themselves," she said. "At the end of the six weeks, we will offer job-training programs for the parents for another six to eight weeks. We will offer several different pathways and there will be fun activities."

"We're excited about that one. We're still trying to plug information and get partners for that," Nelson continued. "The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is helping us with this and we're still looking for other partners, hopefully from the local community."

The DGLF grants were awarded earlier this month as part of a \$10.5 million donation from the DGLF to support summer, family and adult literacy programs across the country. The \$10.5 million award is the largest, one-day grant donation in the nearly 30-year history of the DGLF.

The foundation was formed in 1993 to support "organizations that increase access to educational programming, stimulate and enable innovation in the delivery of educational instruction and inspire a love of reading."

Each year, the DLGF awards funds to local nonprofit organizations, schools within a 15-mile radius of a Dollar General store or distribution center to support family, summer and youth literacy programs.

Anyone who is interested in participating in the RISE or E3RPlus programs may call 833-GO2-READ (833-462-7323) or visit www.literacycoalitionsca.org for more information.