

## America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) Improves Reporting, Enhances Member Development Using Hurley Write's Online Training

### Background

America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) is an AmeriCorps program consisting of 350 full-time members who serve in more than 85 school sites across the state of Mississippi. ARM is dedicated to improving the reading skills of students, encouraging public awareness and support of literacy, and helping increase the number of certified teachers in Mississippi. The organization also works to enhance ARM members' development through learning programs and personal development activities to help them be successful.

### Challenge

ARM members must describe the services they provide on daily timesheets, service project reports, and other performance measures for reporting purposes to AmeriCorps headquarters in Washington, DC. Obtaining clear written communication from members was often challenging and, in fact, required a lot of time-intensive editing and rewriting by ARM program staff. ARM needed a writing course that would enhance member development, improve reporting, and continue ARM's favorable reputation. ARM also needed a unique program that could accommodate their federal grant stipulations, busy schedules, and other specific program needs. After considering several similar solutions, they found Hurley Write, Inc.

### Solution

Hurley Write specializes in providing customized writing courses to large corporations and small businesses that empower their employees to write with skill and confidence. Pam Hurley, president of Hurley Write, designed a customized program to fit ARM's needs, complete with six online modules that all 350 ARM members could access online on their own time. The program even included three specific writing examples at the end of every other module to showcase examples of well-written ARM reporting. Members also submitted their own writing examples for critique, which Pam reviewed and edited; members were also encouraged to use Pam's comments to revise and resubmit their work for additional review. Each individual ARM member who took the online class and submitted writing samples was given personalized attention and feedback. "Pam reviewed each member's writing and provided notated proofs via email detailing changes that needed to be made," said Ronjanett Taylor, state program director at ARM. "The personalized attention to each of our members was invaluable."

Pam provided additional value through a follow-up course at ARM's end of the year program, which covered resume writing, cover letters, and email etiquette. "I thought I knew how to write, but Pam Hurley showed me different and better ways to communicate," said Vicktory Thompson, ARM member. "The online writing course also improved my ability to communicate with parents and even helped me better analyze and interpret the writing in things I read."

### Result

Since using Hurley Write's services to improve reporting and enhance member development, ARM has gained efficiencies in the reporting process, improved ARM and member communication, and provided expanded career opportunities to ARM members. After completion of Hurley Write's modules, members were able to more clearly communicate their ideas and services via monthly reporting worksheets, which meant that ARM staff had to spend less time rewriting and proofing the documents. Timesheet descriptions, which had previously been vague and poorly constructed, were now descriptive and cohesive. Besides the benefits to ARM, Hurley Write's online training modules also enhanced member development and provided expanded career opportunities and long-term benefits to ARM members. "The benefits of this course extended beyond ARM by helping me construct better-written papers and reports in college," said Kim Wilson, ARM member. "I just think Pam Hurley's class is a class everybody should take, especially those going into a field that involves any kind of professional writing." Because site supervisors at the partner schools were provided with lists of members who completed the course, it makes the ARM member a more viable candidate for a teaching position in that school, since many of the partner schools hire ARM members as teachers. "Hurley Write's services have helped our members, which in turn improves our organization," said Ronjanett Taylor. "It also gives each individual the tools they need to be more marketable to future employers."

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**Vicktory Thompson  
ARM Member**

### Key Benefits

Time savings from enhanced reporting capabilities

Customized online program to fit specific needs and schedules

Individualized attention and constructive feedback given to each participating member

Better communication between program and members

Enhanced member development and improved career and academic potential