SUPPORTING STATEMENT-SECTION A

Evaluation of the National Endowment for the Arts *Big Read* Initiative

Overview and Introduction

This request is for clearance to conduct the 2007-2008 program evaluation of the NEA's *Big Read* initiative. This evaluation is aimed at assessing the design of the 2007 Big Read program and the program's impact on literary reading habits in participating communities. Specifically, we are seeking approval for all data collection instruments included in this submission.

Background and Context

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and in cooperation with Arts Midwest, designed to revitalize the role of literature in American popular culture by providing citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book of fiction within their communities. As part of *The Big Read*, selected communities will receive grants for innovative reading programs, and support and resources that include materials for discussing 20th-century American classics, an extensive Website, and a national awareness campaign.

Through Arts Midwest, the NEA, in partnership with IMLS, will award $5,000-$20,000 grants to approximately 200 community organizations to conduct month-long community-based *Big Read* programs that encourage citizens to read for pleasure and enlightenment. First-cycle programs, with grants awarded in November 2006, will run from January to June 2007. A second cycle will take place from September to December 2007. Each grantee is required to produce a comprehensive community-wide read focusing on one or more *Big Read* titles, and including collaboration among libraries, schools, local government, military bases, and the private sector. Each community will develop its own program of activities, such as a keynote session, special events, classroom activities, and book discussions aimed at a diverse range of audiences.

In addition to direct grants, the *Big Read* will provide each grantee with NEA-developed program materials that include: Reader's Guides and Teacher's Guides for each *Big Read* title; audio guides for each book with commentary from public figures, artists, and educators; an online organizer's guide for running a successful *Big Read* program; and a comprehensive Web site. In addition, grantees will receive promotional materials to encourage broad participation, including television public service announcements and radio programming. The program will provide additional professional development for key managers from each grantee to help build local capacity for partnerships and effective *Big Read* program delivery.

A. Justification

A.1. Necessity of Information Collection

As federal agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute for Museum and Library Services evaluate their programs on a systematic basis. The NEA, pursuant to its mandate to "support projects and productions that will encourage public knowledge, education, understanding and appreciation of the arts" (20 USC, Section 954), has entered into an agreement with Arts Midwest to sponsor an evaluation of this arts initiative. A private evaluation firm, ROCKMAN *ET AL* was selected to conduct the program evaluation of the *Big Read* initiative. The audience for most of the evaluation deliverables will be the *Big Read* partners' staffs and executives; some may be distributed widely to key stakeholders and national partners.

The *Big Read* evaluation has the following overarching goals:

1. To assess the effectiveness of the *Big Read* program in meeting its key goals of:

    a. revitalizing the role of literature in American popular culture;
    b. bringing community organizations together to foster literary reading; and
    c. strengthening skills in community organizations, particularly of library staff, for community partnerships and audience outreach.

2. To assess the impact of the *Big Read* on American literary reading habits in participating communities, following up on the NEA *Reading at Risk* report, in particular on:

    a. expanding the audience of those who read literary works for pleasure and enlightenment, and
    b. expanding participation in community-wide arts and cultural activities related to literature.

As a national study, the *Big Read* Evaluation will serve as a sound base from which to make estimates of the impact of the initiatives on partnering organizations, communities, and individuals. The *Big Read* evaluation data will also provide information on the characteristics of those who participate in the initiative and the degree to which the initiative is reaching previously under-represented groups.

A.2. Needs and Uses of the Data

We plan to collect data using several different instruments, and two samples. One set of instruments will be administered to all sites participating in the *Big Read* initiative after April1, 2007, and another to a sub-set of case study sites for more in-depth data on the implementation and impact of the *Big Read*. Copies of all instruments are included with this ICR. The specific data sources and the associated data collection methods are described below. Within the description of each instrument, we address the purpose and need for each data source.

Our data collection activities generally meet the following objectives of the *Big Read* evaluation:

- to understand the outcomes of the *Big Read* for participating community organizations

and for specific target audiences within these communities, such as students, teachers, and readers new to literary fiction;
- to facilitate the consistent collection of quantitative and qualitative data from participating communities at the local and national levels;
- to strengthen active 2007 programs based on interim project data, for example using data from grantee community organizations whose programs take place early in the cycle;
- to ascertain which activities and characteristics of local programs most successfully attract participation by different community segments (e.g., age groups; cultural sectors; professional categories such as teachers, employers, or private funders);
- to ascertain which activities and characteristics of local programs contribute most effectively to increase literary reading;
- to ascertain which organizational combinations and project partnership structures contribute most effectively to participation in the *Big Read* and to increase literary reading; and
- to ascertain the extent to which *Big Read* professional development resources strengthen the capacity of local organizations, particularly among library staff, to build partnerships and attract a broad spectrum of participants to local arts and cultural activities related to literary reading.

Data Collection Activities for All *Big Read* Sites
We propose to collect data from three sources in all *Big Read* sites:

- Post-implementation online survey for *Big Read* lead organizations/grantees
- Post-implementation online survey for *Big Read* participants
- Follow-up participant telephone surveys/interviews with a sub-sample of online survey respondents

Post-Implementation Online Surveys of Grantees. A post-implementation survey will be used to collect information from grantees that is not otherwise available in their proposal documents or other record-keeping and reporting forms. The survey will ask about grantees' success in reaching targeted audiences; the value of educational, professional development, and promotional materials; and capacity-building outcomes for their organizations. The survey, which will be administered online with links hosted by *The Big Read* website, will help gauge which resources, activities, and partnerships were most effective in attracting participation by different community segments and in increasing literary reading.

Post-Implementation Online Participant Survey. *Big Read* participants will be asked to complete an online survey at the conclusion of their local *Big Read*. The survey will help us collect formative feedback on *Big Read* events, assess participants' reading habits and attitudes, and estimate the characteristics of the population participating in the *Big Read*. It will include items about *Big Read* events, resources, and reading habits; items related to specific books; and expanded demographic items matched to *Reading at Risk* items. Rockman will administer the survey online through a link on local and national *Big Read* websites, and use a variety of ways to direct participants to the link—announcements at events, printed website survey links on materials, telephone or email contacts with participants who provided contact information and permission to contact them, and announcements on national and local websites.

Follow-up Interviews with Participants. Three months after the completion of local *Big Reads*, we will contact a sub-sample of participants to respond to a brief telephone interview. The purpose of the follow-up interview is to assess any changes in reading habits and attitudes and any lasting impact of *Big Read* participation. The interview sample will be drawn from those participants who completed the online survey and will represent approximately 20% of that sample. To obtain a representative sub-sample across sites, we will use stratified random sampling procedures and the *Big Read* site as the stratification criteria.

Data Collection from Case Study Sites

We will conduct case studies with approximately 15% of the grantees (15 per cycle/30 in all). Sites will be selected, in collaboration with *Big Read* partners, based on book choice, demographics, participant characteristics (e.g., schools, first-time literary readers, military personnel), scope and timing of events, and partnerships. In Cycle 1, we will focus on grantees whose programs take place after April 1, 2007. The goal of the case studies is to gather more in-depth data, including follow-up data collected 3 months following the program. Case-study data collection will include:

Grantee Interviews/Surveys. We will ask grantees in case study sites to take part in a *Big Read* interviews/surveys (by phone or, for sites visited, in person) to learn more about their efforts, partnerships, and use and effectiveness of the *Big Read* materials. We will examine partnership roles and effectiveness of implementation models, the capacity-building outcomes for organizations, and the effect on target audiences such as readers new to literary fiction.

Partner Interviews/Surveys. We will adapt interviews for certain partners, gathering data from schools, e.g., on classroom activities, teachers' and students' use of the guides and audio CDs, etc.; or, from vendors, bookseller, or cultural institutions, on changes in sales or attendance during the *Big Read*. These interviews will be conducted during site visits.

Site Visits. For approximately half of the case-study sites (5-8 per cycle/15 in all), REA will conduct face-to-face activities (e.g., grantee and partner interviews, observations of *Big Read* events, and focus groups with selected participants, arranged by the community organizations). We have included the focus group protocol and interview protocol to be used with the participants at the sites we visit. The purpose of the site visits is to collect more in-depth information about how the *Big Read* initiative is implemented in the community and its impact on participants.

Three Month Follow-Up Interviews with Grantees and Local Partners. A 3-month follow-up telephone survey will explore any longer-term changes in patronage and circulation and literature-related events and partnerships. The telephone interview will be conducted with grantees and, where appropriate, selected partners in the 10-15 case-study sites the evaluation team visits.

A.3. Use of Information Technology

When possible, all surveys will be conducted using online survey technology. The data collected from online surveys will be housed on the REA server. Links to the online surveys will be hosted on the *Big Read* national website, as well as local *Big Read* websites.

A.4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

This is the only evaluation effort of the *Big Read* initiative currently being implemented. Therefore, there are no other existing efforts to collect the data described above. We have taken care to not duplicate information asked on the surveys with any information grantees are asked to provide as a matter of routine record-keeping and reporting.

A.5. Minimizing Burden in Small Businesses or Small Entities

We are minimizing the burden of data collection on the part of the grantee organizations by creating brief instruments that supplement, not duplicate, the data collection efforts they will be making as part of their routine record-keeping and reporting requirements for their *Big Read* grant.

A.6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection

Most grantees and participants will be surveyed only once, at the conclusion of their community's *Big Read* implementation. A sample of participants will also be asked to take part in the 3-month follow-up interview/survey. In the case study sites, some participants may also take part in focus groups, and the lead organization or grantee representative may be surveyed or interviewed twice, once on site or during their *Big Reads*, and during a follow-up interview 3 months following.

A7. Special Circumstances

None of the special circumstances listed in the instructions for completing this supporting document apply to the program evaluation of the *Big Read* Initiative.

A.8. Public Comment and Consultations Outside the Agency

A notice was published in the Federal Register NOVEMBER 24, 2006 to solicit comments on the evaluation of the Big Read Initiative prior to submission of this OMB clearance request. No public comments were received comments were received at NEA in response to this notice.

A.9 Payment to Respondents

No payments are planned.

A.10. Assurance of Confidentiality

The researchers will obtain written informed consent from all adult participants who complete surveys or interviews. Participants will be briefed on the procedures, risks, benefits, and other human subjects protections, and asked to sign an informed consent agreement to participate and have data used in the study. The researchers will also explain anonymity and confidentiality procedures as well as data security. No personally identifying information will be associated with survey or interview responses in the reporting of the findings.

To ensure confidentiality of information, only site and respondent ID numbers will be housed with each form of data for the purposes of matching data across instruments. No names or other identifying information will be kept with the data that will be used for analysis. A separate file with names of individuals or sites and matching ID numbers will be kept on a separate computer under password protection. The external evaluator will compile all data, which will be stored in a secure location. No identifying information will be used in the reporting of findings or provided to any grantee or host organization.

A.11. Questions of a Sensitive Nature

There are no questions in the attached instruments that respondents would consider sensitive.

A.12. Estimates of Hour Burden for Data Collection

Data Collection Protocol	Method of Administration	Approximate Time for Administration
All Sites		
Grantee survey	Online	16 minutes (x 200 organizations)
Participant survey	Online	8 minutes (x 12,000 respondents
Follow-up participant interview	Telephone	5 minutes (x 1,800 respondents)
Case Study Sites		
Grantee interview	Telephone/in person	16 minutes (1 grantee x 30 sites)
Partner interview	In person	16 minutes (2 x 15 sites)
Follow-up grantee and partner interviews	Telephone	12 minutes (1 grantee x 30 sites; 2 partners x 15 sites)
Site visits	In person	2 days per site (x 15 sites) Focus groups 20 minutes

A.13

There are no costs to respondents other than that of their time to respond.

A.14

The total cost of this program evaluation to the Federal government is $314,000.

A.15

Not applicable

A.16. Timeline and Publication

A. **Develop relational database and reporting mechanisms.** A key component of the local data collection process is the development of a Web-based data collection, relational database, and reporting tool that can be used to manage, organize, and report the many data elements that will be collected over the course of the project. In particular, all data forms that the grantees will be required to use will be created as Web-based forms that can be linked to specific needs. The goal will be to design a Web-based interface that clearly lays out all of the data collection tasks, accesses the forms easily and sends reminders to grantees for data updating. The data itself will be stored in a relational database using standard database software. The reporting mechanism of the tool can be used to generate various reports, and will allow the grantees to display their data in a variety of ways that will be determined in consultation with *Big Read* partners and grantees. Possible approaches to reporting include data dashboards, summary charts, and data lists.

B. **Develop evaluation instruments for impact and implementation evaluation.** Proposed instruments include:
   a. **Grantee post-implementation surveys.**
   b. **Participant post-implementation surveys**
   c. **Participant 3-month follow-up interviews/surveys**
   d. **Grantee interviews**
   e. **Partner interviews**
   f. **Participant focus groups**
   g. **Grantee and partner 3-month follow-up interviews/surveys.**

C. **Conduct case studies.** We will conduct case studies with approximately 15% of the grantees (15 per cycle/30 in all), selected in collaboration with *Big Read* partners. Case-study data collection includes interviews with grantees (in person or by phone), interviews with partners (in person), and participant focus groups.

D. **Administer surveys**. Online grantee and participant surveys will be administered post-implementation for both cycles:
   a. All community grantees (N=200) will be asked to complete the post-implementation online survey.
   b. Participant post-implementation surveys will administered in all sites.
   c. The 3-month follow-up survey will be administered to a stratified proportional random sample of participants across all 200 local sites. We will sample 20% of the participants who have provided contact information. In the event that we have a high non-response rate, we will resample, replacing non-respondents with new participants using the same sampling procedures. We will conduct analyses to compare how non-respondents and respondents are similar and different.
   d. Grantees, partners, and participants in case study sites will be asked to participate in interviews, focus groups, and/or a 3-month follow-up.

E. **Conduct quantitative and qualitative impact and implementation analyses.** Demographic and participation profiles will be created for the initiative as a whole and for individual sites. We will create profiles that allow us to report demographic and background characteristics of participants at each local event, as well as across the initiative as a whole. As part of our demographic profile analysis, we will collect participation data from grantees about their non-*Big Read* events and compare the two populations of participants to make some judgment about the increase in outreach to under-represented populations. Survey data will be analyzed to examine changes in participant reading attitudes and behaviors and any sub-group differences that may exist. We will use standard analysis of variance and chi-square analysis along with appropriate effect size indices and confidence intervals to determine any significant difference over time or among group analyses. To examine the links between implementation factors and participant outcomes, we propose to conduct a series of multilevel regression analyses to examine the relationships between how the local programs are implemented and the impact on the participants and the community. Multilevel analyses are used to take into account how organizations differ from one another in an overall analysis. These analyses will allow us to isolate value-added relationships and to begin to examine which models of implementation are most effective. Qualitative data will be analyzed for convergent and divergent themes and to identify models of effective implementation. We will code all interviews, focus group data, and narrative observations using a thematic coding approach. In addition, we will create document review protocols and field note protocols to guide analysis of documents and observations in the case studies. Our goal of case study analysis is to describe specific models of implementation and how they work.

F. **Conduct analysis and extrapolation of *Reading At Risk* (*RAR*) survey items**. The surveys will contain a subset of the survey items used in the *RAR* survey. We will compare the demographics of our participants to the *RAR* respondents. To the degree that the populations are similar, we will estimate survey parameters for our sample of participants along with associated error rates and confidence intervals using standard survey estimation techniques. We will also conduct comparative analyses of our participants' responses to *RAR* items embedded in our surveys to the general survey population to assess how comparable our participants' responses are to the general population.

G. **Submit status reports**. Status reports will include summaries of progress to date and a set of actionable recommendations for the next work period. Each status report, will include: 1. Executive Summary describing key findings; 2. Evaluation objectives addressed and methodology used; 3. Key data, data interpretations, and conclusions (beginning in status report #2, see below); 4. Recommendations; 5. Appendices as required.

H. **Write final report**. We will refine plans and *Big Read* partner needs during the project, but the report will address the needs set out in the RFP for the NEA and *Big Read* partners. The final report will include the following elements:

- Executive Summary of major findings to be developed in collaboration with NEA and *Big Read* partners that will target specific stakeholders and audiences to whom the partnership wishes to disseminate findings.
- Description of methodology, data collection goals, research questions, and sampling procedures.
- Context of the *Big Read* initiative including a description of the local sites and the participants
- Findings including the following:
  - The effectiveness of *Big Read* professional development resources in building capacity of community organizations, particularly library staff, to attract and manage community partnerships and to attract diverse audiences;
  - The impact of *Big Read* participation on libraries, librarians, and other community organization participants, including the ways in which these organizations build coalitions and partnerships;
  - The effectiveness of the program in attracting participation by diverse populations and changing their attitudes and behaviors towards literary reading;
  - The varying models used by different communities in implementing the program and their relative success in attracting participation, building

community partnerships, and changing patterns of literary reading

- Implications and recommendations for scaling up and sustaining the *Big Read* initiative across and within communities and the issues and challenges associated with implementation.

Table 2. Proposed *Big Read* Month-by-Month Work Plan

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES	Initial Planning, Cycle 1										Cycle 2, Final Data Analysis and Report									
Develop relational database and reporting mechanisms																				
Develop evaluation instruments for impact and implementation evaluation																				
Conduct case studies																				
Administer surveys																				
Conduct quantitative and qualitative impact and implementation analyses																				
Conduct analysis and extrapolation of *Reading At Risk* survey items																				
Submit status reports																				
Write final report																				

A.17 Exemption to Display Certification

Not applicable

A.18 Exceptions to Certifications

There are no exceptions to the certifications set forth in Item 19.