Landscape Analysis of the Educational and Literacy Context in the United States: A Feasibility Study

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Map of the United States

Source: <u>Wikipedia</u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States (U.S.) is one of the largest and most wealthy countries in the world. Wealth and opportunity to learn are not equitably distributed, however, and this study was designed to explore the extent to which there are communities in the U.S. that are underserved in terms of opportunities to develop strong literacy skills, and therefore might present a strategic impact opportunity for Room to Read.

Choice-filled Lives Network was retained to conduct the strategic research and make recommendations. The two primary questions guiding this work were:

1. **If Room to Read were to invest in the U.S., where and for whom would an intervention be of greatest impact?**; and,
2. **Which organizations are best suited to partner with Room to Read in this work?**

This project aimed to identify 15-20 geographic areas of need, recommend 4-5 areas of high priority and strategic potential, and then identify prospective strategic partners within those priority areas. Each phase of the research was iterative and multi-stage. We approached the data with initial questions and knowledge of likely priority areas, but also allowed for emergent findings and unexpected patterns in the data. We began by both reaching out to a network of experts and practitioners, and then digging into datasets on respected academic, nonprofit, and government sites.

We found there are many communities that are high need, high poverty, and underperforming across the U.S. Populations of interest, determined in collaboration with the Room to Read team, included: **Native Americans; Black Americans; Latinx; White, rural Americans, Immigrants & Refugees; and, Children in Foster Care**. Each population's needs were explored, as well as the question of how to reach each population geographically. While the project team initially expected to find 15-20 geographic areas of approximately county size, the data instead illuminate that levels of need and performance are organized by regions in the U.S. - and these regions don't necessarily adhere to state or county lines. Ultimately, this may be a benefit for the goal of scaling.

From the initial 20 regions identified, five were selected that matched Room to Read's criteria: **the Great Plains, the Southwest, the Deep South, Central California, and Appalachia.** Because these are large regions, we also identified where to start within each region based on poverty, access, and education data: T**he Dakotas, The Navajo Nation, Mississippi, Central Valley Region, and West Virginia**. Additionally, we conducted due diligence in **The Bay Area, CA**, and **New York / Newark** due to the desire of Room to Read and key donors to ensure their home communities were explored for potential impact opportunities. National partners and region-specific partners were researched and recommended; the next step will be to conduct further vetting on recommended partners.

What became abundantly clear through this research is the incredible need in the U.S. for additional literacy support and services. Despite its vast wealth, the U.S. is struggling to ensure all of its children develop the literacy skills that will allow them to lead empowered, choice-filled, lives. Room to Read's extensive experience, science-based literacy programming, and willingness to develop books with and for populations that are underrepresented in children's books are strengths that will bring value and have an impact in the U.S. context. We recommend Room to Read act on its interest in bringing its books and programs to the U.S.

Strategic summaries of findings and recommendations were created in slide presentation decks and can be viewed here: [Recommended Regions](#) | [Potential U.S. Partners](#) | [New York / Bay Area](#).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Project Background & Objectives

Room to Read (RtR) exists to ensure children receive a solid start in literacy, learning and the joy of reading. Founded in 2000, RtR's mission is to transform the lives of millions of children in low-income communities by focusing on literacy and gender equality in education. Traditionally, RtR has focused on low- and mid-income countries in Asia and Africa, but is now looking to expand their reach into communities that have experienced the same generational lack of access but are located within high income countries.

The United States (U.S.) is one high income country that RtR is exploring. As RtR is based in San Francisco, California, staff members are aware of the existence of large discrepancies among different communities in the U.S. based on demographics including income, geography (i.e. rural/urban), race and ethnicity, and home language, amongst others. Furthermore, there are considerable "book deserts" across the country where children do not have access to books in their homes, lack basic community access to high-quality children's books and literary culture, and are not meeting minimum proficiency levels for literacy based on standardized exams.

Due to this variability in both book access and opportunities to experience rich literacy experiences, RtR perceives an opportunity to support literacy initiatives for underserved populations in the U.S.. For the moment, RtR does not anticipate becoming a direct provider of literacy programming but rather supporting local organizations that focus on family engagement and literacy development activities outside of schools in disadvantaged communities by leveraging: a) their experience supporting literacy development in low-income communities, b) their global collection of 1,600 children's books in 42 languages, and c) their ability to publish books in the United States with characters, themes and stories relevant to the lives of children from marginalized communities.

The research detailed in this report is thus part landscape-analysis and part feasibility study. It was designed to provide the basis for defining a project implementation strategy for Room to Read in the United States for the next 2-5 years.

Key Objectives for this process included:

1. **Develop a national landscape mapping of educational context**
   A landscape analysis of the educational and literacy context in the United States, with a focus on geographies where children in public schools are not reading at grade level and have limited access to books.

2. **Identify 15-20 potential areas for investment**
   Create a set of criteria for investment and identify 15-20 potential geographies that meet this criteria. This larger pool of geographies may be used for future expansion of RtR efforts in the U.S.

3. **Recommend 4-5 priority geographies**
   For each of the 4-5 priority geographies, additional landscape and organizational research will be conducted regarding specifics of recent reading or book campaigns, concerted family outreach efforts and a deeper overview of the organizations, community-led groups and influencers that could serve as allies. In addition, conduct due diligence on NY/Newark and the San Francisco Bay Area if they are not in the top five recommended geographies.

4. **Prepare RtR to communicate about process and decisions**
   Ensure the RtR team deeply understands the process and key information found, as well as the criteria for selection. Leave them with high-quality materials to communicate internally and externally about the process and outcomes.

Outline of this Report

Prior to this report, three extensive deck presentations were developed with key information. One presented information to identify the [15-20 and 4-5 geographic areas of focus](), one identified [potential strategic partners]() for this work, and one explored [New York/Newark and the Bay Area](#) in depth. These presentations provided an overview of each phase - the goal of this report is to bring everything together in one place and provide additional information and appendices when helpful.

The rest of the report is organized as follows:

- **Process & Methodology**
  A high-level overview of the research questions, process, and approach.

- **Findings: Overview of the U.S. Context; Populations of Interest & High Need Geographies; and, Potential Strategic Partners**
  Findings for the landscape analysis, 15-20 potential areas of focus, seven recommended areas of focus, and potential strategic partners. The findings section provides more granular-level methodology for each step of the process and presents both the ultimate recommendations and the rationale for each.

- **Final Considerations**
  Throughout the process, strategic trade-offs emerged that it will behoove RtR to consider as it designs the next steps.

PROCESS & METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Research Questions

There are two primary research questions guiding this project, each includes a few relevant sub-questions:

1. **If Room to Read were to invest in the U.S., where and for whom would an intervention be of greatest impact?**
    a. Which are the populations of highest need for literacy support in the U.S.?
    b. What are the geographic patterns of need for literacy support in the U.S.?
    c. In what ways do these intersect?

2. **Which organizations are best suited to partner with Room to Read in this work?**
    a. One great value-add RtR brings to its work in the U.S. is the development of books for populations that are both underrepresented in books and underserved by literacy programs. Few organizations have the opportunity to publish books that tell the stories of underserved or marginalized communities. Another may be providing technical assistance to organizations who promote children's literacy within these populations: which partner organizations to both/either: a) get books into the hands of children, families, and educators; and/or, b) help those stakeholders use them well to promote literacy?
    b. Furthermore, RtR is interested, long-term, in potentially scaling across the U.S.: which organizations are poised to support an approach to scaling?

As mentioned above, ultimately, the goal was not to simply provide a narrative, but to use this process to identify key geographic areas of focus - for now and for a potential future effort to scale; and, to identify potential strategic partners to carry out this work.

Research Process

While the scope of this project was large, the timeline was tight: under eight weeks from launch to finish, starting 10 Nov and completing by 31 Dec 2020, and with a short additional two weeks added to deeply dive into the San Francisco Bay Area and New York/Newark in January 2021.

While the process here is presented as linear, in order to achieve both the comprehensive outcome goals and adhere to the timeline, the process was designed as multiple concurrent and sometimes overlapping streams of inquiry. Each step led to the next, but also findings from one was integrated into the process of others in a continuous cycle that allowed us learning and refining both findings and questions throughout.

The process included the following steps.

1. **Outreach to network of scholars and practitioners**

   The Choice-filled Lives Network team maintains an extensive network of experts, researchers, and practitioners across the K-12, and early literacy areas, which we drew on for this work. One of the first steps was to reach out via email and phone to a selected group of experts and practitioners in the early childhood and literacy space to request their recommendations regarding: a) underserved geographies; b) underserved and/or underperforming populations; c) potential partners working to serve those areas or populations; and, d) key research or indicators we should consider.

2. **National landscape review of key research and indicators**

   Working with the RtR team to identify a number of key indicators interest (see Appendix A), and reviewing past feasibility studies in other countries, the team used Google Scholar and Search, previous research our team had conducted, recommendations from experts and practitioners, to find relevant data and research pertaining to broad patterns of access, opportunity, attainment, and performance.

3. **Identified populations of interest**

   From this work, and in discussion with the RtR team, we identified initial key populations of interest: Native Americans, Black Americans, Latinx Americans, White, Rural Americans, and Immigrants/Refugees, particularly from countries where RtR had previously developed books. From the network of scholars and practitioners, Children in Foster Care were identified as a very underserved population and also added to the list.

4. **Identified geographic areas of high need**

   Returning to the question of geography, the team explored where the populations of interest were located and most underserved. Population size and density of the population of interest were considered, as well as data on educational attainment, poverty, access to books, and access to other social services. While numerous sites were used in the analysis (see bibliography), six were particularly useful and deserve specific mention:

   - [Educational Opportunity Explorer](#) from Stanford University's Educational Opportunity Project
   - Unite for Literacy's [Book Desert Maps](#)
   - U.S. Census [QuickFacts](#) tool for comparison by County
   - Migration Policy Institute's [Data Hub](#) on Immigrants and Refugees
   - University of Wisconsin at Madison's [Institute for Research on Poverty](#)
   - Pew Research Center's [Social and Demographic Trends](#)

5. **Identified 20 potential areas and 5 recommended priority geographies**

   Based on the strategic criteria identified by the RtR team, and the findings from mapping areas, the team identified 20 potential areas, and 5 high-impact priority geographies. Strategic questions considered include:

   - **How many different populations of interest vis a vis number of regions?**
     RtR could choose a single population of interest and work across multiple regions, or multiple populations of interest across one or multiple regions.'

   - **Depth of need or density/size of population?**
     Often the poorest, most underserved communities are more rural and reside in smaller groups, making them harder to reach and harder to scale programming in terms of numbers reached..

   - **Most underserved communities vis a vis desire to use global collection?**
     Populations of immigrants who speak languages in the global collection tend to be in LA, NY, Chicago, Dallas, Twin Cities - but these are not the most underserved areas.

6. **Identify potential partners & geographic starting points**

   Once the regions were identified, the CLN team returned to both the network of experts and practitioners and Google Search to identify as many organizations as possible that worked in the regions of focus. Given that each region ended up spanning multiple states, we adopted an iterative process of returning to the data to identify the most underperforming and poor areas, with searching for potential partners that served each area. This resulted in: a) a smaller "entry-point" area of focus within each region;, and b) a spreadsheet of over 200 organizations, which were then analyzed based on partnership criteria provided by the RtR team. This resulted in 15 national organizations and 5-7 local organizations being recommended as potential partners. In addition, the team identified organizations that might not be programmatic partners, but may be good to seek counsel from regarding a population of interest or a particular geography.

   Strategic questions considered include:
   - **Scale vs. Depth of Local Roots**
     There is often a tradeoff between an organization's potential or current scale, and the extent to which it has deep roots in a particular community.

   - **Programmatic Implementation vs. Book Distribution**
     In other countries, RtR both distributes books and has designed literacy programs to ensure they are used well. In the U.S., a large value-add of RtR might be the development of books that share the stories of underrepresented

communities. Will RtR consider partnering with organizations that solely distribute books, or will it only partner with those that combine distribution & programming?

- **Schools vs. Families as the recipient**
  Organizations differ in who is the primary recipient - schools or other institutions, or families and children directly. Does RtR have a preference or theory of change about which leads to greater impact?

- **Government Agencies vs. Nonprofits**
  In many of the most underserved areas, government agencies are the major players in literacy. It may take more effort and bureaucracy, but they also present the opportunity for great scale. Will RtR consider partnering with government agencies instead of/in addition to nonprofits?

These steps are captured in Appendix A, which includes a chart with each aspect of the different stages as it was designed originally: research questions, methodology, key criteria, and analysis questions. Any changes or adaptations to the process are discussed in the methodology section for each step in findings.

OVERVIEW OF THE U.S. CONTEXT

Socio-economic Factors

The United States is a large country both in terms of land area and population. Of the 193 countries recognized by the United Nations (U.N.), the U.S. is the third largest in terms of land area (after Russia and Canada), and the third largest in terms of population (after China and India)[1]. On the latter, it is worth noting that the U.S. comes in a distant third with ~331 million people, while China has ~1.43 billion and India ~1.38 billion[2].

While the U.S. is third in land area and population, it is still the largest economy in the world - and has been since the year 1871. With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $21.44 trillion, the U.S. economy comprises nearly one quarter of the global economy[3]. Notice in the chart below from the International Monetary Fund that the U.S. share of the global economy is greater than the lowest 173 countries combined.

Figure 1: Percent Share of the Global Economy[4]
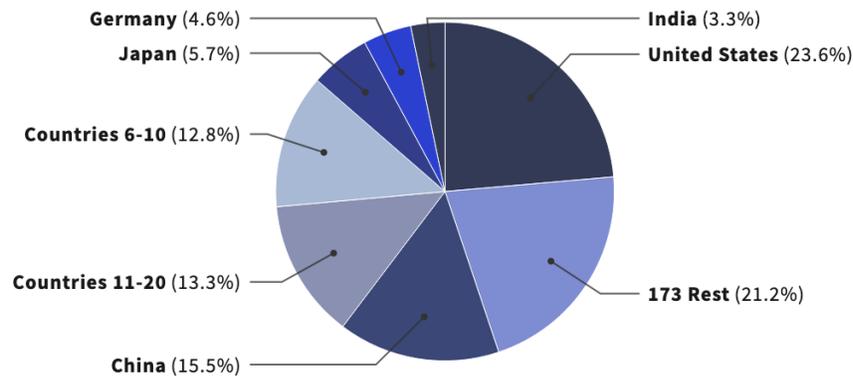
The large size of the economy also translates to wealth of individuals within the U.S. relative to other countries: the GDP per capita of the U.S. is seventh highest in the world at $63,051[5].

In other words the U.S. is a land of huge wealth. Because of this wealth, the U.S. is often considered the "Land of Opportunity". Yet, a history of systemic and systematic racial and economic oppression, means that the average or total numbers do not tell the whole story of wealth or of opportunity in the U.S.

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[1] (*Population by Country (2020) - Worldometer*, n.d.)
[2] (*Population by Country (2020) – Worldometer*, n.d.)
[3] (*GDP by Country - Worldometer*, n.d.; International Monetary Fund, n.d.)
[4] (International Monetary Fund, n.d.; Silver, n.d.)
[5] This is calculated using "purchasing power parity" meaning it is adjusted to consider the cost of goods and services in each country as well as the raw dollar amount per capita. ("List of Countries by GDP (PPP) per Capita," 2020)

Part of the story is that per capita income is calculated as an average, which masks inequality, and the United States is the most economically unequal country of its developed nation peers, including the entire G7[6]. In 2017, the Gini coefficient[7] of the U.S. was 0.434 while the range in other G7 nations was from 0.326 in France to 0.392 in the UK[8].

This means that while the U.S. has the largest economy, and seventh largest per capita income, it also has one of the highest rates of poverty, and particularly of child poverty, compared to fellow OECD countries. In fact, as Figure 2 shows below, the U.S. has a higher percentage of children living in poverty than its southern neighbor, Mexico (despite a vastly greater wealth and GDP per capita).

Figure 2: Proportion of children living in poverty in the OECD countries in 2017[9]
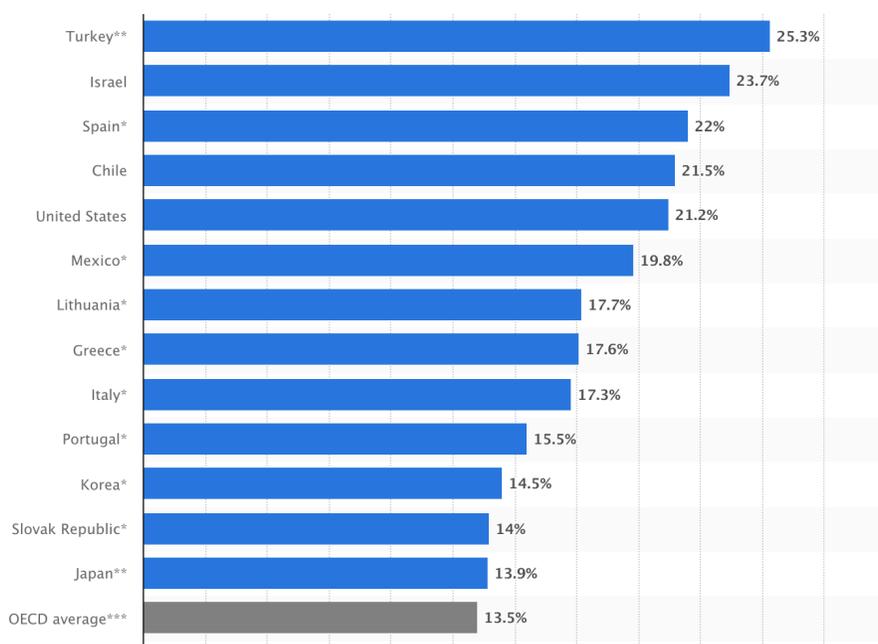
Poverty is not equitably spread across demographics in the U.S. - it has both racial and geographic dimensions. In 2019, 25.4 percent of Native Americans, 20 percent of Black Americans, and 20 percent of Latinx Americans live in poverty, while the poverty rate for native-born, white Americans is 9.6 percent[10]. Furthermore, the rural poverty rate was 16.4 percent in 2017 but only 12.9 percent for urban areas, and child poverty in rural areas is higher (25 percent) than in urban (20 percent). Figure 3 shows a map of the rural child poverty in the

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[6] (Schaeffer, 2020)

[7] The Gini coefficient is a widely used measure of income inequality, or a measure of the distribution of income across a population. The coefficient ranges from 0 (0%), or perfect equality, to 1 (100%), or complete inequality.

[8] (Horowitz et al., 2020)

[9] (Statista, 2020)

[10] COVID has deepened both the depth of poverty and the gap: Nearly 4 in 10 Black and Latino households with children are struggling to feed their families - 29% of black households and 24% of Hispanic households reported their kids hadn't eaten enough the week prior (Cookson, 2020; Evich, 2020)

U.S. Important to keep in mind is that, while the numerical majority of the rural poor are White - 65 percent of the rural poor in 2017 were white - at a 13.5 percent poverty rate, whites do not have the highest percent living in poverty: Black rural poverty is 30 percent, and Native American rural poverty is 31 percent[11].

Figure 3: Rates of Child Poverty in Rural Areas in the U.S.by County[12]
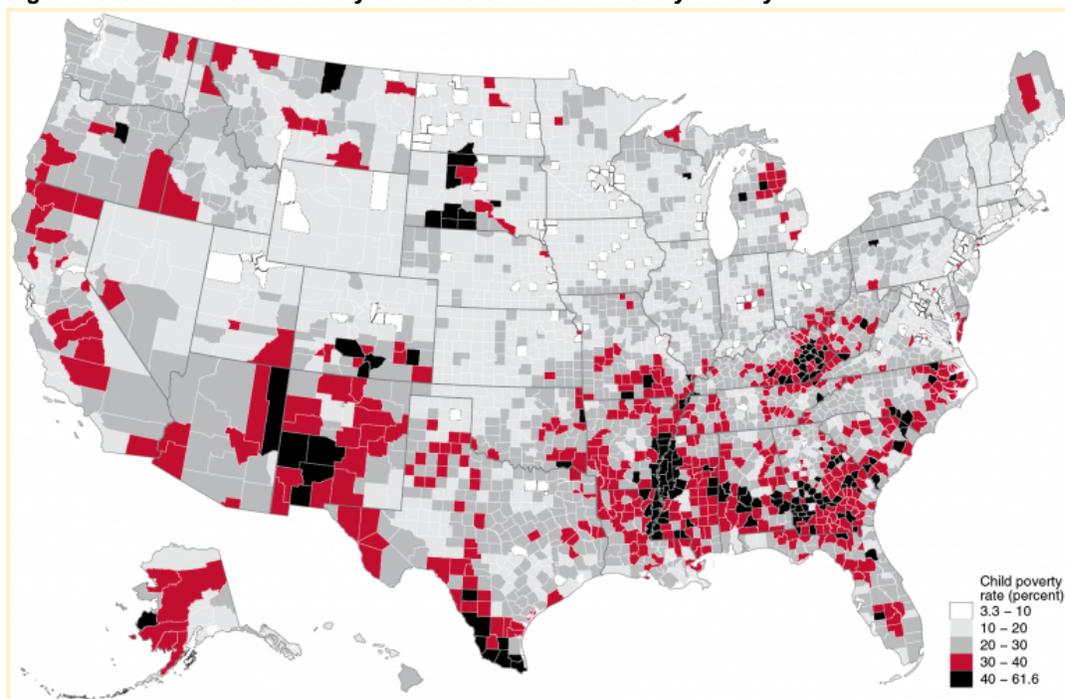
While these poverty rates are high for such a wealthy country, the high inequality itself may be causing additional societal harm. There is considerable empirical evidence that, even as societies improve in terms of material success, and absolute health and education indicators improve for all, inequality continues to have a detrimental effect on almost all aspects of society[13].

Wilkinson & Pickett (2011) have done extensive research on the consequences of inequality on societies, particularly otherwise wealthy societies, and find that the list social ills either caused or exacerbated by inequality comprises a surprising number of diverse types of social ills, including:

- Poorer *health* - increased obesity, heart disease, and decreased life expectancy;
- Decreased *educational performance*, particularly of poorer children;
- Increased *crime*, especially violent crime and homicides, and increased incarceration for all types of crime;
- Increased *mental illness* and sense of psychological well-being;

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[11] (IFRP, 2020; USDA, 2018)

[12] (IFRP, 2020)

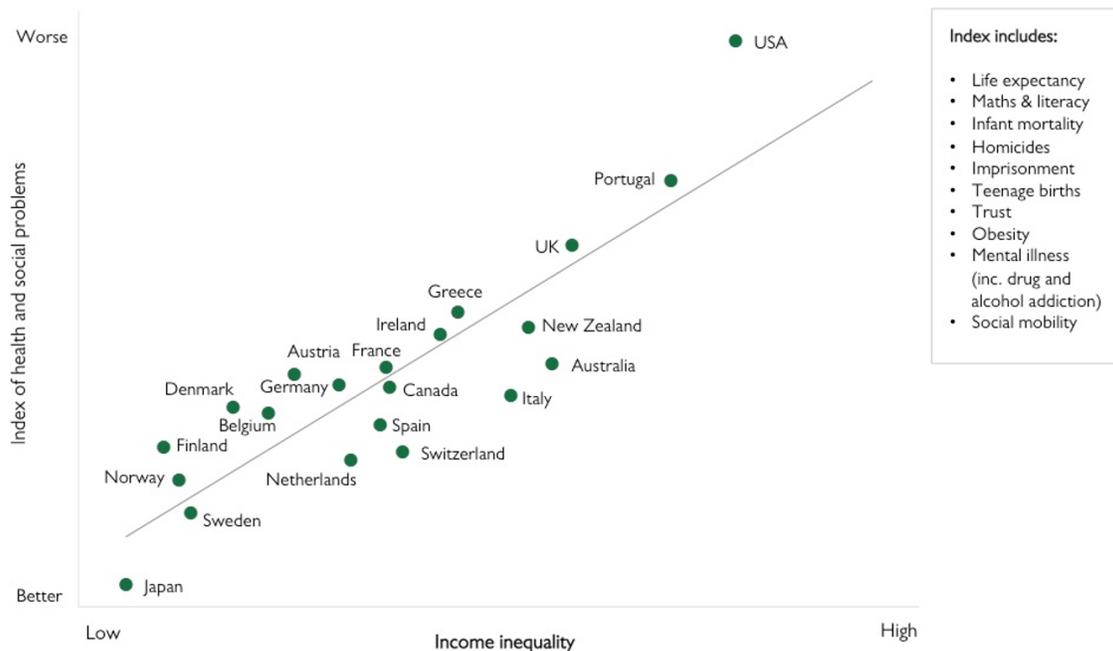[13] (Neckerman & Torche, 2007; Stiglitz, 2013; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011)

- Increased proportion of ***teenage births, infant mortality*** and decreased child well-being overall;
- ***Decreased social mobility*** or 'equality of opportunity' (you're more likely to remain in the income stratum of your parents);
- ***Diminished levels of trust*** in, and connectedness with, fellow citizens.

Wilkinson and Pickett call developed countries with high levels of inequality societies that have achieved material success but social failure. All of these hold true for the U.S. and, in fact, the U.S. is an outlier (skewing negative) in nearly every single one of their analyses[14]. Figure 4 below, gives a stark picture of the correlation between inequality and an index of social ills.

Figure 4: Health and Social Problems Highly Correlated with Inequality in Wealthy Countries[15]

Health and social problems are worse in more unequal countries

Index includes:
- Life expectancy
- Maths & literacy
- Infant mortality
- Homicides
- Imprisonment
- Teenage births
- Trust
- Obesity
- Mental illness (inc. drug and alcohol addiction)
- Social mobility

Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, The Spirit Level (2009)

THE EQUALITY TRUST

What is striking about the evidence presented in research on inequality is that the negative health and social effects hold across ALL strata of society: so, for example, while poor children do much better educationally in more equal countries, the wealthiest children in more equal countries also do better than the wealthiest children in unequal countries. Thus, while it is often

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[14] (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011)
[15] (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011)

felt that inequality really only affects the poor, it appears it actually hampers the possible levels of well-being of even the most privileged.

Education

There are almost 50.8 million students in 130,930 K-12 schools that are organized into 13,598 regular school districts in the U.S.[16]. About 70 percent of students are in urban (30 percent) or suburban (40 percent) schools, while 19 percent of students attend rural schools, and 11 percent attend schools in a small town[17].

While there is a federal Department of Education (DoE), education is primarily a state and local responsibility for both funding and regulation due to the fact that the constitution does not mention education specifically and the 10th Amendment states that "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution…are reserved to the States respectively."

At least since the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the federal government's role has been interpreted as being one of primarily intervening to prevent legally sanctioned discrimination (i.e. segregation, access for students with disabilities, equal access for girls and women, etc.). This means that, rather than the federal government, States and communities are responsible for the establishment of schools, the curricula/pedagogy, and the enrollment and graduation requirements.

The structure of education finance also illustrates the predominant role of States: while an estimated $1.15 trillion was spent on all levels of education, 92 percent of the funds for elementary and secondary education will come from non-Federal sources - only 8 percent of funding comes from the federal DoE[18]. Partly due to the localized provenance of education funding and the reliance on local property taxes for financing schools, the amount of per pupil expenditure varies greatly - i.e. it is inequitable.

In fact, U.S. school funding is the most inequitable of its peer industrialized nations[19] - the wealthiest states in the U.S. spend around three times the poorest states[20]. Even within states, the wealthiest districts spend 2-3 times the amount per pupil than poorer districts; and, schools that have high percentage of students of color spend, on average, $1800 less per student than those who serve a low percentage of students of color[21]. Schools in the U.S. are also becoming

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[16] (NCES, 2019; Riser-Kositsky, 2019)

[17] (*Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment, Number of Schools, and Other Selected Characteristics, by Locale: Fall 2014 through Fall 2017*, 2019)

[18] (*Federal Role in Education*, 2017)

[19] (Darling-Hammond, 2019)

[20] (Baker et al., 2018)

[21] (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; LPI, 2020; I. Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018)

more segregated by race, and a growing number of schools are hypersegregated (when 90 percent or more of the student population in non-white)[22].

Performance & Inequality

Increasing segregation and inequitable funding mean it is not particularly surprising that the inequality that runs throughout other socio-economic indicators in the U.S. is present in the education system as well; and, the inequality runs along similar demographic and geographic lines.

Research suggests that children in the U.S. from low-income backgrounds and children of color are more likely to:

- attend more poorly-rated schools[23];
- be in schools with lower rates of funding[24];
- attend highly segregated schools[25];
- be tracked in lower academic courses, regardless of ability[26];
- be suspended and expelled at higher rates[27];
- experience low-trust, low-belonging, and/or feel their self-integrity is under threat[28];
- experience stereotype threat and/or experience school as a hostile environment[29].
- dropout of school (five times more likely to dropout than higher-income peers).[30]

This pattern holds true for literacy achievement. Figure 6 below shows National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores by race and ethnicity. It shows that levels of proficiency and advanced literacy are highly correlated by racial group, with Native, Black, and Latinx Americans underperforming compared with their peers.

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[22] (GAO, 2016)

[23] (Orfield, 2001; L. B. Perry & McConney, 2010; Reeves, 2015)

[24] (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; GAO, 2016)

[25] (GAO, 2016; Wells et al., 2016)

[26] (Hallinan & Oakes, 1994)

[27] (Anyon et al., 2014, 2014; de Brey et al., 2019; Payne, 2010) de Brey et al. 2019 doing research for IES found that, "In 2013–14, about 2.6 million public school students (5.3 percent) received one or more out-of-school suspensions. A higher percentage of Black students (13.7 percent) than of students from any other racial/ethnic group received an out-of-school suspension, followed by 6.7 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 5.3 percent of students of Two or more races, 4.5 percent each of Hispanic and Pacific Islander students, 3.4 percent of White students, and 1.1 percent of Asian students." (p.v).

[28] (Cohen & Garcia, 2008; Fiske et al., 2014)

[29] (Calabrese, 1990; Delpit, 2006; T. Perry et al., 2004; Steele, 2011)

[30] (Balfanz et al., 2012; Chapman et al., 2011)

Figure 6: Nation's Report Card Achievement Level Data for 4th Grade Reading by Race/Ethnicity[31]
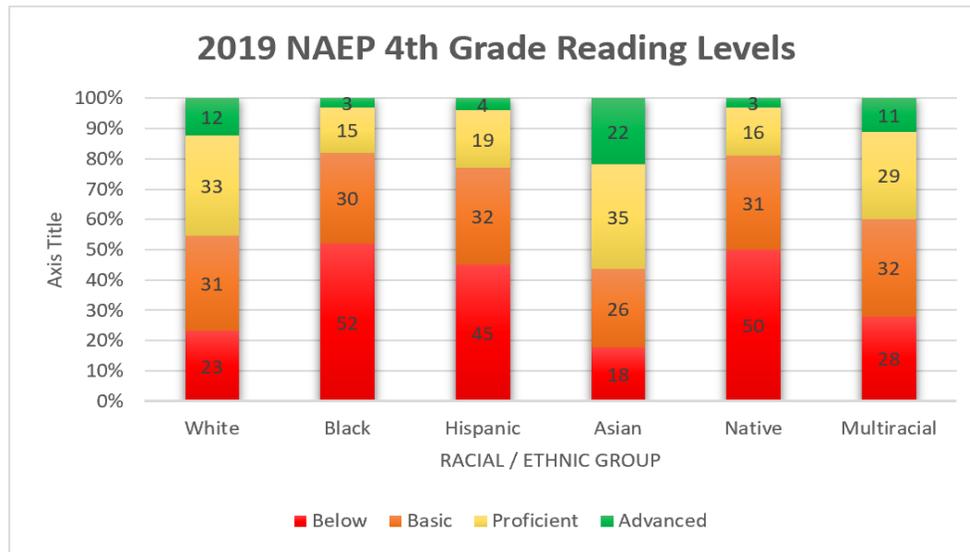
While researchers and policymakers often create interventions that locate the problem in the children themselves (arguing that certain populations have lower intelligence, lower motivation, less involved families, etc.), systems theory suggests that when there are patterned effects, or symptoms, the problem is in the environment not in the individuals - in this case, the problem lies in the environments and experiences to which students have access[32].

This is particularly important when considering early literacy development which requires access to high quality materials, exposure to implicit modeling, and quality explicit instruction or instructive interactions[33]. For literacy development two key ways to measure access to high quality experiences is through children's access to high-quality early childcare and access to books in the home.

ECE access

High quality early child care in the U.S. is costly - in 30 states it costs more than in-state college tuition and fees - and in zero states can a full-time minimum wage worker afford childcare[34]. Around two thirds of children who require early childhood education (under the age of six) have both parents, or their only guardian, in the workforce. Yet the childcare subsidies are distributed to only around 15 percent of eligible children from low-income families[35]. As Figure 7 shows below, nearly half of 3 year olds and one third of 4 year olds do not attend preschool or early childcare education of any kind.
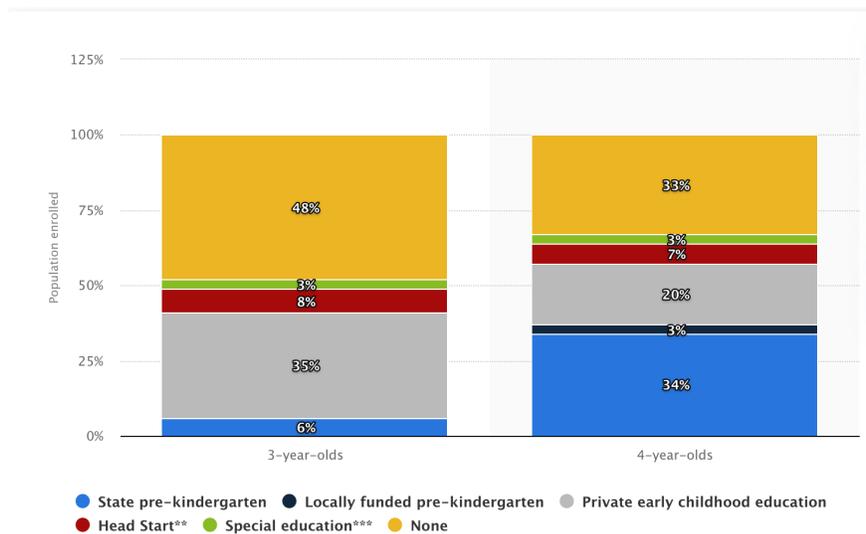
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[31] (*NAEP Report Cards*, n.d)

[32] (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Raab, 2017; Senge, 2010)

[33] (Wechsler et al., 2016)

[34] (Child Care Aware, 2019; LPI, 2020)

[35] (Chien, 2019)

Figure 7: Percentage of pre-school enrollment in the United States in 2019,* by age group and type of program[36]

Access to Books
Having books in the home is important for children's literacy development and broader education - one of the most important factors influencing children's success in early education[37]. If a child is read to at least three times per week by an adult, they are more than twice as likely to develop reading skills that put them in the top 25 percent of reading skills than children who are read to fewer than three times per week[38]. Children who grow up in homes that have many books get 3 years more schooling than children from homes without books, and this effect was found to be true across country context and is independent of their parents' education, occupation, and class[39].

In the U.S. specifically, data from the NAEP show that students who report having more books in their homes are more likely to be proficient in reading: while less than 15 percent of students with fewer than 10 books scored proficient in 2015, 50 percent of students with more than 100 books scored proficient or higher[40].

Yet, at least half of homes across the U.S. do not have 100 books in them: the estimated percentage of homes in the U.S. with more than 100 books ranges from around 5 percent to 51 percent[41]. This is not randomly distributed: there are higher book deserts in poor counties across the U.S. and for families of color[42].

[36] (Duffin, 2020)

[37] (R. C. Anderson & And Others, 1985)

[38] (Denton & West, 2002)

[39] (Evans et al., 2010)

[40] (*The Nation's Report Card | NAEP*, n.d.; U.S. DoE, 2020)

[41] (Unite for Literacy, 2020) Mississippi is the only state in which every county has 20 percent or fewer homes with 100+ books.

[42] (Sawyer et al., 2018; U.S. DoE, 2020)

Insights & Considerations

What becomes clear in the overview of the U.S. context is that, while the U.S. is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, neither wealth nor learning opportunity is equitably distributed. One part of the scope of this project was to identify underserved communities that could benefit from additional literacy development support. While the overview does not identify geographic communities per se, it does help clarify both the need for additional support in the U.S. context, and that a number of populations of interest may be within communities of color: Native Americans, Black Americans, and Latinx Americans. Additional populations of interest, the socio-economic and educational realities for these populations, as well as the best places to reach them geographically, will be explored in more depth in the next section.

POPULATIONS OF INTEREST & HIGHEST NEED GEOGRAPHIES

Goals for this Stage

The overview of the U.S. makes clear that particular segments of the population, primarily students of color, are underserved by the educational system, and increasing segregation suggests that there may be particular geographies that provide an opportunity for outsized impact. The goal of this stage of the project was thus two-fold:

1. **Provide an overview of the most underserved areas in the U.S.**

2. **Identify 4-5 regions for further research & exploration of potential partners**

In collaboration with the RtR team, multiple criteria were identified for assessing the potential fit of a geographic area. Table 1 shows the initial criteria to consider in identifying areas of interest included.

Table 1: Criteria for Identifying Geographic Areas of Interest

Socioeconomic status (SES)	Where are the poorest areas, and areas with highest rates of child poverty in particular?
Education attainment and performance	Where are the areas with the lowest educational performance, and where students tend to dropout before finishing high school?
Size of population of interest	Where are areas of large and dense populations of interest?
Opportunity to scale	Which areas provide an opportunity to eventually scale within a larger region, to a larger population, or nationally?
Language communities (other than English)	A particular value-add RtR brings is its willingness and experience publishing books in different home languages. Which areas might benefit from home language publishing in a language other than English?
Languages in global collection	Another value-add of RtR is its extensive collection of books from other countries it already works in. In which areas in the U.S. might this collection of books be useful?
California & New York	RtR is headquartered in CA, and a potential funder for this work is located in NY, making both states a priority - if the data backs up the

	idea that areas of highest need are located in these states. Are there any areas in CA or NY that might count amongst the highest need areas in the country?

Approach

Each phase of this research was iterative and multi-stage. We approached the data with initial questions and knowledge of likely priority areas, but also allowed for emergent findings and unexpected patterns in the data.

We began by both reaching out to our network and digging into readily available data. We sent emails to 15 experts and practitioners in literacy and early childhood education requesting their insights on the most underserved geographies and populations and any organizations they knew of that served those areas or communities.

Meanwhile, we also started conducting desktop research using national databases and analytical tools to look for key patterns in education, poverty, and book access. We found many useful sites, but six were particularly useful for painting a nearly complete picture, as well as providing visual tools for mapping - they deserve special mention.

- Educational Opportunity Explorer from Stanford University's Educational Opportunity Project
- Unite for Literacy's Book Desert Maps
- U.S. Census QuickFacts tool for comparison by County
- Migration Policy Institute's Data Hub on Immigrants and Refugees
- University of Wisconsin at Madison's Institute for Research on Poverty
- Pew Research Center's Social and Demographic Trends

These tools allowed us to begin to identify patterns across the U.S.

One surprise was that this stage did not result in identifying a few county-level areas that are particularly underserved. We originally assumed we would find 15-20 geographic areas of approximately county size. However the data show that, rather than specific counties or even states, levels of need and performance is organized by regions.

Using this finding, we then gathered and considered key policy and research documents. The Learning Policy Institute, the National Center for Educational Statistics, the National Assessment for Educational Progress, the Education Trust, and the U.S. Department of Education, were key sources in this work. Through these we double checked the patterns emerging from the national sites, found more granular information, and were able to see trends over time.

Out of the recommendations of expert and the patterns from the data, we Identified the following populations of interest:

- Native Americans
- Black Americans
- Latinx Americans
- White, rural Americans
- Immigrants & refugees
- Children in Foster Care (from network outreach)

Then, we returned to the data sets to explore the geographic areas where these populations could be reached most easily.

Strategic considerations that emerges out of this stage of the research included the following questions:

- **How many different populations of interest vis a vis number of regions does RtR want to consider?**
  - RtR could choose a single population of interest and work across multiple regions, or multiple populations of interest across one or multiple regions. Which might be more impactful?

- **Depth of need or density/size of population?**
  - These are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but often the poorest, most underserved communities are more rural and reside in smaller groups. Where are the tradeoffs?

- **Does RtR want to serve the most underserved communities in the U.S. or make sure it can use its global book collection?**
  - Populations of immigrants who speak languages in the global collection tend to be in LA, NY, Chicago, Dallas, Twin Cities, but these are not the most underserved areas.

Findings are described in the next section.

Regions of Focus for each Population of Interest

Maps illustrating each geographic area and the key data and recommendations contained in this section can be viewed in this presentation of the findings, data collected can be viewed in this spreadsheet.

In the main text below, we provide an overview of key data for each population, and recommended regions. **Appendix B provides a table for each population of interest that shows comparative data used to make the final recommendations.**

Native Americans

According to the U.S. Census, as of 2019 there were 5.2m people who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN) - this is about 1.7 percent of the total U.S. population[43].

The vast majority of AI/AN live in 10 states, and only about 25 percent live on tribal lands; however, while ~75 percent live off of tribal lands, the highest density areas are in counties surrounding tribal nations (reservations)[44]. Over a quarter of Native Americans - 25.4%, or 1.3m people live in poverty. This is the highest percentage poverty of any racial group[45].

There are around half a million (~500k) AI/AN students in public schools, around 1 percent of the total school population[46]. AI/AN students tend to be underserved educationally - as a group, they tied for lowest average Grade 4 NAEP reading score with Black Americans - a score of 204, while White students scored, on average, 230 and Asian students scored 239[47].

The majority, 70 percent, of AI/AN speak only English at home. There are a few language groups with considerable native language speakers remaining, however. The Navajo is the largest group, with around 170,000 speakers of Dine´, the Navajo Language, and around 7,600 people who only speak Dine´. This is greater than the next two largest language groups combined - Yupik (1,100 speakers) and Sioux (30,000 total in U.S. and Canada)[48].

Potential Geographic Regions to Reach Native Americans:

- Great Plains (ND,SD,NE)
- Alaska
- Southwest + West Region (NV,UT,AZ,CO,NM)
- Eastern Oklahoma

Key Considerations:

- Both Alaska and the Dakotas include the top 1 percent poorest counties in the U.S.. The Southwest includes the top 5 percent of poorest counties in the U.S.
- Southwest seems a clear first choice for further exploration because of the size and density of population, and because the Navajo are actively revitalizing their language.
- Alaska is the most underperforming and very poor, but also smallest groups spread across a large geographic area, so difficult to reach. In terms of scale, Alaska Native stories are likely most distinct from other Native American tribes.
- Dakotas are the poorest and next most underserved educationally. While still a smaller number of people than OK or Southwest, there is the opportunity to scale beyond into MT, NE, MN, WI, and the Sioux language is the third most widely spoken.
- Oklahoma, while populous, is less poor and performs better educationally - i.e. it is the best served of these areas. And, there are many different tribes and tribal lands in one small area.

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[43] (NCAI, 2020; US Census Bureau, 2020)
[44] (CDC, 2020; NCAI, 2014)
[45] (Muhammad et al., 2019)
[46] (CNAY, 2016; NCES, 2020)
[47] (*The Nation's Report Card | NAEP*, n.d.)
[48] (Lee, 2014; "Sioux Language," 2020)

Black Americans

Approximately 44m people, or about 13 percent of U.S. population identifies as Black or African American[49]. The vast majority of Black Americans live in ten states; 58 percent live in the South, where there is both the greatest density and greatest number population-wise[50].

Nearly one-fifth - 18.8 percent - of Black Americans live in poverty; and 31 percent of Black children live in poverty[51].

There are ~7.6m Black students K-12, which is 15 percent of all K-12 students in the U.S.[52]. Black students are tied with Native Americans for the lowest Gr 4 NAEP reading scores (204)[53] - both groups have a long history of educational, political, and human oppression.

Potential Geographic Regions to Reach Black Americans:

- Deep South Corridor (LA, MS, AL, AR)
- Michigan
- South Carolina

Key Considerations:

- The Deep South belt seems a clear first choice for serving Black Americans. It's the poorest, the least served, has a long history of educational and political oppression, likely shares stories across the region, and the population is large and dense. There is a good opportunity for impact and scale.

Latinx Americans

There are approximately 61 million people, or ~18.5% of U.S. population who identify as being of Hispanic origin, or Latinx[54]. Over 75%+ live in one of eight states: the highest numbers are in CA, TX, FL, NY, IL, while the highest density are in NM, TX, CA, AZ, NV[55]. It's important to note that "Hispanic" is a diverse census category encompassing dozens of countries of origin and multiple racial identities; the largest population is of Mexican descent[56].

About 15.7 percent of Latinx, or 12.2 million people, live in poverty; and, around 23 percent of Latinx children live in poverty[57].

Over one quarter of K-12 students, 27 percent, or around 13.8 million students are of Hispanic

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[49] (U.S. Census, 2020)

[50] (Frey, 2019; RHI Hub, 2018)

[51] (Creamer, 2020; Kids Count, 2020)

[52] (NCES, 2020)

[53] (*The Nation's Report Card | NAEP*, n.d.)

[54] (U.S. Census, 2020)

[55] (Hernández, 2018)

[56] (Hernández, 2018)

[57] (Creamer, 2020; Kids Count, 2020)

origin[58]. Nearly half - 45 percent - of Latinx students score below basic on the NAEP exam.

Potential Geographic Regions to Reach Latinx Americans:

- Central California
- Southwest Border (AZ/NM)
- Texas

Key Considerations:

- Central California offers the largest and most dense population, but it is not the most poor.
- Texas has the poorest counties with the worst education outcomes, but the density is lower and spread across the state larger, and the range of outcomes greater.
- The Southwest has the lowest total number, but highest density of population in some of the counties. In this region there is potentially a chance to combine outreach with organizations to reach both Native Americans and Latinx.

White, Rural Americans

The majority of the U.S. is white: 76.3 percent of the population identifies as "white alone" and 60.1 percent of the population when considering only non-Hispanic white people - this is 197.3 million people[59].

About 37 million white people live in rural areas in the U.S.. Poor, rural whites were identified as a potential population of interest partly because rural populations are among the most underserved areas in the U.S. - few nonprofits serve rural populations and even government services can be difficult to access[60]. They were also identified because most rural poor are white. Rural America is less racially and ethnically diverse than urban areas: whites comprise ~80 percent of the rural population but only 58 percent of urban areas[61].

In 2017, the rural poverty rate was 16.4 percent while it was 12.9 percent for urban areas[62]. This means approximately 5 million white rural people live in poverty. Child poverty in rural areas is higher (25 percent) than in urban areas (20 percent)[63]. While the numerical majority of the rural poor are white - about 65% of the rural poor in 2017, white rural people do not have the highest rate of poverty. White rural poverty was 13.5 percent Black rural poverty is 30% and AN/AI rural poverty is 31%[64].

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[58] (NCES, 2020)

[59] (U.S. Census, 2020)

[60] (Kneebone, 2017)

[61] (USDA, 2020)

[62] (USDA, 2018)

[63] (USDA, 2020)

[64] (Kneebone, 2017; USDA, 2018, 2020)

Rural high-poverty counties are geographically concentrated in Appalachia and Native American lands, the Southern "Black Belt," the Mississippi Delta, and the Rio Grande Valley. The area with the highest proportion of white people is Appalachia[65].

Potential Geographic Regions to Reach Whites, Rural Americans:

- Central Appalachia (WV, KY, TN)
- Deep South (LA, MS, AL, AR)
- Northern MI

Key Considerations:

- Central Appalachia seems like the clear first choice for reaching the poor, rural white population. It has high density and the largest numbers, and likely shares stories across the region. It could potentially scale across Appalachia.
- The Deep South offers an opportunity to potentially combine with efforts to reach Black Americans.
- White rural poor - while very poor and underserved - still have lower levels and rates of poverty, and higher levels of performance, than Native, Black, or Latinx Americans.

Refugees & Immigrants

After many years of leading the rest of the world in accepting refugees, under the Trump administration the number of refugees has fallen. In FY 2020, the U.S. is planning to accept a maximum of 18,000 in FY 2020, down from 30,000 in 2019[66].

Figure 8: Graph of the Number of Refugees Admitted to the U.S., 1982 - 2018

U.S. trailed rest of world in refugee resettlement in 2017 and 2018 after leading it for decades

Number of refugee admissions, in thousands, by calendar year

Note: Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data, accessed June 12, 2019.

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[65] (IFRP, 2020)
[66] (Krogstad, 2019)

In 2019, there were very few refugees from countries where RtR has a presence. Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo far outnumbered those from other countries D.R. Congo (13,000), Burma (Myanmar) (4,900), Ukraine (4,500), Eritrea (1,800) and Afghanistan (1,200)[67]. Of these countries and languages, Burmese is the only language in RtR's collection.

The U.S. is home to 20 percent of the world's migrants: Immigrants: 44.7+ million people living in the U.S. were born in another country - more than any other country in the world[68]. Of those, 77 percent of immigrants are here legally and 23 percent are unauthorized. About 45 percent of the immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens[69]. Mexico is the country of origins for far and away the largest group of immigrants in the U.S. - Mexican immigrants are 25 percent of all immigrants to U.S., followed by China (6%), India (6%), the Philippines (4%), and El Salvador (3%)[70].

Figure 9: Number of immigrants from countries of RtR's global book collection languages. Not including Mexico[71].

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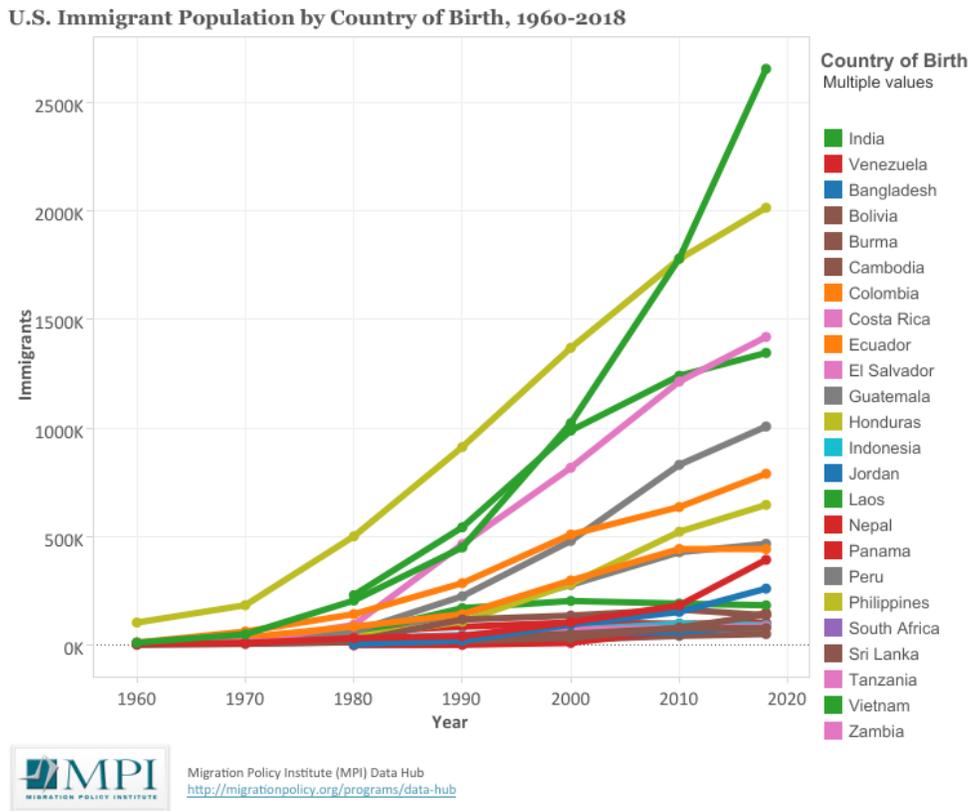
[67] (J. B. B. B. and J. Batalova, 2019; Krogstad, 2019)

[68] (Budiman, 2020; Connor & Budiman, 2019)

[69] (Budiman, 2020)

[70] (J. Z. Batalova Jeanne Batalova Jie Zong and Jeanne, 2018; Budiman, 2020; *Countries of Birth for U.S. Immigrants, 1960-Present*, 2013)

[71] (MPI, 2020)

Figure 10: Number of immigrants from countries of RtR's global book collection languages. Including Mexico.
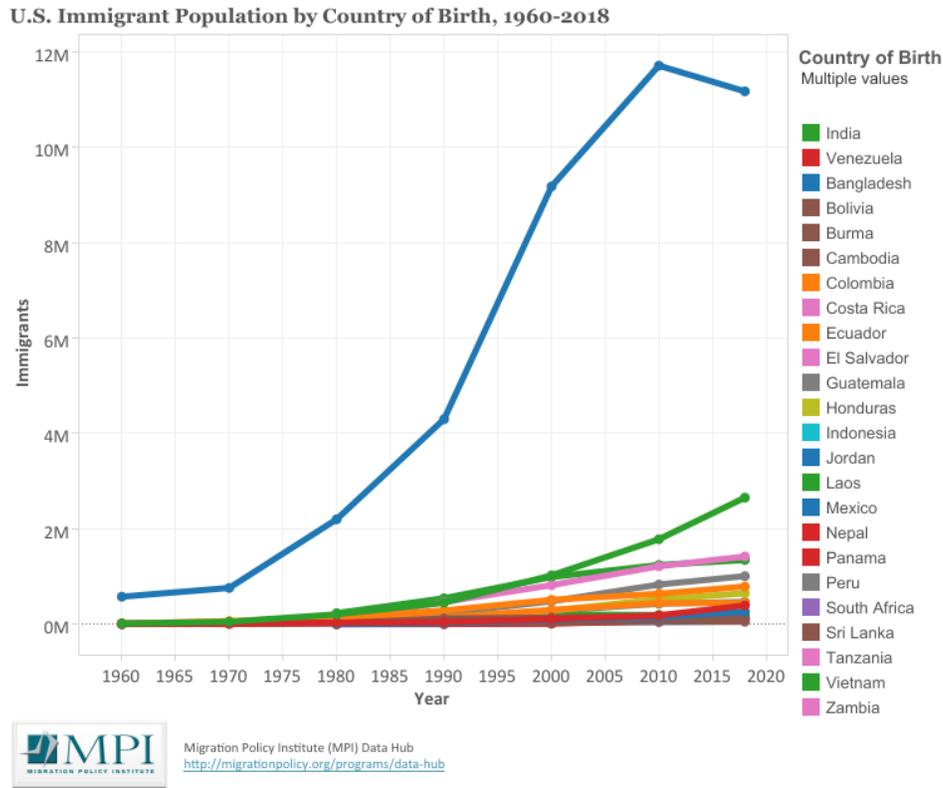
Potential Immigrant Communities

Table 2: Top Five Largest Immigrant Communities that also Speak a Language in RtR's Global Book Collection

Region of Origin	U.S. Region	Population
Mexico	CA (35%); TX (26%); AZ (5%) Los Angeles (Mexicans are 13% of LA); Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Phoenix	**11m**
India	NY, IL, CA, DC NYC, Chicago, San Jose, SF, LA,	2.7m
Philippines	CA, NY, HI, IL Los Angeles, San Francisco, NYC, San Diego, Chicago, Honolulu	2m
El Salvador	CA, TX, NY Los Angeles, DC, NYC, Houston	1.4m
Vietnam	CA, TX Los Angeles, San Jose, Houston, Dallas, SF, DC, Seattle, San Diego	1.34m

Considerations
- Refugees, while likely very in need, are relatively small in population size, spread across the U.S., and diverse in background. The refugees who have recently entered the country do not overlap with RtR's global book collection languages; i.e. they do not come from countries where RtR is currently working or speak the languages in the global book collection.
- The largest group of immigrants in numbers *by far* is from Mexico. And, where they live overlaps, unsurprisingly, with Latinx Americans. Plus, once you include El Salvador, and most of the rest of the top ten immigrant countries are from Latin America, it seems clear this would be the group to choose. Likely, RtR could serve both Latinx Americans and Immigrants via the same partners.
- Immigrants from India, Vietnam, and the Philippines may speak languages in the RtR global book collection, but are on average better educated and less poor than Latinx immigrants. Also, they are located in large metro areas (LA, NY, Houston, Chicago, Twin Cities) where there are many potential partners, but already well-served areas.

Recommendation: There may be future opportunities here, but it's not an obvious first and most impactful entry into the U.S.. In the future, it might be worthwhile to pursue an earned income model with some groups of immigrants - i.e. some groups of immigrants may be interested in purchasing books in their home languages that could then support programmatic work RtR does with more vulnerable populations.

Children in Foster Care

Children in foster care were identified by our network as one of the most underserved and vulnerable groups. It was an unexpected finding from the research, so we did additional research on children in care to assess the possibility of identifying them as a recommended population for the next step.

In the U.S., states bear most of the responsibility for overseeing and implementing foster care services, including assessment, intervention, and placement of "foster care candidates," - children at-risk of abuse or neglect in their homes. In some states foster care is handled at the state level, in others it is handled at the county or city level. Licensing requirements for foster care homes and processes for placing children thus vary by state, but the Federal government monitors States' services through the Department of Health and Human Services. The Federal government retains influence and control through this monitoring because it also provides significant funding for the foster care systems through IV-E of the Social Security Act. In 2018 the Federal Government tucked changes to the way States are reimbursed into the spending bill, in a way that prioritizes preventive services, keeping or reuniting children with their birth families, and limiting stays in group facilities[72].

In September of 2018 there were 437,283 children in foster care across the U.S.. Nearly one-third of these children (32 percent) were in homes of relatives, and nearly half (46 percent) were in foster family homes that were headed by nonrelatives. ffIn 2018, 49 percent of the

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[72] (Children's Bureau, 2020; FindLaw, 2018; Quinn, 2019; Wiltz, 2018)

children who left foster care reunited with their parents or primary caretakers upon discharge, and around half of the children (43 percent) were in foster care for less than a year[73]. The largest number of children in foster care, by far, are in CA, TX, and FL[74].

Table 3: Four States with the Largest Population of Foster Care Children

State	Population Size	% Under Age 10	# Under Age 10	Notes
CA	52337	60%	31,402	Native Americans and Black children are overrepresented in the foster care system in California; but the largest percentages within the system are Latino (52%) and White (26%), then Asian (11%) and Black (5%). In 2017-18, only 23 percent of students in foster care met or exceeded the standards on the Smarter Balanced tests for English language arts administered to students in certain grades each spring, compared to 50 percent of all students statewide.
TX	32960	69%	22,742	Latino (38.9%; white (30.8%); Black (23.5%).
FL	24404	74%	18,059	Latino (30%); Black (20%); White (43%)
NY	16385	71%	11,633	White (32%); Black (55%); Latino (10%) Percentages under age 10 are estimates because they divide differently in NY - into waiting to be adopted and adopted

Considerations

Children in foster care are very high need, but lower population numbers than other populations of interest, highly concentrated in metro areas, and quite diverse in race/ethnicity/story. It might be challenging to navigate the bureaucracy of different states to figure out how to get books into the hands of children who need it most, as it might require navigating multiple state, county, and city governments to forge impactful partnerships. Furthermore, the Federal Government is working hard to reduce the numbers and keep children with their families.

Recommendation: This may be a population to look at once RtR has established its U.S. collection of books and partnerships.

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[73] (CWIG, 2020)
[74] (Jacques, 2018)

Considerations & Learnings

Analysis of the patterns that emerged in the data yielded key strategic insights relevant to this project, including the following:

- We paid particular attention to New York and California, given their importance to RtR and a potential funder. While Central California emerged as a region of highest need, New York did not. This does not mean there was not any need, simply that when we looked at the data for New York, none of the key indicators or criteria (e.g. the level of poverty, the level of educational performance, the size of a population of interest, or the density of the population of interest) placed NY in the greatest need regions. There were counties in Northern New York that could be re-considered if NY needs to be included for other strategic priorities.

- Native American populations are relatively small, but among the most poor and underserved.

- Deep South Black population holds opportunity for impact - very poor, very underperforming, high density. And, the Deep South could potentially be an area for reaching both rural, poor white populations and Black populations. However, Appalachia is likely the best for reaching the largest number, density, and poorest, rural white population, and likely have a more homogenous identity/set of stories.

- Refugees were a much smaller group than other populations of interest, and relatively few overlapped with RtR's global book languages.

- The largest immigrant group, by far, is from Mexico. RtR could consider reaching both Latinx Americans and Latinx immigrants simultaneously via the Latinx areas by publishing stories of both 1st and 2nd+ generation Latinx.

- Immigrants who speak a non-Spanish language in the global book population tend to live in one of a few large cities (LA, NY, Houston, Chicago, Twin Cities), and also be less poor/more highly educated (i.e. India, Philippines, Vietnam). There may be a way to partner in Southern California in L.A. if this is a region chosen, or NY if there is a need to include NY for funder reasons - but perhaps not the highest need.

- Children in foster care are very high need, but highly concentrated in metro areas, and quite diverse in race/ethnicity/story. Like non-Spanish speaking immigrants, there are ways to partner in any region identified, but it may be best as a "next step" once within a region to tell their particular stories.

We originally assumed we would find 15-20 geographic areas of approximately county size. However the data show that, rather than specific counties or even states, levels of need and

performance is organized by regions. This is a potential benefit for scaling. Rather than 4-5 counties or school districts, we've recommended regions, in which impact can be scaled through partnership once the book collection for the region is developed.

Five Recommended Regions of Focus

Consideration of the insights above, along with the goals and main criteria for selection, resulted in the top five recommended areas being: **the Great Plains, the Southwest, the Deep South, Central California, and Appalachia.** Table 4 below gives a comparison of key data points for each region.

Table 4: Five Recommended Areas of Focus with Key Data
        Methodology Notes in Appendix B.

Region	Population(s) of Interest	Population Size	Poverty* **	Education	Book Desert
Great Plains* **(ND,SD,NE)**	Native American	~150k	-3.55	-3.44	6%
Southwest (AZ, NM)	Native American	~750k	-2.16	-1.94	9%
	Latinx - Americans & Immigrants	~2.2m	-2.04	-1.95	12%
Deep South	Black	~3m	-4.23	-3.35	9%
	Poor rural white	~3m**	-.23	-2.91	
Central California	Latinx - Americans & Immigrants	~3m in Central (15m in all CA)	-1.33	-2.14	5%
Appalachia	Poor rural white	1.5m	-2.16	-1.66	22%

Alaska was high on the list for Native American investment, but the Dakotas offers the possibility of scaling into MN, WI, or potentially NE, OK. Alaska is also much more difficult physically, and the Alaskan Native traditions are more different than the mainland Native American tribes, meaning the books developed in mainland U.S. might be able to be used across regions more easily.
***3m is a very rough estimate taking into account total white and approximate rural population. 1.5m is the estimate of white people living in poverty in Central Appalachia. There are 7 million total white rural people in the area.*
****Poverty & Education were taken from the Educational Opportunity Project Calculations.*

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN THE SEVEN FOCUS AREAS

Goals for this Stage

Findings from research into the populations of interest and the geographic areas to reach those populations helped us identify the five geographic areas of focus. In addition, we added New York/Newark and The Bay Area to ensure we conducted due diligence on the home communities for Room to Read and key donors to the U.S. investment plan. The next stage of this process required additional honing within each of the seven geographies and the identification of potential partners, both nationally and within each region. The goal of this stage of the project was thus two-fold:

1. **Identify potential program and book distribution partners in each region of focus.**

2. **Identify potential smaller geographic areas to start in each region of focus.**

When considering where to start within each geography, we returned to the criteria outlined in Table 1 in the section above, asking, "where are communities most underserved and most in need?" To identify potential partners, the CLN team worked closely with the RtR team to identify the selection criteria outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Initial Criteria Considered for Assessing Potential Partners

Mission, values & program alignment	To what extent does the organization share RtR's values, and draw on the science of literacy development in their work?
Geographic scope	Does the organization work in a region of focus with local ties to the community?
Population Served	Does the organization serve a population of interest within the region of focus?
Capacity for Partnership	Does the organization have the size of budget and staff capacity for partnership?
Current and potential for scale	Does the organization serve a substantial size of beneficiary population/schools or geographic area? Does the geography/population it serves lend itself to scale?
Experience	How many years of experience does the organization have delivering its programs? We assumed that newer organizations are likely less ready for partnership of this scale.

Approach

As with prior stages, each phase of this research was iterative and multi-stage. We approached the data with initial questions and knowledge of likely partners, but also searched for unexpected new names, as well as creative ways of reaching children with books to emerge. For instance, we found a few organizations that work through the healthcare system to get books into the hands of children and families. While these are not typical literacy organizations, nor do they work through the education system, they were identified as potential partners for the goals of RtR.

We started by building a [spreadsheet](#) with organizations that were recommended by the experts and practitioners we had reached out to at the beginning of the last phase - this is an example of how research phases were overlapping.

Then, we conducted a Google search for national and regional organizations, even before the regions of focus were identified - this is yet another example of the overlapping nature of the research. This Google search was not in-depth, rather, it was utilized as a mechanism for finding key or major players. We input the following search terms into Google, among others: "literacy," "reading," "reading program," "early childhood education," and "early childhood development."

Once the regions of focus were identified, we repeated the Google search, adding each region and state to the search terms. We looked for areas within each region that were particularly underserved, and from these findings identified logical starting places within each region. Then, we re-conducted the searches at the county level within each state or region.

To ensure a comprehensive search beyond Google, we conducted searches through [Guidestar](#), [Charity Navigator](#), and [GoodNonProfits.org](#). At times we also used these sites to double-check that organizations met our partner criteria by checking budgets (through 990s) or mission statements.

Finally, we specifically searched for government agencies, University partnerships, and other large-scale, but not nonprofit programs, that might align with the goals of this project and RtR's strategy.

Strategic Considerations that emerged from this stage in the research included the following:

- **Scale vs. Depth of Local Roots**
  - There is often a tradeoff between an organizations' potential or current scale, and the extent to which it has deep roots in a particular community.

- **Programmatic Implementation vs. Book Distribution**
  - In other countries, RtR both distributes books and has designed literacy programs to ensure they are used well. In the U.S., a large value-add might be

the development of books that share the stories of underrepresented communities. Will RtR consider partnering with organizations that solely distribute books, or will it only partner with those that combine distribution & programming?

- **Government Agencies vs. Nonprofits**
  - In many of the most underserved areas, government agencies are the major players in literacy. Collaborating with such entities may require more effort and navigating bureaucratic hurdles, but these potential collaborations also present the opportunity for considerable scale. Will RtR consider partnering with government agencies instead of, or in addition to, nonprofits?

Findings are presented in the next section.

Recommended Places to Start in Each Region

Identifying regional areas that are underserved and underperforming serves to accurately represent the data, and also presents an opportunity for thinking forward about scale. However, this approach presents challenges in terms of considering where to begin partnering within each region. In our subsequent research, we identified and recommended smaller targeted starting point states or localities within each region. Table 6 below provides each region's recommended starting point, as well as the accompanying rationale.

Table 6: Recommendations of Where to Start in Each Region with Rationale

Region	Where to Start	Rationale
Great Plains* **(ND, SD, NE)**	The Dakotas[75]	There are a high number and density of Native Americans in the Dakotas, and many different tribal nations: Nine sovereign nations share geography with SD; Five tribes and one Native American community share with ND. This is about 9% (~80,000), of SD residents; 5.6% (~43,000) ND residents There are extremely high levels of poverty in the NA communities: 49.9% living in poverty in SD; 35.1% in ND. Very low education and performance in NA communities: Less than 1 in 4 students (~24%) in grades 3 to 8 and grade 11 was rated as proficient in reading and writing on state standardized tests in either state. On-time graduation rates are ~54%, vs. 85% for students of

[75] (Barbara Bush Foundation, 2020; Deaton, 2019; IES REL, 2019, 2020; Lee, 2014; Lowrey, 2019; Muhammad et al., 2019; NCAI, 2014; NCCC, 2020; ND DoPI, 2020; ND State Government, 2020; SD DoE, 2019, 2019; Springer, 2020, 2020; *The Nation's Report Card | NAEP*, n.d.)

		all backgrounds. In ND, the grad rate gap is 16% - 73% of Native Americans graduate on time vs 89% overall.
Southwest (AZ, NM, NV)	Navajo Nation[76]	The Navajo Nation covers over 27,000 square miles & extends into the states of Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. Diné Bikéyah, or Navajoland, is larger than 10 of the 50 states in America. With ~298,000 enrolled members, the Navajo is the second largest tribe in population; and, over 173,000 Navajos live on the reservation. The Navajo have the most people who identified with one tribal grouping and no other race (287,000) on the census. Diné, the Navajo language, is the most-spoken Native American language. It is an Athabaskan language spoken by 150,000 people with 7,600 Navajo-only speakers. The Navajo are poor: 38% of the people on the Navajo reservation live in poverty, and 19% suffer in extreme poverty. Each of the counties around and through the reservation have >20% poverty.
Deep South	Mississippi[77]	MS is one of the poorest states in the country, and child poverty is the highest in the nation at 30%. MS is the only state with an extreme statewide book desert - fewer than 20% of homes have >100 books). Historically, MS has been one of the most underperforming states on NAEP literacy assessments. There is a high number and density of Black Americans: many MS counties are >40% Black. Furthermore, MS Black students are particularly underserved and underperforming: 47% of Black 4th graders have below basic reading skills and in 2019, Black students had an average score that was 21 points lower than that for White students.
Central California	Central Valley Region[78]	The Central Valley has a large Latinx Population in Size and Density: >40% Latinx in most counties and >55% of public school students are Latinx Students. CA is also the most segregated state for Latinos "where 58% attend intensely segregated schools," exacerbating inequities in educational opportunities. A large proportion of CA's rural poor live in the Central Valley. >25% Child Poverty in most counties. Fresno, Madera, Merced, and Tulare counties all have >33% child poverty.

[76] (Bland, 2019; First Things First, 2020; "List of U.S. Communities with Native-American Majority Populationshttps," n.d.; "Navajo Language," 2020; Navajo DED, 2004; Navajo Nation Government, 2011; Navajo Relief Fund, 2017; Rosetta Stone, 2020)
[77] (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018; Barbara Bush Foundation, 2019; Bragg, 2018; MS DoE, 2018, 2020; *The Nation's Report Card | NAEP*, n.d.)
[78] (ABC News Bakersfield, 2018; A. Anderson, 2017; Cano, 2020; CCSCE, 2019; Index Mundi, 2019; Kids Data, 2020; Kohli & Lee, 2020; Orfield & Ee, 2014; Solis, 2017)

		The Valley has lower educational attainment and achievement on average than the rest of California and the U.S. The Valley accounts for 9.7% of the CA state population over 18 but 14.9% of the residents who did not go to high school and only 4.4% of the state residents with a graduate degree. It's worse for Latino Students across CA. Reading proficiency in CA by race, ethnicity 2019: Asian American 77%, White 65%, Latino 41%, American Indian 38%, Black 33% Of the largest 200 school districts in the U.S., 3 of the country's lowest performing 15 districts were in the central valley (Stockton-3rd lowest, Bakersfield-9th, Fresno-12th).
Appalachia	West Virginia[79]	WV is the only state that is entirely within the Appalachian region. High density and number of population of interest 680,000 rural population, 93%+ white, 16%+ living in poverty WV is the most consistently poor of all states in Appalachia. Appalachia's poverty rate is decreasing overall, but has increased in Central Appalachia (West Virginia and part of Kentucky) by 2 percentage points since the 2008-2012 time span. Central Appalachia had by far the lowest median household income at about $35,862, while the region as a whole was nearly $48,000. 16% of West Virginians live in poverty, compared to 10.5% nationally. West Virginia has 18 economically "distressed" counties and 10 "as-risk" counties, according to the Appalachian Regional Commission. WV is on average the least educated of Appalachian states. In 2017, 14.1% of West Virginians had less than a high school degree, compared to 11.4% nationally and 11.5% in Appalachia as a whole. In 2019, Only 20% of West Virginians had a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 32.1% nationally. The percentage of students in West Virginia who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level was 25 percent in 2019. Students who were eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), had an average score that was 15 points lower than that for students who were not eligible.

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[79] (ARC, 2020; Boles, 2019; Kannapel et al., 2015; M. D. Morgan, n.d.; Pollard & Jacobsen, 2019; RHI Hub, 2020; Scommegna, 2012; *The Nation's Report Card | NAEP*, n.d.; U.S. Census, 2020)

| New York / Newark | Bronx, Newark, Brooklyn; *or,* Monroe & Erie[80] | New York is the most unequal state in the U.S.: the top 1% makes 44.4 times as much as the rest on averageInequality in income leads to other disparities, including in health.

NYC is the most populous city in the U.S. with 8.4 m residents. Nearly one in five New NYC residents and 25% of children live in poverty. Among families in the poorest quintile, nearly half (48%) are headed by a Latino/a, and nearly a quarter (25%) are headed by a Black person.

There are 1,126,501 students in the NYC school system, the largest school district in the U.S: 72.8% are economically disadvantaged; 13.2% are English Language Learners; 40.6% Hispanic; 25.5% Black; 16.2% Asian; 15.1% white; 47.4% of students meet state proficiency standards in English; 45.6% in math; 75.9% of students graduate high school in four years. There are over 21,000 children sleeping in NYC homeless shelters each night. Over 114,000 students were homeless in NYC in the 2018-19 academic year. The number of NYC students identified as homeless has steadily increased by more than 70% over the last decade.

The Bronx is particularly bad - 26.2% of residents live in poverty, and over ⅓ (31.8%) of children live in poverty. This is the only NYC borough with a majority Hispanic population: 56.5%, and 43% Black. Only 9% of the Bronx identifies as "white alone."

Newark is the most populous city in the state of New Jersey with 282,000 residents. **It's also the poorest:** 27.4% of Newark residents live below the poverty line, compared with 9.2% in the state of NJ. 16% of Newark families are living in extreme poverty. 95% of residents living in poverty did not have a full-time job during the past year. Newark's students are 51.1% Hispanic; 39.7% Black; 7.9% White. 76% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. 17% are "limited English proficient." Only 34.8% of students meet or exceed state proficiency expectations in English, and 24.1% in math. Nearly ¼ - 24.8% - of students do not graduate high school in four years; and 25% of all residents do not have a high school diploma.

Upstate NY: The black-white achievement gaps in counties such as Onondaga, Erie, Monroe, Columbia, and Schenectady are large: while white students perform above average, Black students perform 2-2.5 grade levels below the national average. |

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[80] (ACNY, 2019; ARC Gis, 2021; Baer & Haygood, 2017; Chin et al., 2017; District Summary - Newark Board of Education, 2020; Kiersz, 2014; Kimiagar & Mullan, 2020; NYC DoE, 2021; NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity, 2020; NYC Poverty Research Unit, 2020; Shapiro, 2020; U.S. Census, 2020b)

Bay Area, CA	Alameda or Contra Costa[81]	The San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara metro area is the most unequal metro area in CA: the top 1% earn 34.6x more than the bottom 99%. San Francisco has the highest per capita GDP in the world, but in the Bay Area, more than two-thirds (68%) of Black residents are in families considered low or very low income as are nearly three-quarters (72%) of Latinos. Housing costs in the Bay Area are one of the most expensive in the country. In San Francisco, the median home price is just over $1 million, and in San Jose, the cost is $600,000. The Bay Area has the third largest total population of people experiencing homelessness (28,200) in the U.S. (after NY & LA). The Bay shelters a smaller proportion of its homeless (33 percent) than any metropolitan area in the U.S. besides Los Angeles (25 percent), making the crisis highly visible across the region. The percentage of the population with a Bachelor's degree varies widely - from 60% in Marin County to 36% in Napa. Education: In Alameda and San Francisco over two thirds (71 percent) of incoming fourth graders from low income communities cannot read at grade level. Oakland: Only 18.6% of Black students in OUSD are reading on grade level, and 23.8% of Latinx students are, overall less than half of all Oakland students are proficient readers. Racial Achievement Disparities: In the same district where less than 1 in 5 Black children can read, almost 3 in 4, 72.5%, of White children are meeting or exceeding standards.

Considerations & Learnings

- Some of the book distribution partners operate in other regions beyond those we identified as well, reaching more children in RtR's populations of interest, even if beyond the specific focal regions. If RtR works with large national partners that have local affiliates, a single organization may be able to distribute books to multiple geographies/populations of interest.

- Large government agencies present an opportunity for scale, but might be slow moving. As mentioned above, RtR should consider whether it will interact with government agencies in parallel ways to how it has approached partnership in other countries.

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[81] (A. Anderson, 2017; CA DoE, 2020a, 2020b; CADOE, 2016; Cano, 2020; EPI, 2018; "List of Cities by GDP (PPP) per Capita," 2020; Ross & Treuhaft, 2020; *Students Meeting or Exceeding Grade-Level Standard in English Language Arts (CAASPP), by Race/Ethnicity*, n.d.; U.S. Census, 2020)

- Some organizations serve families directly, some work through schools - it may be worth considering whether RtR has an implicit or explicit theory of change about whether one type of recipient is more likely to lead to impact than another.

- The most respectful and culturally appropriate way to approach working in Native American nations is not clear - It will be important to reach out to some of the existing national and organized groups before delving into work in these areas.

- Additional due diligence is needed across the board on the organizations identified, and consideration should be given for how to respectfully partner and become involved in each region.

- Since RtR is relatively clear on the populations of interest, a good first step is connecting with organizations to contact authors/artists from communities within the focal geographies. Meanwhile, RtR can begin to connect with the counsel organizations and large nonprofits to learn more about the realities, stories, and politics of each region.

Potential Partners

Information about potential and recommended partners within each region can be found detailed in this presentation and in this spreadsheet. Appendix C provides a comparison table analyzing the different organizations by type of program and by the region it serves.

In the research, we found there were three different kinds of organizations that might be of use in the U.S. strategy:

- Organizations that could connect RtR with authors and artists from each community or population of interest;
- Organizations for Counsel regarding each region of focus or population of interest; and,
- Potential partnership organizations in either book distribution or program delivery.

Within each region, organizations we recommend reaching out to in the next phase are outlined in the "recommended" tab of the spreadsheet. While we were able to significantly reduce the number of potential partners based on the criteria outlined above, there are still many prospective partners to consider. Table 7 below provides our top national partners - it shows whether they are a book distribution organization, a literacy program organization, or both. Additional partners can be explored in the spreadsheet.

Table 7: Recommended National Organizations

Organization	Book Dist	Prog	Natl	NY/ Newark	SF Bay Area	Deep South	South west	Central CA	Appal achia	The Dakot as
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reach out and Read (Learn4Life Partner)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Save the Children, U.S.		X	X	?	?	?	?	?	X	X
First Book	X		X	X			X		X	X
Raising a Reader		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Reader to Reader	X	X	X			X	X			
Reading Corps		X	X					X		X
Partnership with Native Americans		X	X				X			X
Little Free Library	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Unite for Literacy	X		X	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Reading is Fundamental	X	X	X	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Project Night Night	X		X	X	X		X	X		
United Ways		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
FACE by Bureau of Indian Education		X	X				X			X
Teach for America		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Top Recommendations:
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a surprise best potential pick for book distribution. It's the only organization that has partners in every geography of focus.
- Reach Out & Read is another excellent potential partner; it doesn't have partners in WV, but otherwise is extensive.
- It may be worth exploring partnerships with Americorps' Reading Corps and Teach for America, after ensuring their programs are truly mission aligned.
- Partnership with Native Americans and FACE by BIE seem like essential first steps when considering work in Native American regions, as well as the for-counsel organizations recommended in the spreadsheet.
- Raising a Reader might be a strong choice, particularly given they are headquartered in San Francisco and are national with local affiliates. But, they do not currently seem to have affiliates in the highest priority areas. This may be an opportunity for a joint funding application for strategic growth.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

What became abundantly clear through this research is the incredible need in the U.S. for additional literacy support and services. Despite its vast wealth, the U.S. is struggling to ensure all of its children develop the literacy skills that will allow them to lead empowered, choice-filled, lives. Room to Read's extensive experience, science-based literacy programming, and willingness to develop books with and for populations that are underrepresented in children's books are strengths that will bring value and have an impact in the U.S. context.

This being said, there are a few additional considerations to take into account:

- **Additional due diligence is needed across the board.**
  This is true both for research on organizations and how to respectfully become involved in each region. While there seem to be a number of strong potential partners, limited information can be gathered from desktop research. We anticipate that the true potential options for entering the U.S. will become clear through conversations with potential partners and the organizations that were recommended for counsel.

- **Doing this right will take time.**
  Crafting a strategy that adheres to RtR's principles, builds on its strengths, and is designed for maximum impact given the particular constellation of challenges, opportunities, and contexts of the U.S. will take time to develop and implement well. Given the complexity of the different populations and geographies, and the vast geographic size and number of potential partners, it's likely better to plan well then implement, rather than jump right in.

- **Book development could start immediately.**
  While additional due diligence is needed, RtR is relatively clear on the populations of interest, and where they are located. This means the stories themselves could be developed while the due diligence is being conducted on the best way to get books and literacy opportunities to children. A good first step is connecting with organizations to contact authors/artists from communities within the geographies of focus and designing the book development process. This way, when RtR has identified its partner(s) and strategy, the books will be ready.

At a high-level, we imagine a plan for achieving RtR's desired impact year one is likely to include a year for additional research and partnership exploration, while also developing books and stories with authors, illustrators, and communities. Then, it will likely take around two years to publish books and begin distribution, while also continuing to build relationships and continue how to develop and deliver programming for these populations in the U.S. context. By year four or five, we expect RtR will be piloting and scaling literacy programming or technical assistance,

as well as book distribution. Any plan will need to be flexible enough to allow the team to take into account and adapt to emergent information, shifting contexts, and partners' strengths and plans.

In closing, this research has found there is a clear opportunity for Room to Read to make a significant impact in the U.S.. There is incredible inequity to address in the U.S., and multiple demographics that could benefit from this work. The U.S. both has a significant need for additional literacy development assistance, and is a feasible country for Room to Read to work in with partners. We recommend Room to Read act on its interest in bringing its experience, skills, and programs to the U.S., and look forward to following and supporting its progress and impact.

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APPENDIX A: Methodology Overview Chart

National Landscape Analysis

Key Research Questions:
  What does the educational landscape in the U.S. look like?
  Who are the most underserved populations demographically, and where geographically are the most underserved communities?

Approach	National Indicators of Interest Explored
- Online research re: key national databases - Identification of key policy and research documents - Network & Stakeholder outreach recommendations & interviews - People and orgs to talk to - Data sources - Key geographies of interest	**National Indicators of Interest Explored** Education-Specific 　NAEP scores 　State literacy assessments 　Title I / FRL 　Adult Literacy Rates 　Adult Education Attainment Rates Demographics 　Poverty 　Race/ethnicity 　Immigrants 　Refugees 　Migrants Additional Community Indicators of Interest 　Library access 　Book Deserts 　Broadband Access 　Social services 　Non-profit density 　Incarceration rates

Additional research Questions:
  ● For each indicator of interest, what are the patterns across the U.S.?
  ● Which areas/communities/identities do experts in this area think are least served?

Analysis Questions:
  ● In which geographic areas do multiple indicators of interest intersect?
  ● What intersecting demographic identities are least served/ most in need?
  ● How do expert opinions compare with the data?

Geographic Selection of 15-20 Potential Geographies

Key Research Questions:
- *Where in the U.S. might RtR have outsized impact? (specifically for populations of interest)*
- *Where in the U.S. are children most underserved in ways that impact their access to developing literacy skills?*
- *Where are 4-5 geographies of highest need/highest potential impact for populations of interest?*

Approach:	Geography Selection Criteria:
- Online research re: key state databases - Identification of key policy & research documents at state-level - Network & stakeholder outreach & interviews	- Communities experiencing book deserts - Populations of interest - Key indicators of need - poverty, access to services, etc. - Existence of potential partner organizations (mechanisms for reach/access)

Room to Read Global Book Collection Countries & Languages

English
Bangladesh: Bengali,
Cambodia: Khmer
India: Bundeli, Hindi, Chhattisgarhi, Garhwali, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu, Rajasthani
Indonesia: Bahasa, Indonesia
Jordan: Arabic
Laos: Lao
Myanmar: Burmese
Nepal: Nepali Tharu
Philippines: Filipino
South Africa: Afrikaans, Ndebele, Sepedi, SeSotho, Tswana, Venda, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Tshivenda, isiSwati, Xitsonga
Sri Lanka: Sinhala, Tamil
Tanzania: Swahili
Vietnam: Vietnamese
Zambia: Nyanja, Tonga

Analysis Questions:
- To what extent is there overlap between geographies and multiple populations of interest?
- To what extent do children in need speak languages from RtR's global book population and live in geographically identifiable areas?
- Where are the 4-5 geographies of high

5 Priority Areas of Focus & Potential Strategic Partners

Key Research Questions:
- *Where within the 5 regions identified are the best places to start?*
- *Which organizations might be good partners for RtR within these regions?*

Approach:	Geography Selection Criteria:
- Online research re: key state and local databases - Identification of key policy & research documents at state-level - Network & stakeholder outreach & interviews - Online searches for literacy, early childhood, reading, and book distribution organizations.	- The most poor and underserved within each region - Highest density and number of populations of interest - Existence of potential partner organizations (mechanisms for reach/access)

Partner Selection Criteria Used in other Room to Read Program Countries

- <u>Mission</u>: The organization's mission is related to primary grade literacy, expanding access to quality reading materials and/or public school improvement.
- <u>Reputation</u>: Has a good professional standing amongst other non-profit organizations for high-quality work in the relevant field
- <u>Relationship with government</u>: Prior success working with the local government and communities to carry out and complete projects with primary schools
- <u>Access to staff</u>: Ability to recruit and retain a high caliber teams
- <u>Geographic scope</u>: Work in both urban and rural geographies
- <u>Operations experience</u>: Prior experience in implementation activities with public primary schools, including organizing training, acquiring and distributing materials, etc.
- <u>Technical Experience</u>: Prior experience conducting capacity building activities for school-based staff at the primary school level, such as workshops and/or on-site coaching
- <u>Beneficiaries</u>: Past beneficiaries of the organization have included public schools or organizations that support public schools
- <u>Availability and commitment</u>: Ability to commit to the full scope and timeline of projects with partner organizations
- <u>Years of experience</u>: At least five years of experience working implementing projects with primary schools
- <u>Ability to replicate the work in the future</u>: Demonstrated success in fundraising for current activities and a stable donor base

Additional potential criteria in the U.S.
- Serve a population of interest / DEI focus
- Align with Science

Analysis Questions:
- Where is there overlap between geographies of focus and potential partners?
- Which partners work across multiple geographies of interest?
- Where is there the most need / potential for impact?

APPENDIX B: Tables of Recommended Areas of Focus for each Population of Interest

Methodology Notes

Each table includes the representative worst data for each region for comparison purposes, but each region has a range – see spreadsheet for details.

Book Desert is the percent of homes in a particular area with fewer than 100 books.

Poverty (SES) and Education (test scores) were taken from the Educational Opportunity Project Calculations. Methodology Notes:

Stanford Educational Opportunity Explorer website and methodology for SES and EDUCATION (excerpted below).

SES or "POVERTY" SCORES
The composite SES measure is standardized so that a value of 0 represents the SES of the average school district in the U.S. Then, areas are assessed according to the standard deviation.. Approximately two-thirds of districts have SES values between -1 and +1, and approximately 95% have SES values between -2 and +2. We use six community characteristics reported in the surveys from 2007 through 2016 to construct a composite measure of SES in each community:
- Median income
- Percentage of adults age 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher
- Poverty rate among households with children age 5–17
- Percentage of households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Percentage of households headed by single mothers
- Employment rate for adults age 25–64.

TEST SCORES
The data are based on the standardized accountability tests in math and English Language Arts (ELA) administered annually by each state to all public-school students in grades 3–8 from 2008–09 through 2015–16. In these years, 3rd through 8th graders in U.S. public schools took roughly 350 million standardized math and ELA tests. Their scores—provided to us in aggregated form by the U.S. Department of Education—are the basis of the data reported here. We combine information on the test scores in each school, school district, or county with information from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; see https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/) to compare scores from state tests on a common national scale (see see the Methods page). Once the test scores are placed on a common scale across states, grades, and years, we have measures of the average test scores in up to 96 grade-year-subject cells for each school, district, or county. The scores are adjusted so that a value of 3 corresponds to the average achievement of 3rd graders nationally, a value of 4 corresponds to the average achievement of 4th graders nationally, and so on. Average test score: To compute the average test score, we compare students in each grade, year, and subject with the national average and then combine them. For example, -4.23 means that the county's average test scores are 4.23 grade levels below the national average, -3.35 is 3.35 grade levels below average.

American Indian / Alaska Native

Region	Tribes/ Lang	Population	Poverty	Education	Book Desert	Notes
Great Plains (ND,SD,NE)	Sioux - 3 dialects spoken in ND,SD, MN, NE. & Canada	~150,000	-3.55	-3.44	6%	Smaller population groups, but very underserved. Could potentially scale to MN/WI/MT.Sioux is 3rd most commonly spoken.
Alaska	Yupik, Inupiat	~114,000	-3.08	-4.17	9%	Very rural, likely hard to access, but very underserved. Yupik is second most widely spoken Children grow up speaking Yupik as their first language in 17 of 68 Yupik villages – 10,000 speakers, 21,000 people
Southwest + West Region (NV,UT,AZ,CO,NM)	30+ tribes; Navajo largest by far	~750,000	-2.16	-1.94	9%	<50% on reservations, spread across states, but mostly within a few counties in AZ/NM. The Navajo Nation is actively trying to keep language alive through schools, radio, etc. 170,000+ speakers. The Navajo have the most people who identified with one tribal grouping and no other race (287,000) on the census.
Eastern Oklahoma	**Thirty-nine tribes** call Oklahoma home, but only five are considered indigenous: the Osage, Caddo, Kiowa, Comanche and Wichita.	~500,000	-1	-2.74	16%	According to the Tulsa World, six Native languages once spoken in Oklahoma have disappeared and 14 are endangered. One survey says nine different Native languages are taught in up to 34 public schools. Apache, Cherokee and Choctaw are each spoken by 10-15,000 people.

Black Americans

Region	Population	Pop Density	Poverty	Education	Book Desert	Notes
Deep South Corridor (LA, MS, AL, AR)	3 million	~30%	-4.23	-3.35	9%	
Michigan	1.4 million	14% state 78% Detroit	-3.24	-2.64	19%	The largest concentration of Black Americans in MI is in Detroit - 40% of total
South Carolina	1.4 million	~20%	-3.55	-3.22	8%	

Latinx Americans

Region	Population	Pop Density	Poverty	Education	Book Desert	Notes
Central California	~3m (15m in CA)	40%+	-1.33	-2.14	5%	Most counties have about 25% book desert, but the one with highest % Latino is 5%, may be more representative of Latino families
Southwest Border (AZ/NM)	~1.5m (2.3AZ, 1m NM)	50%+	-2.04	-1.95	12%	Most counties around 15%
Texas	~3m (11.5m TX)	40%+	-2.19	-2.24	7%	Most counties around 20% but lowest performing, 94% Latino is at 7%

*Population numbers are estimates from high need counties identified, state population from census data for the whole state.

White, Rural Americans

Region	Population	Pop Density	Poverty	Education	Book Desert	Notes
Central Appalachia (WV, KY, TN)	~1.5m*	95%	-2.16	-1.66	22%	
Deep South (LA, MS, AL, AR)	~3m*	40%	-.23	-2.91	9%	*3m is a very rough estimate taking into account total white and approximate rural population
Northern MI	~450k	90%	-.28	-1.1	25%	

*3m is a rough estimate based on percentage white population and percentage poor; 1.5m is the estimate of white households living in poverty in Central Appalachia. There are 7 million total white rural people in the area.

Immigrant Communities

Region of Origin	Region U.S.	Population	% Immigrant Pop	Poverty	Notes
Mexico	CA (35%); TX (26%); AZ (5%) Los Angeles (Mexicans are 13% of LA); Chicago, Dallas, Houston,Phoenix	11m	25.00%	20%	Mexicans on average are more likely to be Limited English Proficient (LEP), have lower levels of education, experience poverty, and lack health insurance. All three of the primary regions in the U.S. for Mexican immigrants are, unsurprisingly, also where the majority of Latinx Americans reside.
India	NY, IL, CA, DC NYC, Chicago, San Jose, SF, LA,	2.7m	5.90%	7.50%	Indian immigrants are more likely to be highly educated, to work in management positions, and to have higher incomes. They also have lower poverty rates and are less likely to be uninsured.
Philippines	CA, NY, HI, IL Los Angeles, San Francisco, NYC, San Diego, Chicago, Honolulu	2m	4.50%	7.50%	Filipinos are more likely than other immigrants to have strong English skills, and have much higher college education rates than the overall foreign- and U.S.-born populations. They are also more likely to be naturalized U.S. citizens than other immigrant groups, have higher incomes and lower poverty rates, and are less likely to be uninsured.
El Salvador	CA, TX, NY Los Angeles, DC, NYC, Houston	1.4m	3.20%	17%	In 2014, U.S. authorities and media noticed an increase in unaccompanied youth—primarily from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, but also some from Mexico—and families arriving in the United States to escape violence and poverty in their countries.
Vietnam	CA, TX Los Angeles, San Jose, Houston, Dallas, SF, DC, Seattle, San Diego	1.34m	3.00%	14.30%	Vietnamese immigrants are more likely than the overall U.S. foreign-born population to be Limited English Proficient (LEP). Compared to the total immigrant population, a much greater share of Vietnamese are naturalized U.S. citizens; & also less likely to live in poverty or lack health insurance.

Children in Foster Care

Region	Population	% Under Age 10	# Under Age 10	Notes
CA	52337	60%	31,402	Native Americans and Black children are overrepresented in the foster care system in California; but largest percentages within the system are Latino (52%) and White (26%), then Asian (11%) and Black (5%) In 2017-18, only 23 percent of students in foster care met or exceeded the standards on the Smarter Balanced tests for English language arts administered to students in certain grades each spring, compared to 50 percent of all students statewide.
TX	32960	69%	22,742	Latino (38.9%; white (30.8%); Black (23.5%).
FL	24404	74%	18,059	Latino (30%); Black (20%); White (43%)
NY	16385	71%	11,633	White (32%); Black (55%); Latino (10%) Percentages under age 10 are estimates because they divide differently in NY - into waiting to be adopted and adopted

San Francisco Bay Area

County	Population	Pop Density	Poverty	Education	Book Desert	Notes
Alameda	Total: 1,671,329 Black: 183,846 Latinx: 372,706	Black: 11% Latinx: 22.3%	.69 8.9%	Total:-.08 Black: -2.24 Latinx: -1.73	28%	Total population of Black residents is approximately the size of Newark's, but with lower education outcomes.
Contra Costa	Total: 1,153,526 Black: 109,585 Latinx: 299,917	Black: 9.5% Latinx: 26%	.76 7.9%	Total -.17 Black: -2.34 Latinx:-1.67	36%	
San Francisco	Total: 881,549 Black: 49,367 Latinx: 133,995	Black: 5.6% Latinx: 25.2%	.99 9.5%	Total: -.28 Black: -2.73 Latinx: -1.96	32%	
San Joaquin	Total: 762,148 Black: 63,258 Latinx: 320,102	Black: 2.8% Latinx: 24%	-.34 13.6%	Total: -1.43 Black: -2.56 Latinx: -2.02	5% Fresno; 20% County	

New York / Newark

County	Population	Pop Density	Poverty	Education	Book Desert	Notes
Newark (City)	**Total: 282,011** **Black: 141,288** **Latinx: 102,370**	**Black: 50.1%** **Latinx: 36.3%**	**-2.14** **27.2%** **poverty**	**Total: -.98** **Black: -1.48** **Latinx: -.6**	**5%**	**Highest density & poverty & book desert.**
Bronx	Total: 1,41,8207 Black: 618,338 Latinx: 799869	Black: 43% Latinx: 56%	unavail 26.2% poverty	Total:-..2 Black:-.98 Latinx: -.95	8%	Nearly tied in density, poverty, & book desert, but 5x the population size.
Kings (Brooklyn)	Total:2,559,903 Black:865,247 Latinx:483,822	Black: 33.8% Latinx:18.9%	unavail 17.8% poverty	Total:-..2 Black:-.98 Latinx: -.95	17%	Highest BIPOC population.
Erie	Total:918,702 Black:128,618 Latinx:53,285	Black:14% Latinx:5.8%	-.01 13.3% poverty	Total: .04 Black: -2.25 Latinx: -1.57	31%	Low density & lower overall poverty rates, but nearly the same number of Black residents as Newark with lower education outcomes.
Monroe	Total: 918,702 Black:120,617 Latinx:68,243	Black: 16.2% Latinx: 9.2%	.06 12.7%	Total: -.04 Black: -2.28 Latinx: -1.81	31%	Same as Erie.
Onondaga	Total:460,528 Black:55,263 Latinx: 23,947	Black:12% Latinx: 5.2%	.14 13.8%	Total: -.28 Black: -2.87 Latinx: -2.46	34%	The worst education outcomes.

APPENDIX C: Table of Potential Partners

A full list of partner organizations discovered during this process, as well as analysis and information about each, can be viewed in this spreadsheet.

Organization	Book Dist	Prog	Natl	NY/ New ark	SF Bay	Deep South	Sout hwe st	Cent ral CA	Appal achia	The Dakot as	Description of Mission & Program	Notes re: Scale & Capacity
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until they begin school, no matter their family's income.	They are already nationwide with presence in every state (along with 4 other countries), but not in every county in our target regions. 148 Million Free Books Gifted As Of November 2020. Seems an excellent way to get books distributed. A good combination of national reach and local roots. Depending on the region, might need additional local partners to reach the most needy.
Reach out and Read (Learn4Life Partner)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together. They provide training, resources, and support to pediatricians, including books that the families take home at the end of the visit.	An alternative way of reaching families - Reach Out and Read's national network of clinicians delivers vital information about the importance of reading at routine pediatric checkups. Nationwide presence, but very sparse in our target regions (i.e. they have very few programs in ND or WV, but higher in MS).
Save the Children, U.S.		X	X	?	?	?	?	?	X	X	Helps children get ready for kindergarten and learn to read by third grade — a major indicator of future success. Especially focused on reaching vulnerable children in rural America where early learning resources are scarce.	In the US and over 100 countries - high potential for scaling. Well-established organization that has been around for a long time (founded in 1932).

Organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Description	Notes
[First Book]	X		X	X			X		X	X	Gives new books to low-income families with young children throughout the United States and Canada. They have a The Stories for All Project™ that specifically curates new, relevant, high-quality books representing diverse characters, voices, and life circumstances and makes them available and affordable to educators supporting kids in need. First Book aims to remove barriers to quality education for all kids by making everything from new, high-quality books and educational resources to sports equipment, winter coats, snacks, and more – affordable to its member network of more than 500,000 educators who exclusively serve kids in need.	They have a The Stories for All Project™ that specifically curates new, relevant, high-quality books representing diverse characters, voices, and life circumstances and makes them available and affordable to educators supporting kids in need. Since 1992, First Book has distributed more than 185 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families. Already nationwide - High level of scalability.
[Raising a Reader]		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Helping families with children from birth to age eight develop, practice and maintain home literacy habits essential for school and life success. Parents receive training in research-based practices to develop the habit of sharing books, children bring home a Red Book Bag each week filled with award-winning books to practice the habit of sharing books, and families are connected with libraries to maintain the habit of borrowing and sharing books.	A good combination of national reach and local roots. RaR is already in hundreds of locations nationwide, concentrated mostly in the coastal states. They have created a reading and book sharing program and then they train their partners across the country to do the actual implementation. High level of scalability. *However, while they are in each region, they are not in the particular areas of focus that serve the populations of most need identified in this research.*
[Reader to Reader]	X	X	X			X	X				Dedicated to bringing books, free of charge, to under-resourced school libraries and public libraries across the United States. They have donated over $50,000,000 worth of books and computers. In addition, they run a number of innovative programs designed to get people reading and learning.	Reader to Reader's Book Donation Program has donated millions of books to schools and public libraries. They provide district-wide book donations for public schools in low-income areas, and state-wide donations for public libraries. Work in many areas of interest, plus a few that were "runners up" (i.e. Detroit & Texas). Even though they are currently only in two of our target regions, they are a national organization with broad presence. Seems like a high capacity for scaling.

Organization											Description	Notes
[Reading Corps](#)		X	X					X		X	Changing academic outcomes for thousands of students through a tutoring program that helps children become successful readers. It combines the power of national service with literacy science to deliver proven approaches that help struggling learners transform into confident students.	This might be a way in to partnering with Americorps programs more broadly - huge opportunity for scale long term. With more than 1,500 tutors serving in twelve states and Washington D.C., Reading Corps is helping more than 36,000 children each year. They are in more than 350 school districts and nearly 1,200 preschool and elementary school sites across the country.
[Partnership with Native Americans](#)		X	X				X			X	PWNA's role is to be a trusted partner and resource to support their community-driven efforts toward lasting change in tribal communities. PWNA provides materials and services for immediate relief through program categories such as education, community investment, capacity building, health, and more.	Programs and services impact 250,000 Native Americans on reservations across the US. $27million org- PWNA has a strong network with hundreds of reservation programs (our Program Partners) in hundreds of tribal communities.
[Little Free Library](#)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Inspires a love of reading, builds community, and sparks creativity by fostering neighborhood book exchanges around the world. There is also an impact library initiative for book desert communities; and a partnership specifically for Native communities.	They have 100,000 little free libraries across the world. There is an impact library initiative for book desert communities; and a partnership specifically for Native communities. Won the 2020 World Literacy Award from the World Literacy Foundation.
[Unite for Literacy](#)	X		X	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	Unite for Literacy has developed the platform, publishing tools, and systems-based strategies that support partners to change the literacy landscape of their communities. They build home libraries and support families to develop a daily habit of reading.	May be a good partner in publishing and/or distribution. It's unclear from their website where exactly they work. They appear to be primarily virtual with the capacity for printed books as well.
[Reading is Fundamental](#)	X	X	X	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	Books for Ownership, RIF's flagship reading program, enables children to select new, age-appropriate books to take home and own and is supported by resources (activities, games, lesson plans, and more) for parents, educators, and local literacy advocates to create a continuous focus on reading.	Have already served over 50 million children through Books for Ownership Program (since 1966). They seem worth a conversation, and have a big book distribution program "books for ownership" that may be a good partner.
[Project Night Night](#)	X		X	X	X		X	X			Our mission is to provide free Night Night Packages to homeless children from birth to pre-teen who need our childhood essentials to have a concrete and predictable source of	350,000 children's books donated since 2005. Nationwide presence, but very sparse in our target regions (i.e. they have very few programs in ND or WV,

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Description	Notes
										security and increased exposure to high-quality literacy materials during this time of upheaval. Each Night Night Package contains a new security blanket, an age-appropriate children's book, and a stuffed animal	but some in AZ and CA). Specifically serves homeless youth.
United Ways	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	There are a number of United Ways in each of our target regions, each with their own website and programs that they offer to the communities that they serve. Some have literacy-focused programs (including book distribution) and some do not.	Unclear as to the governance structure of United Ways across the country and whether or not there is one point of contact for all literacy programs or if we would need to reach out to each individually. Possibility to scale what one location is doing into other locations.
FACE by Bureau of Indian Education	X	X				X			X	A program for kids ages 0 to 8, parents, and primary caretakers. Built on a model that respects American Indian culture and traditions, the FACE program aims for school reform in three settings—home, school, and community.	The Bureau for Indian Education schools have some of the worst results in the nation. This is a Program of BIE. Lots of sites in AZ and NM, but fewer in ND - possibility to scale more here.
Teach for America	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Teach For America works toward the day when every child will receive an excellent and equitable education. We find and nurture leaders who commit to expanding opportunity for low-income students, beginning with at least two years teaching in a public school.	This could be an interesting partner in thinking about how to access kids and families. TFA teachers work in high-needs populations in all of our target regions. Though they are based within schools, they are a well-established, national organization within education.
Mississippi Department of Education	X					X				Mississippi Dept of Ed - The site is organized by grade level, from kindergarten through grade 5. It includes strategies for developing strong reader habits and a series of activities to practice the five components of reading. Those include working with sounds, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Also included are tools for families to find books that match their child's grade band and a free, online library.	Big focus on literacy at the moment. Just started a site to provide parents with resources about reading. Potential channel for getting to families. Scalable within Mississippi, assumed higher capacity than normal given that literacy is a state priority right now.
Mississippi United Ways		X				X				United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.	Each United Way has different literacy programs. Some in Mississippi include Grade-Level Reading Campaign, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, PreKFwd Program, school readiness, resources

Organization											Mission	Notes / Scalability
												for parents, and summer learning.
Ferst Readers	X					X					Ferst Readers' mission is to strengthen communities by providing quality books and literacy resources for children and their families to use at home during the earliest stages of development.	Large presence in the southeast, but only in two counties in Mississippi right now. Possibility to scale further within the state. Well established (since 1999).
Mississippi Head Start Association		X				X					The Mississippi Head Start Association's (MHSA) mission is to provide Mississippi children and families with a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early child development, medical, dental and mental health, nutrition and parent engagement.	Scalable given the National Head Start Program, but might be slower moving due to government affiliation. Could be a good way to access parents of very young children.
Americorps/Mississippi Reads Program		X				X					America Reads - Mississippi is dedicated to improving the reading skills of students, encouraging public awareness and support of literacy, and helping to increase the number of certified teachers in Mississippi.	Like Reading Corps, this might be a way in to partnering with Americorps programs more broadly - opportunity for scale long term. Lots of partner school districts + organizations
Make Way for Books	X	X					X				The mission of Make Way for Books is to give all children the chance to read and succeed. Programs include book distribution, teacher professional development, family programs, and more.	Currently provides proven programs, services, and resources to 30,000 young children, parents, and educators throughout southern Arizona each year - possibility to scale into more of the SW
United Way of the Navajo Nation		X					X				To empower and support Human Care organizations that deliver services to improve the lives of the Navajo Nation and neighboring communities	The only Native American charter member of the United Way. Opportunity to scale because they are part of the national United Way Network.
Kids Need to Read	X						X				Works to create a culture of reading for children by providing inspiring books to underfunded schools, libraries, and literacy programs across the United States, especially those serving disadvantaged children.	This organization is based in Mesa and partners with the Mesa United Way. It says that they are a national organization, but it is unclear which areas they serve outside of Arizona. Possibly to scale, especially if they have presence in our other target areas.
Navajo Nation Department of Dine Education		X					X				It is the educational mission of the Navajo Nation to promote and foster lifelong learning for the Navajo People, and to protect the	

Organization									Description	Notes
									cultural Integrity and Sovereignty of the Navajo Nation	
[First Things First]							X		First Things First is Arizona's early childhood agency, committed to the healthy development and learning of young children from birth to age 5. Also in Navajo Nation.	
[U.S. Bureau of Indian Education]		X					X		In NM there are 22 Bureau Operated Schools and 23 Tribally Controlled Schools, and in AZ there are 17 Bureau Operated Schools and 37 Tribally Controlled Schools.	
[Navajo Head Start]		X					X		To support the Early Childhood Education curricula, we have our very own Diné version of curricula to teach Navajo culture, language, traditions, values, behaviors, and skills necessary for young children, so that in the future, children will know who they are, where they come from, and where they are going.	
[Central California United Ways]			X					X	United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.	Each United Way has different literacy programs. Some in Central California include Help Me Grow, Kinship Care, a Partnership with Raising a Reader, Book Club of the Month Program, and Literacy Project.
[Reading Heart]	X							X	Reading Heart is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) book donation program dedicated to serving children in hospitals and children in areas with limited access to books.	Website seems small but it has delivered 700,000+ books
[Read to Me Stockton]	X							X	"Read to Me, Stockton!" is Stockton's affiliation to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The Imagination Library is offered in cities across our nation, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The program's purpose is to encourage early childhood reading. Children under the age of 5 are eligible to be in the program. Once a child is enrolled, they receive their own free book in the mail every month! The high quality, age appropriate books are addressed to the child and delivered to them by the Dollywood Foundation.	Lots of partners in the area - First 5, Rotary, Office of Ed, Public Library, etc.; Part of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Organization											Description	Notes
Valley Children's Literacy Program		X						X			Doctors and medical staff at Valley Children's talk to families about the importance of reading and patients receive a book each time they visit participating practices to encourage at-home reading.	Doctors and medical staff giving books to kids. Opportunity to scale to more health professionals possibly.
Read for Life	X							X			Read for Life was founded in 1989 by five women passionate about improving literacy in Tulare County. The all-volunteer, non-profit advocacy group distributes books to children and educates parents on the life-long difference reading can make – not just for one child or one family, but for an entire community.	20,000 Books Distributed in 2019-20. Books for Babies, Preschool Program, Books for Kids, Teenage Parenting Program
Owens Valley Career Development Center		X						X			The Owens Valley Career Development Center is a dedicated American Indian organization operating under a consortium of Sovereign Nations. Whereby, providing the opportunity for improvement in the quality of life by focusing on education and self-sufficiency while protecting, preserving and promoting our cultures in the spirit of positive nation building for Native people of today and generations of tomorrow. They have both a family literacy and an early head start program.	This group works across the Central Valley counties but focuses on Native American families - may be of interest once the books are developed for Southwest/Dakotas! Programs include Family Literacy Program, Early Head Start, and Kern Indian Education Center.
Partnership with Native Americans		X					X			X	Founded in 1990, PWNA has evolved from a small startup to a high-impact nonprofit with a clear mission, dedicated team and committed donors who support our work.Our Motivation:We believe the people who live and work in the tribal communities we serve have the solutions to the problems that challenge their quality of life. PWNA's role is to be a trusted partner and resources to support their community-driven efforts toward lasting change. Our programs and services impact 250,000 Native Americans on reservations across the US.	
Native American Training Institute		X								X	Our mission at the Native American Training Institute is to empower individuals, families, and the community to create a safe and healthy environment so children and families can achieve their highest potential.	

Organization											Mission	Notes
Read Aloud WV		X							X		Read Aloud West Virginia's mission is to change the literacy culture of West Virginia by keeping reading material in the hands and on the minds of our state's children. Our mission is supported by programs in four primary areas: Book Distribution, Volunteer Readers, Reader-Friendly Classrooms, and Community Engagement.	This seems like a good potential partner - book distribution by school, family, and healthcare
West Virginia United Ways			X						X		United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.	The United Way of Southern West Virginia partners with Mabscott and Cranberry-Prosperity Elementary Schools to provide volunteer readers on a monthly basis. New in 2018, we are partnering with Read Aloud West Virginia to help them expand and develop their Volunteer Reader program in the coalfields of Southern West Virginia.
West Virginia Department of Education - Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade-Level Reading											Growing literate, competent children today will result in positive impacts on career and college readiness tomorrow. The West Virginia Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade Level Reading serves as the organizing body to help achieve this work. To yield long term gains in student achievement, partnerships between stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels will help ensure all young children in West Virginia are provided ample opportunities to establish positive dispositions toward literacy learning.	Literacy is a focus for them right now. Campaign for grade level reading is part of a national movement and therefore has potential for scale. Some 35 governors have made grade-level reading a priority. And 344 communities are part of our Grade-Level Reading Communities Network, which is bringing together mayors, United Way agencies, chambers of commerce, schools, parents, and educators to substantially increase third grade reading proficiency in their cities and towns.
Energy Express		X							X		West Virginia University Extension program that has family programs and Energy Express is an award-winning, 6-week, summer reading and nutrition program for children living in West Virginia's rural and low-income communities.	Summer literacy program through WVU focused on rural and low-income communities. Relatively small but still good reach and may be well connected.
United Way NYC	X	X		X							ReadNYC helps improve grade-level reading by third grade for children living in some of the most-challenged communities, while at the same time empowering their parents and caregivers to build more stable homes.	The NYC United Way seems to have a robust literacy program that is mission aligned with RtR and could be scaled to other areas of interest.

[United Way of Greater Newark](#)	X	X		X								Newark Thrives! is an intermediary out-of-school time (OST) network with the vision to engage every child in high-quality out-of-school time (OST) experiences so they will grow, develop, and thrive. United Way of Greater Newark University of Chicago's My Very Own Library program is a PreK – 8 literacy initiative that focuses on bolstering literacy and fostering a love of reading by empowering students to build their very own home libraries.	As part of the national United Way, there is possibility for partnership/ scalability. UW of Newark has some great literacy programs that could be shared with other regions.
[ParentChild+ / Newark Trust for Education](#)		X		X								ParentChild+ is a research-based early literacy, school readiness, parenting education program that prepares children for school success by increasing language, literacy, and numeracy skills, enhancing social-emotional development, and strengthening the parent-child relationship.	National org in 15 states, including New York and New Jersey. Their affiliate in New Jersey is called The Newark Trust for Education. There is a separate row in the New York tab with more information.
[Literacy Inc](#)												LINC works throughout New York City's five boroughs to surround children with literacy-rich environments. We disrupt intergenerational illiteracy by training parents to help their children embrace reading. Parents become literacy ambassadors within their communities, engaged with resources that already exist in their neighborhoods. The entire community contributes to the goal of raising readers, creating a culture of literacy at the neighborhood level.	It is unclear if they work in Newark - they may just be NYC. They have lots of programs and initiatives, including parent workshops, early childhood capacity building at schools, book drives, reading celebrations, a literacy initiative coordinated by Literacy Inc., and public awareness initiatives.
[Reading Partners](#)		X		X	X							Our mission is to help children become lifelong readers by empowering communities to provide individualized instruction with measurable results.	Reading Partners became a part of the SF Bay Area and Silicon Valley in 1999. They have offices in Oakland, Pasadena, and Milpitas. They are also in NYC.
[Book Trust](#)	X			X	X							By providing the means for kids to decide which books they want to read each month and adding them to their home libraries throughout the entire school year, we help students build the healthy habits of life-long readers and learners.	National org headquartered in Denver. They have a lot of presence in low-income areas of the bay, specifically Oakland, Livermore, Ravenswood, Redwood City, and San Jose. They are also in NYC.

Organization											Description	Location
[Bridges of Books Foundation](#)	X			X							We collect books through book drives, individual donations, publisher overstocks and corporate donors. We also purchase books for special programs run throughout NJ and to supplement distributions with genres that are not typically part of the collections that we receive. We distribute books through various agencies, community events, schools & other venues.	Slightly unclear where exactly they work, but they are a national org and seems to work in NY, given articles about NYC on their website
[Springboard Collaborative](#)		X			X						Springboard Collaborative closes the literacy gap by closing the gap between home and school. We coach educators and family members to help kids learn to read by 4th grade.	National org headquartered in Philly. Lots of presence in the Bay Area, specifically Stockton, Fresno, Oakland, San Jose, SF, and Salinas.
[Children's Book Project](#)	X	X			X						The Children's Book Project was founded to provide new and gently used books for free to children who need them for equity in literacy, learning, and life. Since 1992, we have given away over 3 million books for children in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond.	They could be a partner for both book distribution and programs (the Read Aloud Program works with local service providers, early childhood educators, nurse home visitors, community health workers, and parenting coaches to support parents in reading aloud to their very young children). They are in 15 California counties in the Bay Area and beyond.
[Tandem, Partners in Early Learning](#)	X	X			X						Tandem engages the whole community to ensure all families have the resources, skills, and confidence they need to support their children's kindergarten readiness. They have both a book distribution program modeled off of Raising a Reader, as well as programs for families and educators around shared book reading and early literacy skills.	They are headquartered in the Bay Area, with offices in San Francisco, Alameda Office, and Contra Costa.