

ARCC Partners *By Caitlin Howley*

An undertaking as complex as the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) benefits from collaboration among like-minded partners with complementary knowledge, skills, and perspectives. ICF is pleased to coordinate the ARCC in partnership with RMC Research and the Ron Brown Scholar Program, each of which makes unique and critical contributions to our collective effort.

For more than 25 years, RMC has provided research, evaluation, and technical assistance to states, school districts, communities, and families to help them improve their work. RMC's impressive portfolio includes the National Reading Technical Assistance Center, the Compendium of Research and Assessment Tools associated with youth development outcomes, and contributions to Doing What Works. In addition, RMC also leads the new Northeast Regional Comprehensive Center and is a subcontractor to four Regional Educational Laboratories.

RMC staff are fully integrated into our technical assistance system and provide direct assistance to our clients. Each state in the Appalachia region is served by two State Coordinators—one from ICF and one from RMC—with shared responsibility for maintaining established state education agency (SEA) relationships and continually building new relationships; assessing needs; developing and delivering technical assistance; and liaising between the SEA and the ARCC. Additionally, RMC staff serve as subject matter and technical assistance specialists, bringing relevant expertise to specific projects as needed.

The Ron Brown Scholar Program has provided academic scholarships, service opportunities, and mentoring for exceptionally talented African American young people since 1996. With a graduation rate of 100%, the program's record of accomplishment includes an extensive alumni association, a community service foundation, and a collection of essays penned by Scholars.

Whereas RMC staff provide direct services to the field as an ARCC partner, Ron Brown Scholars assist with important analytic tasks. For instance, Scholars aid in the development and evaluation of technical assistance by contributing to needs assessments, research reviews, and evaluation data analyses. Not only does the ARCC benefit from an empirical base enhanced by Scholars' efforts, Scholars receive opportunities to learn more about and assist with state-level education initiatives.

Ultimately, our team is strengthened through partnership. RMC brings years of technical assistance and research experience—and insight—to our work with educators and leaders. In addition their analytic support of the ARCC, the Ron Brown Scholars also remind us of the purpose of our technical assistance to SEAs—to ensure that all students have rigorous educational opportunities so that they may achieve their potential and make meaningful contributions to the world.