

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application Non-Construction

2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):

3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:

13-JAN-12

STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:

N/A

2b. APPLICATION ID:

12AC133376

4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:

FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:

12ACHTX0010004

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: CIS of Central Texas

DUNS NUMBER: 137610309

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):

3000 South IH-35, #200

Austin TX 78704 - 6536

County:

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):

NAME: Jennifer Jefts

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (512) 464-9732

FAX NUMBER: (512) 462-0825

INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: peerreviewers@cns.gov

6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):

742369020

7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:

7a. Non-Profit

7b. Local Affiliate of National Organization

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

NEW

NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTE

CONTINUATION

AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es):

A. AUGMENTATION

B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION

D. OTHER (specify below):

9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:

Corporation for National and Community Service

10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006

10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State

11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:

Communities In Schools of Central Texas AmeriCorps

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):

Travis County, Hays County, Caldwell County and Bastrop County

11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/01/12

END DATE: 08/31/15

14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant

b.Program

15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:

a. FEDERAL

\$ 712,352.00

b. APPLICANT

\$ 714,227.00

c. STATE

\$ 0.00

d. LOCAL

\$ 0.00

e. OTHER

\$ 0.00

f. PROGRAM INCOME

\$ 0.00

g. TOTAL

\$ 1,426,579.00

16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?

YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:

DATE:

NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?

YES if "Yes," attach an explanation.

NO

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

Suki Steinhauer

b. TITLE:

CEO

c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:

(512) 464-9713

d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

e. DATE SIGNED:

05/07/12

Narratives

Executive Summary

96 AmeriCorps members (30 FT, 26 HT, and 40 Education Award Only QT) will serve as supportive mentors, academic supporters and service-learning project leaders to at least 1,000 students each year. Members will serve at targeted public schools in underserved communities with large at-risk student populations in four Central Texas counties including: Travis, Hays, Caldwell, and Bastrop. At the end of the three year grant period, 3,000 students will have received one-to-one weekly academic support and/or mentoring and 70% of those students served for a minimum of six months will have increased academic engagement. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of educational attainment. The CNCS investment of \$711,981 will be matched with \$713,612 of non-Corporation funds.

Rationale and Approach

A. NEED -- There is currently an educational crisis in this country as every 26 seconds, a high school student in the US drops out of school. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has identified more than 100,000 students in Central TX as "at-risk" for school dropout because they have repeated 1 or more grades, failed the TX standardized TAKS tests, have limited English proficiency, are homeless or in foster care, are pregnant or parenting, or have been set back academically by other challenges. Behind these risk factors are the multiple barriers students also face: inadequate shelter, clothing or food, untreated mental, emotional or physical health problems, direct or indirect contact with substance abuse or abuse in the home, little to no school readiness or parental involvement -- all significant obstacles to learning. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA, 2010) reports TX has a 29% school attrition rate, meaning nearly a third of all TX students do not graduate in 4 years. The study also noted that Hispanic and African-American students have over twice the attrition rates of White students. Even more alarming, 2 of the 4 counties Communities In Schools of Central Texas (CIS) serves have higher attrition rates than the state average, with an attrition rate of 45% among Hispanic students in Travis County. This is especially concerning since Travis County has an ever increasing Hispanic population. In the Central TX region as a whole English language learners have increased 137% compared to only 47% for TX over the last 10 years according to the E3 Alliance.

Since 1986, more than 3 million students have dropped out of TX schools (IDRA, 2010). School dropouts are an enormous drain on the economy and according to The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, the TX 2007 class of high school dropouts costs state taxpayers \$377 million per year for their lifetime. Dropouts are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors such as premature sexual activity, early pregnancy, crime, violence, alcohol/drug abuse and suicide. Dropouts are also more likely to be incarcerated and more than 80% of TX prison inmates are dropouts (Texas Appleseed, 2007). CIS staff and AmeriCorps members are working on a daily basis to prevent the ever-increasing

Narratives

number of high school dropouts.

CIS provides year-round supportive dropout prevention services on 52 public school campuses (21 elementary, 18 middle, and 13 high) in 5 Central TX Independent School Districts (ISD) including: Austin, Hays Consolidated, Lockhart, Manor, and Bastrop. CIS targets schools in underserved communities with large at-risk populations. Schools are selected in conjunction with school district personnel and community stakeholders to ensure the most underserved communities and campuses with the highest at-risk student population receive CIS services. CIS also focuses on school feeder patterns to provide a safety net of student service continuity from elementary through high school. These targeted schools have high percentages of economically disadvantaged students and the schools are often located in low-income, high-need communities. Although all students are eligible for services, CIS targets its efforts to students who are most at-risk for dropping out of school. During the 10-11 school year, 96% of the students served were ethnic minorities, 95% received some form of public assistance, 67% of students served were Hispanic, 21% African-American, 10% Anglo, and 2% representing other ethnic populations. In addition, 28% of the students served were English Language Learners, 17% were in special education, 10% had an incarcerated parent, and 12% of the high school students served were teen parents. CIS has extensive experience providing services to schools that have low standardized test scores, poor student behavior, high numbers of discipline referrals, low attendance rates, lack of parental involvement and limited community support.

The CIS AmeriCorps program utilizes best practices to effectively serve students at risk of dropping out. Full-time and half-time members specifically focus on 3rd -- 8th graders, because these are critical educational years that can determine a student's potential for dropping out. The Annie E. Casey Foundation recently published a study that indicated 3rd grade students who do not read proficiently are 4 times more likely than their at-grade level peers to dropout or fail out of high school. Similarly, the Department of Education recommends utilizing "adult advocates" who provide mentoring and support as a critical practice in any effective dropout prevention program. By utilizing AmeriCorps members to address these educational inadequacies with elementary and middle school students and by providing necessary mentoring supports, they are working to equalize the educational deficits many at-risk students face on a daily basis which will affect their future school success. Our AmeriCorps program is also unique as it is designed to meet student needs in both urban and rural communities on campuses with a CIS program. Over 20% of our members serve on rural campuses where social services, community resources and volunteers are scarce. Their presence on rural campuses is essential to meet the need for caring supportive adults and additional resources.

B. AMERICORPS MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - 96 members (30 FT, 26 HT and 40 Education Award Only QT (EAO)) will serve as supportive mentors, academic supporters and service-

Narratives

learning project leaders to at least 1,000 at-risk students each year. FT and HT members begin their service year in September and are on the school campuses for the entire school year. They also support students during summer programming. Approximately ½ of the QT EAO members serve for the entire school year while the other ½ complete their service during the fall or spring semester. Each year CIS Program Managers (PM) complete a member request form to meet the needs of their students and individual campus. In completing these forms, PMs also indicate the member slots they are requesting based on their campus need, ability to access students for mentoring, and available meeting space. Utilizing the information from these forms, FT and HT applicants are matched to the campus based on their skills and campus needs. EAO members are typically social work or counseling interns who individually seek out their campus site to fulfill their internship requirements.

Often, there are non-academic issues that hold at-risk students back in the classroom, and many of these students become increasingly disengaged from school due to their various personal, family and social barriers. Members work with the student, teacher and parents to address the root causes of academic problems. A teacher, parent, counselor, or school administrator refers students to CIS. Upon referral, the CIS PM does an initial assessment and matches appropriate students to the members. The members' campus presence allows our PMs to focus their clinical skills on very high needs children while members serve students with less severe behavior, academic and attendance issues. This allows CIS staff to serve a larger number of at-risk students who would otherwise not have any supports and/or positive influences.

Members provide structured meetings consisting of support activities for students referred to CIS for behavior, attendance and/or academic problems. These meetings are 1:1 with the students outside of the classroom. Additionally, members meet with small groups of students providing mentoring/supportive guidance and academic support. They give consistent and individualized attention to students who need extra support that the classroom teacher, counselor or even parents cannot provide. They serve in a coordinated effort with the PM, teachers, school administrators, counselors, students and parents to create a safety net for the students. Members work with students on issues that specifically relate to the CIS referral reason. Overall goals for mentoring/supportive guidance are to improve behavior, attendance rates and/or grades, which ultimately increases school success and promotion rates while reducing the dropout rate. Members plan their weekly mentoring sessions based on the student's needs, semester goals and teacher feedback. Member sessions could include activities addressing topics such as: self-esteem, bullying, grief or loss, and/or anger management. Members tailor activities for student learning and full student engagement through the utilization of learning games, arts and crafts activities, and journal writing.

FT and HT members assisting students with academic support, coordinate their efforts with teachers

Narratives

and use teacher-identified materials with students who are currently failing a core subject (Math, Reading, English, etc.), are in danger of failing, or have previously failed the Texas State Assessment test. CIS members do not fall under the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) definition of tutors as they are not doing curriculum-based tutoring. Academic support activities include: academic goal setting and homework help, deficient skill development, classroom support, and facilitating/mediating meetings between students and teachers. Members incorporate goal setting into their sessions and involve their students in developing improvement plans. Each member and student complete agreements that specify their commitment to work together on the goals they set. After each grading period, agreements are reviewed and modified, progress is documented, and new goals are set. Members analyze the student's learning style and work to engage their students academically in ways that provides student success where in many cases academic success has been very limited. Members meet the student where they are at academically and utilize engaging academic activities such as learning games, and student made reading materials to facilitate a student-centered learning environment.

FT and HT members focus specifically on 3rd-8th grade students on designated campuses. These school years are critical as students are developing behavior patterns that will affect their academic performance in high school. In working intensively with students during this time, positive behaviors and patterns are built that facilitate school success. Members provide a minimum of 900 (HT) or 1,700 (FT) service hours and each works with 12-20 students, at least 1 hour/week for the entire school year. QT EAO members serve students in K-12 on any of the CIS campuses. The majority of EAO members are interns pursuing Social Work or Counseling degrees and this educational background allows them provide necessary clinical services. The education award serves as an added incentive during their internship and connects them to National Service. Their service builds upon preparations from their studies, internship training and AmeriCorps training. Their service term lasts 4-11 months and they provide a minimum of 450 service hours. EAO's facilitate therapeutic groups such as anger management, grief and loss, and self-esteem enhancement. Each EAO works with 6 students at least 1 hour/week for the duration of their service. Daily EAO activities might include: setting goals and tracking progress, coordinating with a teacher regarding services for their students, processing difficult situations and developing coping strategies, discussing future goals, or facilitating a therapeutic group.

In addition, to providing mentoring and academic support services for students, all FT and HT members facilitate the planning and implementation of service-learning projects, involving student volunteers in grades 3-8. Studies show that involvement in service-learning boosts students' academic achievement, improves social skills and prepares students to enter the workforce (Learning Indeed, 2002). Projects are campus or community based, one-time or ongoing, and include participation in

Narratives

National Days of Service. Our past program evaluations have shown that service-learning groups were more effective than any other type of group. The more service-learning hours a student received, the more likely their behavior improved. Behavioral improvement has been as high as 93% of students who participated in our service-learning projects.

We model service-learning principles: by engaging members in the planning, preparation and implementation of trainings and service days; by providing ongoing reflection opportunities and by recognizing the members in a variety of venues during their service year. By modeling these practices, we ensure that student service-learning projects meet a community need, allow time for reflection and critical thinking, facilitate learning and include time for celebration. Members receive training on all components of a successful service-learning project including identifying community need and project management. Members can also access a library of service-learning resources when working with their students. Projects are documented through service-learning logs. Examples of previous projects include: school gardens and beautification, Afghans for Afghans, nursing home pen pal program; anti-littering campaigns, building peace benches, and sending care packages to U.S. troops stationed overseas.

According to the National Dropout Prevent Center/Network mentoring and service-learning are 2 of the 15 effective strategies that have the highest positive impact on the dropout rate. By utilizing AmeriCorps members to implement these strategies, CIS is able to greatly surpass the number of students served than if these services were strictly provided by community volunteers. Two campus principals were recently asked by an outside funding agency "what can we do to make your campus more successful" and both principals immediately answered provide more CIS AmeriCorps members. CIS AmeriCorps members are able to meet each student where they currently are at academically and emotionally, assess the student's needs and work together to achieve the student's goals. AmeriCorps members are in the schools on a daily basis and therefore have ongoing interactions with their students and school staff, can constantly monitor student achievement and easily follow-up on academic, behavioral, and/or attendance issues. CIS AmeriCorps members are part of the school campus, but also serve through an outside agency which allows them to advocate for their students in situations where student needs are not being met by the campus. CIS has a strong infrastructure in place which allows AmeriCorps members to serve a large number of students in a deeply meaningful way allowing for student change and success.

C. EVIDENCE-BASED - Children cannot learn at their potential when in crisis or facing significant non-academic challenges. Most students who dropout of school deal with multiple barriers to their education: poverty, unattended health needs, hunger, unemployed parent or domestic violence. Although dropout statistics focus on the "end game" of high school graduation, dropping out of school is a lengthy process. Researchers have indicated that reading performance and attendance as early as third

Narratives

grade can predict a student's likelihood to dropout of high school. Consequently, the CIS AmeriCorps program primarily targets students in 3rd--8th grade. Child development involves moving from one psychosocial crisis to another (Erickson). Children in 3rd -- 8th grade are resolving the crisis of "industry versus inferiority", which means they will either master and succeed in school, or fall farther behind and ultimately dropout. CIS AmeriCorps members provide the link needed to ensure students' success by positively engaging students in school through mentoring/supportive guidance, academic support, and service-learning.

Mentoring researcher Dr. Jean Rhodes concluded that mentors contribute to youth development by enhancing social-emotional development, being a role model and advocate, and improving cognitive development through dialogue and listening. These influence factors converge to provide positive outcomes across three primary behavioral areas: academic (increased attendance, improved grades and better attitudes toward school); risk behaviors (decreased substance use and delinquent behavior); and psychosocial development (positive social attitudes, self-esteem). CIS focuses on developing student-led goals and assisting students in improving their attendance, academics or behavior. Research indicates that the most important factor for a successful mentoring program is that the program is student-centered. Our members tailor activities to meet the needs of each student and develop student-centered plans based on individual needs, making necessary changes to ensure student success.

Nationally, CIS has been the subject of extensive evaluation for years. Results from school-level evaluations confirm that CIS is: 1) One of a small number of dropout prevention organizations with scientifically-based evidence of effectiveness, 2) One of a handful of organizations proven to decrease dropout rates, and 3) The only organization proven to increase graduation rates. Most recently, Atlantic Philanthropies awarded the CIS national office a five-year grant to support a rigorous independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the CIS model. Of the 200 CIS affiliates across the country, CIS of Central Texas was selected to participate in this ground-breaking study. The study found that CIS case management services was the causal factor of high-need students staying in school, improving attendance, and getting better grades. This evaluation puts CIS nationally in the "evidence-based" category of researched programs and is the first body of evidence on how collaboration between communities and local schools affects academic success. CIS student outcome data supports these findings and demonstrates measurable community impact as 99% of students served intensively complete the school year, 92% are promoted to the next grade, and 88% improve in academics, attendance, and/or behavior.

The CIS model is successful and has been proven as such through multiple evaluations due to the implementation of dropout prevention best practice strategies as outlined by the National Center for Dropout Prevention/Network. Many of these strategies are embedded into the culture of CIS student

Narratives

services and extend through the member's service and student caseload. In addition to mentoring and service-learning noted above as best practices in dropout prevention, members assist in providing a safe learning environment by creating a safe space for students to share concerns, discuss both school and home-based problems and seek safety if they are experiencing any form of violence. Members also strive to keep open communication lines with student's parents/guardians to discuss any school-based issues, share successes and monitor home-based issues. The implementation of these strategies creates a multi-pronged approach which assists the members in striving towards student success.

D. MEMBER EXPERIENCE -- CIS places a very strong emphasis on the member service experience as demonstrated through recruitment and selection, orientation and training, supervision, and reflection. By emphasizing the member service experience throughout the program year, CIS staff work to ensure a powerful experience that results in increased community impact, connection with other AmeriCorps and National Service participants and continued civic participation post-service term.

During the CIS recruitment and selection process, it is heavily emphasized that applicants are applying for a year of National Service as an AmeriCorps member and that this is not a "regular job". Applicants selected for the CIS program clearly communicate their commitment to service and AmeriCorps throughout the selection process.

CIS believes strongly in the power of the corps as a team. FT and HT members begin their service term with a mandatory overnight retreat which focuses on teambuilding while providing them with a detailed training on the history of AmeriCorps and National Service. The first night of the retreat ends with a reflection walk in which members silently reflect upon their service commitment and what they hope to gain during their service term. The reflection walk culminates in a candlelight swearing-in ceremony in which they take their AmeriCorps pledge for the first time. Individual and group reflection opportunities are built into their entire service experience. CIS staff facilitate 4 civic reflection sessions with readings based on topics members are facing with their students or as individuals navigating their service term. During member monthly trainings, time is set aside for member support groups which allow members to reflect on their service, share experiences and learn from each other. Members also have the opportunity to complete monthly reflection journals and book or movie reviews utilizing materials that directly relate to their service. These reflection opportunities allow CIS AmeriCorps staff to monitor members connection to their service, and helps members reflect on and learn from their service which results in a quality experience, promotes life long involvement in service and civic responsibility.

CIS provides varied opportunities throughout the year to connect our members with one another and other area programs. All CIS AmeriCorps members must participate in three National Days of Service. These projects allow the members to showcase their civic responsibility, work towards meeting a

Narratives

community need they may not have been previously exposed to and connect with each other in accomplishing a common goal. Previous service projects have included: local park rehabilitation, creating hats for terminally/chronically ill children, and clearing debris from home sites destroyed by the Texas wildfires.

Our AmeriCorps program has strong relationships with other local, state and national service programs through a number of formal and informal activities that allows us to nurture these relationships, bring our members together for service and collaborate to raise awareness of national service. Austin AmeriCorps programs have established an Austin AmeriCorps website featuring a description of programs to assist in joint recruitment efforts. CIS AmeriCorps members are also introduced to the wider Austin AmeriCorps community as soon as they are accepted as a member. All accepted applicants are invited to join an Austin AmeriCorps Google Group and Facebook page. These groups allow Austin AmeriCorps members to assist each other in relocating, finding housing or roommates, and discuss their upcoming service years. In addition, Austin AmeriCorps programs have a joint swearing in day on the steps of the State Capitol featuring: OneStar Foundation staff, CNCS staff, State Representatives, and AmeriCorps Alums. The joint swearing in allows members to take their pledge in solidarity and increases visibility of AmeriCorps members in the larger community. Each year, Austin AmeriCorps members with program staff guidance, form a planning committee to create a service project and AmeriCorps awareness activities for AAA Day (Austin AmeriCorps Awareness) in conjunction with National AmeriCorps Week. This annual event raises awareness of the impact of AmeriCorps and National Service and allows the members from various programs to collaborate and share their service experiences.

CIS staff strongly encourages member's civic participation during and after their term of service whether through continuing terms of service with CIS or other National Service programs, or volunteering with local community agencies. Members meet with the AmeriCorps Director half-way through their term of service to formulate Life After AmeriCorps goals. During this meeting, they are reminded of their commitment to AmeriCorps and being active participants in their communities. Members are also encouraged to exercise their right to vote as well as take part in other civic activities. For example, members are encouraged to view the State of the Union address together and reflect upon the speech and write a reflection to deepen their connection to National issues. This surfaces discussions and thoughts that cement members' commitment to the needs of their local community. CIS is also in the process of establishing an alumni network to ensure alums are continuously connected for networking opportunities, volunteer opportunities and to continue to learn and grow from each other.

In connecting the CIS AmeriCorps program with the AmeriCorps brand, service sites post AmeriCorps signs and members wear AmeriCorps gear. Members are continuously identified as

Narratives

AmeriCorps members by their AmeriCorps service gear, nametags, e-mail signatures and in all correspondence. Members also receive a bi-monthly newsletter and are encouraged to join local and National Alumni groups.

E. OVERALL PICTURE -- The CIS AmeriCorps program plays a very important role in addressing the 100,000 Central TX students at risk of dropping out of school. In the current economic state, school districts are increasingly utilizing larger class sizes and fewer school staff to meet tighter budgets while at the same time students are facing tougher academic, social, and emotional issues with fewer supports. CIS AmeriCorps members are an enormous resource to the school districts in providing individual 1:1 interventions with students focusing specifically on the students needs and working to eliminate barriers to their school success. In 2009, CIS underwent an agency-wide independent evaluation which found that students who receive a minimum of 16 hours of direct service were statistically more likely to show improvement on their targeted academic and/or behavioral issues. As a result, CIS has focused on ensuring as many students reach 16 hours of service as possible and AmeriCorps members easily reach and far exceed this threshold with their entire caseload. Members are able to strictly focus on meeting with their individual students and working with them to meet their goals instead of navigating administrative systems and program management. Utilizing AmeriCorps members not only allows a large number of at-risk students to have individualized attention based on their needs, but it also allows AmeriCorps members to share and develop their own individual skills and talents while serving their students.

CIS AmeriCorps members allow an additional 1,000 students in the Central TX area to receive individualized attention tailored to their needs each year. CIS as a whole has been proven time and again as implementing successful interventions in working to prevent student dropout. The CIS AmeriCorps program has consistently exceeded grant performance measures and 84% of students maintaining services for at least 12 weeks had improved academic performance during this last program year. CIS AmeriCorps will continue to build upon this success and aims to have 70% of the 750 students maintaining mentoring relationships for six months to have increased academic engagement as measured by student and teacher surveys.

F. AMERICORPS MEMBER SELECTION, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION -- To maintain our high enrollment rate and ensure 100% enrollment consistently across the grant years, AmeriCorps staff post available member positions on a wide variety of internet job sites, attend local recruitment fairs, and coordinate recruitment events with other AmeriCorps programs. CIS AmeriCorps consistently has over 200 applications for the member positions available. Efforts are made to recruit from the community served through regular presentation about AmeriCorps at areas schools and civic groups. Typical applicants include individuals from the local communities in which members serve as well as individuals

Narratives

wishing to relocate to the Austin area. CIS historically has a very diverse corps allowing members to learn and grow from each other during their service term.

FT and HT applicants undergo a rigorous two-part interview process. CIS AmeriCorps staff review all applications for completeness, reference review and personal statement scoring. If an applicant reaches the application scoring threshold, they are scheduled for an initial interview. The initial interview is conducted by two CIS AmeriCorps staff members and includes a thorough explanation of the program calendar year, program expectations and interview questions based on a member's service year, their experience working with children and their understanding of the CIS member roles and responsibilities. The initial interview also includes a math and reading assessment. Applicants are interviewed on a rolling basis and the entire CIS AmeriCorps team reviews and discusses all interviews. If the applicant passes the initial interview phase they are matched to a campus based on their grade level preference, geographic location, individual skills and campus needs. Upon a campus match, the applicant undergoes a second interview on the campus with the CIS PM who is the day-to-day AmeriCorps member supervisor. This interview includes more information on individual student needs for the campus, and a daily overview of a service day.

FT and HT members participate in a rigorous pre-service orientation. Training begins with an overnight retreat which includes: overview of National Service and AmeriCorps, program policies and procedures, federal regulations and AmeriCorps member prohibited activities, and teambuilding. The member service agreement is read page by page to members ensuring a complete understanding of their roles and responsibilities, disciplinary procedures and AmeriCorps prohibited activities. Policies and procedures including prohibited activities are reviewed in interactive activities to reinforce learning. After the retreat, members have 4 full days of pre-service orientation covering topics specific to their work with students including, but not limited to: structuring academic support sessions, behavior management techniques, goal setting, working with traumatized youth, learning styles, crisis intervention, confidentiality, boundaries, first meetings with students, school culture, and self-care. Upon completion of the pre-service orientation, members report to their assigned campus to participate in further training with the PM, their day-to-day supervisor. PM's orient members to the community they will be serving, campus procedures, supervisor expectations, and the school culture. Training is an integral piece of the CIS members term of service and members continue to meet once a month for all-day Member Resource Days (RD) to learn about topics directly impacting their service throughout the year including: civic responsibility, motivating unmotivated students, service-learning project facilitation, compassion fatigue, conflict resolution, child protective service reporting, gang intervention, ADHD, and bullying to name a few. Member RD allow members to continue training for their direct service while reconnecting with the corps and sharing their service experiences.

Narratives

QT EAO members participate in a one-day condensed pre-service orientation covering topics from the overnight member retreat prior to beginning their service on campus. QT members are also required to attend two mandatory all-day intern trainings which assist in their work with individual students and facilitating groups on campus. In addition, all QT members are highly encouraged through site visits, e-mails and the AmeriCorps member bi-monthly newsletter to participate in member resource days and ongoing training provided by CIS specifically geared towards social work and counseling professionals.

CIS AmeriCorps has a two-pronged supervision approach with daily supervision by the CIS PM and programmatic supervision by the AmeriCorps Program Coordinator (PC). Members are supervised on a day-to-day basis by the CIS PM who is a licensed social worker or counselor. The PM provides members with ongoing training, consultation and assistance in reviewing student cases and preparing for student meetings. All PM's must provide an hour of weekly individual supervision to each AmeriCorps member on their campus and group supervision every other week which includes all CIS staff and AmeriCorps members. CIS uses a comprehensive supervision template which guides the supervision process and allows PM's to directly address any member concerns, staff cases, provide feedback, review successes and find solutions to challenges. In addition to the PM, members receive regular contact via phone or e-mail and at least 1 site visit/semester from their PC. During site visits, the PCs meet individually with each member and the PM to discuss member progress, successes, concerns and Life After AmeriCorps plans.

PMs who supervise AmeriCorps members must participate in a half day site supervisor training in August to review National Service and AmeriCorps federal regulations and prohibited activities, program policies and procedures, and AmeriCorps member supervision best practices. CIS PM's have monthly level meetings and each AmeriCorps PC checks in with their assigned level (i.e. elementary or middle school) to address any overarching member concerns or training needs. Open communication is continuously stressed and the PCs relationships with the PM's from their assigned campuses is important to the success of the members and the program as a whole.

G. PERFORMANCE MEASURES -- At the end of the three year grant period, 2,250 students will have been matched with a CIS AmeriCorps member and sustained their mentoring and/or academic support relationship for at least six months of the academic year. 70% of these students will have demonstrated increased academic engagement as measured by student and teacher pre and post-surveys. AmeriCorps members will distribute and collect student and teacher pre surveys for each individual on their caseload at the point of enrollment in the CIS program. These surveys will establish a baseline for increased academic engagement and assist the member in creating realistic, attainable goals for the individual students. Upon completion of the academic year, post surveys will be distributed, collected and analyzed by AmeriCorps staff for comparison. Each year, program results will be analyzed for further program

Narratives

improvement, and increased student success. Annually, program results will be disseminated to the corresponding campuses, school districts, funders and the community at large.

The performance measure targets were established by reviewing data from the last three academic years. These performance measures are new to the CIS AmeriCorps program; however, CIS as an agency has been measuring academic engagement for many years. The targets are ambitious, but realistic.

CIS has consistently met and exceeded their AmeriCorps grant performance measures. In the 10-11 grant year, 674 out of 797 students displayed improved academic performance in a mentoring relationship that was sustained for a minimum of 12 weeks. This far exceeded the target of only 560 students with improved academic performance. Each year, the CIS program has been successful in meeting their performance measures and working towards student success. However, despite these successes, students continue to struggle and the number of students in need of assistance continues to rise. Unfortunately, removing barriers to academic success is not an issue that can be targeted for one academic year and be resolved. Many of the students CIS works with on a daily basis face on-going social, emotional and physical barriers to their success and need mentoring services over multiple academic years to prevent school dropout and help them achieve in life.

H. VOLUNTEER GENERATION -- CIS AmeriCorps members have a two-fold responsibility in the recruitment of volunteers and management of volunteer groups. As part of their service term requirements, CIS AmeriCorps members must initiate a volunteer recruitment session. Members coordinate their volunteer efforts with the CIS Volunteer Coordinator by facilitating recruitment presentations at local businesses, faith-based institutions, parent-teacher meetings, and community-based organizations surrounding their service sites. Volunteers are specifically recruited for tutoring and mentoring positions on CIS campus and after-school sites. CIS services are in high demand and many campuses completely fill their caseloads by mid-October. Volunteers are an important part of the CIS model and allow CIS to serve an even larger number of students who otherwise might be placed on a waiting list. The number of annual volunteers directly correlates to the number of increased students that CIS can provide services for annually.

Many CIS campuses with AmeriCorps members also have outside groups such as UT SEEK (Student Engineers Educating Kids) which provide specific programming to CIS students. Members assist the PM in overseeing the facilitation, organization, and student management of these volunteer groups by orienting the volunteers to the campus and campus procedures, assisting with student behavior management and following up with student participants on the group lessons.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING - In 1985, a group of Austin's community, education, and business leaders were concerned about the school dropout issue in Central TX and

Narratives

brought the CIS proven model of school-based social service delivery into this community to tackle school dropout. This group realized that underlying social service needs - not academic deficits - were the primary factors prohibiting the majority of students from completing their education. The mission of CIS is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. The CIS vision is that all children in Central TX have access to needed school-based support, resources, and opportunities so that they are successful in school, graduate, and become contributing members of society. Central to CIS programming is the belief that all students deserve access to the "Five Basics" including a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start and future, a marketable skill to use at graduation, and a chance to give back to peers and community so they become successful adults.

CIS campus-based prevention and intervention programming is by far the most accessible community case management and counseling resource available for many low-income students and their families. Since its inception in 1985, CIS has grown to 147 employees and approximately 800 volunteers operating on 52 public school campuses. During the 10-11 school year, 6,669 students received comprehensive case-management services, 5,165 parents received ongoing support services and a total of 55,686 individuals were reached agency-wide.

The grant primary contact is Suki Steinhauser, CIS's CEO. She has served as the CEO for 5 years and has over 17 years experience with CIS. The grant secondary contact is Jennifer Jefts, the AmeriCorps Program Director, who is an AmeriCorps alumnus and has over eight years experience managing and directing AmeriCorps programs. During her time with National Service she has developed systems and policies that are held up as best practices for other programs. She has facilitated workshops on creating and managing strong AmeriCorps programs at state-wide and regional conferences. Prior to managing AmeriCorps programs, she was a middle school special educator and utilizes this experience to assist members in their academic support role. She has extensive experience in the non-profit sector including service-learning, and international development.

CIS has over 25 years of experience in administering federal grants including: Workforce Investment Act funds, CNCS, US Department of Education funds for Even Start and Male Involvement Project projects; US Department of Health and Human Services funds through contracts with the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Education Agency.

Our strong administrative and financial expertise is evidenced by our record of excellence and lack of findings in numerous audits by various public and private funders including an OIG audit and our own annual independent audits. This past year, CIS underwent a OneStar Foundation programmatic and fiscal audit dating back to 2006 and the Program Impact Specialist cited the audit as the cleanest one she has performed in her four years. Our CFO, a CPA and Senior Management Team have developed

Narratives

strong financial controls, Standard Operating Procedures, Personnel Policies, and Financial Management manuals. Our systems are carefully operationalized, trained on, and monitored. All new employees must attend a half-day employee orientation training and managers must attend an additional full-day of training in which these systems are reviewed at length. Finally, our Board of Directors reviews monthly financial statements.

CIS maintains a wide diversity of funding sources to ensure agency and program financial sustainability. Funding sources include: Texas Education Agency, City of Austin, City of Bastrop, school district partners, private foundations (Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, RGK Foundation, Topfer Foundation, etc), United Way Capital Area, and individual donors. The AmeriCorps program budget represents a small portion of the overall agency budget at 9%. CIS has received AmeriCorps funding over the past five years from the OneStar Foundation and CNCS representing a similar portion of the agency budget at 9-10%. Each year, we have successfully met the increasing AmeriCorps match requirements with various local, state, private, in-kind and cash sources. Agency staff time makes up a great deal of our match in the form of professional supervisors across all service sites. CIS continues to seek new funding sources to maintain our strong history of raising funds to support service activities and initiatives.

Our Board of Directors (BOD) supports programming that furthers the mission of CIS to help kids stay in school and achieve in life and therefore, supports the AmeriCorps program. They meet monthly and receive a report from the CEO as well as AmeriCorps specific information. The BOD and a cross section of staff members recently completed a review of our agency strategic plan ensuring that all program activities are in alignment with the organization's vision and mission and includes AmeriCorps service activities.

The CIS organizational structure provides high levels of support to the AmeriCorps program staff. The Chief Program Officer has been with CIS for more than 16 years and directly supervises the AmeriCorps Director. He has extensive experience managing federal contracts and developing programming and partnerships. He is supervised by the CEO and makes reports to the BOD. He advocates for the program at key meetings to ensure alignment of program and organizational goals. The CFO has over 12 years of experience with CIS and has experience managing federal, state and local funding sources. He has established sound accounting practices for CIS and our AmeriCorps program.

CIS has a long history of managing scores of public contracts, and grants from private foundations and donors. CIS has routinely had "clean" audits and has met program goals for grant-funded activities. CIS was one of the first CIS programs in the country to be accredited by CIS National and one of two affiliates nationwide nominated as a Best Practice affiliate.

CIS has successfully managed an AmeriCorps grant for 11 years. During that time period we have

Narratives

operated a successful, high-quality program while striving for continuous improvement and working to further enhance our member experience and client successes. We have maintained an open line of communication with the OneStar Foundation to ensure program compliance. CIS AmeriCorps staff are regularly called upon by AmeriCorps programs from within TX and other states to share effective practices. The CIS AmeriCorps program has a strong record of compliance and performance as evidenced by clean fiscal and programmatic audits by the OneStar Foundation and the Office of the Inspector General.

CIS AmeriCorps has five programmatic staff. The AmeriCorps Director has the overall responsibility for program compliance and excellence. Two AmeriCorps PCs provide high quality training and support to AmeriCorps members and PMs. One Administrative Specialist position is 30 hours/week and develops and maintains systems to document member activities and provides strong administrative support to staff. A second Administrative Specialist position is 10 hours/week and maintains student records and data to document member service activities and student progress.

Along with the AmeriCorps Program Director, who has extensive experience managing AmeriCorps programs as noted above. The AmeriCorps PCs both have backgrounds in social work and are AmeriCorps Alumni. The AmeriCorps staff has been a consistent team of individuals over the last three years with the addition of a part-time administrative specialist this past year.

CIS AmeriCorps staff are continually seeking out training opportunities for continuous program improvement. AmeriCorps staff participate in the National Conference on Service and Volunteering along with TX state AmeriCorps trainings. Staff regularly visit with other AmeriCorps programs to learn from their programmatic systems and member training models. CIS AmeriCorps staff monitor service sites and communicate regularly with PM's to sustain compliance from both members, and site supervisors.

B. SUSTAINABILITY -- CIS coordinates or collaborates with over 70 community groups including, but not limited to: Community Action Network, Success by Six coalition, Directors of Volunteers in Austin, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, Basic Needs Coalition, Travis County After-School Network, Children and Youth Mental Health Planning Partnership, Austin Child Abuse Prevention Coalition and the Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition. Our participation in these collaborations shows that CIS is a valued partner and leader in social service and education arenas. It allows us to partner with a multitude of community groups to broker additional services for clients. CIS is continually sought out as an agency to spearhead new community initiatives concerning social services and dropout prevention. These continued community partnerships support and sustain the mission and goals of CIS while allowing the agency to continue further growth to serve more students. They also ensure that CIS is involved at all levels in the communities where we provide services.

Narratives

CIS continues to seek out additional funding sources to diversify funding even further and maintain the established level of programming. Over the past 5 years CIS has successfully moved agency funding from a reliance on public dollars to a more diverse, 1/3 public, 1/3 school district and 1/3 private portfolio. Due to our current diversity of funding sources, CIS has been able to maintain programming at a high level despite decreased non-profit charitable stemming from the economic downturn.

CIS programming encompasses a large number of stakeholders including: school districts, school staff, parents, students, and community members. Annual end of year school district and parent stakeholder surveys consistently list mentoring and academic support as an essential student need. In addition, CIS staff report that academic support and mentoring can directly address the education barriers faced by our clients. Even after 11 years of AmeriCorps services, surveys continue to list academic support and mentoring services as essential or very important to their campus.

Each year, CIS students and parents, as well as teachers and school administrators, complete feedback surveys for every campus. The survey contains questions to solicit feedback on program effectiveness and improvement areas related to members' activities. In September, each CIS PM must develop an annual campus plan in conjunction with their school principal outlining their yearly activities. This campus plan begins with an extensive campus needs assessment that includes the survey feedback mentioned above as well as a conversation with multiple stakeholders regarding the needs of the students and the campus. The PM then designs services to address those needs, including how AmeriCorps members will be mobilized to assist.

C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY -- CIS AmeriCorps staff and supporting agency staff continually review the changing AmeriCorps rules and regulations as a team to ensure continued compliance and implementation of best practices. CIS AmeriCorps staff attend yearly grantee meetings, monthly AmeriCorps Program Director and PC meetings, and the National Conference on Service and Volunteering annually to learn from other programs, CNCS staff and State Commission staff. Program Coordinators are in regular communication via monthly meetings and bi-monthly e-mails with campus PM's to ensure members are providing service as outlined in their service agreement and are not participating in prohibited activities. In having members serving on school-based service sites, the opportunities for members to engage in prohibited activities is limited and therefore low-risk due to the types of activities allowed on public school campuses. CIS has multiple internal controls established to prevent and detect compliance issues. In the event that instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, CIS staff will notify the OneStar Foundation to work with their staff to immediately rectify the situation and review systems to ensure continued compliance.

D. ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION - CIS has had a consistently high enrollment rate with 100% member enrollment during the last two program years. To maintain our high enrollment rate and

Narratives

ensure 100% enrollment consistently across the grant years, AmeriCorps staff post available member positions on a wide variety of internet job sites, attend local recruitment fairs, and coordinate recruitment events with other AmeriCorps programs.

The CIS retention rate has consistently risen over the last three program years with 94% member retention during the 10-11 program year. Despite the consistent increase in member retention, CIS AmeriCorps staff continue to implement strategies to ensure even higher member retention rates including: member teambuilding opportunities, increased civic reflection opportunities, and increased communication with the school level directors (i.e. elementary or middle school).

E. PERFORMANCE TARGETS AND DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE -- CIS met and exceeded 2 of the 3 performance measures during the 10-11 program year. The performance measures were aligned with the National pilot project and targets and measures were new to this program year in conjunction with changes to the pilot program. CIS established mentoring relationships with 1,315 students which is considerably higher than the target of 1,000 students. Of these students, 797 had relationships that were maintained for longer than 12 weeks which is just below the target of 800 students. Of these 797 students, 674 had improved academic performance which greatly exceeds the target of 560. Central TX has a very high student mobility rate which contributed to falling just under the target for the number of sustained mentoring relationships. However despite the missed target, CIS far exceeded the other two performance measures. Ultimately, as an agency and an AmeriCorps program, our goal is to ensure student success and 84% of students maintaining a 12-week relationship had improved academic performance. CIS AmeriCorps staff have discussed the shortfall with numerous CIS staff and are implementing new strategies to ensure meeting the performance measure during this program year. Some of these strategies include: reviewing students previous mobility prior to assigning them to an AmeriCorps members caseload, and assigning students to members caseloads at a quicker pace to ensure more member and student meetings earlier in the school year when mobility is lower.

CIS has not had any compliance issues and/or areas of weakness/risk identified and is often touted as an example of a high-quality program within the State of Texas.

F. OPERATING SITES AND MEMBER SERVICE SITES -- CIS AmeriCorps places members on 32 campuses throughout 4 counties. All member service sites have CIS campus-based offices and are administered by a CIS PMr. CIS PMs submit member request forms in February which are reviewed by a CIS committee composed of AmeriCorps staff, Level Directors and the Chief Program Officer. Service sites are selected based on campus need, student population, PMs' supervision skill level, and current available campus resources.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS -- Our proposed program has 53.58 MSYs. The cost per MSY of \$13,288 is

Narratives

below the maximum allowable rate. CIS has maintained a cost effective program throughout the program history by maintaining a cost/MSY that has been significantly lower than the maximum allowable in previous grant years. CIS has a diverse funding pool which contributes to the success of maintaining and exceeding AmeriCorps match requirements. The agency currently utilizes \$713,612 in non-Corporation funds to support the CIS AmeriCorps program at a match rate of 50%. The match sources are non-federal and represent local, state and private contributions. Program staff supervision time and campus space represent a large amount of our in-kind contributions, while the majority of the cash contributions are from private foundation and donors. The in-kind resources have been committed and are secure for the 2012-2013 program year. The cash contributions from the private foundations are pending grant renewals which do not take place until summer 2012. CIS has a long-standing history with these private foundations and is confident that these funds will continue to be provided as match for the AmeriCorps program and CIS campus programming in general. CIS will continue to meet and discuss funding concerns with private foundations while seeking other funding opportunities from private individuals, local government and participating school districts.

B. CURRENT GRANTEES -- CIS has continuously contributed an increased match percentage which exceeds grant requirements over the program history. CIS has requested a slightly higher cost per MSY compared to the previous program year due to the significantly increased cost of criminal background checks in alignment with the new federal regulations.

D. BUDGET ADEQUACY - Adequate funds are budgeted for coordination and support, proven by our retention rate and high rate of returning members. The budget ensures appropriate staffing levels so members receive adequate training and supervision levels. The budget also includes adequate supply costs to supplement member student activities in meeting programmatic performance measures. There are no extraneous items in the budget and our budget complies with the application guidelines.

Sites are distributed among 4 counties across a 50-mile region. Supervisors provide day-to-day guidance, but reaching all sites for monitoring and compliance is costly. Members must travel to Austin for training and National Service events. It would be an irresponsible use of Federal dollars to decrease our cost per MSY, as it would not provide adequate funds to serve such a geographically diverse and challenging population.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Communities In Schools of Central Texas AmeriCorps 2010-2011 program year budget included a limited amount of funds for an external evaluation. Due to the high costs of conducting an external evaluation, CIS was unable to secure other funding to supplement the limited grant funds and complete the evaluation. In lieu of a CIS focused external evaluation, the statewide evaluation conducted by the OneStar Foundation meets the grant evaluation requirements.

Narratives

Communities In Schools of Central Texas is part of a three-year independent, external evaluation of the AmeriCorps*Texas portfolio that OneStar Foundation (OneStar), the Texas state service commission, is conducting on all of its programs. OneStar has contracted with The RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin (RGK) to implement a rigorous, scientifically-based independent evaluation. Components of the evaluation include: measuring the value of AmeriCorps service across Texas; analyzing impact; evaluating organizational structure and program management characteristics to identify any determinants of successful program implementation; and providing a series of case studies examining the strategic use of AmeriCorps members to make significant impact in their communities. RGK is nearing the completion of the data collection phase from program directors, members, and various sources of organizational characteristic data and will begin analysis and case study work in late 2011. Once the evaluation is complete in 2012, the final report will be sent to CNCS.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

2012-2013 Clarification Items

Budget Clarification Items

Section I. Part A. Personnel Expense.

* The program narrative mentions a CIS Volunteer Coordinator but is not listed in the budget, please clarify.

The CIS Volunteer Coordinator position works agency-wide to recruit, train and support volunteers. The position is not AmeriCorps focused and therefore is not included in the budget.

Section I. Part C. Travel.

* The travel costs for members in line items 1 and 2 only account for 50 members, please confirm that the other 46 members do not receive travel costs.

The travel costs only account for 50 members due to the fact that this is an average monthly cost. Members may only submit mileage for carpooling to service projects and/or trainings, and therefore, may not submit expenses each month. The number of members in need of bus passes also varies throughout the year based on other available transportation to them. Most quarter-time members are not able to transport students due to their internship restrictions and therefore do not submit for mileage reimbursement.

Narratives

* The InterCorps Council Event is not mentioned in the application narrative. Please explain the purpose of this event. Also, please itemize the travel costs.

OneStar Texas Commission requires all applicants to include \$500 in the budget for one member to travel to one or more AmeriCorps Texas Leadership Council events.

Section G. Staff and Member Training.

* In the Clarification Summary field, please explain how training for quarter time members is covered and conducted.

Quarter-time members all attend AmeriCorps training which reviews all required paperwork, AmeriCorps and National Service 101 and policies and procedures. All quarter-time members are also required to attend full day trainings on working with individuals and working with groups which is tailored to the specific age group on their assigned school campus. Quarter-time members are completing their internship requirements while serving and have on-going field seminar classes and major specific classes.

* Please verify that criminal history checks will be conducted on all members, employees and other individuals as described above. You may revise the budget to include these costs, if necessary, but may not exceed the level of funding for which you are under consideration.

All AmeriCorps members, employees and other individuals listed on the AmeriCorps grant undergo a criminal history check as per the CNCS guidelines.

Programmatic Clarification Items

* Please describe the summer programming and how members are involved.

During the month of June, AmeriCorps members participate in enrichment camps at their school campus. Students can participate in a wide variety of events including: field trips, arts and crafts activities, and University/College visits. AmeriCorps members assist in the facilitation and planning of the enrichment activities. In July, AmeriCorps members serve in a child-centered non-profit of their choice. This allows members to continue assisting students while exploring Life After AmeriCorps opportunities by serving in another non-profit.

* Please provide data on the impact CIS Texas has had in the counties mentioned.

Travis County: 4,881 students received ongoing case management. 87.1% improved academics, attendance and/or behavior; 93.3% were promoted or graduated; 75.7% passed all core classes

Narratives

Hays County: 1,041 students received ongoing case management. 90.2% improved academics, attendance and/or behavior; 96.9% were promoted or graduated; 84.4% passed all core classes

Caldwell County: 379 students received ongoing case management. 87.6% improved academics, attendance and/or behavior; 94.3% were promoted or graduated; 77.6% passed all core classes

Bastrop County: 116 students received ongoing case management. 94.0% improved academics, attendance and/or behavior; 98.1% were promoted or graduated; 67.9% passed all core classes

* Please clarify the value added by the quarter time education award only members.

Quarter-time education award only members provide an enormous value to CIS of CT in allowing an additional 250 students to receive mentoring and academic support services. Since the quarter-time members are social work and/or counseling interns they are able to assist students with a slightly higher need than those assigned to the full-time and part-time members.

* How are the quarter time members chosen?

Quarter-time members who are all social work or counseling students, apply directly to the campus Program Manager requesting an internship placement. Upon securing an internship placement, the individual applies for a quarter-time education award only position. The CIS of CT AmeriCorps staff reviews the applications and references, and conducts a criminal history check prior to selecting an individual as a quarter-time member.

* Please describe the initial assessment that is conducted once a student is referred. How are parents/guardians notified and involved in the process throughout the year?

When a student is referred for services, the campus Program Manager conducts a thorough individualized assessment that includes an analysis of current academic performance, attendance, behavior at school, socio-emotional factors, and social service needs. The assessment includes examination of student data (grades, standardized test scores, absences, discipline referrals), conversations with classroom teacher(s) and other school officials concerning the student's performance, and the student's completion of a screening tool. This information is used to develop an appropriate service plan for the student. The parent/guardian of each referred student is contacted in person or via telephone or letter to explain CIS services and answer questions. Written parent permission is required before any services are provided to the student. Parents/guardians receive information about CIS activities throughout the year and are included in specific communication about their student's performance as needed.

Narratives

* Please describe the interventions and/ or curricula members are utilizing to ensure increased academic engagement.

Members are provided a variety of interventions and resources to utilize with their students including; get to know you activities, subject specific academic support activities and games, and behavioral interventions. Members are not provided a specific curriculum, because services are tailored to each individual student's needs and goals.

* How are the students selected to work with the quarter time members?

All students are assigned to AmeriCorps members by the campus Program Manager. The Program Manager reviews the student's file to assess the level of student need and assigns them to a CIS or CT staff member or an AmeriCorps member based on this assessment. Due to the fact that quarter-time members are simultaneously completing their internship requirements, they are able to assist students with higher needs than the full-time and part-time members. The number of higher needs students has been steadily increasing over the last few years due to the current economic climate, and increased academic expectations; therefore putting a greater burden on the schools. The ability of the quarter-time members to serve higher needs students is an invaluable resource in ensuring academic success for these students.

* Are teachers involved in the service learning planning?

No, teachers are not involved in the service-learning planning. AmeriCorps members facilitate the service-learning process with a small group of CIS students who may be from multiple classrooms and grade levels. By allowing AmeriCorps members to facilitate the service-learning groups, it provides them with member development opportunities in facilitating small groups, group behavior management, and leadership skills.

* In addition to mentoring and service learning, members provide a safe learning environment for students. Please explain some of the ways members create this type of environment.

CIS or CT serves students most at-risk for school dropout and who face a myriad of challenges to academic achievement. AmeriCorps members provide a safe learning environment for students by establishing one-to-one meaningful connections through an ongoing nonjudgmental and trusting relationship. Members meet with students in confidential spaces which allow the students to share personal challenges. AmeriCorps members always assist students from a strength-based perspective and are fully accessible to students in the event of a crisis situation. By meeting students at their level, members create a safe learning environment that cannot be established in other ways in the school.

Narratives

environment due to the structure of public education.

Performance Measure Clarification Items

* Please define what improved academic engagement in attendance and behavior is.

Students will have improved academic engagement as measured by teacher surveys indicating increased completion of assignments, increased teacher-reported participation. Student surveys will measure increased interest in school and increased attachment to school and education aspirations.

* Please clarify if the program will use baseline attendance data to demonstrate improvement.

Baseline attendance data will not be utilized to demonstrate improvement since attendance will not be measured.

* Please clarify if CIS has approved access to official school records for the purposes of measuring progress on performance measures.

CIS of CT does have access to official school records, but will be administering a teacher and student survey to measure progress on this performance measure.

* Please confirm that the program will not measure improvement in course grades. If the program would like to measure academic achievement, please select ED5 (but note that course grades cannot be used for that measure either).

CIS of CT will not measure improvement in course grades.

Additional Clarification

* In the clarification, it was stated that members who serve in the summer choose their placement sites. Please clarify if these sites are CIS-screened sites that the members select. If they are not, please explain how the program ensures sub-site compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations and how the program assures alignment with CIS and CNCS performance goals.

CIS of CT AmeriCorps staff screen all member sites for the month of July. AmeriCorps staff contact applicable sites to discuss their needs, service duties for AmeriCorps members and member scheduling. AmeriCorps staff also meet with the site staff prior to member placement to review a summer site memorandum of understanding which clearly delineates member prohibited activities, and AmeriCorps rules and regulations. Staff ensure program alignment with CIS and CNCS performance goals by establishing a clear member service plan with the non-profit that allows members to continue to provide academic support and mentoring. Once all sites have been pre-screened by CIS of CT AmeriCorps staff

Narratives

for need and schedule, a list is compiled of all sites for the program year and members have the ability to select a placement site from that list.

* In the clarification, you noted that quarter-time members are interns. Please clarify if the additional 250 students would still receive the services that interns provide without the AmeriCorps component. It would be highly unlikely that the additional 250 students would still receive the services that interns provide without the AmeriCorps component. The ability to offer interns an AmeriCorps opportunity with an education award is a strong motivating factor for interns to select CIS of CT for their placement site. In doing so, CIS of CT has seen an increase in the number of agency interns. Since the interns are able to work with students that are higher need, if CIS of CT AmeriCorps did not have the ability to utilize the QT interns, then those 250 students, kids with special needs, would not be served by our full-time and part-time AmeriCorps members.

* Please thoroughly describe the student and teacher surveys that will be used to measure engagement and discuss how the program will define improvement.

The teacher survey measures classroom work completion on a 5-point Likert scale from significantly worse to significantly better. The student survey for students in grades 6-12 measures interest in school based on a 5-point Likert scale from not at all to very much so. The student survey for students in grades K-5 measures interest in school based on a 3-point Likert scale depicted by sad to happy faces. CIS of CT will administer both surveys at the start of a mentoring relationship with the student. CIS of CT AmeriCorps members do not begin on their respective campuses until 1 ½ months after school has begun which allows plenty of time for teachers to analyze the student's academic engagement as a baseline for determining progress after our members have worked with the students. The survey will be administered again at the end of the school year to determine change. Academic engagement improvement will occur if any of the above elements shows a 1-point improvement without any of the other elements worsening.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Sent

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable