

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: 10-JAN-12	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER: 710552055
2b. APPLICATION ID: 12AC134671	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 12ACHAR0010001

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative (SEARK) DUNS NUMBER: 112897152 ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 1022 Scogin Dr Monticello AR 71655 - 9709 County: Drew	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Jenny Satterlee TELEPHONE NUMBER: (870) 367-4825 FAX NUMBER: (870) 367-9877 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: jenny.satterlee@se2.k12.ar.us
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6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 710552055	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b. Local Education Agency State Education Agency
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8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):	9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: <p style="text-align: center;">Corporation for National and Community Service</p>
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10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State 12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Ashley, Cleveland, Calhoun, Drew, Bradley, Chicot, Desha	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: AR Smart Start AmeriCorps Tutoring 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):
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13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/01/12 END DATE: 08/31/15	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="AR 004"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="AR 004"/>
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15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <input type="text" value="1"/> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">a. FEDERAL</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: right;">\$</td> <td style="width: 50%;">458,680.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. APPLICANT</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> <td>223,353.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. STATE</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> <td>0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d. LOCAL</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> <td>0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e. OTHER</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> <td>0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f. PROGRAM INCOME</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> <td>0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g. TOTAL</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> <td>682,033.00</td> </tr> </table>	a. FEDERAL		\$	458,680.00	b. APPLICANT		\$	223,353.00	c. STATE		\$	0.00	d. LOCAL		\$	0.00	e. OTHER		\$	0.00	f. PROGRAM INCOME		\$	0.00	g. TOTAL		\$	682,033.00	16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: 09-JAN-12 <input type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372
a. FEDERAL		\$	458,680.00																										
b. APPLICANT		\$	223,353.00																										
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e. OTHER		\$	0.00																										
f. PROGRAM INCOME		\$	0.00																										
g. TOTAL		\$	682,033.00																										
17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO																													

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAAPPLICATION 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: Jenny Satterlee	b. TITLE: Program Director	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (870) 367-4825
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 05/07/12

Narratives

Executive Summary

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of the 73 part-time Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps Program members 80% are current college students. Members gain experience in the education field by serving kindergarten-5th grade students in the rural Arkansas Delta Elementary School classrooms providing services over the 10 month school year. Each member provides 10-15 students at increased risk for academic failure with one-on-one reading and math tutoring for no less than one hour/wk and English as a Second Language students receive at least two hours of tutoring each week. Those students targeted with one-on-one tutoring will demonstrate significant improvement in math and language arts proficiency on standardized testing conducted pre and post AmeriCorps interventions. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$458,680.00 will be matched with no less than \$216,147.00.

Rationale and Approach

Rationale and Approach:

A. NEED

The Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative (SEARK ESC) proposed and established the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program in 2006 to provide area elementary students at increased risk for academic failure with services to improve academic achievement. And as a result of our continued evolution, the program has also grown to support college age community members who have little opportunity to grow and develop in the Delta Arkansas region with valuable training, and opportunities to serve in a desired career choice that promotes a cadre of teachers that stay and live in our area. The program targets Southeast Arkansas Delta Elementary Schools because they generally have access to few resources due to the poor economic conditions and sparse population of the area. The Southeast Arkansas Delta is one of the poorest regions in the country. The SEARK ESC serves fourteen member school districts within the Southeast Arkansas Delta. In 2009, the average median household income of the eight counties served by this program was \$32,183.00, which is at least 17% lower than the average state rate of \$38,820.00 and 23% below the average national rate of \$50,221.00 (U.S. Census 2009 data). Within the 14 school districts served, an average 33% of all children less than 18 years of age live in poverty with individual county percentages ranging as high as 44% (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

Narratives

The program serves seven sparsely populated counties that lack resources due in part to the great distance between very small communities and the inability of the sparse population to support programs within the communities. Due to the sparse population within Southeast Arkansas these communities are often looked over for program pilots, funding, and research projects related to the additional funding and effort required to provide and monitor services in such a vast area.

The percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced school meals ranges between 100% and 54% in the nine participating school districts (Arkansas Department of Education 2011). The children of Southeast Arkansas grow up in communities suffering from great economic disadvantage. What were once thriving, prosperous communities are now in a dismal state. Downtown areas are dominated by vacant buildings in disrepair. Much of the employable population has relocated to areas of the state or country with greater employment opportunities.

Local businesses and family incomes are largely dependent upon agriculture and forestry. With the decline in the need for timber and wood based building supplies many industries have downsized or left Southeast Arkansas. Local retailers that have supported these industries and communities have gone out of business. Thus, allowing the one remaining grocery store or gas station to drive prices of essential items up and increasing to the stress of poverty.

Of the 9 school districts served by the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program, all are failing to meet state mandated math and reading proficiency levels established in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. All but one of the districts is failing to make consistent progress towards attaining the targeted student proficiency levels in math and reading. Therefore, nine are on the state monitored school improvement plan and one is on alert status and will be placed on the school improvement plan if they do not demonstrate significant improvement during the 2011-2012 school year. Examples of schools not meeting standard achievement levels include Chicot County, Lakeside Upper Elementary: 46.9% of 3rd grade students scored proficient or above in literacy and 69.4% score proficient or above in math on Benchmark tests. Bradley County, Hermitage Elementary: 47.2% of 4th graders scored proficient or above in literacy and 61.1% of 4th graders scored proficient or above in math on Benchmark tests.

There is a growing enrollment of ESL students in the target area schools. Due to language and cultural barriers, ESL students require more supplemental services than local schools in the target area have resources to provide.

According to the National Education Association in 2004, "Greater collaboration with parents and families is clearly one of the most essential and effective strategies for closing achievement gaps."

Narratives

Parental involvement and engagement is low in the target area schools. It is imperative that parents become involved in the education of their children for schools to meet adequate progress expectations as defined by No Child Left Behind.

Opportunities for college students and college bound students to gain experience in the education field and to earn education awards are limited in rural Southeast Arkansas. School districts do not have adequate funding to hire tutors to serve within the schools. Funding for afterschool programs is declining related to state and federal budget cuts. Smart Start AmeriCorps members gain valuable experience and employment opportunities through the service they provide the students and communities they serve.

Members often lack funding to support educational pursuits. Their service through AmeriCorps provides additional funding to support their pursuit of a college education upon completion of their service commitment. AmeriCorps members that have successfully fulfilled their commitment to the AmeriCorps Smart Start program qualify to apply for additional scholarships amounting to as much as \$82,000.00 offered by Arkansas Universities.

B. VALUE ADDED: AMERICORPS MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The program is requesting 73 part-time members to provide support services that complement those currently provided by school district faculty addressing local educational needs that schools do not have the resources to provide. The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program supports the AmeriCorps priority area of Education ensuring a brighter future for America's youth by providing individualized tutoring for children designated as increased risk for academic failure in kindergarten through 5th grade in host site elementary schools.

Tutoring: The 73 part-time Smart Start AmeriCorps members provide support services addressing local educational needs in 15 elementary schools within 9 school districts that do not have the resources to provide additional tutoring. Member's activities are divided into five basic areas: literacy tutoring, math tutoring, parental involvement, volunteer generation, and service project development.

For the majority of their service, members provide one on one literacy and math tutoring to a caseload of 10-15 students each for a period of 36 weeks. Members serve from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM for which they provide a rotating schedule where students will be pulled from the classroom. Members' schedules are coordinated with classroom teachers and are flexible to meet individual students' needs. Tutoring activities employ tutoring strategies that are scientifically-based and include the five components of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel: phonemic

Narratives

awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Mentoring teachers in area schools are using Arkansas Reading First strategies based on the five components of reading instruction mandated by No Child Left Behind. Classroom instruction and tutoring are cohesive due to collaborative efforts between area math and literacy specialists, host site schools, and the Smart Start AmeriCorps program director. Students served by an AmeriCorps member are tracked for progress and improvement in mathematics and reading skills.

ESL tutoring: AmeriCorps members work with the ESL Coordinator at each service site to provide additional help through individual literacy tutoring for ESL students for a minimum of two hours each week for each student. These students count as a portion of the 10-15 students members targeted for tutoring. They are tracked as part of the total targeted population and separately as ESL students.

Parental Involvement: The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program addresses parental involvement by providing basic skill sessions for parents and opportunities for them to volunteer for community service and remembrance activities. Members work with the Parent Involvement Coordinator to plan and hold four evening basic math and literacy skill sessions that address particular needs of the parents at each school district site. A sponsor teacher from each site provides assistance and supervision during the planning and implementation of these sessions.

Additional Volunteer Recruitment: The 73 part-time Smart Start AmeriCorps members recruit no less than 75 high school students to serve a combined total of no less than 750 hours of community service. Volunteers assist with community service projects, read to students, assist in preparation for parent involvement, and participate in small group activities with students in after school programs. Members also recruit parents and other community volunteers to provide services within the school and community. County judges, mayors, nurses, and parents volunteer to talk about community service and aid AmeriCorps members in community service projects.

Additional Community Service: AmeriCorps members implement no less than two signature service projects annually. Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps members are encouraged to conduct additional service projects for the National Day of Service and Remembrance and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. These service projects foster a community connection with national service while also addressing local needs.

Each signature service project is connected to the mission of the program by providing services that aid student academic performance. An example of a recent community service project involved addressing student oral health issues. Many students in Southeast Arkansas suffer from poor oral health and untreated dental caries. Poor oral health often affects a student's academic performance.

Narratives

In February and March of 2011 members collaborated with community partners to provide K-3rd grade students with oral health lessons approved by the American Dental Association and the Arkansas Department of Health, activities to support the lessons, and oral hygiene kits as one of their community service projects. AmeriCorps members work with community/parent volunteers to generate publicity for the projects through local media.

In April of each year, the program collaborates with community partners to plan and hold an area-wide event celebrating the Week of the Young Child. This all-day initiative allows children and their parents to participate in fun, food, and educational activities free of charge. This celebration serves over 800 children and their parents annually.

C: EVIDENCE-BASED: The tutoring services provided through this program employ tutoring strategies that are scientifically-based and include the five components of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Mentoring teachers in area schools are using Arkansas Reading First strategies based on the five components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension mandated by No Child Left Behind. The member training and math tutoring interventions are based on the process and content standards developed by the National Council of teachers of Mathematics for Pre-K through 12th grade. The process standards are: problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, connections, and representations. The content standards are: number and operation, algebra, geometry, measurement, and data analysis and probability.

D. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: Since the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program began in 2006 members have gained valuable experience and benefit through the service they provide. The Cognitively Guided Instruction theories utilized in math and literacy tutoring are science based strategies that members will continue to use upon entering the education profession. Through orientation and advocacy training members become aware of what an opportunity it is to serve children with their community and how important the contribution they are making is to their community. Hosting schools and site supervisors nurture and support the growth of program members. Supervisors say they are "growing their own" teachers through the program. Program participation has proven to build member confidence and self-esteem.

Smart Start AmeriCorps members each have SEARK ESC/Smart Start AmeriCorps name badges, member t-shirts and jackets they wear when performing service hours. This helps to identify them as Smart Start AmeriCorps members and identify them separately from school employees and other AmeriCorps program members.

Narratives

Upon entrance into the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program, members will begin a member service journal. Members will attend initial training that includes: Personality Assessment, Decision Making, and Goal Setting. They will use this training to aid in initiating their AmeriCorps Member Service Journal. Initial entries will include who they are, personal strengths and weaknesses, and what they hope to achieve and gain through their AmeriCorps service. Members will establish both short-term and long-term goals and identify needs that the program could help them meet through service or training.

Additional training based on identified member needs and civic responsibility will be conducted throughout the year that can help members to meet personal goals. The program coordinator will review each member's service journal and assess progress towards goals with them during monthly site visits.

Members, site supervisor, and program coordinator will have the opportunity to revisit their goals and needs mid-service year to assess personal growth and any modifications members wish to make in their goals.

Post program review of members experience and progress towards goals will be conducted to aid members in transitioning out of AmeriCorps or planning for their continued experience as an AmeriCorps member.

Members often collaborate with Coordinated School Health and Future Teacher AmeriCorps program members to conduct community service projects and additional community service such as the October 2011 Lake Village Minority Health Fair. Members gained additional state and regional contacts for future community service projects and learned a great deal about child health and interactive strategies in health education. They received recognition from state and local partners for their efforts.

Members often enter the program lacking funding to support educational pursuits. Their successful completion of service through AmeriCorps provides an education award. AmeriCorps members that have successfully fulfilled their commitment to the AmeriCorps Smart Start program qualify to apply for additional scholarships designated for AmeriCorps volunteers amounting to as much as \$82,000.00 offered by Arkansas Universities.

To date, at least 21 AmeriCorps alumni have received a teaching certificate and are serving as teachers. As a direct result of their training, skill development, and performance, greater than 50 AmeriCorps alumni have been hired by the school district as tutors, teachers' aides, or substitute teachers, when they completed their service.

Narratives

E. OVERALL PICTURE: The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program provides area elementary students at increased risk for academic failure with services to improve academic achievement. The Southeast Arkansas Delta is one of the poorest regions in the country. The average median household income within the program area is \$32,183.00, which is at least 17% lower than the state rate and 23% below the national rate. Within the 14 school districts served an average 33% of all children less than 18 years of age live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). The percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced school meals ranges between 100% and 54% in the fourteen participating school districts (Arkansas Department of Education 2011). Of the 10 school districts served by the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program all are failing to meet state mandated math and reading proficiency levels established in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. All but one of the districts is failing to make consistent progress towards attaining the targeted student proficiency levels in math and reading.

Of the 73 part-time AmeriCorps Smart Start program members greater than 80% are college students. Each member provides 10-15 students at increased risk for academic failure with one-on-one reading and math tutoring for no less than one hour/wk and English as a Second Language students receive at least two hours of tutoring each week. Members collaborate with each other and school staff to address parental involvement by providing basic skill sessions for parents and opportunities for them to volunteer for community service and remembrance activities.

As a result of the no less than 1-2 hours of one-on-one weekly tutoring, approximately 800 targeted students receive and the additional support students gain from parents, targeted students demonstrate significant improvement in math and language arts proficiency post AmeriCorps interventions.

F. AMERICORPS MEMBER SELECTION, TRAINING, AND SUPERVISION:

Member recruitment is conducted by both the program director and host-site elementary schools. Through the program director's outreach at local institutions of higher education many members are recruited from freshman and sophomore classes. Many members are recruited from senior classes of local high schools by host site supervisors and members. To provide awareness and to educate the community about the program, the program director and members speak at civic meetings and manage booths at college career days, and other community venues.

Each participating elementary school solicits potential AmeriCorps members through various methods such as; word of mouth, the school's website, outreach in the community, and advertisement in the local newspaper from within the community served by the school. Schools are encouraged to select members from within the community that represent the diversity of the community.

Narratives

Potential program members submit a school district para-professional application to the individual school with their community, applications are screened by schools and interviews are conducted by host site supervisors. Once potential members are selected by host site elementary schools, they are interviewed by the program director and complete the program packet which includes the AmeriCorps Program Member application. Preference is placed on applicants currently attending college and those expressing a desire to attend college in the near future. All members must have a high school diploma or its equivalent prior to serving.

Members attend program orientation and begin program training for two full days at the onset of each program year. Program training continues throughout the service year. Members attend orientation and training at hosting schools in August prior to program initiation as school districts conduct this training annually at this time. Members are oriented to CNCS and the Smart Start AmeriCorps requirements and prohibited activities during orientation at the SEARK ESC. In addition, members and host site supervisors receive documentation of program requirements and prohibited activities and must acknowledge they understand them by signing this documentation. A copy is maintained in program files and members and supervisors are provided a copy.

All Smart Start AmeriCorps members are required to attend a minimum of 48 hours of high quality training in research based educational strategies resulting in member orientation to basic instructional tools needed for providing effective individualized literacy and mathematics services. Regional math specialists and literacy specialists housed at the SEARK Coop conduct extensive AmeriCorps tutoring training. Technology trainers housed at the educational cooperative conduct basic computer and e-mail classes. Other training for members includes CPR and First Aid, recognizing diversity, parent involvement, personality awareness, and communication.

The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program utilizes a three prong supervision strategy to ensure quality and consistent services are provided by members. The program director supports and oversees service sites through monthly site visits and ongoing member monitoring and support. At least monthly, the program director travels to each school and meets with site supervisors and members to discuss and gain feedback regarding program and member performance strengths and weaknesses. Members submit monthly time sheets electronically and mail documentation of services provided. Documentation includes; the member's personal daily activity journal, a success story related to a particular program experience gained the previous month, reports of community service projects, parent involvement activities, volunteer recruitment, and sign in sheets are submitted by the fifth of each month. This allows the program director to monitor member progress in fulfilling program

Narratives

requirements.

Direct supervision is provided by each hosting elementary school. The site supervisor is usually a principal or assistant principal selected by the school district. These supervisors attend host site supervisor orientation, training, and program updates annually at the onset of each school year. Site supervisors ensure members collaborate with assigned classroom teachers to develop a schedule to access students for individual and group tutoring. The program director conducts monthly site visits to aid host site supervisors in the performance of their duties and to keep them apprised of program and NCSC goals and regulations. Supervisors monitor member's time served through sign in/out sheets or time clock as deemed appropriate by the individual school. Site supervisors pre-approve and monitor all community service projects completed by members.

Members are supervised by a certified teacher when providing classroom services. Classroom teachers identify students who are performing poorly on academic achievement tests and specific skills they have identified students need tutoring in. Members are then observed by classroom teachers while providing tutoring services. To ensure members provide the program required hours of tutoring to assigned students, classroom teachers often have members document the time entering and exiting the classroom.

D. OUTCOME PERFORMANCE MEASURES: At the end of the three-year grant cycle, elementary schools hosting AmeriCorps Smart Start members will demonstrate increased percentages of students performing at proficient or advanced levels of academic achievement. Students receiving tutoring services will build upon skills learned through this program in successive years to continue performing at proficient levels of academic achievement. Program members will attain personal educational goals and be gainfully employed within the education field in SEARK schools..

Measure ED2: No less than 700 of the students targeted will each receive at least 32 hours of tutoring in math and literacy by May of each school year. Smart Start AmeriCorps program members will start with no less than 730 students; however, in all likelihood they will not retain all 730 students throughout the school year. The number of 700 students is based on the transitional nature of families within the area served by the program.

Measure ED5: No less than 616 of targeted students completing 32 hours of tutoring will demonstrate at least a 20% increase in math and literacy on the academic achievement assessment post implementation of services. The number 616 is based on a past success rate of 94-88% regarding the number of targeted students demonstrating improved academic performance.

The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program director, school site principals, and members share

Narratives

responsibility in collecting data for tracking and evaluating progress toward meeting program performance measures. The SEARK Literacy and Math Specialists have developed an assessment tool based on Common Core Standards in math and literacy. Quarterly assessments are to be conducted in September, January, and May of each school year to measure change in individual targeted student math and literacy levels. Individual hosting elementary schools conduct testing, testing is analyzed and reports are developed by the SEARK ESC testing center, and schools share the data on targeted students with the program for evaluation purposes.

Impact Made by the AmeriCorps Smart Start Program: During the 2009-2010 school year, the Arkansas Smart Start program's 73 members served 753 students, in 18 elementary schools. These members completed 36 community service projects (two at each site) and recruited 1086 community volunteers that completed 1813.5 community service hours. Comparison of the targeted students' Stanford Achievement Test 10 (Sat-10) scores pre and post intervention revealed the following: Of the students that completed required tutoring, 89% demonstrated academic growth in math and literacy levels. Of the ESL students that completed the required tutoring 87% demonstrated academic growth. During the 2010-2011 school year, the Arkansas Smart Start program's 73 members served 735 students, in 17 elementary schools. These members completed 36 community service projects (two at each site) and recruited 884 community volunteers to complete 1934 community service hours. Comparison of the targeted students' Stanford Achievement Test 10 (Sat-10) scores pre and post intervention revealed the following: Of the students that completed required tutoring, 79% demonstrated academic growth in math and literacy levels. Of the ESL students that completed the required tutoring 79% demonstrated academic growth.

The proposal for the next three years incorporates successes from the past and strategies to address lessons learned from the previous program years.

H. VOLUNTEER GENERATION: As stated previously, one of our program goals is to increase parental and community involvement in our schools. A part of the service our members provide involves focused volunteer recruitment to bring high school seniors and parents into the schools so they can provide additional support to the students served. Specifically, parents will be trained on activities they can do with their children at home so they can build on the learning that occurs in school. And parents will also be encouraged to play a greater role in the life of the school which research shows has a direct impact on student success. In addition, high school seniors will provide additional support to the targeted students so they are receiving well rounded support that addresses the whole child. Member volunteer recruitment is conducted in two ways; Members speak at the

Narratives

school district high school and recruit high school seniors to volunteer in the targeted elementary school and they recruit parents and community volunteers for community service and remembrance projects within the hosting elementary school. Members organize community services projects and collaborate with volunteers to conduct these projects.

I. TUTORING PROGRAM COMPLIANCE: All members must obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent prior to serving. Math specialists and literacy specialists housed at the SEARK ESC conduct extensive AmeriCorps tutoring training in proven educational strategies resulting in member orientation to basic instructional tools needed for providing effective individualized literacy and mathematics services. Math and literacy coaches at each host site elementary school are trained and supported by cooperative specialists. They provide members with additional support and supervision. The tutoring theories and content are scientifically based interventions aligned with the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

Organizational Capability

I. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: It is the mission of the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative (SEARK ESC) to assist member schools in more effective and more equitable use of their shared resources and to provide shared services for the better education of their children and youth. The Smart Start AmeriCorps program's goal to improve the academic performance of targeted students fits perfectly with the SEARK ESC's mission.

The SEARK ESC was developed in 1981 in response to Arkansas Act 360 of 1981 to meet the needs of rural school districts in rural Arkansas. The education service cooperative provides staff development, consultation services, special programs, and houses specialists in specific fields of educational services to aid area school districts in improving the academic performance of students in Southeast Arkansas. The current number of employees is in excess of 150 with 176 AmeriCorps Members (73 Smart Start members, 18 Coordinated School Health members, and 85 Future Teacher AmeriCorps members), and 130 Foster Grandparent Volunteers.

The SEARK ESC current annual budget is approximately \$10,500,000.00. Of that amount \$325,000.00 is the state government awarded base for the cooperative, the remaining \$10,275,000.00 is awarded from state, federal, and foundation grants to support education programs serving Arkansas. The SEARK ESC is on the cutting edge for pursuing innovative strategies and programs to support not only member schools, but schools statewide. Funding sources include both federal and state government sources as well as national, state, and local public and private

Narratives

foundation grants. The percentage of CNSC funding the SEARK ESC receives is approximately 9% of the SEARK ESC annual budget.

The SEARK ESC has three AmeriCorps grants it has been awarded, the Future Teacher AmeriCorps grant is an education award only grant of \$34,000.00, the Coordinated School Health AmeriCorps grant is a State Commission Formula grant of \$130,000.00, and the current Smart Start AmeriCorps grant is a National Awarded Competitive grant. Another CNCS funded program within the SEARK ESC is the Foster Grandparent Program grant of \$447,112.41.

The primary and secondary contacts for this grant application are: Karen Eoff, SEARK ESC Director, she has 30 years of educational experience, which includes three years as the cooperative's director and 17 years of administrative experience as assistant director of the SEARK ESC. During those 17 years, Ms. Eoff served as the Teacher Center Coordinator. Ms. Eoff holds several certifications including district administration. She serves on the statewide testing committee and has been involved in the development of target tests.

The AmeriCorps Program Director, Jenny Satterlee, has 16 years of educational experience. Ms. Satterlee holds a 1-6 grade certification in elementary education and taught elementary grades for 11 years. She has been director of the Smart Start Program for 5 years and the AR Future teacher program for 1 year. She maintains constant communication with site supervisors via, telephone, email, and site visits.

Assistant Program Coordinator, Jerry Craven, has been with the AmeriCorps program for five years and the SEARK ESC for eleven years. Ms. Craven holds an Associate Degree in Business Administration. Ms. Craven is responsible for member records, gathering required member data, and finance.

The SEARK ESC has five finance and accounting personnel overseen by Ms. Sandra Savage who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and over 20 years of experience in accounting.

The SEARK ESC currently serves 15 public school districts in nine surrounding counties. The SEARK ESC is governed by its fourteen member school districts. Each of the 14 superintendents is a SEARK ESC Board Member. One of the board members is elected annually to serve as board president. The board employs a director to oversee programs, employees, and services housed within the SEARK ESC. The SEARK ESC has a personnel committee made up of certified and non-certified employees who make recommendations to the director to present to the board. Policies and Procedures are in place to govern both the board and cooperative personnel. Board members meet monthly to address cooperative business. Each program or department within the ESC has a program coordinator or

Narratives

director. Each coordinators/director is responsible for supervising his/her staff. The SEARK ESC coordinates all activities and provides appropriate financial accounting services through its director and board members.

The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program has operated successfully in its second three-year cycle of AmeriCorps State funding. The SEARK Coop's full staff, the area school administrators and staff, and the communities of the projected sites are all very familiar with and have experience with the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program while supporting its efforts. Each host site supervisor's annual program orientation includes the following topics: program finances and host site contributions, member training, technical assistance, and program/site monitoring for compliance. The program receives annual site visits from the Arkansas Service Commission annually to ensure program compliance. Outcomes of these visits have been positive. Quarterly reports to the NCSC and state commission have been submitted on time and performance measures have been met. Responses to requests from federal and stat commission have been submitted in a timely manor.

B. SUSTAINABILITY: Members demonstrate to residents of southeast Arkansas, and the state, a proven workable program model to increase academic achievement of children, to increase access to higher education for residents, and to promote entrance of college students into the teaching profession. Schools report that the program aids them in identifying quality future teachers. The target school districts continue to make a considerable contribution to the AmeriCorps program despite the shortage of education resources and funding. The alternative match waiver acknowledges the extreme poverty existing in the target area and schools served. However, the schools continue to show a high commitment in resources to the AmeriCorps Smart Start program.

Each school district is committed to providing long-term support to the program through cash and in-kind commitments. Through each previous program year, schools in the target area have progressively increased their cash match to sustain the program.

The SEARK ESC has initiated a foundation that was designated as a 501C for tax exemption status in June of 2011. The SEARK ESC Foundation was created to help support programs within the ESC, primarily AmeriCorps programs.

The SEARK ESC director, Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program director, and the program advisory council work throughout the three-year grant period to develop a comprehensive plan for financial sustainability, seeking grants to help pay living allowances after the funding period. The program is currently in the process of applying for two foundation grants. The first is a Wal-Mart Foundation grant that will be used to help cover member living allowances and support tutoring and

Narratives

parent involvement projects. The second grant is an Arkansas Community Foundation grant to support a health education/injury prevention community service project at each host site.

A parent advisory council comprised of superintendents, principals, parents, and members from each school in the target area is formed each year. The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program director forms the advisory council based on recommendations of parents and staff at participating schools and facilitates meetings. The council offers the program and area schools recommendations that might increase parent involvement in improving student academic performance.

The Smart Start AmeriCorps program is currently working the cooperative's technology staff to develop an AmeriCorps Alumni Website. This website will be an additional tool to use in fund raising, member recruitment, and member reflection.

C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: The Arkansas State Commission of Volunteerism conducts annual trainings on CNCS policy, procedures, rules, and regulations. They provide periodic updates to ensure program staff is aware of any changes throughout the year. Annual state audits of the SEARK ESC and its programs are conducted to ensure all program are fulfilling state and federal guidelines. Results of these audits are exemplary and are one of the reasons the SEARK ESC has been selected to house and manage so many programs.

The SEARK ESC provides annual training to host site supervisors that includes orientation and updates to program and CNCS rules and regulations. Host Sites are provided with Smart Start AmeriCorps program manuals that include documentation of CNCS rules and regulations. Host Site Supervisors and school district superintendent are required to sign a memorandum of understanding pertaining to compliance with program and CNCS rules and regulations.

The Smart Start AmeriCorps Program director makes site visits to host sites monthly to ensure compliance with program requirements, rules, and regulations. The program director meets with both the supervisor and members at each site to ensure both are following program contracts and memorandums of understanding. Any performance and/or disciplinary issues are addressed at this time with both host site supervisor and member present. The program director also makes immediate site visits if the program has concerns with a member or a hosting site being in compliance with program or NCSC rules and regulations. Issues of noncompliance are addressed according to NCSC rules and regulations and the Arkansas Service Commission's recommendation.

E. ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION: The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program has filled all 73 member positions annually for the past two years. The program retention rate was 96% in the 2009-2010 school year and 92% in the 2010-2011 school year. This failure to maintain a 100% is due

Narratives

in part to the recent unemployment the region is experiencing. Families have to relocate for employment, thus some students are leaving the program and community to be with spouses or parents.

In an effort to increase member retention rate the program plans to allot more member slots to those host sites with excellent member performance and retention rates and decrease or eliminate member slots offered to host sites with poor retention rates.

F. PERFORMANCE TARGETS AND DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE: Year one of current funding: Performance Measure 1: 700 students will complete 25,200 hours of reading and/or math tutoring -724 students completed the tutoring program. Performance Measure 2: 595 (85%) of the 700 students will show at least moderate improvement in academic achievement - 645 students (89%) showed improvement. Performance measure 3: 75 youth volunteers will generate 1000 hours of service- 267 youth volunteers generated 1041.5 hours of service.

Year two of current funding: Performance Measure 1: 700 students will complete 25,200 hours of reading and/or math tutoring -735 students completed the tutoring program. Performance Measure 2: 572 (85%) of the 700 students will show at least moderate improvement in academic achievement - 721 students (98%) showed improvement. Performance measure 3: 75 youth volunteers will generate 1000 hours of service- 149 youth volunteers generated 1072 hours of service.

During the first year of the current funding period, members were not exited within 30 days of their last day of actual service due to a misunderstanding. Instead, members were exited within 30 days of program ending date. This was addressed and corrected. In the subsequent year, all members were interviewed and exited within the 30 day period following their last day of service.

F. OPERATING SITES AND MEMBER SERVICE SITES: The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program currently successfully manages 15 host site elementary schools within the following counties: Ashley, Cleveland, Calhoun, Drew, Bradley, Chicot, and Desha. These sites are selected from the 23 elementary schools served by the SEARK ESC based on their: community need for tutoring services, ability to provide a quality host site supervisor and member support, past compliance with program and NCSC rules and regulations, and ability to provide matching program funds.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

BUDGET/COST EFFECTIVENESS

A. Cost Effectiveness:

The SEARK ESC is requesting a Cost Reimbursed grant in the amount of \$458,680.00 to help support

Narratives

the Smart Start AmeriCorps program. The requested amount will be matched with no less than \$216,147.00 from local school districts, the Arkansas-based foundation (Arkansas Community Foundation), and the SEARK ESC.

Each school district is committed to providing long-term support to the program through cash and in-kind commitments. Smart Start Program was awarded \$5,000 through AR Community Foundation to support an "Oral Health Education Community Service Project." The SEARK ESC supports the program through in-kind and cash support for \$37,440 of the project. Arkansas Smart Start has the comprehensive community based and state-wide support to make a sustainable, long-lasting impact on education in the Arkansas Delta. All partners agree that the need is paramount and the proposed solutions engage the entire community.

B. Current Grantees Only: The program is currently pursuing additional funding from the Wal-Mart Foundation to help support the program in the future and reduce the amount of funding requested from CNCS. The program has had requests from additional school districts to expand into neighboring rural impoverished counties.

C. The current budget is adequate to meet current program requirements. The program has successfully met its goals annually. To expand the number of schools served by the program, additional funding is being pursued from within the state.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Evaluation Summary or Plan:

The SEARK Coop can effectively develop and administer the program with proper supervision, monitoring, evaluation, and financial controls. In 1985, the Arkansas Legislature authorized the establishment of the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative to provide educational support services in school districts located in seven counties of southeast Arkansas. The SEARK Coop is centrally located in Monticello, Arkansas and serves a large rural population. The SEARK Coop Board of Directors is composed of the 14 school district superintendents. The SEARK Coop Director, Mrs. Karen Eoff, reports to the SEARK Coop Board of Directors and the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program director reports to Mrs. Eoff. The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program director, school site principals, and members will share responsibility in collecting data for tracking and evaluating progress toward meeting and achieving performance measures. The Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program has developed a system for collecting and organizing data on an ongoing basis, reporting progress, and generating reports. The program will utilize the AmeriCorps Web-Based

Narratives

Reporting System to enroll members. Members will receive a minimum of 48 hours of in-service training, resulting in a member orientation of basic instructional tools needed for providing effective individualized reading and mathematics services. The program director will prepare, administer member training assessments, and post-tests covering in-service material as a method of evaluation of members. Tests will be scored by the director to show member progress. Members will gain practical experience in individual reading and mathematics assistance by working with their mentor teachers, resulting in new tutoring skills. An assessment of member tutoring skill performance will be developed by the program director. Each mentor teacher will measure improved tutoring skills of members using this assessment. Service delivery records documenting member attendance, service delivery, and service results as required for reporting will be completed by members on a daily basis. Each AmeriCorps member's service delivery plan will serve as documentation of experience and planning. AmeriCorps member journals will document success stories, occurring as a result of service delivery at their site. Members will journal at least one success story, concern, or discovery each month. These success stories will be copied and compiled by the program director each month to serve as qualitative data of program success. Student achievement will be monitored through the use of performance assessments and reading inventories on an ongoing basis, and adjustment of individual learning plans for students will be made, as required, at a joint meeting of the sponsor teacher and the member, ensuring maximum educational success. Pre- and post Stanford 10 Achievement Test (SAT-10) scores will document reading and math level gains for the program year. Parent involvement meetings will be documented by signatures of attending parents on a log of attendance form, and members will complete a parent involvement form after each meeting. The summary form and the attendance form will be mailed to the central office. AmeriCorps Signature Projects and student volunteerism will be documented by signatures of volunteers on a log of participation form. Members will complete an AmeriCorps Signature Project form after each community service project. The AmeriCorps Signature Project form and the participation form will be mailed to the central office. According to SEARK Coop policy, a program/program director evaluation form will be mailed to area schools to be completed by the superintendent or principal at the school receiving services. The administrator will complete the form and mail it to the SEARK Coop Director, Mrs. Eoff, for review. Mrs. Eoff and the program director will then conference concerning the evaluation outcomes. The program director will make necessary adjustments to ensure proper program management.

Amendment Justification

n/a

Narratives

Clarification Summary

BUDGET CLARIFICATION ITEMS:

1. Please certify that each of the individuals listed will not engage in fundraising activities, including work on CNCS grant applications as 100% of their time is charged to the grant.

Any personnel with the Smart Start Program will not engage in any fundraising events or work on CNCS grant applications as 100% of their time is charged to the grant.

A hired consultant writes the grant therefore any personnel hired with Smart Start program does not work on the grant application.

2. Please modify your calculation to include cost per mile and clarify if per diem is included in the lodging expenses and if so provide the rate.

2 people: Commercial airline tickets @ \$700 + registration fees \$750 + lodging \$460 includes (2 nights hotel @ \$216 + per diem @ \$61 per day per 2 people = \$244) + mileage (\$.42 x 214 miles) \$90 = \$2000.

3. Please provide an explanation of costs for the training identified (ex. is this consultant fee, supplies, room rental etc.).

The identified training provided by the Smart Start Program is located and hosted by the SEARK Education Service Cooperative. The Cooperative's "specialists" provide specific trainings such as but not limited to: math, reading, technology, Life After Americorps, and orientation. Each specialist training is included as the grantee's in-kind match for the program. In kind match will be reported for each specialist at the rate of \$540 per day for math, reading, technology, and life after AmeriCorps. Training rooms are reported as in kind match at the daily rate of \$503 per day and \$37 for refreshments for orientation days, entry level training, advanced level training, CPR/First Aid and advisory council meetings, math trainings, literacy and technology.

4. Please provide itemization for all costs over \$1,000 including printing costs, postage, and telephone service.

Itemization for printing costs include:

Cost of Paper, Photo copies of daily paperwork, timesheets, member guides, handbooks, forms, faxes and letters: 73 members x 411 copies per member @\$.15 per copy

Itemization for postage includes:

Mailing of member packets of required paperwork, member guides, newsletters, training

Narratives

notifications and forms per week/month per member (73 members)=73 members x \$1.97 per month x 12 months =\$1725

Itemization for telephone usage includes:

Office phone and cellular phone service-\$100 per month x 12 months= \$1,200

5. Please certify that the AmeriCorps logo will be included on all member gear.

The AmeriCorps logo has and will be on any shirts, names badges, bags, and jackets purchased as Gear for members.

Programmatic Clarification Items:

Please make the following changes in the eGrants narrative field labeled Clarification Summary.

1. Please elaborate on how the program plans to provide structured opportunities for participants to reflect on and learn from their service in a manner that promotes a lifelong ethic of service and continued civic participation.

Upon entrance into the Arkansas Smart Start AmeriCorps program, members will begin a member service journal. Members will attend initial training that includes: Personality Assessment, Decision Making, and Goal Setting. They will use this training to aid in initiating their AmeriCorps Member Service Journal. Initial entries will include who they are, personal strengths and weaknesses, and what they hope to achieve and gain through their AmeriCorps service. Members will establish both short-term and long-term goals and identify needs that the program could help them meet through service or training.

Additional training based on identified member needs and civic responsibility will be conducted throughout the year that can help members to meet personal goals. The program coordinator will review each member's service journal and assess progress towards goals with them during monthly site visits.

Members, site supervisor, and program coordinator will have the opportunity to revisit their goals and needs mid-service year to assess personal growth and any modifications members wish to make in their goals.

Post program review of member's experience and progress towards goals will be conducted to aid members in transitioning out of AmeriCorps or planning for their continued experience as an

Narratives

AmeriCorps member.

2. Tutoring Requirements:

Please certify that your tutoring program will ensure that members meet the requirements of obtaining a high school diploma and high quality, evidenced based tutoring strategies. The following information was added in Rationale and Approach section F and I.

The Smart Start AmeriCorps Program is in compliance with 45 CFR 2522.910. requiring all Smart Start AmeriCorps members to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent prior to serving in the program.

Many potential applicants attend the local university ,therefore; requiring the member to obtain this certification does not hinder the recruitment process.

Continuation Changes

The program will opt to use the National Performance Measures.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable