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## Executive Summary

Twenty-nine AmeriCorps members will tutor 1,015 K-8 students in reading and math within the Grenada Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle Schools, participate in local and national days of service in the Grenada community, and reinforce tutoring through reading initiatives at the local library. At the end of our program, August 31, 2014, that will begin September 1, 2013, we anticipate a two-fold outcome: 1) At least 85% of the 1,015 K-8 students receiving AmeriCorps tutoring have at least a 15% gain in academic achievement as measured by pre and post test scores. 2) Members will have experienced a meaningful year of service and training activities that have a positive impact on the community needs and encourage community members to participate in community service. The program will focus on the CNCS area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$370,976 to be matched with \$171,562.

## Rationale and Approach

a.NEED--The underlying cause of our community's problem is the lack of academic skills beginning with our young students. In our county there is a direct correlation between academic success and family economic status/employment. According to the US Census Bureau in 2010, those with a bachelor's degree or higher earned an average of \$78,000 per year while workers... without a high school diploma averaged about \$29,000 per year. The statistics of Grenada's graduation rate of 63.2% (Mississippi Report Card for 2010-2011 No Child Left Behind) compared to the poverty rate of families in Grenada, 29.2% (2005-2009 data-[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) and the 2011 State graduation rate of 71.4% ([www.mde.k12.ms.us](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us)), provide corroborative data of the need to attack the underlying problem of lack of academic skills to improve the economic disadvantages of our populace. According to Steven Strauss, Harvard University, [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com), "Basically, the higher the education level, the higher the income...The better educated the groups, the lower the unemployment rate...Those with low educational attainment drift permanently... with little stability."

-According to the most current statistics in the 2010-2011 Children First Annual Report (CFA), <http://www.gsd.k12.ms.us/testing>, our Dropout Rate is 18.7%, greater than the State average of 16.7%. Consider the implications of that staggering CFA statistic, compiled by the MS Department of Education, that almost one of five students of the 4,400 District pupils drops out of school.

-Lack of academic preparedness is defined as a primary reason for dropping out. According to a recent longitudinal study by Donald Hernandez in his report, 'Double Jeopardy, "...found that children who are struggling to read in third grade are four times more likely to dropout or not complete high school

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as classmates who are proficient readers." This ongoing problem is generational and affects the adult population as evidenced by county adult illiteracy rates, 19% of adults at the lowest Level 1 reading level and combined 70% at Levels I and II (according to the synthetic estimates available from the National Institute for Literacy study, [www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov), 2003 statistics). Twenty-nine percent (29%) of our adult population lack a high school diploma or equivalent ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), 2005-2009).

-The lack of academic achievement of adults, our District's former students, therefore affects the families' economic status. As stated by Jennifer Cheeseman Day from the July 2002 report on the US Census website, ([www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/23-210.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/23-210.pdf)) "...each successively higher education level is associated with an increase in earnings." The poverty rate percentage (29.2%) and the adults without a diploma (29%) are not the same percentage by coincidence. Lack of education and poverty go hand-in-hand. According to Wendy Schwartz in her report, 'New Information on Youth Who Drop Out:', "...dropouts will earn \$200,000 less than high school graduates ...make up nearly half the heads of households on welfare...and make up nearly half of the prison population." The 2010-2011 Children First Annual Report lists our District's free and reduced lunch rate at 66.41%, ([www.gsd.ms.us/testing/2220CFA.pdf](http://www.gsd.ms.us/testing/2220CFA.pdf)), more than half of our student population. Our county unemployment rate is 8.4%, compared to the State average of 7.5% and the national average of 7.4% (Nov. 2012, [www.mdes.ms.gov](http://www.mdes.ms.gov)). The evidence-based need of these statistics comparing remarkably similar poverty rates and percentage of adults without a high school diploma provide a compelling case for the need of academic achievement interventions for our students. Our populace lives in an isolated, rural environment with limited access to cultural and educational opportunities. Cities are about 100 miles away in any direction.

-We selected of K-8 grade students for tutoring services. The target group was determined by a consensus of the Tutoring Intervention Team consisting of the District Intervention Specialist, Psychologist, and his facilitators, and the teachers at each school site. They used data from the Title I Surveys of Community Needs, which encompassed community members, District staff, parents, and students, to give an accurate picture of student needs. Data indicates specifically the need for smaller classes, an indication that would be effectively met by AmeriCorps small group and one-on-one tutoring. Improvement of reading and math skills in the lower grades was selected to optimize our efforts and prepare the children for high school graduation, subsequent success in work and life, and the opportunity to fight continued poverty and illiteracy.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS-Members tutor K-8 grade students in math and reading one-on-one and in small groups

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during the school day for 30-minute sessions and during morning extended year classes in June. Members arrive at their school site each day to prepare tutoring lessons and maintain accurate reporting documents. The Intervention Specialist and staff of our District assign students to each AmeriCorps member for tutoring. Members also answer community needs through projects that address illiteracy, poverty, and drop-out prevention. Members, unlike volunteers, are reliable and at their service site daily. Volunteers are sporadic and don't receive the extensive training that all AmeriCorps members receive.

-Our members participate in National Days of Service and are engaged in opportunities that both serve the community and provide approved hours.

-Members provide a highly effective means to solve our community needs because the one-on-one and small group settings of AmeriCorps instruction provide the optimum environment for tutoring impact. The teaching staff is unable to give the individualized tutoring that at risk students require. AmeriCorps service models the appropriate behavior for leveraging additional volunteers, impacting student achievement, and providing community service. Our programs' student tutoring has improved academic scores at least by 15% in 85% of tutored students in every year of the program.

-We are requesting 29 full-time AmeriCorps members for the 2013-2014 program year. We need full-time members to provide the personal attention required and to serve as follows: 20 at the Lower Elementary (K-3), 5 at the Upper Elementary (4-5), and 4 at the Middle School(6-8).

-We are requesting 29 full-time slots to tutor one-on-one and in small groups.

c. EVIDENCE-BASED-AmeriCorps has a measurable community impact with evidenced-base documentation. There is a very similar correlation in our community between academic success (63.2% graduation rate, therefore, 36.8% are not graduating) and the community poverty rate (29.2%). By increasing academic achievement of students annually by 15% or more, our AmeriCorps program attacks the lack of academic skills in our younger students. A 2010 report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 'Longitudinal Analysis of Third Grade Students in Chicago in 1996-97 and their Educational Outcomes' by Lesnick, George, Smithgall, and Gwynne, stated, "...we saw that a child's third grade reading level is related to future educational performance. Specifically, students who are above grade level in third grade...graduated high school and attended college at higher rates than their peers who were at or below grade level." Measurable academic success in our younger students will ultimately raise the graduation rate. Those not graduating, according to the US Department of Education National Center for Education statistics, 2011, "...will remain entrenched in poverty". We measure the academic improvement of tutored students by State approved standardized pre and post

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testing scores with AIMSweb, a web-based assessment, data management, and reporting system designed to screen and monitor progress. AIMSweb obtains outcome measures of reading and math performance to provide guidance to administrators and teachers based on accurate, continuous, and direct student assessment. Students are tested AIMSweb Benchmark Testing three times a year to obtain performance data that demonstrates student growth. AIMSweb uses Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) an approved and standardized assessment practice based on over 25 years of scientific research. (Fuchs, 1987, "Effects of Curriculum Based Measurement Procedures in Spelling and Math")

- The impact of the AmeriCorps investment has and will continue to increase academic achievement by at least 15% in 85% of tutored students as evidenced by pre and post test scores. The tutoring success rate supports our program design of improving academic skills. Our program is demonstrating community impact and assisting with the solving of community problems. Student testing results in Mississippi are interpreted by comparisons of a measurement tool known as QDI. QDI is calculated by using the students' results on the state test. During the 2007-2008 school year, Grenada students scored 144, one point below the state average on the Quality of Distribution Index (QDI). This past school year, our QDI was 179, 17 points above the state average and, for the first time, our District has been labeled high performing. This growth in achievement is directly attributable to the tutoring interventions by the AmeriCorps members.

-By the end of the three-year grant cycle, we expect to see an annual academic improvement of at least 15% of 85% of the tutored students.

-The demonstrable impact will be evidenced by pre and post test data of Aimsweb Benchmark Testing ([www.aimsweb.com](http://www.aimsweb.com)) that will verify the annual 15% academic improvement.

-The impact will be measured by reports of achievement compiled annually by the Intervention Team and from members' progress monitoring of their students.

-This will be reported on an annual basis by information posted in our monthly District newspaper distributed to students and stakeholders throughout the community, School Board, website postings, our Facebook, and the AmeriCorps Newsletter.

-Performance measure targets were determined by a consensus of the Tutoring Intervention Team consisting of the District Intervention Specialist, Psychologist and his facilitators, and teachers at each school site. They used data from Title I Surveys of Community Needs, which encompassed community members, District staff, parents, and students.

CURRENT GRANTEE-Our performance during our last year and all years of operation, met our

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program objectives of 15% academic improvement of 85% of tutored students.

-Our 5-year AmeriCorps program is making a difference. Schools targeted by our initiative have increased their accreditation status as defined by the MS Department of Education. Our high school has been labeled as successful for 2 years and has now been labeled high performing partly due to the previous four years of AmeriCorps members tutoring students soon to enter high school. Our Middle School has moved upward to a high performing label instead of successful and Lower Elementary scored in the high performing range. During the 2007-2008 school year, Grenada students scored a QDI of 144, one point below the state average on the Quality of Distribution Index (QDI). This past school year, our QDI was 179, 17 points above the state average.

-Our AmeriCorps Program has been successful in improving the academic skills of our students as evidenced by pre and post tests, increase in accreditation status, and State testing scores.

-We are on target of improving the academic success of our students. Our program is successfully moving our students forward! Each year our tutoring initiative has boosted at least a 15% academic improvement of 85% of students as measured by pre and post test data.

d. MEMBER RECRUITMENT-Our program recruits members through a variety of methods: newspaper, cable, radio, AmeriCorps website, District website, WIN Job Center, our local community college, and principal referrals.

-Members will be recruited from the local communities by our frequently visited website ([www.servegrenada.com](http://www.servegrenada.com)) that is used both for information and for recruitment purposes. A display will also be created and exhibited in Grenada to visually describe AmeriCorps opportunities and benefits. Applicants will reflect the diverse nature of population of our community-wide District.

-We will be recruiting and engaging traditionally underrepresented populations, especially low income individuals, rural residents, older Americans, veterans, members of faith-based organizations and communities of color. All of our current members are rural residents, 82% are black, 100% are from faith-based organizations, and 7% are older Americans. We have adjusted our recruitment plan to attract more members over fifty-five and those who are veterans. We target social security offices, retired persons' organizations, and the local VFW. We realize the benefits of having members over fifty-five and veterans include their maturity, skill, and work ethic. Our experience with fifty-five and older members has been very positive, with these members earning more hours in a smaller time frame, offering more community service, having less discipline issues, and facilitating more changes to tutored youth. Our selection criteria includes those meeting tutoring requirements, individuals seeking to further their education and/or those over 55 wishing to transfer their education award to

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child, grandchild, or foster child.

e. MEMBER TRAINING-Plans to orient members to AmeriCorps will serve to develop Corps esprit de Corps and unity of purpose.

-Topics include: delineation of AmeriCorps prohibited service activities, drug policies, work schedules, education awards and benefits, supervision policies, work ethics, position description, required services, timesheets, and program evaluation gathering procedures. Orientation also includes specific reading and math tutor training, purpose of AmeriCorps, community demographics, and project planning. Orientation will include information about the County of Grenada in which the members would serve. Local service opportunities and National Service Days are described.

Placement site orientation at the members' schools will include introductions, tours, and school in-service training to prepare them to perform all service activities required during their term.

-Members will learn interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution, communication skills, collaboration skills, classroom/behavior management, leadership training, journaling, goal setting, stress management, creative thinking skills, professionalism, and emergency preparedness skills.

-Training will enable members to be prepared to perform all the activities they will engage in through orientation, member manuals, and monthly program meetings.

-Members receive monthly program training throughout their term which encompasses about 105 hours. Anticipated topics include training in education strategies and personal and career development.

-Planned timeline for monthly meetings includes: September-Orientation; October-CPR/First Aid; November-Conflict Resolution/Goal Setting; December-Stress Management; January-Creative Thinking; February-Emergency Preparedness; March-Professionalism; April-Leadership; May-Writing/Resumes; June-Use of Education Award; July-Service Review; August-Life after AmeriCorps

-Members are made aware of prohibited activities at the first orientation meeting and reminded weekly by the Program Director. Members and volunteers receive our Program monthly newsletter which is sent to hundreds of stakeholders, members, and volunteers with program updates, encouragement to members, reminders to the community, and the listing of prohibited activities.

f. MEMBER SUPERVISION-Our in-depth plan for supervising members ensures that members receive adequate support and guidance throughout their term via ongoing communication between program staff and supervisors as follows: Onsite educators-to Principal- to Tutoring Intervention Team-to Program Director-to District Administration-to Board of Trustees.

-AmeriCorps members are constantly supervised by the Program Director who maintains a high

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visibility and working knowledge of each school site and closely communicates with the principals and Intervention Specialist and staff. Each school site will have onsite professional educators who will oversee tutoring activities. Site supervisors, usually the classroom teachers of the students being tutored, will monitor member participation and attendance at scheduled school activities. Onsite principals and assistant principals will supervise the overall program established at each respective school. At the Lower Elementary 20 AmeriCorps members will serve, five at the Upper Elementary, and four at the Middle School. Guidance and evaluation of tutoring processes are implemented by the Tutoring Intervention Team (psychologist, facilitators, and Intervention Specialist). The full-time Director will supervise the Corps at the offsite training and service days' activities.

-Supervisors at each site are professional educators selected for their knowledge of targeted students' academic deficiencies. Often, the identified supervisors are the classroom teachers of the targeted students. Principals were selected as a result of the targeted school choices. The Tutoring Intervention Team, principals, and professional educators all have specialized degrees and training for supervision.

-Our program provides training, oversight, and support to supervisors. The Program Director, a former two-term AmeriCorps VISTA, has served as the Director for three years and has been trained by MCVS to appropriately supervise members. The Assistant to the Program Director, a former AmeriCorps VISTA, assists the current Director in training and in maintaining accurate records of member hours. Identified onsite educators receive orientation at the beginning of the school year to adequately prepare them for AmeriCorps' supervision. Onsite educators/ supervisors receive adequate support and guidance via ongoing communication between administration and principals. Onsite educators are trained in each of the tutoring intervention strategies such as Reading to Read, Math to Math, and Touch Math to effectively monitor members' tutoring effectiveness. In addition to monitoring, the site supervisors serve as resources for members to refine teaching methods and ensure optimum utilization of teaching time. Principals visit members' tutoring areas daily. Communication between the Director and on-site supervisors take place on a frequent and as needed basis.

TUTORING PROGRAMS ONLY-Our process complies with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutoring qualifications.

-All members must have a high school diploma or GED, meet the MS Department of Education and No Child Left Behind requirements for tutors (48 hours of college credits or pass the ACT Work Keys Test), be a minimum age of 17, desire to make a difference in the community, and pass background and sexual predator checks. Our members provide tutoring through a structured school-managed cross-grade tutoring program.

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-All members receive training consistent with instructional programs of the Grenada School District and with the MS Academic Content Standards. Members will complete high-quality, research-based pre- and in-service training for tutors implemented by our Tutoring Intervention Team (psychologist with facilitators and the Intervention Specialist). Members will be trained to tutor the students using the specific intervention strategies targeted for each individual student. The Tutoring Intervention Team provides most of the intervention training for members at the beginning of the school year, with monthly updates thereafter. The Tutoring Intervention Team ensures that training is consistent with the instructional program of our District, with our State academic content standards, and selected intervention strategies. Members are supervised by principals, professional educators with specific expertise in tutoring, the Tutoring Intervention Team, and the Program Director. Training is consistent with the activities the members perform.

g. MEMBER EXPERIENCE-Program components that foster positive service activities and increase community impact are: participation in leadership development, reading programs at the county library, community events, and National Service Days. Participation in National Service Days and wearing of AmeriCorps gear enables connectivity to other AmeriCorps members and to the ideals of service and civic engagement that national service represents. These service projects lead to a quality member experience by assisting the members to empathize with those in need, helping them to devise plans to solve problems, and providing analysis of effectiveness to enable members to internalize characteristics of a heart for service.

-Upon completion of service days' activities, structured opportunities are provided for members to reflect upon and learn from their service through discussion of the impact of their projects and the importance and meaning of service. Structured opportunities consist of interactive evaluations/discussions, journaling about project effectiveness, and guided discussions of improving upcoming projects, and guided reflections to promote a lifelong service ethic.

-Identification of members is apparent to community, partners, and public through the wearing of AmeriCorps gear, publicity through the media, and visibility of members at community events.

-Members are connected with each other through camaraderie in community service projects, team building training activities, and the unifying goals of community impact. Connections with other area AmeriCorps members are established at a National Service Launch Day to be held in Jackson, Mississippi. National connections with other AmeriCorps Members are inherent in the goals and participation in National Service Days and the alignment of the ideals of service and commitment with nationwide AmeriCorps. Expansion of members' vision of their service as part of a larger

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nationwide organization will be discussed with emphasis upon enlarging their viewpoint to encompass the larger national service goals.

-Our program fosters a sense of connection and identity with the AmeriCorps identity during Corps training meetings that serve to develop esprit de corps and unity of purpose. These activities enable powerful, personal experiences and are tailored to awaken the ethic of lifelong service and civic responsibility. By fostering camaraderie and reflection upon the meaning of service, our AmeriCorps members are transformed with heightened consciousness, motivation, and the development of a heart for service. Highlighting the accomplishments of members in the county newspaper, school district newspaper, AmeriCorps newsletter, Facebook, and website publicity enables them to realize their achievements and develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

h. VOLUNTEER GENERATION-Our members are able to optimize their organizational capacity and expand the reach of our program by recruiting a diverse group of volunteers through the Districts' extensive Partners in Education, an adopt-a-school program which boasts over 100 members of business, industry, and civic clubs. Last year our AmeriCorps recruited approximately 150 volunteers. Our goal is to recruit 15 more volunteers by serving as speakers for civic clubs, publicizing upcoming activities in the local newspaper and the District newspaper, recruiting volunteers on our District website and AmeriCorps newsletter, and publicizing activities on our Districts' Facebook page. From a small business to an industry employing over 2,000 people, churches, Chamber of Commerce, and civic organizations, this coalition is in tune with the needs of our educational community. Volunteers will participate in activities that meet the identified community needs, complementing and expanding the members' outreach activities. The members will have access to the Partners' database to recruit volunteers for AmeriCorps' diverse initiatives.

-Our members support at least five National Service Days as mandatory projects: Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King Day, Read Across America Day, National Global Youth Week and National AmeriCorps Week. We recruit volunteers for additional community service events including reading programs at our local library, Boys & Girls Club initiatives, and summer arts programs.

-Members will assist in volunteer management by overseeing the activities of the volunteers to ensure that appropriate service activities are implemented as intended. AmeriCorps members and site supervisors are well aware of and reminded often of prohibited activities and thus do not afford volunteers the opportunities to engage in unallowable or prohibited activities. We will focus upon our efforts to increase the number of volunteers that our program recruits, manages, and retains, enabling our AmeriCorps to strengthen our community through service projects.

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-Our program will ensure that volunteers are not recruited for or engage in prohibited or unallowable activities by the distribution of our program's AmeriCorps newsletter that describes prohibited activities, posting of prohibited activities on the program website, and by listing of prohibited activities on the volunteers sign-in sheets.

i. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION-Grenada School District is proud of our AmeriCorps program and its contributions to the progress of our District and is pleased to commit to and ensure branding national service.

-Our District insists upon the usage of the AmeriCorps name and logo at service locations and AmeriCorps activities' sites. The AmeriCorps' name is exhibited on Program and District websites, service gear, and public materials such as stationery, application forms, recruitment brochures, recruitment strategies, orientation materials, member curriculum, signs, banners, press releases, and publications. Our Program Director, Assistant Program Director, and Public Relations/Communication staff ensure that the AmeriCorps logo is displayed appropriately, designed correctly, and utilized and posted at on-site locations, service venues, and in appropriate publicity.

### Organizational Capability

a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING-The mission statement of the Grenada School District is that: We believe that all children can learn and deem it essential to provide each child with learning experiences that will enable them to become productive members of society. Realizing that students in our District exhibit a wide range of needs, interests, capabilities, and backgrounds, the educational program is comprehensive to meet the needs of each student. Our District was consolidated in 1961 and presently includes city and county schools. Grenada experienced a great deal of unrest during integration, with violent confrontations between white citizens and black children attending newly integrated schools. Our current student population is a balance of black and white students (47.72% black, 51.3% white) and provides a variety of educational and extra-curricula activities for all students. The large membership of our Partners in Education program exemplifies the strong backbone of community support. We are a rural district, over 100 miles in any direction from a major city, with limited access to cultural and educational opportunities. However, our challenge now is the academic and economic improvement of our students and citizens. AmeriCorps is helping us address this challenge. Our populace is resilient, strong, and continuing our community's progress. AmeriCorps is leading us to the attainment of our next hurdle.

-Our District has a great deal of experience in funding initiatives, implementing over \$4 million in grants funds, including five grants for AmeriCorps, five for 21st Century, seven health grants, six

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Goals, a CSRD, five arts commission, and seven technology grants.

-Our staffing and management structure have been optimized to implement the proposed program from our experience in implementing our successful AmeriCorps program for the last five years. Our organizational management structure is organized by levels of supervision and responsibility. The State Department oversees all districts within the State. The District receives oversight from the Board of Trustees and the District Administration, including the Superintendent and Financial Department, and monitors the overall program to ensure exemplary management at all levels. All school sites are monitored individually by principals and assistant principals. The Board of Trustees, administrators, and staff members support our program by providing appropriate oversight, publicity, maintaining evaluation records, and providing ongoing encouragement of students receiving tutoring.

-The current AmeriCorps program staff includes a Director and Assistant Director, 29 AmeriCorps members, Intervention Team, psychologist, business manager, onsite professional educators, principals, superintendent, and Board of Trustees. As a past AmeriCorps VISTA, our AmeriCorps Director has a knowledge of AmeriCorps, skills in our program, member and fiscal management, organization, staff supervision, evaluation procedures, and computer literacy. Qualifications for the position include leadership ability, ability to supervise and coordinate multiple activities and programs, and excellent communication and writing skills. The Program Director meets these qualifications, and has served as Director for three years. The AmeriCorps Assistant Director works part time and has knowledge of the program operation since she worked as an AmeriCorps VISTA. She assists the Director with overall implementation, with ongoing duties including monitoring members' service, maintaining member files, and helping to coordinate trainings.

-Relevant Experience of Staff: INTERVENTION SPECIALIST-Monitors, supervises, and defines tutoring activities and organizes evaluations. Licenses in Administrator Entry-Level, Standard Career Level and Intervention Specialist in Elementary Education grades K-3 and 4-8. AAA level, National Board approved in Early Adolescence/Science; PSYCHOLOGIST-Monitors and defines tutoring activities. M.ED in School Psychology; BUSINESS MANAGER-Supervises District finances. Bachelor of Business Administration; PRINCIPALS-Daily assessment and supervising of teaching staff. Principals have advanced degrees in school administration (two with a doctorate), and multiple years in supervision; ONSITE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS-Provide supervision for each member. Education degrees and years of teaching experience; SUPERINTENDENT-Oversees all school performance. Thirty-three years of teaching and administrative experience, doctoral degree; BOARD OF TRUSTEES-Oversees all school performance. Board members are elected.

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- We currently have no vacancies in our program.
- Our members and sites will receive financial, programmatic, and procedural orientation to our AmeriCorps program. Although we will rely on MCVS to guide us in meeting national service requirements, our financial and administrative staff are qualified to assist with technical needs. The Program Director and Assistant will use websites and webinars from MCVS, Project Star, America Learns, and other resources. Plans for providing financial and programmatic orientation and training presentations include: prohibited activities, drug policies, math and reading tutor training, purpose of AmeriCorps, review of member manual, work schedules, education awards, insurance, supervision policies, work ethics, position description, required services, timesheets, and data gathering procedures. Technical assistance will be provided by the District Technology Team.
- Onsite training at the members' schools will include tours and in-service participation. At each site, supervising professional educators will receive programmatic and fiscal orientation including an overview of AmeriCorps policies, procedures, prohibited activities, supervision responsibilities, timesheets, tutoring techniques, evaluation, and member training topics.
- Our organization has ample capabilities to provide training and skill development for members. Ongoing training options have been presented by Program Director, Assistant Program Director, District Staff, community volunteers, MCVS staff, and paid consultants.
- Our District has a deep level of expertise in completing evaluations and providing support to external evaluators. All of our \$4 million in grant funding has required appropriate evaluation and our last five years of AmeriCorps implementation has provided ample opportunity to develop evaluation expertise. Our AmeriCorps' tutoring is measured by AIMSweb, a web-based assessment, data management, and reporting designed to screen and monitor progress. These results are compiled and analyzed by the Tutoring Intervention Team.
- Our District's prior grant experience includes five years of AmeriCorps funding, five 21st Century grants, seven health grants, a CSRD grant, seven technology grants, and five arts commission grants. Our financial structure receives recognition annually from the State Auditor's Office for exemplary accounting procedures. Last year our Business Manager was recognized as the State's top school business administrator of the year.
- Our District management structure progression from onsite supervisor, to principal, to District administration, to Board of Trustees. The Board of Directors, administrators, and staff members, including the Superintendent and Financial Department support our program by monitoring the overall program to ensure exemplary management, providing and gathering appropriate evaluation

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materials, providing training assistance, determining students qualifying for tutoring, monitoring budgeted financial expenditures, and organizing insurance and appropriate living allowances for members. The Board of Trustees oversees administration activities and will be informed of initiatives of our AmeriCorps members. The MS Department of Education oversees all District activities.

FOR CURRENT GRANTEES-Our AmeriCorps program is thoroughly integrated and supported throughout our District. Members tutor students at three of our four schools. AmeriCorps tutors receive appropriate instruction from the Intervention Specialist, ensuring that tutoring lessons use appropriate strategies and coincide with the students' academic curriculum.

-We have managed our AmeriCorps program well, with ongoing evaluations taking place throughout the District through community and student surveys, interviews, informal assessments, student testing, observations, and self-study initiatives. The District is monitored by the MS Department of Education and has a financial audit each year. MCVS provides training on specific topics for the District Administration. Our program has been very successful ---over 85% of the 1015 students receiving tutoring last year have improved at least 15% academically as indicated by pre and post test scores. Throughout all the years of formula funding MCVS monitoring visits have discovered no compliance issues, reimbursement requests have been timely and accurate, and progress reports have been timely, informative, and accurate.

b. SUSTAINABILITY-Grenada School District is allocating the necessary financial resources needed for AmeriCorps from the District budget. Although finances are very tight at this time, our District is matching CNCS funds in response to marked academic success of our AmeriCorps tutoring initiative. In-kind resources are also planned, such as snacks , costumes, and toys for reading programs at the county library, gift cards, discounts on filing cabinets, and donations of paper goods, providing necessary contribution to the program to ensure continued success.

-Our District has a great deal of experience in raising funds from community stakeholders for District initiatives through our Partners in Education Program. Our District has exhibited ability to obtain grant funding to sustain initiatives, obtaining almost \$4 million in competitive grant funds over the last twenty years.

-To ensure long-term sustainability we are currently creating a Task Force to organize existing resources and volunteers to further delineate our plan to sustain the existing tutoring program. Task Force members will create an action plan, set up committees with delineated goals, and recruit committee members. Potential grant funding will be pursued by committee members from our Partners and community foundations. Our community and students are all stakeholders in the

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success of our project, with the community's prosperity at stake. We will continue to engage stakeholders to mobilize support to continue our program after the grant ends through increased volunteers, community investment, and grants. Our community relationships will add to community investments in the program's continued operation. Our funding sources will be diversified to include a wide range of stakeholders including State, local, and private sector funding. Specifically, we will be pursuing alternative funding sources such as E-Rate Funds, Title I and Title VI Funds, Minimum Program Foundation Funds, Eisenhower Funds, business foundations, and special education funds. Our broad-based support system of involvement through our Partners in Education Program has greatly fostered the growth of our education system. The community has access to the adopt-a-school database and the database developed by the AmeriCorps program through the years to recruit volunteers to maintain our project. These compiled databases and volunteer recruitment experiences will enable our community and District to maintain our project after it is completed.

-Our Partners in Education coalition contains over 100 members of businesses, industries, churches, governmental entities, and civic organizations that have always been involved in planning and implementing of program initiatives. Specifically, the Chamber of Commerce Education Committee has served as the steering committee for several grant initiatives and will continue to serve for our sustainability endeavors. They have garnered support for initiatives from community entities, recruited volunteers to implement strategies, and provided publicity for efforts.

-The Partners in Education Program has always been involved in planning and implementing our program. They will provide support for recruiting, sustaining, and supporting volunteers which will sustain our member activities to contribute to long-term sustainability.

c. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY-Our in-depth plans for monitoring program and service sites for compliance will be implemented by our Administrators, Program Director, and site supervisors. The Program Director will continually monitor members regarding prohibited activities to ensure non-duplication, non-displacement, and non-supplementation and monitor members through site visits, individual conferences, and one-on-one meetings with the Intervention Specialist.

-Our organization adheres to a detailed member supervision plan to prevent and detect compliance issues, especially as related to prohibited activities. Our supervision plan begins with oversight by onsite educators and progresses to principals, Tutoring Team, Program Director, Administration, and School Board. Grenada School District has the ability and structure to ensure service site compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations, including those relating to prohibited activities.

-Our organization will ensure compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations at the grantee and

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service site locations by adhering to member tutoring qualifications, filing appropriate reports and evaluations, and adhering to all AmeriCorps' guidelines and directives.

-Appropriate orientation and training of members will include delineation of prohibited activities, education awards and benefits, and purposes of AmeriCorps and our program and will, therefore, prevent and detect problems with compliance issues.

-If non-compliance issues are identified, the Program Director will discuss the infraction with the offender and will follow the appropriate discipline procedures delineated in our member handbook. Responses to recognized problems will be the responsibility of the administration and Program Director. Service sites will be the primary focus of the ongoing evaluation and needs determinations. All supervisors will be mindful of not allowing members to perform duties that are prohibited.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES-Grenada School District consolidated from city/county districts in 1961. We serve a poor, rural community with a decreasing population, high poverty and unemployment rate, history of racial strife, and a scarcity of philanthropic and corporate resources.

-Our District is located in an economically distressed community, measured by federal and State data. According to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security's most current data (November 2012 [www.mdes.ms.gov](http://www.mdes.ms.gov)), Grenada County's unemployment rate is 8.4%, almost 1% above the national average in November 2012 of 7.4%. According to <http://www.quickfacts.census.gov>, the per capita income national average for 2005-2009 is \$27,915. However, the Grenada County per capita income is listed as \$20,116 approximately 72% of the national average. Economically distressed areas are defined as a per capita income less than 80% of national average or an unemployment rate over 1% of the national average. Grenada's statistics define our area as above both definitions of distressed. Our populace realizes that our educational system is the best hope of a bright future. Our successful AmeriCorps program reflects our commitment to area improvement. Our proven organizational capacity enables us to make a successful impact in a distressed, poor, rural county.

CURRENT GRANTEES-DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE-throughout all years of formula funding, MCVS monitoring visits have discovered no compliance issues.Reimbursement requests have been timely and accurate and progress reports have been timely, informative, and accurate.

ENROLLMENT -We enrolled 100% of slots received in all five years of implementation.

RETENTION:-To improve retention and the earning of education awards, we emphasize the need to select appropriate candidates. We will search for individuals with a heart for service, a need for the education award, and a deep desire to help at risk students. Each applicant will be asked to attend at least two service projects to ensure that national community service is appropriate for them. To ensure

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that applicants realize the implications of AmeriCorps commitment, the applicants' information manual will be revamped to more fully explain tutoring duties, living allowance, and necessary hours to obtain the education award. The Program Director will answer questions and review requirements for service. To increase retention, we will target those members requiring additional motivation. The retention rate for year one was 75%, year two was 75%, year three was 61.3% and year four was 86.7%. We anticipate a 93% retention rate for year five. We have not retained 100% our members for various reasons: pregnancy, 2nd term members finding jobs they felt they must take before end of service, emotional home issues, and not being able to fulfill their commitment to hours. Almost all reasons related to personal problems that were unrelated to AmeriCorps service.

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS-Our program uses every dollar most efficiently to impact the academic achievement of the maximum number of students. We serve difficult to reach populations with a high illiteracy rate and students with less parental academic support. We are achieving great program impact as evidenced by our evaluation. Our budget will support our program design, desired outcomes, targeting of academically at-risk students, and evaluation processes.

-Our cost per MSY is \$191 less than the MSY of our last year of operation. Currently, our District supplies all match (in cash and in kind services) and fully funds our program. If needed, we will obtain resources from a variety of sources such as grants, community donations, and additional in-kind services. Part of our implementation plan includes assistance from our Partners in Education members, additional grant funding options, and the pursuit of alternate funding sources such as E-Rate, Minimum Program foundation, Eisenhower Funds, business foundations, and special education funds. Our MSY requested does not exceed the maximum cost per MSY.

-Corporation cost per member service year (MSY) is \$12,792, a lower MSY than in our previous years. Our District provides program match with non-Corporation resources with local District funds, in-kind and cash of \$171,562. We have increased our District's percentage match from 31% to 32%.

-Our budget is adequate for our program design. We are increasing our share of costs to 32% to meet our program goals. Even though this time is a financial crunch for our District, we recognize the incredible success and impact of our AmeriCorps program and are willing to increase our percentage of match to support, maintain, and expand this invaluable service.

-Our funding is derived from District budget allocated to the AmeriCorps program, a 32% match of the total project. Our organizational funding for AmeriCorps represents less than 1% of the Grenada School District's budget. For the last five years, our District has been supported by MCVS formula

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funding, with CNCS contributing approximately 69%-75% of the total project. This year, we are requesting a 68% match from CNCS. In 2009-2010 we also received additional cash funding in AARA funds through CNCS and for two years utilized an AmeriCorps VISTA member.

-Less than 1% of the Grenada School District's total budget is received from CNCS.

-We will use diverse in kind resources and assistance from our Partners in Education for program implementation (Commitments follow in successive paragraphs).

-The District is supplying the cash match.

-Non-CNCS resource commitments have been obtained through our Partners that provided Title I Community Surveys that determined the program needs. Assistance with National Service Days and reading fairs has been procured from Partners in Education members for refreshments, volunteers, and donations of funds. Partner activities included: R&S Cleaners gave us storage space and use of vehicles to deliver canned food for our Make A Difference Day, Kirk Auto donated a ton of food for our food project, Dollar General gave \$100 gift card each year plus toys and other items for reading programs. Criss Office Supply gave paper goods and discounts on filing cabinets, and Luvata donated desks. For the initial creation of our MCVS formula AmeriCorps program, a planning committee composed of District personnel, Chamber of Commerce representatives, the Mayor, and City Manager discussed the needs of their stakeholders.

-Although our program does not require additional resources to support our program, the contributions and resources from our stakeholders and partners serve to enrich our program and ensure its success. We will pursue additional commitments from community and Partner volunteerism and participation for improvements and additions to our AmeriCorps program. The AmeriCorps members are the mobilization catalyst for the organization of more community volunteers. We intend to combine and more fully utilize the Partners in Education Adopt-A-School Program as our base for organizing our continuation initiatives. AmeriCorps' emphasis upon modeling participation in community and National Service Days provides a powerful catalyst for leveraging community volunteers and creating community impact. Our District's Partners in Education Program has provided a broad-based support system of community involvement that has been instrumental in the program implementation. Our partners include members of businesses, industries, churches, and civic organizations. Each year, school representatives meet with the adopters of their school to discuss school needs. Adopters assist with school needs in a variety of needs including classroom volunteers, speakers, student incentives, school supplies, and equipment, providing and offering teacher incentives and recognition.

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-Our AmeriCorps program is a cost effective approach for addressing our community need of increased academic achievement. Our program will require \$370,976 in CNCS funds and \$171,562 local funds for a total of \$542,538. Our program's benefits have been remarkable. Our target community need of student academic improvement has been optimally impacted by the AmeriCorps members through one-on-one and small group tutoring. The AmeriCorps design is ideally suited for this type of intervention by providing the needed personal attention and assistance for children having academic difficulty. These interventions have been most successful, establishing at least a 15% annual academic improvement in pre and post test scores in 85% of tutored students. This improvement has provided the foundation for academic competencies for continued success throughout the students' school experience. Student results in Mississippi are interpreted by comparisons of a measurement tool known as Quality Distribution Index. QDI is calculated by using the students' results on the state test. During the 2007-2008 school year, Grenada students scored 144, one point below the state average on the Quality of Distribution Index (QDI). This past school year, our QDI was 179, 17 points above the state average and, for the first time, our District has been labeled high performing. This growth in achievement is directly attributable to the tutoring interventions by the AmeriCorps members. Our program is successfully moving our students forward!

-Our AmeriCorps members tutored 1,015 students last year at a CNCS cost of \$376,504 and an MSY of \$12,983. In comparison, the equivalent cost of twenty-nine certified teachers providing in school one-on-one or small group tutoring at a cost of about \$59,000 each would have been \$1,711,000. This additional work is not possible as our teachers are already over tasked in regular classroom activities on a full time basis. Our successful AmeriCorps program, therefore, is a cost effective engagement and provides academic achievements that reaches across grade levels that would and could not otherwise be offered.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES-Our program is requesting funding for a sixth year. We are achieving great program impact (last year 85% of 1015 tutored students achieved at least 15% academic growth) in a distressed rural area serving difficult to reach populations with a high illiteracy rate, high poverty rate (29.2%), less parental support, and a scarcity of corporate and philanthropic resources. As measured by federal and State data, we are located in a high-cost, economically distressed community. According to [www.quickfacts.census.gov](http://www.quickfacts.census.gov), the Grenada County per capita income is 72% less than the national average.

CURRENT GRANTEEES-We are increasing our share of costs by 1% and we are planning to at least meet and anticipate exceeding our program goals of at least 15% academic growth in 85% of 1015

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tutored students. We are planning for our 29 members to continue the number of students that they tutor (1,015) to maintain the breadth of our reach to students needing additional academic reinforcement. We are not requesting an increase in federal funds. The cost necessity of our program can be attributed to the high illiteracy rates in our county, low high school graduation rate, (29% of adults in our county do not have a high school diploma), and high unemployment rate (8.4%). (Statistics from [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

b. BUDGET ADEQUACY-Our budget is clear, reasonable and in alignment with our program narrative.

-Expenditures in our budget are directly tied to the tutoring of students and the skills improvement of our members. Our budget is adequate to support our program design and is sufficient to support our program activities and desired outputs and outcomes. Our 29 members will tutor 1,015 at three school sites. Over 85% of K-8 tutored students, as a result of AmeriCorps tutoring, have achieved an annual academic improvement of 15% as demonstrated by pre and post test scores.

-Criminal history, FBI checks, and sexual predator checks are included in our budget.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

Evaluation of the 2011-2012 tutor program has been sent to CNCS. This proposal will continue our use of the State-approved Aimsweb testing and tables for pre and post test, weekly progress monitoring, and evaluation of results.

### Amendment Justification

NA

### Clarification Summary

NA

### Continuation Changes

NA