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## Executive Summary

Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, 45 AmeriCorps members will partner with teachers in four New York City public high schools serving low-income communities to prepare dramatically greater numbers of students for success in college. By the end of the year, we expect that the 900+ students served by Blue Engine Corps Members (CMs), i.e. Blue Engine Teaching Assistants (BETAs), will have the following outcomes: 1) 90% of students will complete the program; 2) 80% will perform above predicted scores on end-of-year assessments, with entire grade levels averaging 10-25 percentage point gains (over previous year) in the fraction of students achieving college-ready levels on assessments; 3) 80% will demonstrate increased engagement in school as measured by pre-post surveys of motivation, growth mindset, and other social cognitive indicators. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$492,492 will be matched with \$910,090.

## Rationale and Approach

I. NEED: Many students entering college lack the gateway skills and the habits of mind required to succeed in higher education as measured by persistence beyond their first year of college and attainment of postsecondary degrees. Only 29% of Americans age 25+ report having a bachelor's degree (USDE, 2011). This problem is compounded in low-income communities, where just 8.3% of students (out of 41% who enroll) earn a bachelor's degree by their mid-20s (Mortenson, 2010). Fewer than three out of ten students who start at community colleges full-time graduate with an associate degree in three years (NCES, 2009).

Students who enter college without the core academic skills they need to avoid remediation and begin accumulating course credits are unlikely to persist beyond their first year. For low-income students in particular, the economics of remediation--students pay full tuition dollars for zero course credits--create massive disincentives to persist. In the US, more than one in four college freshmen end up taking at least one remediation course (Strong American Schools, 2008). Only 17% of students enrolled in a remedial reading course and 27% enrolled in a remedial math course end up completing bachelor's degrees within six years (USDE, 2004).

Students leaving NYC public high schools exemplify the problem of college under-preparedness. Only 21% of NYC students who entered a public high school in 2006 were prepared for college when they left four years later (NYSED, 2011). (The study measured college preparedness as receiving scores of 80+ on the New York State Integrated Algebra and 75+ on the English Language Arts Regents Exams.) Rates of college readiness are lower among minority students in particular: only 13% of black

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students and 15% of Latino/a students statewide were deemed college-ready, compared with 51% of white graduates (ibid).

High remediation and low completion rates present massive problems in NYC in particular, with thousands of students entering the City University of New York (CUNY) system lacking skills that should have been mastered in high school. 74% of all city high school graduates who enroll in CUNY are assigned one remedial course; 22.6% of students entering CUNY in 2010 needed remedial coursework in three subjects: reading, writing, and mathematics (New York Times, 2011). Only 25% of full time students at CUNY graduate in six years (ibid).

Blue Engine's target population consists of entire grade levels of students (775 students in grades 8-10 during the current academic year) at non-charter, public high schools serving low-income, minority students--populations that are most at-risk for never attaining a postsecondary degree. The proven need of our target population lies in the need of our partner schools, where a majority of students have not developed the gateway skills required for successful college transitions and, therefore, are not statistically likely to attain postsecondary degrees.

Each of our partner schools meet two criteria: 1) Critical masses of students have not historically performed at college-ready levels on standardized tests. Across our three partner schools, only 6% of students tested achieved college-ready scores (80+) on the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam before partnering with Blue Engine. On the Geometry and English Language Arts Regents, just 11% and 35%, respectively, achieved college-ready scores (80+ and 75+, respectively) before Blue Engine. These are all below citywide averages for 2011-12 Regents Exams: 24%, 27%, and 56% of NYC students scored at college-ready levels on Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and English Language Arts, respectively. (Student score data was provided directly by school partners.) 2) The minority student population is high, the majority of students receive free- or reduced-price lunch, and the percent of Special Education Students (SPED) and English Language Learners (ELL) exceed NYC averages. Across our three partner schools, 99% of students are black or Latino, 88% qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, 18% are SPED, and 15% are ELL, significantly higher than city averages of 83%, 74%, 14%, and 13%, respectively. (NYC School Demographics and Accountability Snapshot data, 2010-11.)

II. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: Blue Engine's innovative education service model works in partnership with public high schools serving low-income communities to give teachers access to Blue Engine Teaching Assistants (BETAs) for an entire school year. Working alongside teams of BETAs, teachers have the instructional bandwidth and efficiency to teach a more rigorous academic curriculum that equips students with

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college-ready skills in mathematics, literacy, and social cognition. Our unique instructional program focuses on dramatically increasing the number of students who master college-ready material prior to high school graduation and qualify for exemption from remedial coursework in college--one of the strongest predictors of persistence beyond year one of college and ultimately degree completion.

Blue Engine is requesting 45 full-time member slots to support CMs who will work as BETAs across four schools in NYC for one school year (1700+ hours). Blue Engine's program model and impact lies entirely in the work of CMs. As the recipient of slots through The After School Corporation (TASC) as an intermediary, we currently have 41 CMs operating in three schools supporting 775 students. As BETAs, CMs' activities are divided into three components:

1) Small-group instruction: Teams of 3-4 CMs work in regularly scheduled class periods in Math and Literacy alongside teachers, dramatically reducing the instructor-to-student ratios from 1:30 to 1:6 on average during 100% of 180 instructional days from September to June. Unlike a traditional classroom, Blue Engine's model breaks students into small groups where CMs can customize instruction--in style, content, and pacing--to the specific needs of students and give quick, personalized feedback. The small group structure allows instructors to address the wide variation in student achievement, academic needs, and learning styles within a single classroom. CMs have the capacity to collect quantitative and qualitative data daily to monitor learning, track progress, and inform instruction. Intimate settings and individual attention enable students to feel comfortable as they engage with rigorous course materials and push the boundaries of their academic potential.

2) Social Cognitive Curriculum (SCC): With the aim of boosting academic achievement in partner classrooms, Blue Engine has developed a SCC focused on helping students build the noncognitive skills they need to be academically successful. The curriculum was designed to fundamentally change students' attitudes and mindsets with three core areas of focus: fostering a growth mindset, effective goal-setting, and developing learning strategies. Pairs of teachers and CMs co-teach fourteen 50-minute lessons throughout the year; concepts taught during lessons are reinforced by CMs during academic classes, creating a desire to learn by exposing students to academic challenges and providing resources to overcome these challenges in real-time.

3) Afterschool Programming and Extended Learning Time: CMs provide additional instruction and support during off periods and after school hours (3-6 p.m. daily), interventions that increase instructional time without increasing costs. CMs lead academic and non-academic after-school programming each day, engaging with students in a variety of extracurricular contexts (from academic tutoring and test preparation to coaching sports teams and directing school musicals) that

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motivate students to excel both in and out of the classroom.

AmeriCorps makes this intervention possible. By harnessing the energy of college graduates eager to partake in a year of full-time service, Blue Engine capitalizes on talented people as the solution to a complex social problem. The added value of members' AmeriCorps service is that it allows school leaders to access trained human capital that can be deployed quickly, cheaply, and effectively, an untapped national resource with huge implications for student achievement beyond what is possible in traditional classrooms. Schools need access to a cost-effective pool of individuals willing to commit a year to this form of service and AmeriCorps provides a secure, sustainable revenue stream that offsets the cost of providing this service.

### III. EVIDENCE-BASED / EVIDENCE-INFORMED & MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT:

Blue Engine was founded to combat academic under-preparedness in our nation's high schools as measured by high rates of remedial coursework and low degree-completion and persistence rates. We have focused on proven cognitive and social-cognitive interventions because they are directly aligned with a Theory of Change designed to help schools increase the number of students who graduate with the academic skills and habits of mind required for college success. Interventions provided by CMs are both evidence-based and evidence-informed.

The level of academic preparation students receive in high school influences their chances of college persistence and completion more than any other variable, outweighing a host of family, peer, environmental, and financial factors. (Bridgespan Group, 2006; Adelman, 2006). More recently, Wiley, Wyatt, and Camera (2010) found that students have a 65%+ likelihood of completing freshman-year coursework (at 4-year colleges) with a B- average if they meet three rigorous benchmarks during high school: SAT scores of 1550+, GPAs of 3.33+, and a rigorous academic curriculum (index score of 10+/25).

What this research tells us is that any solution for postsecondary success must involve elevated levels of academic preparation during high school, driven (in this case) by Blue Engine CMs. To prepare students for this outcome, Blue Engine's interventions focus on increasing academic rigor and student engagement through daily doses of small-group instruction, or "high-dose tutoring," in three gateway skills: mathematics, literacy, and social cognition. Characterized by structured lesson plans offered consistently and frequently by knowledgeable and skilled tutors, successful tutoring interventions have been associated with dramatic increases in academic outcomes among teenagers, including improved learning efficiency (Merrill et. al 1995), significant increases in academic achievement in writing and mathematics (meta-analyses by Ritter et. al, 2006; Slavin et. al 2009), as well as long-term self-

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regulatory learning and metacognitive skill (Butler, 1998). Research also points to several features of high quality programs that Blue Engine has incorporated directly into our program model, including: clearly-defined time commitments and expectations for tutors, careful screening and selection criteria, pre-service training in pedagogical strategy and technique, strategic alignment with staff and school leadership (Reisner et. al, 1989). Recent school-based tutoring programs delivered to entire cohorts during the regular school day have achieved promising results: Harvard economist Roland Fryer found "positive and statistically significant results" of high-dose tutoring in middle and high school mathematics following a 2011 experiment called Apollo 20 in Houston, TX.

To complement our in-class tutoring program, Blue Engine has developed an evidence-based Social Cognitive Curriculum that incorporates cutting-edge research in educational psychology.

Randomized, controlled experimental research on "growth mindset" in particular (Dweck) has demonstrated that short, carefully-designed interventions teaching students that their intelligence can be improved have corresponded with sustained, statistically significant increases in academic performance (GPA and test scores), presumably by combating the effects of negative self-perceptions, removing mental barriers, and helping students create and implement concrete academic goals (meta analysis by CSSR, 2012).

Blue Engine's CM interventions are also evidence-informed. Blue Engine was awarded competitive grants from the Blue Ridge Foundation of New York and Edna McConnell Clark's PropelNext Initiative with the explicit purpose of refining an evidence-based Theory of Change that links inputs and activities to outputs and measurable outcomes. Our primary intermediate outcome is to increase the number of low-income high school students who are college-ready as measured by "above-threshold" scores on state- and nationally-recognized standardized tests, namely the NY State Regents Examinations and EPAS (EXPLORE in 9th grade, PLAN in 10th, and ACT in 11th). Over time, our desired impact is to drastically increase postsecondary achievement in the communities we serve as marked by a clear long-term outcome: dramatic (20-30+ percentage point) gains in the fraction of graduating seniors at our partner high schools who complete one year of postsecondary coursework at a 2.67 GPA or higher without the need for remedial coursework. This benchmark is highly predictive of college success, which in turn drives measurable increases in college persistence and completion. The most promising piece of evidence supporting the efficacy of Blue Engine's BETA/CM model is our own results. What makes these outcomes compelling is not just the type of change but the magnitude of change we have seen over the past two years. From 2010-2012, Blue Engine classrooms achieved significant growth in college readiness for members of our target population. During the 2010-11

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school year, our partnership with a public high school in Washington Heights achieved statistically significant improvements in "college-ready" performance over baseline. On the June 2011 Integrated Algebra Regents exams, 43% of 9th graders demonstrated college-ready math skills as measured by scores of 80+ on the exam, a near tripling of the proportion of 9th graders who reached this bar the prior year (15%). (100% of students were tested the year we arrived, up from 96% the previous year). During the 2011-12 year, our partnership expanded to include three schools. By year's end, college readiness on NY State Regents Exams (across three subjects--Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and English Language Arts) increased by 186% while simultaneously increasing the total number of students tested: 140 out of 497 exams showed "college-ready" proficiency levels or higher (28%) compared to 49 out of 323 prior to Blue Engine's arrival (15%).

In summary, Blue Engine represents service as solution. AmeriCorps members will have the opportunity to have a measurable community impact through their service as Blue Engine Teaching Assistants (BETAs). Over the next three years, BETA teams will serve 3,000+ students across 4-6 NYC public high schools while serving as a demonstration site for high-dose tutoring--a high-impact, cost-effective strategy now poised for national replication. CMs will have a measurable impact on Blue Engine's two most important intermediate outcomes--an increase in the number of students at each partner school with improved academic performance in literacy and math and improved levels of classroom engagement and intrinsic motivation as measured by pre-post survey instruments. Of the 900-1200 students participating in Blue Engine each of the next three years, we expect: a) 90% to complete the program; b) 80% (of the original total) to perform above predicted scores on end-of-year assessments. In the aggregate, we expect entire grade levels to average 10-25 percentage point gains (over prior year or pre-Blue Engine baselines) in the fraction of students achieving college-ready levels on end-of-year assessments; c) 80% will demonstrate increased engagement in school as measured by pre/post surveys of motivation, growth mindset, and other social cognitive indicators. We chose these performance targets because they are directly aligned with our Theory of Change. Note on Performance Measures: To reflect the time split of 80%, 10%, and 10% of CM time spent on small group instruction in math/literacy, social cognitive curriculum, and after school math/literacy tutorials, respectively, we allotted 36, 4.5, and 4.5 MSYs to each performance measure, respectively. Blue Engine's first "cohort" of students receiving math, literacy and social cognition is this current year's 9th graders (2012-2013). A 3-year grant cycle will help these students receive support through their senior year. Our first data-collection opportunity for evidence of long-term outcomes will come the year immediately following the expiration of the grant cycle (2016-2017) when current high

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school freshmen complete their first year of higher education. We are developing a data collection and management plan to track 100% of currently enrolled students.

Blue Engine is committed to the measurement and public release of impact data on intermediate outcomes in the fall of 2013, 2014, and 2015 on our website. (See [http://www.blueengine.org/infographic/.](http://www.blueengine.org/infographic/)) We maintain a contract with independent evaluation consultant Dr. Rebecca Casciano of Princeton University to analyze student achievement data provided by the NYC Department of Education through an approved Institutional Review Board plan. Primary data sources will include: district-wide student demographics and test-score data for the June 2013, 2014, and 2015 administrations of New York State Regents Exams in Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and English Language Arts for 100% of students enrolled in Regents classes (approximately 75% of total). Blue Engine will also administer and analyze results from the nationally standardized EPAS testing system (Plan, Explore, and ACT, administered pre-post) to ascertain absolute and growth metrics in college-ready skills in reading, writing, and math for all students enrolled in the program each year. We will also measure growth in social cognition and analyze how growth mindset, goal-setting, and academic strategies relate to gains in classroom performance using a reliable, valid pre-post survey instrument.

IV. MEMBER RECRUITMENT: A full-time Director of BETA Recruitment is dedicated to the recruitment of outstanding CMs through a multi-stage process that unfolds over two deadlines each year (February and March in 2013). We identify qualified applicants from all over the country via a variety of channels, including Idealist.org, referrals from partner organizations, career centers, academic departments, and student organizations. In addition to meeting baseline AmeriCorps requirements, all applicants must: 1) complete a bachelor's degree by pre-service training and 2) have a minimum 2.5 GPA (although the average is 3.3).

We have a three-step selection process: 1) Applicants complete a short online application, including basic background information, a one-page resume, and three short essays. 2) Select applicants move on to a phone screen with staff, where they answer questions about their experiences and mindsets to better discern their level of fit for the program. 3) Final applicants are invited to a day-long interview consisting of a group discussion, sample teaching exercise, critical thinking exercise, content-specific assessment, and an individual interview.

Last year's recruitment cycle attracted 314 applicants from diverse backgrounds (17% Black/African American, 11% Latino/a, 10% Asian American/Pacific Islander, 8% Other), 168 colleges and universities, and 58 academic majors. We extended 40 offers (13% acceptance rate) to arrive at a final

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class of 30 new BETAs (who joined 11 returning second-year BETAs). Of our current corps of 41 CMs, 13% identify as Black/African American, 7% as Latino/a, 20% as Asian American, and 3% Multi-ethnic; Our corps is currently 70% female and 30% male. We are working to build a more diverse corps and are committed to improving our techniques in an effort to recruit individuals from backgrounds that reflect the demographics of communities we serve. To accomplish this, we gather and analyze information to continually evaluate our progress in maintaining a diverse corps and focus our efforts to attract underrepresented minorities, applicants from low-income backgrounds, and applicants who hail from NYC.

V. MEMBER TRAINING: Each fellowship year begins in August with an intensive four week pre-service training institute in NYC that helps CMs receive the preparation necessary to have a productive, effective, and satisfactory corps experience. Training takes place in partner schools, where CMs have the opportunity to gain firsthand experience observing and leading effective small group instruction in summer school classes, as well as participate in school-led professional development to begin the process of integrating into their new communities.

Pre-service training has three primary areas of focus. 1) First and foremost, CMs are equipped with tools and skills to be effective instructors and make a measurable impact on academic outcomes. CMs are screened for subject knowledge and taught additional principles of instructional leadership-- including goal setting, behavior management, differentiated instruction, and tracking towards mastery. 2) CMs are taught about the importance of community context, with emphasis on awareness of the NYC school system and diverse cultural settings in conjunction with reflection on what motivates personal commitments to service through AmeriCorps. 3) Blue Engine conducts AmeriCorps orientation sessions to introduce CMs to the logistics and significance of AmeriCorps membership, focusing on terms of service and hour requirements, AmeriCorps benefits including the Eli Segal Education Award, rules of conduct as well as protocols and repercussions for non-compliance, the history of national service, and the short- and long-term value of being a member of the greater AmeriCorps community.

Blue Engine provides ongoing training and professional support throughout the entire year of service, giving CMs opportunities to build strong content-specific knowledge, increase technical instructional skills, enhance awareness of the local school context, and build professional capacity in a workplace setting. Blue Engine provides support for CMs in the form of: weekly professional development meetings with each BETA team led by Site Managers (SMs) designed to prepare CMs to deliver content to students and assess progress towards student achievement goals; weekly SM office hours to

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give CMs the opportunity to address issues personally; twice quarterly individual observation cycles in which SMs track performance along an instructional rubric and debrief with CMs; Quarterly Stepbacks, which allow the organization to gather as a full staff to assess progress, share best practices, and create action plans; and semi-annual 360-degree review processes in which SMs and CMs use a rubric focused on core values--initiative taking, accountability, collaboration, ability to connect, and self-awareness--to provide an overall picture of performance and professional growth.

VI. MEMBER SUPERVISION: CMs are essential to implementing Blue Engine's program and achieving our mission of increasing college readiness and success for low-income youth. We are highly conscious of supporting and guiding our CMs in their work. Currently, supervisory program staff includes a full-time Program Director (1), full-time Director of Instruction (1), and full-time Site Managers (4) to provide ongoing professional development, support, and supervision for CMs at every stage of the year. Next year, we will add one new program staff position: the Director of Performance Management and Technology.

The efforts of our 6 program staff are supplemented by the work of our headquarters Operations team, the Director of Strategy & Operations and Operations Assistant, who liaise with our AmeriCorps intermediary and provide year-long support services including managing paperwork, fingerprinting, insurance enrollment, and evaluation forms at a high level of quality and consistency. (See descriptions of the Operations team under I. Organizational Background and Staffing.)

Chester Ocampo, our current Program Director, will move to fill the new role of Director of Performance Management and Technology (DPMT). Working closely with the CEO, the DPMT will be responsible for designing and managing the processes of strategy development and innovation that will improve our ability to achieve student outcomes more reliably and predictably. The DPMT will also help to refine our Theory of Change and standardize performance management systems and technology to better track student data.

In turn, we are hiring our first Vice President of Teaching and Learning (VPTL)--the equivalent of a Chief Learning Officer / Head of Programs at Blue Engine. As the senior programmatic leader, the VPTL will manage all program staff and oversee 45 CMs across three schools. The VPTL will be responsible for training, supporting, and guiding the professional development of CMs in coordination with program and headquarters staff, maintaining strong school partnerships, and managing effective data collection, analysis, and impact reporting.

Our Director of Instruction (DI), Aisha Chappell, is a former lead teacher in a Blue Engine classroom. The DI is responsible for managing all teacher and classroom relationships, the implementation of

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math and literacy curriculum, and contributing to the training, ongoing support, and professional development of CMs across three schools.

Our four Site Managers (SMs)--Keith Lau, Kevin O'Neil, Frances DeSaussure, and Kate Fagan, three of whom are former CMs--are based at each of our partner schools, with two supporting our largest school team (19 of our 41 CMs). Their primary responsibility is to directly manage school-based teams of CMs, providing training and ongoing support. They supervise CMs daily, implement training, lead professional development sessions, and conduct semi-quarterly observations, all of which allow CMs to strengthen their content knowledge and instructional effectiveness. They are responsible for CM retention, satisfaction, and compliance.

We partner with executive search firms to identify prospective staff. Blue Engine has established rigorous selection criteria for supervisory staff, including a prior record of service and teaching experience. All prospective staff undergo a four-step application process: cover letter and resume, interview with senior leadership, submission of a work product, interview with CEO, and, if applicable, interviews with the Chair of the Board of Directors and/or additional staff. The CEO ensures that appropriate training and support measures are in place for each CM-facing supervisor, including: an onboarding period, the creation of performance management systems, and ongoing supervision and professional development.

Blue Engine provides ongoing oversight and support to staff and CMs via organization-wide management and professional development structures. Weekly check-ins provide regular opportunities for managers and direct reports to align on priorities one-on-one, report on progress to goals, and brainstorm approaches to challenges. In addition, Blue Engine's RGA, or Roles, Goals, and Accountabilities documents are designed collaboratively by senior leadership and staff to provide a blueprint for each position and revisited quarterly to hold all staff members accountable to high-level goals and responsibilities. Semiannual 360-degree reviews provide a picture of the overall performance of employees using a rubric that focuses on five core values--initiative taking, accountability, collaboration, ability to connect, and self-awareness.

Blue Engine's recruitment and selection processes are in strict compliance with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutoring qualifications. All CMs are required to have a college diploma and complete high quality, research-based pre- and in-service training consistent with the activities each member is expected to perform. Our training modules have been tested in the field with organizations such as Teach For America, City Year, and MATCH and reviewed in publications including Teaching as Leadership and Teach Like A Champion. Our process is aligned with instructional programs at

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partner schools and with state academic content standards [section 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311)].

VII. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: Blue Engine strongly emphasizes our partnership with AmeriCorps and the ethic of national service. Being a Blue Engine CM means not only representing Blue Engine, but also representing AmeriCorps and accepting the imperative of national service, recognizing that we are committed to improving the lives of others through measurable outcomes and united by an umbrella of participants nationwide. CMs quickly learn to identify as AmeriCorps members, as the first training session focuses on collectively reviewing and signing the Member Agreement for Participation in the AmeriCorps Program.

Blue Engine CMs have powerful experiences that inspire continued civic participation and an ethic of service. Intimately embedded in and exposed to an urban public education system and the surrounding low-income neighborhoods, CMs form a deep personal commitment to strengthening these systems and communities. Many CMs want to explore a career in education and the social sector. To cultivate this desire for continued engagement and active civic participation, Blue Engine provides structured opportunities for CMs to learn more through monthly professional development sessions called Third Thursdays. These panel discussions and presentations have focused on pathways into the teaching profession, nonprofit leadership, social entrepreneurship, and public policy. Sessions feature field experts and provide guidance for CMs as they move forward into a post-Blue Engine life of civic engagement. To date, 70% of CMs have elected to stay at Blue Engine for a second-year of service and 36% of our alumni have transitioned into service opportunities at Teach For America or New York City Teaching Fellows, evidence of CMs' commitment to the sector and community. Blue Engine has put into place a number of structures that consistently encourage CMs to reflect on professional and personal growth: 1) CMs respond to questions about personal satisfaction and team functioning in a self-reflection survey weekly. Site Managers use these to identify trends in CM satisfaction and inform courses of action. 2) Check-ins, observation debriefs, quarterly stepbacks, and 360-degree reviews provide consistent opportunities to reflect on needs, assess progress, address areas of improvement, and establish or revisit personal and professional goals. 3) During pre-service training, reflective sessions focused on personal narratives prompts CMs to reflect on what drove them to Blue Engine and share this with their CM teams. To close training, CMs share a reflection on someone who inspired their year of service, grounding our work in a personal, committed way. 4) CMs can share their experiences with external audiences via the Blue Engine blog and Back-A-BETA program, where donors and CMs are matched and communicate throughout the year.

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The heart of Blue Engine is teamwork. CMs work side by side with classroom, grade-level teams, and school-wide teams. Because their experience is fundamentally team-based, CMs remain thoroughly connected with each other, both as BETAs and AmeriCorps members. We are committed to developing structured opportunities for CMs to meet other AmeriCorps members and foster a more tangible AmeriCorps identity. We have budgeted resources to send all 45 CMs to the New York AmeriCorps Kick Off in Albany in November and look forward to the opportunity for our CMs to stand beside AmeriCorps members from other regions and sectors in solidarity for national service. We will also join other AmeriCorps members in the Martin Luther King, Jr. "Day of Service" activities, either hosted at our schools or another site.

VIII. VOLUNTEER GENERATION: Blue Engine recruits and engages volunteers through our Board of Engineers (BoE), a group of 42 highly qualified professionals who regularly volunteer time and expertise to help sustain Blue Engine's impact in the communities we serve by fundraising, building awareness, and supporting program capacity. We do not place volunteers in classrooms with students to deliver subject-specific tutoring. The BoE exists to help CMs magnify their impact by supporting their programmatic activities and initiatives. For example, when CMs organized "The Hunger Games," a math competition modeled after a book popular among students, BoE members participated as judges at schools. Our Development Associate and SMs are in the process of designing initiatives that extend our volunteer base to help students develop early career awareness and college expectations. CMs do not recruit or manage volunteers personally; the Development Associate, who is trained to ensure volunteers do not engage in prohibited or unallowable activities, will recruit and manage volunteers.

IX. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: At Blue Engine, we are deeply committed to national service and aligning our activities with the AmeriCorps brand. As subgrantees through TASC, our website proudly displays the AmeriCorps logo on our partners page. We blog, tweet, and post on Facebook about the ethic of service and the honor of participating in AmeriCorps. We include the AmeriCorps logo on public materials, including printed programs for fundraising events and pitch decks seen by influential donors, funders, and Board members. In our fundraising efforts, we include our AmeriCorps subgrantee status at the forefront because it aligns us with a national movement and indicates the strength and diversity of our funding model. The benefits and national prominence of AmeriCorps membership is also a major draw to BETAs. We ensure the AmeriCorps name and logo are represented in recruitment materials including emails, recruitment website, and all job postings.

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Should we be granted AmeriCorps slots, we are also committed to ensuring the AmeriCorps brand and name is heavily represented in all communications materials, both digital and print. Our Communications Associate is a former-CM whose responsibilities will include the integration of the AmeriCorps brand into Blue Engine's developing brand identity. We have budgeted to create co-branded sweatshirts that display the Blue Engine and AmeriCorps logos.

### Organizational Capability

I. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: Blue Engine's mission is to partner with public high schools serving low-income communities to prepare dramatically greater numbers of students for postsecondary success. We support Blue Engine Teaching Assistants (BETAs), recent college graduates who collaborate with teachers to help students develop advanced skills in mathematics, literacy, and social cognition. Blue Engine is based on ten years of fieldwork and research on college readiness conducted by founder Nick Ehrmann. In 2000, Nick began his career as a fourth-grade teacher with Teach for America in Washington D.C. before going on to get his doctorate in Sociology at Princeton University in Sociology at Princeton University, where he studied his former students. In 2009, the Blue Ridge Foundation committed multi-year startup capital to support the development of Blue Engine, which launched at the 5th annual Clinton Global Initiative. Blue Engine's first class of 12 CMs spent the 2010-2011 school year working at a school in Washington Heights with 186 students in 8th and 9th grade Integrated Algebra classrooms; in one year, they nearly tripled the college-ready rate in Algebra. The following year, Blue Engine expanded to 28 CMs supporting 537 students in Algebra, Geometry, and Literacy across two additional schools; these CMs increased college readiness on Regents Exams (for all three subjects) by 186%. Now in our third year, we have grown to 41 CMs and are piloting our Social Cognition Curriculum.

Our organizational chart is currently made up of 54 individuals: 41 CMs and 14 supporting staff, including 7 full-time equivalent (FTE) headquarters staff and 6.5 FTE program staff. The 7 full-time headquarters staff include: Chief Executive Officer (1), Director of Strategy and Operations (1), Director of BETA Recruitment (1), Director of Development (1- vacant), Development Associate (1), Communications Associate (1), and Operations Assistant (1). The 6.5 program staff include: Program Director (1), Director of Instruction (1), Site Managers (4), and Social Cognition Manager (0.5). We intend to hire one additional management-level program staff for 2013-14: the Vice President Teaching and Learning (1). (For a detailed description of FTE program staff positions, see: IV. Member Supervision.) By the start of our three-year grant period, FTE staff will total 15 individuals. The CEO has five direct reports and takes the lead on strategy, fundraising, board relations,

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partnerships, performance management, and program development, and is ultimately accountable for Blue Engine meeting its overarching goals. The Director of Strategy and Operations manages finance, human resources, grants management and compliance, and operations, advises on strategy, and supervises the Operations Assistant. The Director of BETA Recruitment is responsible for recruiting high-quality BETAs and managing the rigorous selection process. The Director of Development develops and manages the annual revenue plan, fundraising campaigns, and special events with assistance from the Development Associate. The Communications Associate creates and disseminates Blue Engine's core narrative, primarily via digital media and grant applications. The Operations Assistant supports operations and finance structures and serves as the CEO's executive assistant. We are building even greater capacity to support CM management, performance management, and fundraising. In anticipation of this growth, Blue Engine has invested significantly in management training and professional development that supports the work of CMs over the past year. We have also developed a regular check-in structure and professional development system (RGA+360) to ensure that all staff have the resources to be highly successful and effective. Over the next three years, the ratio of staff to CMs will decrease as we expand and select greater numbers of BETAs to support additional school sites and grade levels. With the solid management structure we're creating and a program team equipped to manage CMs on-site throughout their terms of service, we are confident we can train and support a highly effective, scalable team of CMs over the three-year grant period. An engaged eight-member Board of Directors (BoD) meets quarterly in person to govern policies, lead strategic planning processes, review our site selection process, oversee our CEO, ensure the availability of financial resources, examine and approve annual budgets, and remain accountable to community stakeholders for our overall organizational performance. Our Board Chair (also our Finance Committee Chair) reviews AmeriCorps financials in detail and reports to the full BoD on the organization's financial status on a quarterly basis.

For our first three years of operation, we received AmeriCorps slots for BETAs as a subgrantee of The After School Corporation (TASC). In our first year, TASC provided 12 full time MSYs. For our second year, TASC provided 28 full time MSYs. Now, in our third year, TASC is providing 25 full-time and 16 part-time slots to support our 41 BETAs. We have partnered with TASC to build capacity and an organizational structure that supports a successful AmeriCorps program. Our intermediary relationship with TASC has prepared us with the skills, know-how, and experience to operate an AmeriCorps program and manage CMs. With TASC bracing for changes in their allocation and Blue Engine developing a strong track record of AmeriCorps compliance and results-driven management,

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the timing is ideal for Blue Engine to become an independent grantee. For evidence that we have managed the program with discipline and compliance, exceeded performance expectations, and developed a strong record of responsiveness and professionalism, contact TASC CEO Lucy Friedman ([lfriedman@tascorp.org](mailto:lfriedman@tascorp.org)) or AmeriCorps Director Jessica Simonson ([jsimonson@tascorp.org](mailto:jsimonson@tascorp.org)). Blue Engine's AmeriCorps program is 100% aligned, integrated, and supported within our organization because it is the heart of our work. Service, community building, and civic engagement are what we do, and we could not exist without AmeriCorps. The current staffing of the AmeriCorps program covers two core responsibilities: programmatic and financial / compliance. (For a detailed description of program staff's role in supervising CMs, see: IV. Member Supervision.) The AmeriCorps program is managed by the Program Director on the programmatic side and the Director of Strategy and Operation (DSO) on the financial / compliance side. Trainings and skill development for CMs are built in to the structure and calendar of our program. (See V. Member Training for details.) In FY13, the DSO co-led a 2-hour compliance training to CMs with The After School Corporation (TASC), covering all member agreements, prohibited activities, waivers, and forms. She also coordinated the process of background checks, and oversaw the creation of a Blue Engine timesheet system. She liaises with TASC's AmeriCorps Director on managing timekeeping, mid-year and end-of-year evaluations. The DSO has approximately ten years of experience in the nonprofit sector, including four years as a management consultant at a public accounting firm, building the financial management capacity of nonprofit clients. She also has experience as a co-funder of a grant recipient of the Social Innovation Fund, a federal grant program managed by CNCS. Next year, the DSO will continue to manage finances / compliance of our AmeriCorps program, while the Vice President of Teaching and Learning will take over the programmatic function.

Next year, the DSO will own the process of providing financial and programmatic orientation, training, and technical assistance to all staff assigned to the AmeriCorps program. The DSO will work with the CNCS Program Officer, attend trainings, and deliver appropriate information to staff via on-site trainings and the Blue Engine intranet (Google Site). The DSO is also responsible for ensuring the accounting system is properly set up for the match reporting requirements, working with the external accountant to implement the appropriate cost center to track AmeriCorps spending, reconciling expenditures with amounts submitted in the AmeriCorps reporting system, and ensuring that all appropriate supporting documentation is maintained.

Blue Engine has capacity to work with an external evaluator, and currently works with an external evaluation consultant who focuses on student progress and impact evaluation. The Director of

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Performance Management and Technology will liaise with future external evaluators.

II. SUSTAINABILITY: Over the past two years, Blue Engine has developed a strong fundraising track record. The diversity of our revenue streams is important for our long-term sustainability. Aside from AmeriCorps funding, we have three significant sustainable revenue streams: 1) Fee-for-service is a per-CM fee paid by schools. This is one of the most important components of our funding model because our customers--school principals--are paying for the results that our CMs deliver in schools, and this source of local funding provides leverage for our AmeriCorps and private philanthropic support. This school year we have approximately \$495,000 in fee-for-service revenue. 2) In addition, we generate revenue through private philanthropy from corporations and foundations. In FY12, we raised \$884,000 from corporations and foundations. Philanthropic leaders in the field of education-- Blue Ridge Foundation, Robin Hood Foundation, Echoing Green, Edwin Gould Foundation, Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation, and Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's PropelNext Initiative, among others--have added Blue Engine to their portfolios on the strength of our results and "service as solution" model. With multi-year foundation support and our first \$1 million three-year grant from the Coatue Foundation, we are now on track to raise \$1,200,000 from corporations and foundations in FY13. 3) We also have a growing and robust individual donor base, engaged via special events, sponsorship campaigns, and board service. In FY12, we raised \$625,000 from individual donors. In FY13, we are on track to raise \$830,000 from individuals. We are hiring our first Director of Development to ensure that we take advantage of the momentum that we have built in securing financial resources. Additionally, we receive in-kind support from community stakeholders and partners, including a three-year in-kind office lease (2013-2016) from the Edwin Gould Foundation. We have obtained pro-bono legal counsel at Dechert LLP, as well as other pro-bono professional services such as information technology and event planning.

Our closest community partners are school principals and teachers, as we are working together to build a model that can be replicated across school districts and transform classrooms around the country--with huge implications for student achievement. The sustainability of our model depends largely on the demand for Blue Engine in public high schools. Members of these school communities are proving instrumental in building momentum around our work and have become our biggest advocates. We've seen lead teachers join our staff and principals join our Board of Directors, demonstrative of the stake school community members have in our program. School partners recognize that the implication of Blue Engine's model on student achievement is worth the fee-for-service, and invest in us because we invest in their students in the form of instructional capacity,

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curricular tools, and performance management systems. This symbiotic relationship between school and organization, teacher and BETA, principal and CEO is key to our model and provides the foundation for programmatic sustainability into the future.

III. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Blue Engine has 2.5 years of experience overseeing the operations of sizable (10-41 CM) AmeriCorps programs, with supplemental training and support from TASC. We have developed a thorough understanding of current AmeriCorps regulations in active partnership with our Program Director at TASC.

We seek to prevent compliance issues at the outset by carefully orienting all staff, CMs, and school partners to AmeriCorps regulations, requirements, and cultural norms as well as Blue Engine's protocols for dealing with non-compliance. For staff, this occurs during our staff retreat in July. During pre-service training in August, CMs attend sessions dedicated to explicating the AmeriCorps regulations and making CMs aware of the protocols for non-compliance. Teachers at school sites are oriented to Blue Engine in August, and AmeriCorps regulations and protocols for non-compliance will be covered to ensure that all classrooms are informed and accountable.

Throughout the year, with a SM monitoring each school, senior program staff circulating between them, and frequent communication with teachers, compliance issues will be discouraged and swiftly detected. Currently, we follow TASC's procedures for non-compliance: first and second offenses warrant warnings, third offense warrants suspension, and fourth offense warrants termination. Our 2.5-year track record of supervisory consistency, strong corps culture, and CM compliance lays the foundation for a continued culture of AmeriCorps compliance.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

I. COST EFFECTIVENESS: We are proposing a project budget of \$1,402,582 (35% CNCS / 65% Blue Engine), which represents 47% of our FY14 budget of \$3.0M. Blue Engine is a direct service provider. CM salaries and fringe make up a majority (62%) of our budgeted project expenses. Blue Engine personnel and fringe make up most of the remainder (32%). The remaining 6% cover supplies, training, evaluation, and indirect costs.

The corporation cost per MSY for our AmeriCorps program is \$10,944 with a 65% match. Our model incorporates diverse sources of non-CNCS/state support and a solid early track record of running a successful AmeriCorps program via a subcontract with The After-School Corporation (TASC). This year our TASC project grant is \$707,514, of which \$206,000 (29%) comes from CNCS and \$501,513 (71%) is matched by Blue Engine. We plan to fund our FY14 \$3.0M revenue budget according to the following breakdown: CNCS: 16% (\$492,492), in-kind value of education awards: 8% (\$5550 \* 45

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education awards = \$249,750), fee-for-service contracts: 17% (\$495,000), private foundations and individuals: 50% (\$1.5M), in-kind rent and professional services: 5% (\$146K), and corporate sponsorships: 4% (\$120K). Of this, \$684K is secured (\$559K from foundations + \$125K in rent). Blue Engine maximizes CNCS's return on investment. For \$10,944 per MSY, we will train and support 45 CMs to deliver small group instruction to 900+ students in high-need NYC public high schools, reducing instructor-to-student ratios (from 1:30 to 1:6) and making dramatic gains in college readiness (increased by 186% last year) in math, literacy, and social cognition. Our cost effectiveness will increase as we reduce the ratio of CMs to headquarters' costs.

II. BUDGET ADEQUACY: Section I - A. PERSONNEL EXPENSES: We have 9 Blue Engine staff that we are applying towards this grant. Blue Engine will cover the entire portion of personnel expenses and fringe benefits. (1) The Vice President of Teaching and Learning oversees and is accountable for the program outcomes and results of the CMs. 50% of his/her time will be allocated to this grant. (2) The Director of Performance Management and Technology is responsible for improving our performance management systems and we are allocating 33% of his salary to this grant. (3) The Director of Instruction contributes to the training, support, and professional development of CMs and we are allocating 33% of her salary to this grant. (4-7) The Site Managers are critical--they oversee the CMs daily and are responsible for their professional development as instructors. 100% of each SM's time is dedicated to this grant. We plan to have four schools, with one SM per school. (8) The Director of Strategy and Operations (DSO) is responsible for financial management, compliance, and reporting of the grant. 25% of her salary is allocated to this grant. (9) The Operations Assistant will assist the DSO with providing administrative support and data entry regarding timesheets, forms, fingerprints and background checks. 25% of her time is allocated to this grant. B. PERSONNEL FRINGE BENEFITS: Blue Engine currently covers full health insurance costs for all full-time employees. The AETNA health insurance plan costs approximately \$425 per month per employee. Because we are not applying 100% of salaries to this grant, we applied the same percentage of Grantee Share salaries / Total salaries ( $\$385,813/\$481,410 = 80\%$ ) to the fringe benefit costs. The budget also includes FICA (7.65% of salary) and workers' compensation insurance (currently at 0.3% of salary), multiplied by the 87% rate for this grant. C. TRAVEL: We have budgeted for the DSO to attend the annual CNCS grantee meeting and the National Conference on Volunteering and Service. She will report back to staff and CMs on relevant information. Costs: registration fee (estimated at \$300 for each event), travel (up to \$350 each), ground transportation (\$20 each), lodging (up to \$250/night with 2 nights at each) and per diem (\$35/day for 2 days at each). Blue Engine will cover costs of travel in its

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grantee share. We have budgeted for all CMs to go to Albany for NY AmeriCorps Kickoff Day. Costs: bus rental (\$1200/day) plus lunch for 45 CMs at \$10 each. We have allocated half of this cost to CNCS. E. SUPPLIES: Each CMs uses netbooks at the school to collect and analyze data. We currently have 42 netbooks in stock, and estimate 10% (or 4) will not be usable for the following year. Thus, we are requesting seven additional netbooks (45-(42-4)) at \$400 each. Each CM uses approximately \$100 in school supplies per year, which we have included in the budget. We are also adding co-branded AmeriCorps and Blue Engine sweatshirts at \$20 each. G. TRAINING: Blue Engine is covering the entire portion of staff and CM training in its grantee budget. For Staff Training, we plan to send the Director of Strategy and Operations Assistant to financial management and compliance training at \$250 registration + \$35 per diem each for one day. For Member Training, our CMs have an intensive four-week pre-service training. Blue Engine provides breakfast and lunch for the 8-hour days and we make it cost effective by getting groceries at wholesale (Costco) for the 20 days. The costs of food, supplies, and activities average \$12.50 per day per CM. We receive training space in-kind from schools. H. EVALUATION: Blue Engine uses an independent researcher / evaluation consultant to conduct program evaluation at a discounted rate (\$100/hour). We estimated 200 hours of evaluation to this grant, to be covered by the grantee share. I. OTHER PROGRAM OPERATING COSTS: All CMs and staff will undergo a national service background check in compliance with CNCS regulations, with estimated cost of \$130 per person.

Section II - A. LIVING ALLOWANCE: We plan to use the 45 CM slots to have 34 first-year BETAs at a stipend of \$14,400/year, and 11 second-year BETAs at a stipend of \$22,000/year--an average of \$16,258 per member. We are allocating 65% of the member costs to CNCS. B. FRINGE: Blue Engine is covering the cost of CM fringe benefits, including FICA (7.65%), workers compensation (.03%), and a basic health care plan, hopefully with The Corps Network, for approximately \$155/month per CM. Section III - We have applied 5% of the CNCS share of Sections I and II for indirect costs including CEO salary.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

N/A

### **Amendment Justification**

N/A

### **Clarification Summary**

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N/A

### Continuation Changes

N/A