

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Sixty eight AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 750 volunteers over three years to implement Iowa's Governor and Mayor Initiative focused on dropout prevention in partnership with Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa (BBBS), and Community! Youth Concepts (CYC). Members will serve at-risk youth with math and literacy tutoring at 38 elementary schools, career-focused mentoring in partnership with BBBS and local businesses at ten middle schools, and implementation of service-learning projects in partnership with CYC and community agencies at eight International Baccalaureate schools. Five of the targeted schools are implementing School Improvement Grant awards. At the end of three years, 12,150 students will show improved academic performance in reading and math, and 3,000 students will show improved school engagement. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$643,207 will be matched with \$370, 252.

## Rationale and Approach

### A. NEED

Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) serves all of Des Moines, Iowa, a highly diverse and urban capital city of 206,000 people. Des Moines Public Schools serves over 32,000 students, many of whom are economically disadvantaged and demonstrate two or more risk factors for dropping out of school. Over 70% of DMPS students live in low-income households, as evidenced by their eligibility for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. Additionally, 26% of DMPS students live in poverty, higher than the state average of 15%. Approximately 40% of dropouts in Des Moines live in poverty. Currently at DMPS, over 8,700 of DMPS students have two or more risk factors for dropping out, according to the District's Early Indicator data tracking System (EIS). The DMPS dropout rate for 2010-11 (grades 9-12) was 7.20%, more than twice the state average of 3.38%. The DMPS four-year graduation rate for 2010-11 was 75.7%, lower than the state of Iowa rate of 88.3%. As Iowa's Governor and Mayor Initiative, the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa (BBBS), and Community! Youth Concepts (CYC) proposes the DMPS AmeriCorps program, a 3-pronged dropout prevention approach to improve students' academic performance and engagement; ultimately decreasing the dropout rate. AmeriCorps members will provide reading and math tutoring at 38 elementary schools to increase academic performance; school-based mentoring for 6th grade students at 10 middle schools in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa (BBBS) to increase school engagement; and service-learning programming at eight

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International Baccalaureate (IB) schools in partnership with Community! Youth Concepts (CYC) to increase school engagement and provide opportunities for real-world learning.

Research shows that no single factor predicts if a student will drop out of school; however, a combination of risk factors is implicated, including poor academic performance and disengagement from school (absenteeism, suspensions, and expulsions). The more risk factors demonstrated by a student in late elementary and middle school, the less likely he or she is to graduate from high school (Balfanz , Herzog, et al., 2007; Kurlaender, Reardon, et al., 2008; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Zau & Betts, 2008). The breakdown of 8,700 DMPS students with two or more risk factors is as follows: 12% (1,863) of elementary students; 31% (2,144) of middle school students; and 53% (4,700) of high school students.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011), 16% of children who are not reading proficiently in 3rd grade drop out of school, compared to only 4% of children who read proficiently in 3rd grade. Students who live in poverty and struggle to read on grade level in 3rd grade have a staggering 26% drop out rate. In 2011-12, 61% of 3rd grade students at DMPS were proficient in reading; and 64% were proficient in math (Iowa Department of Education).

Additionally, disengagement increases during the transition from elementary to middle school. Results from the Iowa Youth Survey showed that the number of DMPS students who felt committed to school and learning significantly decreased between elementary school (86%) to middle school (67%) and stayed the same from middle school to high school (67%). The lack of engagement is often reflected in academic performance, for example, according to data from the Iowa Department of Education, the percentage of DMPS students proficient in reading dropped from 72% in 5th grade (2010-11) to 49% in 6th grade (2011-12).

Students who drop out of school face significant consequences. They earn lower wages, are eight times more likely to commit crimes, are twice as likely to live in poverty, and earn \$1,000,000 less than their graduating peers over their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

### B. AMERICORPS MEMBERS - HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Because of the high number of students with two or more risk factors for dropping out, the lack of existing resources to provide needed interventions, the commitment of AmeriCorps members to civic responsibility and community engagement, the extensive training and skill-development members receive to perform their service, and the high number of hours and flexibility of their service that can accommodate the academic day, members are the best solution to the problem. Members are well-

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positioned to impact change for a large number of students and build the infrastructure and relationships with community partners to sustain the program long-term, producing a high return on investment. A total of 68 members will serve DMPS as follows: TUTORING: 13 full-time, 28 half-time, 9 reduced half-time; MENTORING: 10 full-time; SERVICE-LEARNING: 4 full-time; COMBINATION: 4 full-time to split their time 50/50 between tutoring and service-learning (at International Baccalaureate schools).

TUTORING: Members will provide evidence-based math and literacy tutoring to improve elementary school students' reading and math performance levels. Members will expand the existing DMPS AmeriCorps tutoring program from literacy-only tutoring at nine elementary schools to become literacy and math tutoring at all 38 elementary schools. Principals will assign members to specific classrooms. Members will work closely with teachers to identify students in need, providing tutoring during small group sessions to those struggling to achieve or maintain proficiency. Small groups will consist of 4-6 students and occur 3-5 days per week for the duration of the academic year. Members will serve 2-3 small groups for 60-90 minutes per session. Each member will tutor an average of 75 students per week. Members will utilize evidence-based curriculum (Houghton Mifflin Journeys for literacy; Houghton Mifflin Expressions and TERC Investigations for math) aligned with state standards (Iowa Core).

Thirteen full-time members will provide tutoring and volunteer management at 13 elementary schools. They will spend an average of 25 hours per week tutoring and 10 hours per week recruiting, training, and managing volunteers. Each member will recruit at least 10 volunteers to assist with a variety of school needs, such as: family nights, Battle of the Books (District reading competition), Literacy Army (volunteers reading to students), etc. Four full-time members will serve at four International Baccalaureate (IB) elementary schools to split their time 50/50 between tutoring and service-learning programming.

Twenty eight half-time members will serve an average of 25 hours per week at 21 elementary schools for a 9-month or 12-month service term. Nine reduced half-time members will serve an average of 18.75 hours weekly at nine schools for a 9-month service term for the academic year. This allows DMPS to engage highly qualified retirees (i.e. teachers) as members. Twelve-month members will also provide tutoring during summer months at select schools. A total of 4,050 students will be tutored each year; 12,150 students over the three year period.

MENTORING: The purpose of the mentoring program is to improve student engagement by providing caring, supportive adult relationships to 6th grade students at ten DMPS middle schools, in

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partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa (BBBS). DMPS will utilize the evidence-based school-based mentoring model from BBBS, and components of the Career Navigator's small-group mentoring program model from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mississippi Valley that has proven successful in improving student engagement. The proposed mentoring program is focused on post-secondary education and career exploration and aims to improve student engagement and increase at-risk students' awareness of career opportunities and the educational paths that lead to them. To implement this new program at DMPS, ten full-time members will serve ten middle schools to create a program at each site in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa (BBBS). The mission of BBBS is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

BBBS will provide a minimum of one full day of pre-service training to mentoring members on best practices and effective mentoring strategies. The BBBS Mentor Coordinator will provide monthly and as-needed technical assistance to members to ensure effective school-based mentoring strategies are implemented. Members will identify, engage, and enroll 30 students per middle school to be matched with mentors from local businesses. Students with two more dropout risk factors, as tracked through the Early Indicator System (EIS), will be chosen for the program. Teacher and staff will provide referrals as well. Members will obtain permission from parents for students to participate and provide a 2-hour orientation to students at the beginning of the program (October). Students will participate in the program through May.

Members, with assistance from BBBS and United Way of Central Iowa (UW), will recruit volunteer mentors from local businesses to "adopt" each middle school. Each business will provide 10 mentors per school to mentor 30 students via small group format (a 1:3 ratio). BBBS will conduct background checks and screen mentors. BBBS, with assistance from members, will facilitate 2-hour orientation sessions at the businesses for mentors on best practices and effective strategies in mentoring youth. Each school will offer the mentoring program twice monthly on Wednesday afternoons, early-out days for the District for Professional Development. These 3-hour meetings will provide the opportunity for students and mentors to engage in educational and career-focused activities. One Wednesday per month a field trip will be taken to a business to learn about careers, or to institutions of higher education to learn about college programs. During the other Wednesday of the month, mentors and students will meet at the schools for small-group sessions that build relationships through academic support (homework assistance) and a variety of activities (academic and career exploration, and social-emotional skill-building). Group mentoring activities allow for students and mentors to bond

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and benefit from more than one connection. Members will serve as liaisons between the school and BBBS, coordinate all aspects of the program at the site level, enroll and match students to mentors, recruit community speakers and businesses, coordinate field trips and program activities, and communicate with teachers about students' homework assistance needs. BBBS will provide match support to mentors throughout the program. At the end of the academic year, all mentored youth will have the opportunity to transition to BBBS programs where they can continue receiving mentoring services beyond the AmeriCorps program. Through the proposed school-based program, a total of 300 students will participate in the program each year, for a total of 900 students over three years.

**SERVICE-LEARNING:** Members will provide evidence-based service-learning programming in eight International Baccalaureate (IB) schools to increase student engagement for those with two or more at-risk indicators as indicated by EIS data. Members, in partnership with Community! Youth Concepts (CYC) will integrate standards-based classroom curriculum into community service projects that provide relevant, real-world educational experiences for students. Four full-time members will serve an average of 30 hours per week on service-learning and 5 hours per week on volunteer recruitment and management. Four full-time members will split their time 50/50 between service-learning and tutoring activities. Over the past four years, International Baccalaureate has authorized eight DMPS schools (4 elementary, 3 middle, and 1 high school) to offer the world-renowned educational degree program. Implementing service-learning programming is a natural fit with the IB framework. Through the IB program, students are encouraged to ask challenging questions, learn how to learn, develop a strong sense of their own identity and culture, develop the ability to communicate with and understand people from other countries and cultures, and become independent, self-motivated learners.

In partnership with CYC, members will implement service-learning programming based on the evidence-based IPARD/C (investigate, plan/prepare, action/implement, reflect, demonstrate/celebrate) model. IPARD/C is an educational best practice framework that students use to investigate and take action upon social issues in the community. CYC will train members, teachers, and staff on best practices in service-learning. Members will collaborate with teachers and IB Coordinators toward curriculum integration of the IPARD/C framework; recruit community organizations where students can apply their real-world learning; work with students to plan and implement IPARD/C service-learning projects on a school-wide basis; and provide extra project assistance for up to 25 at-risk youth (those with 2 or more dropout indicators) to improve student engagement. Students will experience relevant, real-world learning.

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Community! Youth Concepts' mission is to ensure all Iowa youth have access to high quality opportunities that prepare them for success in school, work, and life. CYC provides training and technical assistance to youth-serving organizations and sets high expectations for youth through youth development initiatives.

**SUMMERTIME PROGRAMMING:** AmeriCorps members with 12-month terms of service will provide a combination of tutoring, mentoring, and service-learning activities during the summer. Programming will be developed by District leadership and principals and might include tutoring programs, community service projects, and/or job-shadowing at businesses.

### C. EVIDENCE-BASED, MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT

The National Dropout Prevention Center has researched effective strategies to prevent students from dropping out for over 25 years. From this research, 21 strategies have been identified as most proven and effective for helping all students graduate and succeed in life, including the chosen interventions of tutoring, mentoring, and service-learning. **TUTORING:** Research has consistently shown that tutoring helps improve test scores and grades, especially for low-income students (Hamilton & Klien, 1998; Slavin, et al., 2011). DMPS utilizes evidence-based Houghton Mifflin Journeys curriculum for literacy and Expressions for math, as well as TERC Investigations for math to train members as tutors to improve the academic performance of students. The curriculum is aligned with state and national standards (Iowa Core). Members will be provided pre-service and in-service training by DMPS Curriculum Coordinator(s) (CC) on evidence-based, effective tutoring strategies using this curriculum. The CC and principals will ensure fidelity to tutoring practices. **MENTORING:** DMPS will utilize the BBBS school-based mentoring model which has been shown through rigorous experimental evaluation in 2007 by Public/Private Ventures to have a positive impact on students' engagement in school (attitudes toward school, academic performance, and behaviors). Students who are at-risk for dropping out of school demonstrate improved school engagement and graduation rates as a result of positive, caring adults who mentor them on a regular basis (Albert, B., Lippman, L., Franzetta, K., Ikramullah, E., Keith, J., Shwalb, R., et al., 2005; Herrera et al., 2007). BBBS utilizes an evidence-based Positive Youth Development framework as the foundation of their program. **SERVICE-LEARNING:** DMPS will utilize the evidence-based K-12 IPARD/C framework based on the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice by the National Youth Leadership Council. Developed in 2008 from decades of research on effective service-learning practices, this framework includes: meaningful service, link to curriculum, reflection, diversity, youth voice, partnerships, progress monitoring, and duration and intensity. Studies have consistently shown service-learning improves

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school engagement and attitudes toward school (Brown, Kim, & Pinhas, 2005; Billig & Klute, 2003; Kirkham, 2001). A meta-analysis found that high-quality service-learning is an effective dropout prevention strategy that positively impacts students' engagement in school (Furco, 2007). CURRENT GRANTEES/ PERFORMANCE IMPACT TO DATE: DMPS implemented the AmeriCorps Partners in Education tutoring program at nine elementary schools this past year. DMPS exceeded the goal of serving 390 students with tutoring. A total of 508 students were served, 287 of whom had comparable data. Of the 287 students, 237 showed improved academic performance, surpassing the goal of 211. Those that didn't have comparable data included: Kindergartners (no prior scores to compare); those with no 2nd score due to mobility; schools that did not use comparable measurement tools; and students who moved into the District with no prior scores available. The DMPS Curriculum Director is currently streamlining assessment procedures to allow for increased comparable data across the schools using the Scholastic Reading Inventory and Scholastic Math Inventory. The program goal of 187 students improving school attendance was not met. Of program students, 161 improved their attendance. It's important to note that a high number of students were already at 90% or better attendance at the baseline report. At baseline, 12 students were below 90%. At follow-up, only 8 students were below 90% attendance. So far this academic year, 426 students have received literacy tutoring. Assessment will occur again in February 2013.

### D. MEMBER RECRUITMENT

DMPS will recruit qualified members of diverse backgrounds and provide them with high quality training to ensure their contribution has the highest potential impact. The District Volunteer Coordinator (DVC) will implement neighborhood-focused recruitment strategies to target local community members and parents who represent the demographics of DMPS students. This will include promotional flyers displayed at the 49 school sites to target parents, newsletters sent to families, and promotion on the District's website and social media pages. Flyers will be distributed to at least 15 neighborhood-based organizations (Creative Visions, Urban Dreams, Children and Family Urban Ministries, Hispanic Educational Resources, Inc., etc.) and to at least 25 local churches to promote the program. BBBS and CYC will assist with recruitment efforts, promoting the opportunity at their sites, to their partners, and to area community organizations. DMPS provides equal opportunities to all, including members with disabilities. DMPS will access the National AmeriCorps website portal to recruit members. Additionally, the DVC will employ the following role-specific recruitment strategies: TUTORING: DMPS will intentionally target current higher education practicum students serving the District and local colleges/universities (Drake University, Grand View

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University, Simpson College, Des Moines Area Community College, etc.). This includes education departments, graduate schools, work-study programs, and student services via meetings, promotional flyers, and campus websites. MENTORING and SERVICE-LEARNING: DMPS will target local colleges/ universities (as mentioned in the previous paragraph) including African American fraternities and sororities, Latino student groups, and campus career centers via meetings, promotional flyers, and campus websites.

### E. MEMBER TRAINING

Coupled with resources provided by CNCS and Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (ICVS), trainings provided to members ensure they gain knowledge of AmeriCorps and national service best practices, as well as skills specific to tutoring, mentoring, service-learning, and volunteer management. Members will attend semi-monthly meetings (2 hours each); once with the DVC to receive training and supervision and once for role-specific technical assistance from Curriculum Coordinators (CC), BBBS, or CYC. TUTORING members will receive training during orientation and ongoing technical assistance from CC to ensure skill attainment and fidelity to training models. MENTORING members will receive training during orientation and on-going technical assistance from BBBS on effective implementation mentoring programs. SERVICE-LEARNING members will receive training during orientation and ongoing technical assistance from CYC on effective service-learning programming (IPARD/C model). All members receive training on effective recruitment and management of volunteers. Members are encouraged to attend monthly District Professional Development and relevant ICVS and DMPS trainings. ORIENTATION TRAINING TIMELINE (9-3-13 to 9-13-13): 9/3-9/4: District Volunteer Coordinator will provide: Introduction to AmeriCorps/national service, rules and regulations, member responsibilities; introduction to Des Moines community and DMPS; AmeriCorps website; timekeeping system; member reflections; using MyAmeriCorps; and completion of pre-service survey. 9/5-9/6: Literacy and math curriculum tutor training for tutoring members by Curriculum Coordinators; Mentor training for mentoring members by BBBS; Service-learning training for service-learning members by CYC. 9/9: Behavior Management by DMPS Special Education staff; 9/10: Introduction to principals by DVC; 9/11: (member day of Service, no training); 9/12: Volunteer Management: Retention, Recruitment, and Recognition by DVC and United Way; 9/13: Orientation to placement sites (building, staff, emergency response) by principals. Other relevant trainings offered on a monthly basis include: Citizenship, Civic engagement, Communication, Life after AmeriCorps, Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training, etc. During the application process, prohibited activities are listed in the job

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description. During orientation, prohibited activities are discussed in detail by the DVC as part of the member agreement. Examples are provided to members to further explain the parameters. Prohibited activities are also discussed in ongoing monthly member meetings with the DVC. Members will complete post-training surveys to gauge their understanding of the program and their readiness for service while informing the DVC of needed modifications.

### F. MEMBER SUPERVISION

The District Volunteer Coordinator, Eric Whitney, manages the program and has received extensive training and supports to fulfill job requirements. (See Organizational Background and Staffing Section). He provides uniformity of program implementation across sites and ensures adherence to best practices. Mr. Whitney provides direct supervision to members through 2-hour monthly meetings, ongoing site visits, and is available as needed. Mr. Whitney collaborates with principals to address issues through monthly principal meetings and as needed. Members receive daily on-site supervision by principals via classroom visits, teacher feedback, email, and as needed. Principals provide performance reviews for members twice yearly. Curriculum Coordinators, BBBS and CYC provide technical assistance to members through monthly meetings (2 hours each) specific to their roles. These partners work closely with the DVC via monthly planning meetings, monthly member meetings, and as needed to ensure effective program implementation. Principals and partner agency staff receive training during orientation sessions in July (Introduction to AmeriCorps training, rules and regulations, prohibited activities, site supervisor responsibilities, and the IowaGrants timekeeping system). COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS - MEMBER TUTORING: The proposed tutoring program meets all AmeriCorps requirements as detailed in the Congressional Federal Register and the Serve America Act. DMPS requires the following of members: High School diploma or equivalent; ability to read at a 12th grade level; strong organizational, interpersonal, and communication skills; interest and capability to tutor students; and ability to work effectively with diverse populations. Member tutor training is conducted by Curriculum Coordinators (CC), who have postsecondary degrees in education and extensive experience in the field. Their primary job duties include providing evidence-based training/ professional development to teachers consistent with District and state core standards. Evidence-based tutor strategies and curriculum aligned with the Iowa Core are taught to members by the CC during member orientation and ongoing in-service trainings. The CC provides guidance on Best Practices and methods regarding students' individualized tutoring needs. The DVC seeks ongoing feedback to assess members' training needs during monthly meetings. Members are supervised on site by principals.

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### G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

Members have opportunities to learn about the needs of the Des Moines community and experience the power of civic engagement to impact children, families, and communities. They gain experience working with disadvantaged youth, seeing first-hand the vast needs of at-risk students. Because school districts serve as a hub of the community, members gain leadership skills and professional skills building partnerships with community based organizations on behalf of the District. They gain an understanding of the mutual benefits that collaboration between the community and the schools provides to students and the greater community. Members can engage with parent group meetings and events, observe school board meetings, and participate in District events and activities. They reflect on these opportunities using logs in the IowaGrants system. To ensure continued growth professionally, they are provided extensive ongoing training related to tutoring, mentoring, service-learning, and volunteering. To promote a lifelong ethic of service and civic responsibility and process the service they are providing to children and communities, members are encouraged to reflect on the meaning of citizenship and community service within their long-term personal and professional goals. Individual and group reflection activities are facilitated by the DVC during monthly member meetings. Members also submit written reflection logs along with submission of time sheets. All members gain knowledge of and skills in navigating professional relationships through interactions with DMPS staff and community partners. They gain leadership skills through the implementation of new programs at DMPS, building a foundation for a successful program long-term. Multi-term members gain increasing personal, professional, and leadership development through informally mentoring other members and planning networking and service-learning events.

**IDENTITY AS AMERICORPS MEMBER- BRAND:** DMPS ensures members are aware of their identity as AmeriCorps members while interacting with the community, other members, partners, and the general public. During orientation, DMPS emphasizes member roles, including acceptable and prohibited activities. Members are required to wear highly visible AmeriCorps lanyards attached to their DMPS ID badge when serving, distinguishing them from staff. Members are provided AmeriCorps t-shirts, further promoting awareness and connection to the AmeriCorps brand and the value of lifelong civic engagement. Schools display AmeriCorps signage in entranceways and promote visibility of the members' service through school newsletters, social media, events, and training activities.

**CONNECTING MEMBERS TO LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL MEMBERS:** During orientation, trainings, and member meetings, members are provided with information about and connections to external service opportunities to connect to others members at the local, state, and

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national levels. The program will partner with other member service agencies to complete service activities, building a state and national network of members. For example, members can connect to the Des Moines chapter of AmeriCorps alumni through luncheons and events, such as partnering with YMCA for Martin Luther King Day of Service. Multi-term members coordinate monthly networking events or service-learning events to connect local members together. DMPS also invites Des Moines area AmeriCorps members serving at other agencies to DMPS trainings and member meetings.

### H. VOLUNTEER GENERATION

#### RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS - EXPAND REACH/IMPACT IN COMMUNITY:

Through the volunteer component of the program, members develop collaborative relationships with community partners, gain leadership skills and connections in the community, and open doors to future nonprofit sector jobs. **TUTORING:** In the 13 schools that have full-time members, community volunteers will be recruited, trained, and managed to serve the schools' ongoing and one-time volunteer needs. Each member will recruit 10 volunteers per school, for a total of 130 volunteers per year. **MENTORING:** Full-time members will recruit volunteers to serve as mentors for the mentoring program at the middle schools. With BBBS, members will receive training and guidance on recruitment strategies to meet the goal of recruiting 10 mentors per school to serve 30 students for a total of 100 mentors across the ten schools per year. Recruitment strategies are detailed below, emphasizing outreach to local organizations. **SERVICE-LEARNING:** Full-time members in four of the eight IB schools will recruit, train, and manage volunteers to serve the schools' ongoing and one-time volunteer opportunities. Each member will recruit 5 volunteers per school, for a total of 20 volunteers per year. The other four IB schools have full-time members will divide their time 50/50 between tutoring and mentoring. **MEMBERS' ROLES IN VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT/MANAGEMENT:** As stated previously, members will recruit, train, and manage volunteers to serve within the school sites they serve. Additionally, Mentoring members will be trained by DMPS and BBBS in recruitment strategies, management, and evaluation (pre/post survey) of mentors. DMPS will collaborate with the United Way of Central Iowa (UW) to recruit community volunteers. A total of 250 volunteers will be recruited per year to broaden the reach and deepen the impact of the overall program. Community volunteers can support the program initiative through ongoing or one-time events (reading to kids, assisting with service-learning projects, chaperoning mentor field trips, etc.), and employees of community businesses will serve as volunteer mentors. Members will map out area businesses and colleges to promote and recruit for the program. Existing community partners within school sites will be targeted for recruitment. Mailings to families will aim to recruit volunteers as well.

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Members will promote volunteer opportunities on the DMPS website, social media pages, and DMPSTV (the District's educational access cable channel). Flyers, phone calls, and in-person contacts will be made by members to recruit volunteers. Volunteer orientation will be provided by full-time members at each site on a monthly basis, or as needed. BBBS will guide and assist members (technical assistance) with activities specific to mentor recruitment and training activities. All volunteer focused trainings will be based on best practices (CNCS, ICVS resources). The DVC will supervise members, who train and manage volunteers at their sites. Members will provide support and help problem-solve as needed. Members and principals will coordinate volunteer recognition at each site.

### I. ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

DMPS, BBBS, and CYC will include the AmeriCorps brand on promotional and program materials, curriculum, site signage, press releases, website promotions, and program publications. The DVC will ensure members are aware of their identity as AmeriCorps members during orientation, emphasizing their roles and acceptable/ prohibited activities. Members are required to wear AmeriCorps t-shirts, lanyards, and pins at all times during their service.

## Organizational Capability

### A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

The mission of the Des Moines Public Schools is to equip students for life by challenging each one to achieve rigorous standards in academics, arts, and career preparation. The largest school District in Iowa, DMPS has educated youth for over 100 years. A diverse, urban District, over 70% of students are low-income, based on eligibility for Free or Reduced- Price Lunch (FRPL), and 26% live in poverty. DMPS minority enrollment has steadily increased over the years to 53%. DMPS experienced an increase of almost 300% in English Language Learner enrollment in the past decade. STAFFING THE PROGRAM: ROLES, EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS: The program is coordinated by Eric Whitney, DVC. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and has extensive experience in youth-centered programs and education. An AmeriCorps alumnus, he worked at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa and also served as a Big Brother mentor. The DVC is supervised by Bryce Amos, Executive Director of Secondary Schools. Mr. Amos has a Master's degree and vast experience working in urban districts. Angela Beaman, Mentor Coordinator for BBBS, will provide training and technical assistance to mentoring members of the proposed program. Ms. Beaman holds a BA in Psychology and several years of experience working with disadvantaged youth and mentoring programs. Erin Gorman from CYC will serve as the Service-Learning Coordinator for the project, including training and technical assistance for service-learning members. Ms. Gorman has a Master's

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degree in International Education and several years of experience in education, prevention, mentoring, and service-learning. A Program Assistant position will be filled to work alongside Mr. Whitney. This position will require a bachelor's degree in social services, education, or related field and will provide general program coordination. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE: BOARD, ADMINISTRATORS, STAFF: DMPS Board utilizes a policy governance model to oversee the District. The Board and Interim Superintendent Thomas Ahart are supportive of the proposed program, recognizing the positive impact and broad reach this project will have to increase students' success. Under Mr. Ahart's direction, Bryce Amos, Executive Director of Secondary Schools, oversees DMPS AmeriCorps, ensuring alignment with the District mission. Eric Whitney, DVC, reports to Mr. Amos and coordinates the implementation of the program, working closely with principals, members, and community partners. CAPACITY TO PROVIDE MEMBER TRAINING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT: DMPS prioritizes professional development and skill-building for all staff through ongoing weekly trainings. Because DMPS has integrated AmeriCorps into its structure, this emphasis on training and development has been extended to all members, as evidenced throughout the grant. CAPACITY TO COMPLETE AN EVALUATION: DMPS employs qualified staff in the Assessment Department whose primary duties include data collection, analysis, and reporting for programs and grants (including AmeriCorps). EXPERIENCE ADMINISTERING AMERICORPS AND FEDERAL GRANTS: DMPS has a successful history of administering large federal grants, managing over \$57,000,000 in federal funds last year. Examples of the large-scale federal and state grants administered include: Universal Pre- School, Early Reading First, GEAR UP, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers. DMPS has successfully administered AmeriCorps grants, currently in year three. EVIDENCE OF SATISFACTORY MANAGEMENT/PERFORMANCE; COMPLIANCE: DMPS has integrated AmeriCorps program requirements and roles into its policies and protocols. DMPS has addressed some internal communication and reporting issues. Through working closely with ICVS, the issues are resolved and DMPS is now in compliance. FINANCIAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ORIENTATION: DMPS offers training and technical assistance through its fiscal department. DMPS Staff Accountant of Special Programs provides financial orientation and ongoing support, monitoring all grants. Bryce Amos provides program orientation and ongoing support. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The DVC completes ICVS orientation training, Mandatory Abuse Reporter training, District Literacy and Math Curriculum tutor training, Mentor training, Service-Learning training, and AmeriCorps Program Director training. The DVC will attend an ICVS training on volunteerism and program management. DMPS Curriculum Coordinators (CCs)

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provide technical assistance for tutoring activities. BBBS provides technical assistance for mentoring activities. CYC provides technical assistance for service-learning activities. The DVC trains principals and partners on program requirements, member agreements, regulations, and compliance issues.

**CURRENT GRANTEES: PROGRAM INTEGRATION:** DMPS has integrated the program into the District's management structure. This includes integration of policies and protocols from the departments of Human Resources (member payroll, hiring, volunteer screening, etc.), Business and Finance (grant fund management), and Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (curriculum coordination, Professional Development, training, data collection and analysis, and evaluation).

**MONITORING COMPLIANCE:** The DVC works closely with ICVS to ensure compliance with CNCS regulations. He travels to sites to collaborate with principals and staff, assists members in program implementation, and ensures fidelity to the program. Bryce Amos monitors the program for compliance and meets regularly with the DVC.

### B. SUSTAINABILITY

**PLAN FOR SECURING FUNDS; PARTNER SUPPORT; SUSTAINABILITY:** DMPS, BBBS, and CYC each have a long history of successfully cultivating community partners to build and expand programs. Together, they will recruit new and existing **CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS** to support implementation of the program through contributions, grants, and volunteers. For example, DMPS has met with United Way of Central Iowa and received verbal commitment to provide support toward the program. A meeting is set up with the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines to discuss potential partnerships and contributions. Other area corporations will be approached for contributions as well, such as Principal Financial, Aviva, Nationwide, and Wells Fargo. **GRANT OPPORTUNITIES** that align with the program at the state, federal, and local levels will be sought by DMPS, BBBS, and CYC to sustain the program. The program will also build capacity for **VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND MANAGEMENT** as data systems are being put into place that provide infrastructure for members to recruit, train, and manage volunteers. These systems will ensure a pool of volunteers is available beyond grant funds.

### C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**RULES/REGULATIONS; SERVICE SITE COMPLIANCE:** Eric Whitney, DVC, completes monthly site visits, assisting site supervisors and members to ensure compliance. He meets with his supervisor to address member compliance issues as needed. Mr. Whitney attends monthly meetings of principals and Executive Directors to ensure administrative alignment and compliance of the program.

**PREVENTION/ DETECTION OF COMPLIANCE ISSUES-PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES:** Members

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are highly visible and accountable to principals on a daily basis. They are informed about compliance and prohibited activities during the interview process, orientation, and during monthly meetings.

Principals are trained on prohibited activities and provide ongoing monitoring and guidance. During program orientation training, BBBS and CYC staff will be trained on member prohibited activities and issues of compliance. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INSTANCES OF RISK OR NONCOMPLIANCE: If a member is out of compliance, the DVC and site supervisor meet with the member to address it.

Members are made aware of DMPS' grievance procedures during orientation and when issues of compliance are addressed. The DVC also educates members and staff about members' roles.

DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE; AREAS OF RISK; CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN: DMPS experienced some internal communication and reporting issues this past year. Through working closely with ICVS and District staff, the issue has been resolved and DMPS is now in compliance.

ENROLLMENT: DMPS enrolled 100% of slots. RETENTION: DMPS retained 24 of 26 members. One left the program for personal reasons. The other member left due to increased responsibilities with her full-time job, making it impossible to complete her service term. Slots were not refilled because of the time of year they were vacated (spring/summer). DMPS aims to retain all members, exhausting all options before termination.

CONSULTATION WITH STATE COMMISSIONS (MULTI-STATE APPLICANTS ONLY): N/A

OPERATING SITES AND MEMBER SERVICE SITES: For a broad reach with great impact on the students in need, a District-wide approach that targets all elementary schools for tutoring was chosen. Current AmeriCorps schools have opted to continue the tutoring program, citing its effectiveness.

Schools are well positioned to offer the program, allowing for the alignment of tutoring to the curriculum. Financially, members offer unique and intensive tutoring services in a cost-effective way to meet the great community need of helping students who are struggling to read on grade level. All grant management, training, and program oversight will be coordinated by the DVC, funded through DMPS General Funds. Middle School sites were selected because 6th grade students need the support when they transition to middle school as evidenced by decreased academic performance and increased disengagement. IB schools were selected to pilot service-learning as a dropout prevention approach because they have a framework that supports community service projects. TUTORING sites include the following: Brubaker, Capitol View, Carver, Cattell, Cowles, Downtown, Edmunds, Findley, Garton, Greenwood, Hanawalt, Hillis, Howe, Hubbell, Jackson, Jefferson, King, Lovejoy, Madison, McKinley, Monroe, Morris, Moulton, Oak Park, Park Avenue, Perkins, Phillips, Pleasant Hill, River Woods, Samuelson, Smouse, South Union, Stowe, Studebaker, Walnut Street, Willard, Windsor, and

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Wright. MENTORING sites include the following schools: Brody, Callanan, Goodrell, Harding, Hiatt, Hoyt, McCombs, Meredith, Merrill, and Weeks. SERVICE-LEARNING sites include the following schools: Hubbell, Park Avenue, Stowe, Walnut Street, Goodrell, Meredith, Merrill, and Hoover. SITE

SELECTION; AMERICORPS REGULATIONS; SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

INCORPORATION OF 45CFR §2522.475: All school sites allow for the implementation of HIGH-QUALITY, evidence-based tutoring, mentoring, and service-learning programming for youth. The comprehensive program is INNOVATIVE, providing classroom integrated programming and/ or site-based programming in collaboration with community partners. SUSTAINABILITY and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT will occur through new and established community partners with a vested interest in the success of youth. Partnering with BBBS and CYC allows for a natural transition of youth to their agency programs upon completion of the program. Other community partners will be approached for future sustainability. The United Way has verbally committed to contributing toward program expenses. DMPS offers experienced and QUALITY LEADERSHIP within the program as detailed in the Organizational Background and Staffing section. PAST PERFORMANCE has shown that the AmeriCorps Partners in Education tutoring program had made a significant impact on students' academic performance. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS - 45 CFR §2522.440: The proposed program is operated by the school District and two community organizations, a priority PROGRAM MODEL. The proposed PROGRAM ACTIVITIES serve children and youth, including mentoring of disadvantaged youth, and address educational needs through literacy tutoring. The proposed is a PROGRAM SUPPORTING DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES as there are seven high-poverty census tracts in the city of Des Moines, all served by Des Moines Public Schools. Over 70% of students are low-income and 26% of students are living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau). CURRENT/PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH SITES: The AmeriCorps Partners in Education program has successfully provided literacy tutoring at nine DMPS elementary schools. All schools have opted to continue with the expanded literacy and math tutoring at their schools through the proposed program, citing the program's effectiveness and impact.

IF MEMBER SITES ARE NOT KNOWN, TIMELINE FOR SELECTING SITES: N/A

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: N/A

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

#### A. COST EFFECTIVENESS (13 points)

The budget is cost-effective in that it maximizes resources in collaboration with community partners to meet students' needs while staying within the required Member Service Year maximum. The

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majority of program expenses are member living costs at 68% (covered by CNCS). Project personnel and benefits (District Volunteer Coordinator, Mentor Coordinator, Service-learning Coordinator, and Program Assistant) account for 18% of the total requested funds, a relatively small but necessary percentage of the overall budget. Supplies account for only 1% of the total budget. The administrative indirect costs equate to 10%, within the Commission guidelines. All other costs total 4% of the budget. COST PER MEMBER: For fiscal year 2103, DMPS was awarded 10 MSY at a cost of \$13,215. For fiscal year 2014, DMPS is requesting 48.4285716 MSY at a cost of \$13,281 per member. Due to the vast expansion of the program to include new program components (expanded tutoring, mentoring, and service-learning), as well as the additional reduced half-time slots, the cost per MSY has slightly increased to accommodate increased staffing needs and program support. Full-time members receive a living allowance of \$12,100 each and health insurance. Half-time members receive a living allowance of \$5,800 each, and reduced half-time members receive a living allowance of \$5,100. SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDING: 1. Property Taxes; 2. State Foundation Aid; 3. Voluntary Preschool Access; 4. Other State Sources; 5. Federal Grant Sources; 6. Other Revenue from Local Sources; 7. Sales and Use Tax; and 8. Revenue from Intermediary Sources. DMPS' annual budget is \$474,278,835. The proposed program costs \$1,013,150 (.0021% of DMPS' overall budget). PAST CNCS SUPPORT; PROPOSED PROGRAM, PERCENT OF BUDGET: In fiscal year 2011, DMPS received CNCS funding support in the amount of \$111,083.01. This represented .00026% of DMPS' overall fiscal year 2011 budget. In FY 2012, DMPS received \$126,350.87, representing .00029% of the DMPS overall budget. The proposed program request of \$643,207 from CNCS represents .0014% of the overall DMPS budget. DIVERSE RESOURCES; FUNDING NEEDS; NON-CNCS COMMITMENTS: DMPS, in partnership with BBBS and CYC, will secure the needed \$370,252 to carry out the program. DMPS will commit funds to the program for staffing, benefits, and health care costs. The United Way of Central Iowa has verbally committed to help fund the program as well. BBBS will cover background checks for mentors. DMPS and partners will seek community contributions from existing funding relationships as well. A meeting with the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines will occur in the coming weeks. Other potential contributors to be approached include but are not limited to: Principal Financial, Aviva, and Nationwide.

### B. BUDGET ADEQUACY (12 POINTS)

The requested funds are reasonable and justified for the activities proposed. All program activities listed in the budget correspond to program activities described throughout the narrative. Collaborating with community partners will assist in meeting the required match. Utilizing 68 AmeriCorps members

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to broaden the scope and deepen the impact of programming across tutoring, mentoring, and service-learning programs will yield a high return on investment. By utilizing 12-month term members, the program will build the capacity of the District to provide needed services to at-risk students through the summer, not just the academic year, reaching more students. At the end of 3 years, 12,150 students will show improved academic performance in reading and math, 3,000 students will show improved school engagement, and 750 volunteers will have been leveraged to meet existing school needs.

COST OF CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS AND FBI CHECKS: DMPS will cover all costs of required background checks for members and volunteers. BBBS will cover all background checks for mentors.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

#### EVALUATION SUMMARY OR PLAN:

DMPS has an established data collection, analysis, and reporting system to measure performance outcomes, and employs three full-time Assessment specialists to evaluate programs. Program evaluation will show 1 year results and the overall 3 year results of the program. DMPS will disseminate results to all partners and share the results via the DMPS website and social media pages. TUTORING: DMPS will measure change in students' performance levels three times per year using the evidence-based Scholastic Math Inventory and the Scholastic Reading Inventory to gauge overall performance improvement. MENTORING and SERVICE-LEARNING: DMPS will measure change via pre- and post-surveys (Youth Outcome Survey) of student engagement for all students served by the program to determine the impact of the program on their attitudes toward school.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

N/A

### Continuation Changes

N/A