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Executive Summary

20 AmeriCorps members will serve the communities of Minneapolis & Brooklyn Center, MN to support 600 students in grades 6-10 at risk of dropping out of school. Members will leverage an additional 300 volunteers. At the end of a 3 year period, 1,800 youth will be back on track to graduate from high school on time based on school attendance and academic engagement. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$266,000 will be matched with \$270,432 by the MN Alliance With Youth.

Rationale and Approach

a. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Support & Sustain School Turnaround Efforts
Communities and schools need additional capacity to implement effective dropout prevention strategies. Dropping out of school is a process, not a one-day event, & often has multiple causes. Unfortunately, many classroom teachers lack the time and ongoing access to data to monitor how students are doing from week to week. Students who struggle may go unnoticed for some time. Historically, extra supports have been unavailable to students until their trajectory of failure is almost impossible to reverse. AmeriCorps members provide the people power to help schools & communities intervene early and often, supporting students before they are in crisis. Growth & Justice, a respected MN economic think-tank, reported (2008) that dropouts have higher reliance on public programs such as welfare & Medicaid, and are more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system. They conclude, "Prioritizing new investment in our human capital -- based on evidence, directed where improvement is most needed, and focused on interventions that achieve results cost effectively -- is the smartest investment MN can make." The goal of Alliance AmeriCorps members is to increase the high school graduation rates in the long term for the communities of Minneapolis & Brooklyn Center, and in the short term, re-engage & reconnect students to school & learning.

MN Alliance With Youth requests 20 full-time members to expand our proven model to serve 600 high-need students in grades 6-10 in Minneapolis & Brooklyn Center. MN Department of Education (MDE) has indicated that more support is needed for students in this grade range and a large body of research shows the impact of early interventions on developmental transitions, particularly in middle and early high school aged youth (Balfanz 2007).

We will place clusters of 4-6 members in 4 Priority Schools: Brooklyn Center High School; Edison

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High; Wellstone International; and Lucy Laney Community School. Brooklyn Center & Minneapolis are marked by high poverty & large pockets of immigrant families. In Minneapolis, 28% of residents live in poverty with immigrant families live in poverty at a higher rate (35%). In Brooklyn Center, 13% of people live in poverty with 16% of children live in poverty (higher than the state average of 13%). Minneapolis Public Schools has a high school graduation rate of 50% while Brooklyn Center Schools graduation rate is 47%. We chose to partner with these districts because of the high need, an already established relationship with the Alliance & a desire of both districts' leadership to expand school turnaround efforts. Both cite a lack of capacity to do so. The 4 schools identified are primed to expand and support multiple members to implement evidence-based dropout interventions based on early warning systems looking at individual student's attendance, behavior, & core academic scores. Currently, there is not adequate staffing or sources of volunteers to support such a time intensive, individualized model of supports. Each School's turnaround plan aligns with the Alliance model & has full commitment from school leadership for implementation. To coordinate turnaround efforts across communities, we convene members & sites for training & to take advantage of having multiple members across districts to share best practices.

Members will implement interventions identified by Johns Hopkins University, the National Dropout Prevention Center & MDE's Dropout Prevention Initiative as the most effective for re-engaging youth in school and learning: mentoring, high quality in/out-of-school activities, academic supports, and service-learning. These interventions have shown to address the Early Warning Indicators known as the ABC's (less than 80% Attendance, Behavior referrals, or poor Course performance). Instead of waiting for students to fail, members provide the right support to the right student at the right time for the right duration and intensity. Members build capacity by recruiting, training & supervising volunteers to sustain the program.

A team of school staff and community partners known as a Youth Success Team will support the member in identifying youth to serve based on the Early Warning Indicators of Attendance, Behavior, & Core Academics in Reading & Math. A Site Coordinator, identified by the school, provides access and facilitates the Youth Success Team meetings. Using student data to determine who to serve and which interventions to provide is a key element of each school's turnaround plans. School records along with interventions, duration and dosage are tracked & monitored by the member:

*Attendance Interventions: Monitor & track student attendance; Develop incentive plan with student

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about attendance; Call home to discuss attendance issues; Organize field trips to engage students in school; Engage student in service-learning project

*Behavior Interventions: Connect youth with lunchtime mentor; Build conflict mediation skills through youth-led peer mediation; Behavior check-in/discussion with youth; Engage youth in leadership & service-learning opportunities

*Academic Outcomes Interventions: Provide one to one or small group academic support; Develop plans to complete assignments; Pair youth with mentor; Participate in afterschool program; Engage youth in service project

Members serve in a full-time capacity managing a caseload of 30 students due to the time-intensive nature of the interventions & service activities. Members help create a positive whole-school environment for graduation by recognizing student progress individually and at school events, & modeling positive behavior for students who might lack a strong adult example at home. For schools with student populations in the thousands, these tasks would be impossible without the support of members. By placing members in clusters within high need schools, a deeper impact will be made as they coordinate and support school-wide turnaround efforts.

b. Evidence-Informed & Measurable Impact

Research from Johns Hopkins University demonstrates that Early Warning Indicators of youth disengagement from school & community life include school absences, behavior problems, & academic failure in core subjects such as English and Math. Members serve in partnership with school staff to identify youth who need support using the ABC's, (less than 80% Attendance, Behavior referrals, or poor Course performance). Members ensure youth receive in- and out-of-school interventions to improve attendance, behavior, and core academic skills. At the end of the 3-year grant period, 45% or 810 participants will show improvement in academic engagement or attendance -- indicators of being on track for high school graduation.

The Alliance uses a multi-faceted approach, called a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which is similar to RtI (Response to Intervention) in that it creates comprehensive individualized learning plans. These plans are based on data from the early warning indicators, & provide research-based interventions to help students to get back on track to graduate. Members work with Youth Success Teams, comprised of a site supervisor & coordinator, school social workers, & other school personnel,

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to analyze student data & identify youth who exhibit the ABC early warning indicators. Based on the data, each member supports a cohort of 6th-10th graders who are identified at-risk of dropping out. This model of providing the right support to the right student at the right time for the right duration & intensity is just beginning to show success. In 2012, the national high school graduation rate improved for the first time in over 35 years (Grad Nation Report, America's Promise Alliance, 2013). Much of that success has been through the coordinated efforts of schools & agencies focusing interventions where they are most needed & engaging community members in school turnaround efforts. Creating wraparound supports is a fundamental shift in education where schools and communities work systemically together.

In addition to providing direct interventions like attendance monitoring & academic support, members employ the following strategies to reinforce student engagement and ultimately high school completion:

***CARING ADULTS:** Members increase the number of caring adult relationships experienced by youth in the cohort. Complementing structures already in place, members create or strengthen mentoring or tutoring programs, or youth-adult partnerships. In Minneapolis, members act as Check & Connect monitors to support students struggling with attendance and academics. Check & Connect is an attendance intervention recognized by the What Works Clearinghouse. It involves adult advocates tracking student attendance daily & meeting with students individually to develop goals and plans for ensuring attendance in school and building study skills. The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance at the USDOE recommends connecting students who are at risk of dropping out with adult advocates. The National High School Center concurs, reporting proven dropout prevention programs feature adults working with small groups of students.

***HIGH-QUALITY IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME ACTIVITIES:** Each member implements high-quality academic enrichment and skill-building activities before, during and/or after school and in the summer. Members in Brooklyn Center support expanded learning opportunities, a key aspect to the school's turnaround plans. Research indicates that participation in quality, academically-focused out-of-school programs helps to address achievement gaps in reading & math scores between Black vs. White, Hispanic vs. White, and students eligible for free/reduced lunch vs. ineligible (Hill et. al., 2008). As a result, disengaged youth will spend more hours in high-quality activities & fewer hours in unsupervised or inactive time (a key indicator of disengagement).

***SERVICE-LEARNING & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** Service-learning is a proven student engagement

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strategy (Search Institute 2005), Members engage youth in meaningful service-learning or civic engagement activities for a minimum of 20 hours/youth. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, "Middle-school students, in particular, benefit from service-learning activities. As research indicates, service learning is a strategy to deliver a variety of interventions because it increases student engagement & provides hands-on learning opportunities. Depending on existing programs, members create or strengthen in-school service-learning programs, community service clubs, youth leadership in community decision-making, national days of service, etc.

Members deliver targeted interventions & measure student attendance, behavior, and core academics as a way to gauge the student's academic engagement. The Alliance measures the following: number of youth receiving interventions; number of youth who participate for at least three months; number of youth who improve their school attendance, or have not been suspended over the course of the AmeriCorps program's involvement; and number of students who improve their academic performance in English and/or math. The Alliance also tracks the number and type of interventions along with the dosage of each intervention. These indicators track whether interventions improve student outcomes & what adjustments should be made. The Alliance tracks the number of hours volunteers serve youth and the number of hours youth spend volunteering.

As a result of a member's service, students will increase attendance and improve academic performance in reading or math. Specifically, 45% of program participants (270) will either improve their attendance and/or increase their academic engagement as demonstrated by school records. By the end of the grant cycle, over 810 youth will reverse their trajectory and be on track to graduate from high school on time. Targets are based on research from Johns Hopkins along with the best practices in dropout prevention with regard to dosage and duration. We also factor in our history of success & develop measures that balance aiming high with achievable results in a one-year setting. Members & sites collect student progress data daily, weekly, and monthly. By using an online system to track students, members report on individual student quantitative progress, and provide a narrative that gives contextual variables. Alliance regularly reports to stakeholders about program progress and to ensure the model is being implemented with fidelity. The Alliance submits a final year-end report to its Board, ServeMN, and key community stakeholders.

For Current Grantees: Impact from Prior Year

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In 2011-2012, the Alliance implemented a revised program model that involved a more focused use of data to identify & track student progress. While the revised model successfully allowed for deeper impact with a smaller group of students, there were many lessons learned. For example, we implemented a new state-of-the-art database to support ongoing progress reporting & hired a new external evaluator. A significant challenge beyond our control was the unexpected delay in launching the system, which impacted sites' and members' abilities to report progress. Due to complications with the delay, reports generated were not an accurate reflection of program impact.

In 2011-12, over 2,768 youth received ongoing, intensive dropout prevention interventions. Of those with complete data to compare, 46% improved in attendance or behavior. In addition, over 7,477 volunteers were mobilized to provide over 105,771 hours of service. Another lesson was that the Performance Measures of the Revised Model included benchmarks that were exceptionally bold & aspirational, but need to be revised to more accurately reflect program outcomes.

Improvement plans include working with our external evaluator to identify realistic goals to accurately reflect what is achievable for members & students within a program year. The Alliance has worked with database developers to improve the online data collection system. Members & host sites will be trained in using the system from their first day of service. We have instituted data coaching calls by staff in the first 6 weeks of the program year to ensure that data is being collected & reported accurately. These measures will assist the Alliance in reaching our performance measure targets. In the current program year, 1,328 youth in grades 6-10 have been identified to receive interventions to increase attendance & academic performance.

c. AmeriCorps Member Recruitment

The Alliance recruitment philosophy is that the most effective members come from the community where they will serve. Last year, 47% of members served in their home community. The Alliance places a high value on recruiting individuals typically underrepresented in national service. Over 41% of its members come from communities of color. The Alliance taps into its extensive alumni network & community partners to expand its outreach to underrepresented populations.

We will work with school leadership, staff and district contacts to identify a pool of highly qualified, diverse applicants who are committed to serving. Each school implements community-specific

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recruitment strategies while the Alliance engages in more systemic general recruiting through traditional media and social media outlets. Sites use their networks of parent volunteers, former interns & student teachers to build a large applicant pool. Most applicants are recruited through word of mouth & community networks. We will specifically target the immigrant communities in North Minneapolis & Brooklyn Center as a way to garner community support for this effort as well. The Alliance uses the My AmeriCorps portal to reach potential members living outstate. The Alliance & partners advertise on diverse job search websites (including MN Council of Nonprofits); colleges in the MN Campus Compact network; & diverse media outlets, such as Access Press (for people with disabilities), Asian American Press, & La Prensa.

d. AmeriCorps Training

Member training & professional development is a high priority for the Alliance. Members receive training on a variety of topics provided by the Alliance & by each individual site. To prepare for service, members attend a 2-day orientation to build their understanding of the Alliance, its mission, AmeriCorps & national service, & acquire intervention-specific skills based on research & best practices in dropout prevention.

Members are divided into small corps to meet monthly with Alliance staff for ongoing support & skill building. Within their first 2 weeks of service, members attend an initial Corps Meeting & given an assignment designed to support the member's introduction to their site, position, students & community. Monthly meetings follow a set curriculum, utilize local & state experts, & corps-building activities. Monthly topics include: using data to drive impact; working with a student success team; service-learning & youth engagement; leadership & conflict resolution; program sustainability; & communicating impact. Members receive training in the Strengthsfinder, a talent assessment, to foster their own professional growth along with using a strength-based philosophy at their site. Members plan national service days as part of the meetings. Communication with members between meetings occurs through email, blogs, webinars, phone calls, website, newsletter, social media, & visits. These activities ensure that member & volunteer service activities align with AmeriCorps regulations, including prohibited activities. Staff review provisions with members & provide tools for members to train volunteers in expectations & requirements of service.

Within a month of starting service, members & host sites receive orientation at the 2 day training

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institute. Alliance staff & various education & youth development experts present the following topics:

* Mission & goals of the Alliance * Understanding the achievement gap & serving diverse youth * Working within school cultures; school & community partnerships * Dropout prevention strategies & early warning indicators * Youth & Community engagement strategies * Reading & math tutoring resources * Positive youth development & youth leadership * Service-learning & civic engagement * High-quality out-of-school time programs * Volunteer mobilization & management, includes how to ensure volunteers do not engage in prohibited activities * Reporting & evaluation * AmeriCorps history, policies & regulations* Building a Corps identity * Members gain skills in facilitating out-of-school time activities, behavior/classroom management, tutoring, youth development, & leadership.

One statewide mid-year training retreat is held in February for members & supervisors to plan for the last half of the year. At yearend, a Life After AmeriCorps training takes place to support member & site transition. Evaluations are completed on the effectiveness of each monthly meeting & statewide gathering, plus a mid-year & year-end training survey to assess the overall effectiveness of trainings. Members are given the opportunity to work with a life coach through the AmeriCoach organization which provides pro bono life coaching & training to members & staff. AmeriCoach helps members use their year of service as a time of deep reflection on what they can contribute in their lives. Through coaching, members develop communication & conflict resolution skills along with training in leadership development.

Each school site designs an orientation & on-going site-specific training plan to introduce members to the school, community, & site-specific intervention procedures. These activities complement the training provided by the Alliance.

e. AmeriCorps Member Supervision

A critical aspect of members' success is their relationship with their supervisors. Each school has identified the direct supervisor's experience & qualifications as part of this application process in consultation with the Alliance along with who will be the site coordinator. For Minneapolis, the Director of Check & Connect will provide day to day support across the 3 schools while in Brooklyn Center, the Principal will provide supervision. This layering of supervision allows for multiple people to act as advocates & problem-solvers for the members.

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Supervisors provide day-to-day support, help problem-solve & meet at least weekly with their member(s). Members receive support from site coordinators who allocate at least 10% of their time to interpret student data & identify interventions & community supports. Host sites complete a site agreement committing to all program expectations regarding supervision, timesheets, training, evaluation reporting, & cash match. Before members begin their service, site supervisors & site coordinators are trained in the model, data reporting, & program expectations, including prohibited activities & best practices in supervision. The supervisor leads each member's initial orientation at the host site & in the community. Site supervisors attend one day of the initial member orientation & the mid-year retreat to ensure they receive ongoing training & support.

Site visits twice per year provide Alliance staff with a chance to facilitate conversations between the member & supervisor, & privately interview members to solicit feedback. Site visits are used as a monitoring & planning tool to assist members & sites in future activities. Any problems that come to the attention of staff are dealt with immediately. Members & host sites prepare monthly progress reports, noting any issues that should be addressed. In addition, members & site supervisors complete a mid-year & year-end performance evaluation. The evaluation form is provided at the start of the year & is used as a tool to guide member development. Site visits, monthly progress reports, & mid-year & yearend performance evaluations are used to review the role of volunteers & ensure that volunteers are not engaged in prohibited activities.

f. Member Experience

Based on our 16 year experience of successfully partnering with AmeriCorps, the Alliance invests time & resources to bring its AmeriCorps members & host site supervisors together to learn from each other & share what works. Training is provided monthly to members & during the two-day institute at the start of their term of service. Each gathering includes time for reflection to ensure members are given the opportunity to apply their learning to their sites along with developing a lifelong commitment to service & civic participation. We strongly encourage host sites with multiple AmeriCorps programs to incorporate other national service members into their Youth Success Teams to ensure interventions are consistent & effectively deployed to the students most at need. This provides members, school staff, & community members with opportunities to assess & respond to individual student needs along with connecting their activities to larger school-wide turnaround efforts. It provides a space for key stakeholders to share what is working, what more could be done, & how these lessons can be shared

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with others to influence national efforts to turnaround the lowest performing schools. In addition, members & sites will be highlighted through the larger Alliance network at retreats, monthly meetings & through our Grad MN Summit in the Fall.

Members are strongly encouraged to create intentional partnerships to foster a sense of connection between members of other programs. To increase member identity with national service & AmeriCorps, members are encouraged to wear AmeriCorps gear at service sites, members are identified as part of the national service team with community members, partners & the general public through signage, etc. We strategically partner with other AmeriCorps programs to demonstrate long-term impact on the educational success of youth who receive interventions from a continuum of AmeriCorps programs. In particular, our members are uniquely positioned to build upon & complement the work of MN Math Corps by reinforcing math interventions & connecting their members with tested methods to improve attendance & behavior.

g. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

The Alliance has been a proud partner with CNCS & our state commission, ServeMN since 1998. All communication to host sites, applicants, & members reflects the language of national service. The AmeriCorps name & logo is used appropriately on websites, service gear & recruitment materials (including postcards & online position postings). All member position descriptions are required to use the AmeriCorps logo (whether a paper version or online posting). The Alliance ensures that its press releases about the program include CNCS branding & the logo. It ensures items provided to host sites & members such as the program manual use the AmeriCorps logo throughout. Host Sites & members receive training along with materials on how to use branding & talk about national service, CNCS, & AmeriCorps during their respective orientations. The impact of national service in MN is shared via news articles, web postings, on Facebook, & Twitter. Members are provided with posters, pins, & other signage to prominently display that their host site supports a national service member.

h. Strategic Consideration

The Alliance has focused its program on 4 Priority schools in an urban setting: Brooklyn Center Secondary (Brooklyn Center Schools) and Lucy Laney, Edison High, & Wellstone International (all Minneapolis Public Schools). The Alliance has committed to using the National Performance Measures related to Education: Completing an Education Programs (ED 2) & Academic Engagement

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(ED 27).

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background & Staffing

Founded in 1997, MN Alliance With Youth works to ignite the spark in all young people in MN to become actively engaged, develop strong voices & acquire skills needed for success in school, work & life. Since 1998, the Alliance has utilized AmeriCorps members on the front line to deliver needed services to youth. At Alliance-sponsored regional youth summits in the late 1990s, community & school leaders frequently cited lack of human resources to create a brighter future for youth. We responded by establishing a corps of 10 members in partnership with America's Promise Alliance which grew to 60 statewide members in 2004 & expanded to 119 members in 2012.

The Alliance has experience launching & scaling up new initiatives both through our AmeriCorps program & our Grad MN Initiative, officially launched in March 2013. Grad MN is an initiative bringing a broad-based coalition together to achieve a goal of 90% high school graduation by 2020. Chaired by the Lt. Governor & Commissioner of Education, this effort brings together schools, community organizations, business & faith leaders, families, & youth to raise the graduation rate. Over the past 9 years, the Alliance & its statewide partners lead dropout prevention efforts & sponsored events such as the 2007 & 2009 Statewide Summits on Youth Development & Graduation & 17 follow-up summits which helped inform & determine the direction of the Grad MN work.

Since its inception, four Lt. Governors of MN have co-chaired the Alliance alongside youth co-chairs. The Alliance Board provides fiscal oversight for the organization, including the AmeriCorps program. Board members are recruited for their expertise in positive youth development, graduation success, civic engagement, school-community partnerships, & connections to valuable resources. Board committees include Finance, Development, Evaluation, & the AmeriCorps Program. Staff is located in two offices: Duluth & Twin Cities. Having experienced staff in geographic proximity to sites is effective for monitoring visits, training, & support. Key staff:

* Sarah Dixon, President & CEO, provides overall leadership & strategic plan development, leads resource development, supervises/coaches the staff team, develops partnerships, coordinates board relationships, & oversee public relations. During Ms. Dixon's 11-year tenure, the program grew from 10 to 119 members. She brings 27 years of experience in adolescent health including intervention, treatment, counseling, education, & community-wide youth development.

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* Melissa Burwell, Director of Strategic Initiatives, oversees site development, compliance, evaluation, & the Directors of Education & Training. Ms. Burwell joined the Alliance in 2004 & has a master's degree in Counseling & Higher Education.

* Directors of Training & Education: Support member development, training, & host site support. Renee Anderson joined the Alliance in 2010 & has a master's degree in Social Work & Public Policy. Sarah Ullmer joined the Alliance in 2011 & has a degree in Environmental Education & is a certified life coach. One additional Director of Education & Training will be hired to support this grant. Their qualifications will combine education & experience, with preference for experience with national service.

* Julie Muklebust, Business Manager, coordinates fiscal responsibilities for the program. She joined the Alliance in 2008 & has a background in accounting & management.

* Stephanie Paumen, Operations Manager, joined the Alliance in 2010 and oversees member files, compliance, and enrollment. She has a background in human resources and leadership.

* Mark Gruen, Evaluation Specialist (part-time), has a degree in Political Science & is working toward a master's degree in Nonprofit Management. He joined the Alliance in 2013 & has experience in research, program evaluation & will support data coaching & member fidelity checks with progress reporting.

The Alliance will also recruit the following positions:

* Program Assistant (.5 FTE) Qualifications: Experience in logistics, project management, & event planning. H/she will support the training team & have at least an associate's degree & one year of office experience.

* Intervention Specialist (.3 FTE) Qualifications: Ensure high-quality interventions result in measurable outcomes. S/he will provide training on the MTSS model, early warning indicators, & other technical aspects of our program. The Intervention Specialist will have at least a bachelor's degree in K-12 Education & direct experience in youth development; evaluation; & facilitating Dropout Prevention activities within a school setting.

The Alliance contracts with Cammy Lehr, Ph.D., who is providing leadership in Grad MN efforts, research, best practices, staff development, & replicating the model with fidelity. Dr. Lehr currently coordinates Implementation & Effective Educational Practices & the Dropout Prevention Initiative at MDE.

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All staff receive an orientation to the organization & program along with ongoing training as it pertains to their responsibilities. Professional development through monthly staff meetings & individual work plans provide opportunities for staff to grow in a variety of skills. Each staff has a supervisor & work team to collaborate with & receive technical assistance from as issues arise. In addition, each team cross-trains other staff in their respective areas (e.g. the Finance/Business Manager provides training in reimbursements, budgeting, & planning for the Training & Education Team).

The Alliance contracts with an external evaluator, Lange Research Associates, to provide oversight & ensure compliance with all reporting requirements. Working with staff, the external evaluator develops & executes the evaluation plan. In particular, Lange Research works to aggregate & document that the data collected by members & host sites is accurate & timely. In addition, the external evaluator makes recommendations to strengthen the program model & evaluation methods. They also contribute to quarterly & annual reports.

INTEGRATION OF AMERICORPS IN THE ORGANIZATION

AmeriCorps members are central to the Alliance—they heighten our ability to reach communities & youth across MN. We are proud to be part of the AmeriCorps movement & demonstrate the clear alignment between the core beliefs & key strategies of the Alliance & the roles of members. In addition, the Alliance has consistently received high marks from our state commission regarding financial & programmatic compliance & is often highlighted as a program best practice. We unflinchingly ensure sites & members adhere to CNCS guidelines & regulations. We have unqualified audits both for financial & programmatic sides of the program. We are always responsive to state commission & CNCS requests for information.

b. Sustainability

This proposal builds on over 16 years of experience bringing together schools, organizations, & communities across MN to ensure all young people have the resources needed for success in school, work, & life. Our work is accomplished through network of partners, more than 500 strong including statewide organizations, schools, & communities. Through community gatherings, focus groups, & surveys, key stakeholders are involved in every aspect of our work. A working group of statewide

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leaders & local community representatives meet frequently to advise on the design of this program. Our model aligns with the strategic plan of Minneapolis Public Schools & supports the long term vision of Brooklyn Center Schools' desire to create a true Community School model. We look to deepen our relationship with both districts & engage additional partners through this proposal. Both districts have committed staff & financial support to this partnership. This project will contribute to the sustainability of School Turnaround efforts beyond the grant period through increased involvement of volunteers & increased community partners working alongside schools to bridge & align student supports.

Community partners have committed financial resources, technical expertise, access to local leaders, long-term planning & program assessment. We have a long history of collaboration with highly respected youth-serving organizations including the MN Dept. of Education, Search Institute, University of MN Center for Youth Development, & the League of MN Cities.

As part of our strategic plan, sustainability planning is an integral part of our ongoing work to remain a relevant & viable resource for MN. While the program cannot yet fully operate without CNCS funds, we have successfully demonstrated the ability to raise significant amounts of diverse funding. Since 2007, we have increased dollars raised by an average of 55% each year, in large part due to measurable results from the members. Our board development committee is committed to raise private funds at greater levels than in the past. The Alliance has successfully administered its present AmeriCorps*State grant along with other federal, state, & foundation grants totaling over \$28 million since its inception. This proposal represents 10% of the Alliance's total operating budget for 2013-2014.

Our required host site cash match (\$6,500 per member) ensures commitment & involvement from local communities to the goals of the program & strong support of members. In the past 15 years, 100% of sites have paid their required cash match. The combination of cash match & local volunteer generation builds commitment in the community to ongoing implementation. Host Sites & community partners also contribute feedback & assist the Alliance in long-term planning & assessment of the model. This provides time & space for sites to develop sustainability plans & create community buy-in for the model. Our track record of long-term relationships with community partners signals their commit to sustaining the program.

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The President & CEO & key board members lead our development efforts. Board members are selected based on their leadership & support for key program goals, & their affiliation with influential business & governmental entities. We have demonstrated great success in raising private funds & developed lasting relationships with foundation & corporate funders. Given the economy, we are very proud of our ability to not only maintain our funding levels, but increase the funds raised. In 2012, the Alliance officially became its own nonprofit 501(c)3 for the express purpose of diversifying our funding base after having operated with a fiscal host agent for 15 years.

c. Compliance & Accountability

As a statewide initiative, the Alliance has worked with over 200 sites in the past 15 years & will continue to work with those that experienced success. The Alliance uses a multi-layered monitoring process to ensure host sites comply with the program model & AmeriCorps rules & regulations from selection of host sites through training & ongoing site visits.

Alliance staff visit sites prior to the program year in order to review the site's plan for member activities & address any potential compliance issues before member positions are placed. Sites complete a written agreement & attend a required orientation workshop. The orientation covers key topics including: developing a strong member/supervisor relationship, what are allowable activities & prohibited activities for AmeriCorps members & volunteers, timesheets completion, member recruitment strategies, best practices in dropout prevention, evaluation, & resources available in the Alliance network. All supervisors receive a comprehensive manual with information covered at orientation. An orientation for site coordinators is also provided to review program design, common intervention strategies, & tracking progress using early warning indicators. Supervisors & site coordinators also attend the first day of the member orientation & the mid-year retreat to stay informed of requirements & to discuss challenges/successes. Ongoing webinars are provided regarding recruiting, supervision, & evaluation.

The Directors of Training & Education are in regular contact with sites for compliance visits & to provide ongoing training & support. Alliance staff use site visits along with monitoring of member monthly progress reports & check-ins to prevent & detect compliance issues, including issues related to prohibited or allowable activities. Members & supervisors jointly complete monthly progress reports on

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activities & sustainability. Staff review the reports, note successes & concerns/compliance issues, & provide feedback. Staff communicate weekly with all participants via newsletters & social media.

Alliance staff make at least two in-person monitoring visits per year, which are focused on the site's compliance to the model, program development, supervision, timesheets/hours requirements, evaluation, member experience, & planning. Alliance staff observe the member & site in action to ensure that sites are in compliance with all AmeriCorps regulations & rules. Alliance staff complete a written report outlining areas of strengths & areas needing improvement for the members, supervisors, & site coordinators.

Alliance staff use an RtI-like process, using 7 indicators to identify which sites & members need the most support & how best to intervene early & often. Indicators include whether sites have identified each members' case load within 30 days of the start of the school year; if members complete reporting requirements; if members struggle to maintain hours, etc. Sites that require additional assistance receive extra monitoring visits by staff to ensure they remain in compliance. They complete an improvement plan to document how they will ensure they are meeting requirements & may be given a "mentor" who is an experienced supervisor to support their efforts. If issues are not addressed in a timely manner, the Alliance removes the member from the site & the site becomes ineligible to host members through the Alliance in the future.

CURRENT GRANTEES: DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE, ENROLLMENT, & RETENTION The Alliance uses a multi-tiered process in selecting members & takes seriously maintaining a high retention rate. The Alliance provides extensive coaching to host sites throughout the recruitment process & provides ongoing support. Members who are having personal & financial difficulties while serving are connected to appropriate resources. Over the past several years, we have traditionally maintained our 100% enrollment rate & retention rate of 90% or higher. 15 -- 25% of members return for a second year of service. We continue to refine our recruitment & selection process to ensure members receive the most accurate information in advance of their national service experience. In addition, we work to ensure host sites are in compliance & able to fulfill the model with fidelity which contributes to member retention. We know the 10% who end their service early do so for financial reasons. In this economic climate, serving in a full-time capacity can burden families. The Alliance provides resources, coaching & makes accommodations regarding hours when needed to support members who struggle.

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d. Continuous Improvement

The Alliance uses a variety of methods to inform stakeholders of progress & solicit feedback for continuous improvement efforts. Members deliver targeted interventions & measure student attendance, behavior, & core academics as a way to gauge the student's academic engagement. A team of school staff & community partners review the data regularly & determine which interventions will work best for which student. The variety of types of data collected help track whether interventions are making a difference with each student & whether adjustments should be made. Targets are based on research from Johns Hopkins along with the best practices in dropout prevention with regard to dosage & duration. We also factor in our history of success & develop measures that balance aiming high with achievable results in a one-year setting.

Members & sites collect student progress data daily, weekly, & monthly. By using an online system to track students, members & sites report on individual student quantitative progress, & provide a narrative that gives contextual variables. Each school is able to access & review the student data as well. The progress information provided by members & sites allows the Alliance to regularly report to stakeholders about program progress & ensure the model is being implemented with fidelity. The Alliance submits a final year-end report to its Board, ServeMN, & key community stakeholders.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. Cost Effectiveness

The Alliance has budgeted a total of \$536,432 for the School Turnaround Promise Fellows. The Alliance portion is over 50% of the total budget at \$270,432. Communities & school districts have faced steep budget cuts for the past five years. AmeriCorps members allow schools & communities to pilot strategies & programs at a small & cost-efficient scale, & then seek long-term local funding. Based on our long history of hosting members, we hear directly from our sites how effective this strategy is & the numerous ways members are catalysts for building lasting school-community partnerships through which entire communities commit to dropout prevention. This program is designed to be a cost-effective strategy for MN to reverse the trend of a widening achievement gap. The Alliance successfully raises funds through host site cash match, grants, & in-kind contributions to complement CNCS funding.

The CNCS contribution is \$266,000, which is \$13,300 per MSY. Our match of \$270,432, which is 50.41% of the total budget, is raised by the Alliance through a local host site cash match by August

Narratives

2013 & locally raised foundation & corporate funds. In addition, the Alliance receives funds from federal, state, & local sources. Alliance AmeriCorps programs represent 82% of our total operating budget. 47% of our total funding comes from CNCS. We also receive a \$500/member cash match from a state AmeriCorps appropriation.

In 2012, the Alliance raised over \$773,500 from host sites. Sites willingly allocate this expense because of the value of the AmeriCorps members & the powerful leverage of the program. All host sites also provide mileage reimbursement, training (outside that offered by the program), office space, computer, email, & telephone. Significant in-kind commitments are secured from organizations such as AmeriCoach, MDE, & Search Institute. Total in-kind contributions are valued at \$716,500. Additional sources of funding include \$35,000 from Delta Dental of MN to support local service projects, \$50,000 from St. Paul Foundation & \$25,000 from Bigelow Foundation to support host site cash match & programming, \$170,000 from Otto Bremer Foundation to help with cash match & programming in several communities, \$35,000 from America's Promise, \$190,000 from Youthprise Foundation to support youth engagement efforts. Other funders include State Farm, Ameriprise, 3M, Best Buy, Pillsbury, General Mills, & Target.

Because of the leveraging power of AmeriCorps & a funding model that combines federal, state & private resources, there is a remarkable ROI for each funding partner. The federal share of launching a student on a trajectory of success is as little as \$431 per year. The human capital of AmeriCorps members & the individualized support they provide for students is a significant benefit to schools & community-based organizations, freeing up resources to be directly applied to individual students. Each district has stated that these resources from CNCS would supplement School Turnaround funding. Brooklyn Center in particular is faced with decreased School Turnaround funding & views this unique partnership as a way to continue to support students while determining a longer term strategy & funding.

According to Analyzing the Social Return on Investment in Youth Intervention Programs: A framework for MN (2007), an effective, comprehensive program returns benefits of \$4.89 for every dollar of cost, based on conservative assumptions. Moreover, this type of program returns \$14.68 for every state dollar invested, assuming a 2 to 1 match of other funding.

b. Budget Adequacy

The total budget for the School Turnaround Promise Fellows AmeriCorps program is \$536,432. The CNCS contribution is \$266,000 while the Alliance will raise \$270,432 from funders including each district along with funders with a presence in each community such as Carlson Foundation. The Cash Match is required prior to the start of the program year (\$6,500 per member) and commitments from partners will be finalized in the summer. We successfully develop budgets based on our needs, program design, member activities & outcomes. We have always balanced revenue & expenditures. Our budget reflects cost-effective programming with a strong emphasis on member training & support. We have appropriate staffing levels to train members & monitor sites. We invest a significant amount in outside evaluation & financial management. Through fiscal responsibility & an aggressive fund development strategy, the Alliance has a modest fund balance to cover short-term cash flow that mirrors standard government accounting practice. We are working to secure additional funders with a presence in both communities such as Carlson Foundation with notification in the summer. In addition, the Alliance developed a line item in the budget to cover the cost of Criminal History Check & FBI checks as required by AmeriCorps regulations.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable