

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction	
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)			
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):	3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE: 22-APR-13	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER: SIG School Turnaroun	
2b. APPLICATION ID: 13AC149899	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER: 13WCHME0010001	
5. APPLICATION INFORMATION			
LEGAL NAME: LearningWorks DUNS NUMBER: 088585765		NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Ethan K. Strimling TELEPHONE NUMBER: (207) 775-0105 111 FAX NUMBER: INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: estrimling@learningworks.me	
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 181 Brackett St Portland ME 04102 - 3857 County: Cumberland			
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 010353682		7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b.	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):		9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: Corporation for National and Community Service	
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State		11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: LearningWorks AIMS HIGH 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Cities of Livermore, Livermore Falls, Jay, Portland, Ellsworth, Anson, Embden, New Portland, North Anson, Solon, Steuben, Winter Harbor, Gouldsboro, Sullivan,			
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 08/15/13 END DATE: 08/14/16		14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <input type="text" value="ME 001"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="ME 001"/>	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: 1		16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 727,075.00		
b. APPLICANT	\$ 311,407.00		
c. STATE	\$ 0.00		
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00		
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00		
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00		
g. TOTAL	\$ 1,038,482.00	17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	
18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.			
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Ethan K. Strimling		b. TITLE:	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (207) 775-0105 111
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:			e. DATE SIGNED: 04/14/13

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Executive Summary

216 AmeriCorps members will serve 1,805 elementary and high school students and 1,374 family and community members through extended day learning, one-on-one tutoring, and community/family/parent engagement in Carrabec, Ellsworth, Sumner, Livermore Falls/Jay, and Portland, ME. At the end of their year of service, the academic performance of the lowest performing students will advance in accordance with the state mandated standards. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of school turnaround. The CNCS investment of \$727,075 will be matched with \$311,407.

Rationale and Approach

a. EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN SCHOOL TURNAROUNDS: Four school districts, with six of the lowest performing schools in Maine (two elementary and four high schools) are in need of support. These schools, classified and funded by the state as SIG (School Improvement Grant) sites due to their poor performance, are in some of our lowest income and most ethnically diverse districts. For a minimum of three years, these schools have not met adequate academic progress and the state has injected federal funds to help turn them around. Each district has outlined and implemented detailed plans developed by school leadership, teachers, community members and elected leaders. Unfortunately, these interventions have not been enough due to the complexity of the under-achieving students. What is now needed is a small army of motivated, skilled and community-based individuals to more fully implement the plans.

This proposal, named LearningWorks AmeriCorps Invests in Maine Students Helping Inspire Growth and Hope [LW AIMS HIGH] will allow 318 full and part-time AmeriCorps members to perform over 130,000 hours of service annually. Of the 318, we expect to have 20 full-time and 20 half-time slots. This will allow for approximately 6-7 stipend positions at each school. These members will serve both as leaders and participants in the transformational change outlined below. These 40 AmeriCorps (AC) leaders will each be guiding a team of 6-8 members which will be made up of 278 minimum-time participants, providing 40-50 members for each school. As you'll see in the work areas listed below, the number of participants is needed for after school learning, one-on-one tutoring, and community/parent/family engagement. The number of members is driven by the number of students needing help, but because this project is being brought under one application, it has reduced overhead and allowed us to maximize the overall number of members. As one Superintendent said when we asked if he wanted his schools included in this application, "We need an army to turn our schools

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around and it sounds like an army is what you are proposing to create. Count me in!"

Perhaps the most unique aspect of this proposal is that many of the participants will come from the schools themselves. The districts are eager to recruit from their own ranks of age-appropriate 17+-year-old high school students, as well as their parents. This inherently ties in the local community, builds long term sustainability, and further empowers these HS students in reaching their own educational goals. Not only will each of these participants gain valuable community service and service learning experience, which we know will likely lead to a lifetime of community service, but they will earn much needed financial support for college.

As we have detailed in the following pages, we know what interventions are needed to improve our schools, but just as important we also know that utilizing AC members is the best way to implement these interventions. AC has a proven track record of improving achievement of the students it works with. AmeriCorps Tutoring Outcomes Study (Abt Associates Inc., 2001) found that "On standardized tests of reading, students tutored by AmeriCorps members improved their reading performance from pretest to post-test more than the gain expected for the typical child at their grade level." This finding was statistically significant and was consistent for students at all grade levels tested. This gives us concrete evidence as to why AC members will be the most effective means to accomplish the goals outlined in this application.

The Districts that will be supported by LW AIMS HIGH are: Portland (Riverton School --NCES# 230993000286 - and East End Community School - NCES# 230993000279), RSU 24 (Ellsworth - NCES# 231479000270 - and Sumner Memorial HS - NCES# 231479000148), RSU 73 (Spruce Mountain High School South - NCES# 231480500458), and RSU 74 (Carrabec HS - NCES# 231476700954). Each district and school has put together a detailed plan on how they will turn their schools around, and all four are well underway in implementing that plan. All six schools have identified the need for support in four areas, and each have been involved in creating detailed plans for what members will be doing in these areas which are ideal for AC: Extended Learning Opportunities, Instructional Support, Community Engagement, and Parent and Family Engagement. These four areas are well-known to educators as pillars of educational excellence, but they are only pipe dreams without outside resources and skilled people on the ground. This program can make the difference between a failing school and a successful one.

*Extended Learning Opportunities: We know that an achievement gap exists in this country along socio-economic and ethnic lines (Barth, 2008). Research has shown that for many learners from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds, the opportunity to gain important academic and

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literacy skills needs to extend beyond the traditional school day. There are several studies linking Extended Learning Opportunity programs to higher test scores, better grades, and even reductions in behavioral problems (Afterschool Alliance, 2008). For many young people who are growing up in generational poverty, educational achievement is not a cultural norm. LW AIMS HIGH members (full, half, and minimum) will assist students before and after school, during school vacations, and during the summer recess with a goal of adding 10 hours a week over 30 weeks of the school year. Some schools are looking to start the day early, others want to extend the day by two hours, and some are looking at both. The members will provide much needed instructional support to reinforce the Response to Interventions (RTI) outlined in the SIG, and will also be tutoring, mentoring, providing service learning opportunities, and engaging the community during the extended learning time. They will assist students in meeting identified content-based standards, build cross-content literacy skills, and use technology to enhance learning.

*Instructional Support: Education and youth development leaders across the country agree that a student-centered approach, which includes individualized instruction, not only produces academic success, but also empowers youth and helps them build ties to their community (Afterschool Alliance, 2011). Students not meeting proficiency in state learning standards can often successfully meet those goals through direct instructional support occurring within content-based classrooms during the school day. This is especially true if students are afforded one-on-one support in gaining background knowledge and literacy skills, as well as participating in established, research-based skill-building programs (e.g., Read 180, Do the Math). LW AIMS HIGH will provide this needed classroom support by assisting students in meeting individual learning goals, helping students meet identified standards, and using support technology. As noted above, participating districts plan to recruit age-eligible students to become LW AIMS HIGH volunteers to provide this instructional support for younger students. Any and all non-student tutors (those tutors who are not in K-12 at the time of enrollment as an AmeriCorps member) will meet the requirements in section 2522.910. They will hold paraprofessional qualifications as required in 34 C.F.R 200.58 if they are an employee of the LEA or school. If they are not an employee, they will have a HS diploma or equivalent and will have completed a pre- and in-service specialized training, as required in 2522.940. Current students will not need to meet these requirements.

*Community Engagement: Recent research has demonstrated the power of establishing communities of learners that reach beyond the school walls (Afterschool Alliance, 2011). A community that becomes more involved in its students' learning positively benefits schools, school administrators,

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teachers, parents and--most importantly--the students themselves. The participating school districts have identified the need for LW AIMS HIGH members to assist in managing community outreach, soliciting volunteers and mentors, and coordinating volunteers and mentors to assist students in meeting individual learning goals. Just as recruitment will be done for the other identified areas, as many members as possible will come from the pool of age-eligible high school students and parents within the schools and community themselves. Members that are also students and parents will be best placed to lead community outreach activities and service learning opportunities for the schools. This will enhance our efforts to put the community in the schools, and the schools in the community.

*Parent and Family Engagement: As noted above, research has shown that students with strong academic background knowledge are often more successful in school. While schools provide students with learning opportunities to build background knowledge, many students from disadvantaged circumstances do not return to homes that are education focused, and as a result do not continue their learning outside of school. Studies show that parent and family involvement is a key ingredient to achievement, regardless of other factors that generally negatively affect achievement such as low socioeconomic status (Afterschool Alliance, 2008). Therefore, the participating districts have identified the need for LW AIMS HIGH members to utilize various outreach approaches to facilitate parent and family engagement. One such approach is to create parent learning academies that regularly hold educational workshops on various topics all aimed at teaching parents how to best support their children with their education and learning. These academies will also focus on guiding parents in how to engage with schools and be advocates for their children. In addition, as mentioned above, member recruitment will target families, ensuring an even deeper level of commitment to the work of transforming the schools.

The above efforts, at their core, increase learning time and provide mechanisms for family and community engagement. When you increase student learning time with skilled and trained practitioners, you accelerate acquisition of reading and math. When you provide meaningful and sustained mechanisms for family and community engagement, you see the social and emotional health of students improve. And when you see both increased learning time, and family engagement, rates of graduation, college enrollment and lifelong learning all improve; that is our goal.

b. EVIDENCE INFORMED AND MEASURABLE IMPACT: All six schools in this project have not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and in spite of additional money and staff training, the students continue to need additional help. LearningWorks and these schools agree that a four-pronged intervention approach is needed, including Extended Learning, One-on-One Instructional Support,

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Community Engagement, and Parent and Family Engagement. A preponderance of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of these interventions is truly overwhelming. We have outlined the most significant below.

*Extended Learning: Various studies have linked extended learning to achievement gains. A longitudinal study of afterschool program participation and academic performance showed that academic achievement, motivation, and teachers' expectations for success were significantly higher for low-income students who participated in a high quality afterschool program as compared to students who received afterschool care from a parent/legal guardian, self or sibling care, relatives, babysitters, or adult friends, etc. (Mahoney, et al., 2005).

*One-on-one Instructional Support: There is strong theoretical backing for the use of personal instruction and one-on-one tutoring as a strategy for increased achievement. A synthesis of 56 studies conducted since 1984 linked significant gains in reading achievement to one-on-one tutoring. The study looked at several strategies affecting reading achievement among low-income students across all 56 studies. Reading strategies that used one-on-one tutoring had the largest positive effect size of .5, which is a gain of 19 percentile points (Lauer et al, 2004).

*Community Engagement: Community involvement contributes to the success of schools and students. A study conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research identifies strong family, community, and school partnerships as a key element in school improvement (Bryk et al., 2010). Over two separate five year periods, the study compared significantly improved public schools in Chicago with those that had stagnated or declined. The improved schools in both data sets had shared characteristics, which the study termed as five key ingredients. They found that all five ingredients contribute about equally to a school's improvement and that a school's success significantly declined with the loss of only one or two ingredients. One of these five essential ingredients is "close ties with families and the community."

*Parent and Family Engagement: Involving parents and families in the education of their children is the final element to success for students and schools. A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002) is a comprehensive review of the research. It concludes, "the evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more." Furthermore, studies show that parent and family involvement creates benefits to children, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents'

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education level. These benefits include higher grades and test scores, better attendance records, better homework completion rates, higher graduation rates, higher postsecondary education enrollment, and a decrease in negative behaviors such as alcohol use, drug use and violence (Afterschool Alliance, 2008).

The interventions outlined above that AmeriCorps participants will engage in are all part of the existing SIG plans, and they are intended to impact the achievement scores of students. These plans were developed by a team of professionals who were charged with examining annual state (NECAP) and national (SAT) standardized achievement tests. These teams analyzed and interpreted this test data to determine the school-wide and individual interventions that must be employed. They then determined what RTI strategies should be used to address the weaknesses identified by the standardized test data. Although each school had put in place a number of interventions--including individualized literacy and math programs, and a small-scale extended learning time program--the findings indicated that more one-on-one and small group support was needed as well. It was evident that students needed more support both in and out of school, so another strategy has been developed based on the research above to help support and educate parents so that they can best support their children at home.

Interventions will be chosen based on each individual student's performance on the NECAP or SAT and by informal assessments and recommendations of staff. Using this data, individual profiles of students will be used to match the student with an intervention that will best support their personal learning goals. Students identified as Not Meeting or Partially Meeting Standards will have a Personal Learning Plan created, and each student will have supports put in place during the school day, after school, in the summer and in the home/community. Use of individualized, web-based literacy and math programs, such as READ 180 and Plato, will target instruction to the student's learning needs, and will also be used to pretest students. This software will then be used to offer instruction and opportunities to master new topics, and will also be used to post-test. The results of the post-test will be used by the tutors to either re-teach concepts that were not mastered, or move students on to the next level/module.

The RTI strategies that will be used include a sizeable repertoire of evidence-based programs such as READ 180 and specific teacher designed activities, as well as teaching practices to support literacy and math learning targets. Approaches include technology based programming as well as one-on-one tutoring. One example of the use of technology is the "Flipped Classroom" model, where a teacher teaches a small concept specific math lesson for 15 minutes which is taped and available for students

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to watch on iPads or their phones to practice the strategy at home or in study hall. Regardless of the activity design, all of the interventions will have this same pattern of assessment--goal specific learning program assignments, support with tutors or extra coaches, followed by assessments that will inform the next intervention.

One pair of researchers, Richard and Rebecca Dufour, studied high performing schools extensively. They found that the top schools offer customized learning, extended time to learn, and engage the community and parents as partners in support of their schools. The Dufours' book, "Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap; Whatever It Takes," captures the turnaround results when these interventions were employed in other low performing schools. The schools in the book harness the power of community engagement by recruiting community volunteers to support evidence-based programs and teaching strategies, and in doing so the schools are better able to truly customize learning, one child at a time.

While summative assessment helps to target weakness, use of informative assessments is what will support higher rates of achievement. To effectively use data to inform instruction, each school will collect data with an established reporting system that tracks each student's learning path. With the use of LW AIMS HIGH members, a handful of school and LW staff will easily be able to assign a learning plan to students, and individualized support will begin quickly. This also allows school and LW staff to easily track progress and assess data to adjust the learning plan as the student advances.

LearningWorks will oversee the development of an on-line data collection system, built with our IT staff, that will track the progress and hours of the participants in all six schools, and that will collect, collate, and disseminate quarterly. The two site supervisors (each covering two districts) will be responsible for collecting the data, and a FT position at LW will be dedicated to verifying, collecting, and reporting it. This data will be used to provide additional training, and will be used by the two site supervisors to work with specific sites to increase productivity and program delivery. Bob Marzano's (2009) research and findings have clearly demonstrated the importance of data collection to measure results and inform programming. He stresses that this is a critical component for customized learning to be effective in closing the achievement gap.

c. **AMERICORPS MEMBER RECRUITMENT:** As previously stated, the unique aspect of this proposal, and what makes its success so attainable, is that our school districts want to recruit many of their own age-eligible students to fill the member slots. This builds a cadre of young people who can earn an education award, go to college, and return to earn another. Recruitment for these students will be extensive within schools; through letters, forums, and one-on-one outreach. We will also speak

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at local community gatherings, meetings, conferences, and networking events. We will look for the greatest skill and potential, but also those for whom being a participant could help their own academic growth as well.

However, we understand that in order to successfully meet our recruitment goals, we will need to go beyond the school walls. LW and the SIG districts also have extensive relationships with the local colleges, libraries, teen centers, homeless shelters, veterans clubs, senior centers, Career Centers, immigrant and refugee centers, the NAACP, LGBT organizations, and numerous other civil rights organizations. We will visit all sites, distribute multilingual flyers, organize recruitment information sessions, staff booths at various career fairs and expos, and generally ensure the program is well known in the communities served. Additionally, LW operates alternative high schools for low-income students and Adult Ed programs for immigrants and refugees. Both of these programs serve ideal candidates. These steps will maximize our outreach and ensure that we are reaching out to under-represented populations in Maine.

We will also do outreach through social and professional networking websites such as Twitter, Indeed.com, Servingschools.com, Craigslist.org, Monster.com, Jobsinme.com, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc. This will allow us to reach people across the state and country. It also reaches younger populations and groups that don't necessarily join with others in public settings. In addition, we will dedicate a portion of the LW website to recruitment as an easy way for people to apply to LW AIMS HIGH.

The relevant experience, qualifications, and skills of applicants will be reviewed in detail by LW, and finalists will be interviewed by the entity where the applicant will be placed. In the interview, we will look for individuals who are engaging, persistent, and great communicators who demonstrate basic teaching skills, including mastery of content, patience, creativity and a willingness to be lifelong learners. We will give preference to those applicants who have experience teaching, tutoring and leading, or who are from the communities they will serve. Applicants who lack direct relevant experience, but who are eager to learn new skills and give their time and talents to their community will be considered. Crucial to all placements will be cultural competence (and/or clear openness to cultural competence training) in working with low-income, ethnically diverse communities.

Our goal will be to hire a former AmeriCorps participant to head up our recruitment efforts. By having someone who has been through the program, we will have a better sense of what to look for in recruits, how to answer questions, and how to help meet members' personal needs.

d. AMERICORPS MEMBER TRAINING: Orientation and training of LW AIMS HIGH members will

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be a partnership between LW and the placement site. LW will train new members in all the expectations and particulars of the AmeriCorps model, and the values/work expectations of LW. As an educational agency that has been serving the populations of this proposal for over 20 years, we will also spend considerable time training and orienting members in effective classroom management, individualized educational planning, and academic rigor. Additionally, our initial orientation will include a component on cultural competency that will be revisited regularly as issues arise. Throughout this orientation will be teambuilding, support sessions, and workshops particular to members' needs. The orientation will also focus on all prohibited activities for AmeriCorps members including, religious or political activity when participating in or wearing AmeriCorps gear, and fundraising for for-profit causes or for LW AIMS HIGH. All members will be trained in proper and prohibited activities in school settings such as respecting boundaries, appropriate behavior management, and the legal limitations on teachers from political proselytizing to corporal punishment.

Our model of training does not end after the orientation. Our supervisors will be on site regularly working with AmeriCorps members to ensure that they have the support, assistance, and feedback necessary to strive for lifelong learning within their own professional expectations. Our supervisors will observe classrooms, hold regular one-on-one supervisory meetings, and bring staff together at least monthly to problem solve and discuss ways they can improve. Additionally, student outcomes will be continuously monitored to ensure our practices are reaching the expected goals. The best surgeons not only perform great surgery, they also want their patients to thrive. LW will ensure exceptional classroom environments, as well as exceptional student achievement, through clear communication, member support, and consistent trainings on relevant topics.

An important component of member training will be flexibility. We will hold monthly workshops and activities to further every member's abilities; however, these training topics will be modified to suit members' needs as challenges and questions arise. Possible workshop topics may include current research and best practices in general education and literature, understanding generational poverty, how to foster a fundamental curiosity and love of learning in each student, and any additional topics proposed by members or their sites.

The key to the success of the training will be the work done on-site with the school staff. Each site has committed to training that includes an understanding of the community they are serving, the ins and outs of the placement site, and the specific service they will be performing. Each participant will be briefed in the SIG grant approaches, the RTI strategies, the barriers that originally led to the school's

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low performance, the path the school followed since the funds were received, and the work needed going forward to ensure that these students are successful.

Specific training topics, other than those suggested above, will be based on the site and the goals of the specific SIG/RTI. For instance, if the school is focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), the participants will be trained in the current research and best practices. If the school needs literacy tutoring, our participants will learn models of one-on-one learning. If the program's family engagement component is parent-based English as a Second Language (the Portland schools are over 30% ESL with over 50 languages spoken), our participants will be trained in how to best meet the particular needs of ESL parents. Each site will design its training for the specific population being served, and the supervisors of LW AIMS HIGH members will be a key part of developing the training component.

In order for members, school personnel, and LW staff to communicate best practices and ideas as well as problem-solve, we will create an online forum that is easily accessible but password protected. We will train everyone involved on how to best use the forum and will encourage thoughtful discussion and sharing by posting updates, member and student success stories, and topics of interest.

Additionally, LW AIMS HIGH participants will be offered full participation in all staff in-service trainings appropriate to their roles and responsibilities and appropriate to their service term. If the school is teaching their full time employees a new leadership model for the classroom, the participants will be offered the same training. If the school board re-directs the SIG/RTI priorities, staff leadership will ensure that participants are informed. All steps will be taken for participants to become part of the school and the transformational change curriculum.

Once participants have completed their service year, all will have greatly deepened their skills in working with youth, collaborating, and understanding low-income communities. Participants will demonstrate basic work behaviors such as punctuality, appropriate dress, preparation, and follow-through. All participants will gain a greater understanding of what it takes to transform our public schools into high quality learning environments.

e. AMERICORPS MEMBER SUPERVISION: LW AIMS HIGH members will be supervised most directly by the school leadership and faculty at their placement site who will track time for match purposes. They will also have local approval of member service time using the on-line tracking system provided by our state commission. Members will be included in all staff meetings, related to their area of implementation, for the entire year. School leadership and faculty will provide on-going guidance, feedback, and professional development. Direct supervision will handle ongoing expectations and

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problem solving, and all members will be included in full staff meetings to ensure cross collaboration and build collegial support. This supervision and program support will start on day one, and it will last until the placement is complete in order to ensure members reach their full potential. The relationship built on the ground among these individuals will both enhance academic outcomes for the students and foster professional growth for the members.

All members will also be supported by LW staff who will be available both on-site and via technology. LW staff will work closely with the school leadership to coordinate and support the participants in meeting academic expectations while having a positive experience. In addition, LW staff will be a support system for the members to assist in ensuring that each program placement is a good match. Sometimes members sign up for a placement with one understanding, but it turns out to be something different. The supervisor will prioritize making themselves available to the member including one-on-one conversations, check-ins, frequent emails, and using an individualized problem solving approach.

The hiring of LW AIMS HIGH Site Supervisors will be the responsibility of LW. These employees will go through the same rigorous examination required of all LW hires. From background checks, to references, to multiple interviews, each potential hire will be fully vetted. We will look for previous supervisory experience in an educational setting, cultural competence, and ability to provide honest, direct, and motivational feedback. Additionally, Site Supervisors must be collaborators, communicators, and problem solvers. Once hired, all our employees are in 90-day probation period during which both LW and the employee decide if the fit is good. Because our hiring process is so rigorous, more than 98% of employees have survived the probationary period.

In terms of training, all our supervisors participate in an extensive orientation to learn the values and expectations of LW. Added to this orientation will be an intensive introduction to AmeriCorps. After basic orientation, all employees will be trained in LW's educational model which includes pride in customer/client, individualized learning, relationship building, understanding the potential in every student, and clear assessment metrics. As a statewide leader in working academically with low-income students, we will also train all our participants in understanding generational poverty and developmental asset building with a focus on Ruby Payne's research that informs staff of the effects of poverty and how to help students overcome barriers.

We will then focus on best classroom practices and varying tools for determining how to maximize learning in the classroom and/or in the individualized one-on-one experience. Throughout, on-site expectations will be integrated into the LW training in coordination with the leadership at the

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placement site and, as much as possible, will take place at the site. Prior to the program's beginning, LW Site Coordinators will be brought into school staff meetings, and school leadership will ensure that all fully understand the rules of the school and the expectations of the SIG grant.

LW AIMS HIGH supervisors will be fully oriented and trained in the areas most important to the success of this program - the values and expectations of LW, AmeriCorps, and the placement site. Training will be integrated, complete, and accountable.

In the end, the most effective way to ensure student achievement is through a motivated and inspired AmeriCorps team. When members feel like that they are making a significant impact on a community and have enough support, they are energized and successful. Through our supervision, we will make sure members are recognized for their successes and that their service is valued. We will keep careful track of student achievement data and send out motivating updates and reports to help inspire members. We will also prioritize team building and collaboration as a means of fostering AmeriCorps support networks and identity among the LW AIMS HIGH members.

f. **MEMBER EXPERIENCE:** As anyone who has been through a SIG process understands, transforming a school is a complex problem that takes support and effort from staff, students, parents, community partners, and administration. From the superintendent to the custodian, the parent to the student, the business leader to the school board member, everyone must engage. It is in this environment that our members will fully participate. At the end of every member's experience, the member will fully understand and appreciate that their work had significant community impact and was transformative for those served.

This participation will help our members fully integrate into the community and help them develop a lifetime commitment to turning around our nation's lowest performing schools. They will also be identified in all gatherings as working for LW AmeriCorps and wear pins or school appropriate clothing embossed with the LearningWorks AmeriCorps logo.

Of course, the best way to make sure that this experience creates a lifelong ethic of civic participation is to support participants in creating superior outcomes. LW has a 20-year record of success in raising the academic standards of those we serve in our alternative high schools, ESL programs, and extended learning opportunities for at-risk youth, low-income families and the immigrant community. In the past five years, LW has seen more than 90% of our students advance full grade levels in subject areas where they were falling behind. As any teacher will agree, when you see the impact of your work, you never want to stop. We will ensure that members see that impact and are acknowledged for their results by local school boards and the principals of the schools through periodic e-blasts to the

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thousands who receive the LW e-newsletter and through press coverage of this transformative project. Members will also develop a deep connection to AmeriCorps nationally and with the other members in the state. Our program will structure periodic gatherings with members from other schools so they build AmeriCorps identity and connectivity. This cohort will be brought together to share experiences, discuss concerns and serve as a critical support. At these gatherings, we will also share work from other states through Skype and other remote meeting technologies so members can understand the national impact of their work. We will also hold a gathering of all participants at the beginning of the cycle and a "graduation" for all who have completed their hours. Both activities strengthen the connection to the program at-large by building a sense of community, support, and teamwork.

g. **ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION:** All materials associated with recruitment, training, participation, and program implementation will include the AmeriCorps logo and mission. If the funds are awarded, LW will also brand itself as an AmeriCorps agency, thereby spreading the brand across the dozen other programs we operate that serve almost 2,000 people annually. All sub-grantees and affiliates will also be required to include the AmeriCorps logo in all related material. Plus, all sites will display the AmeriCorps logo prominently. Since all the schools associated with this project are SIG schools, they must regularly report on the progress of their academic success. As the schools turn around and scores improve, the schools have committed to include AmeriCorps in their publicity materials. Additionally, LW receives about \$25,000 worth of free radio time a year. A portion of this time will be dedicated to recruiting, which will help brand AmeriCorps statewide.

Most importantly, all members associated with the project will be expected to represent the program with the utmost pride. In a low-population rural state like Maine, even 300 members can have a huge impact on branding the value of AmeriCorps, building long-term positive feelings, and showing how AmeriCorps is making a difference.

h. **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION:** This application is to the School Turnaround initiative of CNCS to increase the educational achievement of Maine's lowest-performing schools.

Organizational Capability

a. **ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING:** LW's mission is to provide the best learning opportunities in Maine for at-risk youth, the immigrant community, and low income families. We were founded in 1967 and have administered millions of dollars in federal funding, including one of the first AmeriCorps programs in the country. Our primary educational work is directly within the public schools system, either providing alternative education through our US

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Department of Labor funded YouthBuild program, or our extended learning opportunities for elementary school students, funded through the US Department of Education, 21st Century. We also have extensive English language programs for adult immigrants and refugees, and mental health and case management for at-risk and juvenile justice involved youth.

Our management structure is to ensure that communication is lateral, and no individual supervises more than eight people. Our closely engaged Board of Directors oversees the CEO, who has 15 years leading the agency, holds a MEd from Harvard, and is a former Maine State Senator. During his tenure, he has overseen the implementation of numerous new programs including over \$3M in new US DOE funds for extended day learning, a \$2.8M in new US DOL funds for alternative education, two new offices for expanded case management, and the creation of a multi-level English language program for immigrants and refugees funded by Wal-Mart.

Our CEO oversees a senior management team (SMT) of four, including a CFO who oversees the finance department. The finance team ensures that the agency has the infrastructure needed to ensure adequate fiscal oversight, providing stability to the programs and, therefore, services to vulnerable populations. For 20 years, every annual audit has been clean of material findings, and LW has not had a single instance in which federal monies were questioned or had to be returned. This department is also responsible for ensuring that all federal data is collected and reported appropriately to meet grant requirements.

Another member of the SMT is our Director of Development, who has 20+ years of leadership experience in local government. The Development team will be responsible for ensuring matching resources are annually secured and that AmeriCorps is appropriately marketed.

Rounding out SMT is our Director of Educational Excellence, who will be responsible for ultimate supervision of the AmeriCorps program. She is the former Superintendent of Portland Schools, the largest school district in the State of Maine. She has overseen school improvement projects at every level of the public school system, including SIG school improvement plans. Having started as an elementary school teacher, and having worked as a Principal at almost every level, she is one of the most qualified people in the State of Maine to oversee and ensure the success of this AmeriCorps program.

As a contract employee to LW, she will be responsible for hiring the top level supervisors who will recruit and supervise the Members at each site. She will also oversee the educational plans that each school has implemented to ensure that our participants assist in meeting the local goals. Finally, she will oversee the data collection and analyze the academic data to determine where we have been

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successful and where we need to improve.

As mentioned earlier, LW (then Portland West Neighborhood Planning Council) successfully administered one of the first AmeriCorps programs in the country. Every report was filed on time and satisfactorily; 90% of participants completed their hours, and the community impact was remarkable. Beyond the positive press and commendation from the Commission for our work, President Bill Clinton met with our participants and congratulated us on our success.

Even with all the above experience, whenever a new grant arrives we spend considerable time ensuring that our top level staff has the needed programmatic and technical training. We will achieve this goal with this grant by sending our managers to any training offered by the CNCS, and by working closely with our federal and state contract officers. We have successfully navigated this process many times, so we will follow past protocol to continue that success.

Based on all of the above, our current structure, past history, infrastructure and planning expertise, we are well equipped to provide the programmatic and fiscal oversight, the day-to-day operational support, and the data collection to successfully implement this grant.

b. SUSTAINABILITY: The ultimate goal of this project is sustained academic achievement. Sustained academic achievement occurs over time through implementing curriculum-based best teaching practices, but also through a local commitment to that change. Inherent in implementing this transformative change process is that the need for services decreases over time, as expert staff maximizes learning and creates a new culture.

The most important key to sustainability in this project is the local involvement and buy-in. We understand that if LW enters a community with a plan, but implements it from the top, we will fail. That is why every educational intervention in this application comes from the sites. Every piece of the plan is based on the SIG that has already been developed locally by the superintendents, school boards, principals, teachers, parents, and local community members. LW's role has been to gather the information and advise the sites on the best ways we can help enhance their outcomes, whether that is by supplementing a program with additional support, or creating a new program they were unable to develop.

Beyond the implementation of the program, it will be our job to build the local relationships needed to sustain the program over time. This includes concerted and focused outreach, showing local partners how their support will impact youth in their community, and subsequently help the community at-large. It includes raising the matching funds to supplement the federal funds. Finally, it means proving to these partners that a one-time shot will not transform the school or their community; only

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an extended effort with full community backing will serve the students. Sustainability is the two-way street of ensuring the schools are part of the community, and the community is part of the schools. LW has extensive experience raising matching funds. We raise 10% of our overall budget every year in private cash donations. With in-kind donations, we raise well over 25% annually. Those cash and in-kind resources come from dozens of private foundations, numerous local businesses, hundreds of individuals, and long term fee-for-service contracts. As this grant will make up about 25% of our operating budget, continuing this pattern will not be a problem.

Additionally, the partnerships we have developed over our 45 year history run deep. We currently have almost 20 different funding sources willing to invest in our work, and political leaders of all persuasions have visited our programs in the past year, including the Governor, the President of the State Senate, and local leaders from the Mayor to the Chair of the School Board.

As with all SIG improvement plans, the expectation at the local level is that once the federal funds run out, the district will have incorporated the new systems, culture, local volunteers, and teaching techniques that the community will use to continue the improved academic performance for a generation. We will support the building of this capacity.

c. **COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** LearningWorks has decades of experience as a federal grant recipient with 20 years of clean audits. As such, we have established a program of effective and required accounting and tight compliance controls in our finance and administration functions. We are currently required to undergo an A-133 by our independent auditors on an annual basis, with their producing supplemental schedules of federal awards, in addition to the required audited financial statements, footnotes, findings, and related schedules.

The Accounting and Finance department includes a CFO, an Accounting Manager, and a Bookkeeper, all full-time positions. In addition, the grant requests funding for an Office Administrator that will be dedicated to LW AIMS HIGH data collection, reporting, grant transaction overview, and general back-up and support. There is segregation of duties among these staff members, with redundancy among the staff to cover functions appropriately. Approvals for financial transactions are separate from the final signatory authority. Cash receipts and deposits are performed by separate staff members. And, processing of cash disbursements are separate from the check signing authority. In addition to the annual audit, an internal review of financial results and postings occurs on a monthly basis during the preparation and analysis of internal financial statements. Posting and reconciliation activities are reviewed by either the Accounting Manager or the CFO, as appropriate. Internal cost allocations are a special area of emphasis during these reviews. We maintain copies of

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OMB circulars and AC rules and regulations for reference.

We will schedule regular financial reviews, site-based oversight visits, and periodic desk audits of grant functions, reporting, and transactional processing. We will plan a quarterly meeting with service site staff to review operations and check on compliance. Any discrepancies will be addressed immediately with a corrective action plan to bring any such discrepancies into full compliance. We will especially focus on prevention of any prohibited activities during these periodic visits and/or reviews. If instances of non-compliance, or the risk of such are revealed, we will institute a corrective action plan at the origin of the non-compliance or in the risk area. If the action is deemed significant enough, we will issue compliance memoranda, guidelines, trainings, or other appropriate interventions to mitigate subsequent risk of recurrence.

d. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: At LW, continuous improvement is part of our philosophy. Every staff member is evaluated annually, based on goals set at the beginning of each year. Those goals are revisited all year in monthly supervisory meetings, and formally on a quarterly basis. A portion of every set of goals is individualized to ensure that each employee can work on their specific weaknesses. But all goals also have a component of personal professional development, and support a culture of continuous improvement. This same process will be used for our LW AIMS HIGH participants. It creates accountability and provides clear feedback.

Additionally, on a quarterly basis, we use outcome data from all our programs to make sure we are on track. A few examples of data used are attendance records, testing results focused on academic as well as the social/emotional gains, parental meetings, increased participation and classroom engagement, homework completion, and personal testimony from students and teachers. Use of measurement results informs continuous program adjustments and changes.

A community advisory board that meets quarterly in each community will be made up of internal and external stakeholders, including parents, principals, lead supervisors and cue-givers from the community. These quarterly meetings are designed to ensure both that broad goals are being met, and that groups of students are being served. Monthly group staff meetings will also be held with all LW AIMS HIGH participants to ensure focus on outcomes and adequate teaching techniques. Continuous improvement will inherently be the core of the agenda every month. However, it must be emphasized that continuous improvement is a daily activity and focus.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS: The cost of this program in federal dollars is \$1,181,567 annually to create extended learning, tutoring, and community/parent engagement for six schools. On a purely

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unduplicated model, 1,805 students will be directly served by this grant for a cost of \$655 per student. Add in the 2,290 community members that will be directly served, and the per student cost drops to \$289. When you calculate it by type of service, the cost per unit is \$152. There is not a school in the US that could get the amount of direct service provided by this grant for \$152 a unit.

To put this in context, LW currently runs extended learning programs in numerous schools in which the cost per student runs \$2,000, and we are considered one of the most efficient in the state. If we were to implement our traditional model to serve the number of kids in this program, it would cost approximately \$3.6M in federal funds. And that does not take into account the community engagement or one-on-one tutoring.

Conversely, our cost per LW AIMS HIGH member is also remarkably low. With 318 slots of varying hours we will spend approximately \$3,700 per member.

LW also has many staff currently working in areas that will help us recruit, train, and support the participants. Our budget dedicates a minimal amount of funds to have them working 10% of the time on this project to ensure its success. Without already having this structure in place, it would cost twice as much to achieve this breadth.

Finally, all funds in this program supplement what is already happening in these schools, or creates new programming. None of the schools have adequate extended learning programs, nor extensive one-on-one tutoring, and all struggle with community engagement. This project will simply direct funds into the areas that are deficient or non-existent. All of the local unions have agreed to sign off on this project, and will do so in our partnership agreements explicitly, because it supports their members in achieving excellence without replacing them.

b. BUDGET ADEQUACY: The non-CNCS funding will come from LearningWorks and the school districts in the form of cash and in-kind services and will easily meet the 30% match. Much of the in-kind match comes in the form of current staff that will be assisting and providing guidance/training to LW AIMS HIGH members. For instance, school principals will dedicate 5% of their time, and four teachers at each school will dedicate 15% of their time. We have taken a general average of these salaries for budgeting purposes. Additionally, the space that schools provide for offices and classrooms will be donated at \$13.70 per sq. ft. (6 offices and 12 classrooms), as will the transportation costs of the districts taking kids home after extended school hours (\$45 an hour). Many of the utility costs, a portion of staff travel, some of the training, insurance for the members, etc. are in the match. All of this is outlined in the budget, and all \$506,318 worth of matching sources are already pledged and secured.

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The LW funds to cover these expenses are from unrestricted resources, assets it owns, or from sharing resources with other programs. The school side matching funds are from a reallocation of current staff time and from donating their space/busing costs in the off hours. All of these resources are secured, and we expect many more to provide additional support once the grant is awarded, and the community understands how it can help.

The budget is adequate to meet the project's goals and expectations. It mirrors our model of 20 FT, 20 HT, and 278 MT participants, including small honoraria incentives to the minimums. It provides funding for five full time positions: a FT Program Director, two FT site supervisors (one for Portland/RSU 24 and one for RSU's 73 and 74), a FT recruiter/member support person, and a FT office administrator. This staffing is modeled on LW's current extended learning structure which has one supervisor per two sites. Additionally, one of LW's current Portland supervisors will dedicate 25% of her time at one of the Portland schools. Finally, the CEO of LearningWorks and the Director of Educational Excellence are both committing significant time to the first year of this grant (25% and 2 days a week, respectively) to ensure LW AIMS HIGH's successful start-up. Many not-for-profits under-staff, and assume they can make up the difference simply through passion, but that leads to burn-out and less than adequate results. The staffing plan in this budget takes that reality into account, and ensures the staffing needed for success.

The budget also provides flexibility as strengths and weaknesses are identified. No budget has ever played out exactly as expected, but because this one has six sites with over 300 members, the size provides the ability to reallocate resources. For instance, if it is determined that a school needs additional LW AIMS HIGH members, while another school is thriving, we should be able--with CNCS approval--to shift resources to the area in need.

Another area of strength in this budget is that it provides adequate funds for training, training materials, and technology/IT to ensure our staff and members are prepared and supervision/communications are adequate across these disparate school districts. Again, this is an area where many programs try to cut corners, but LW understands that being trained in the job expected, and being given the right tools builds efficiency and creates a better outcome.

Finally, because it is so important that the local community understands who is helping transform its schools, the budget adequately funds marketing materials with the AmeriCorps logo, including shirts, pins, and banners.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Sent

Letters of Support

Sent