

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Ninety Six AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 3,500 volunteers to provide literacy tutoring and employment services in Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego, CA; Chicago, IL; Austin, TX; and Riverdale, MD. At the end of the 2013-2016 program period, 8,400 individuals will receive services. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Economic Opportunity and Education. The CNCS investment of \$1,200,000 will be matched with \$750,000.

## Rationale and Approach

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States is submitting a proposal to access Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) funds to support AmeriCorps programs across the country. If funded the NCLR AmeriCorps Hispanic Empowerment through National Service (LENS) program will focus its efforts on improving academic performance through literacy and math tutoring and employability of Hispanics.

The 2010 Census determined that the Hispanic population became the largest minority group in the United States numbering in at 52 million people. By comparison during the 1990 Census the Hispanic Population was 22 million. In two decades the population has more than doubled and with the median age of Hispanics at 27 (37 for the population as a whole) it's likely that the population will continue to evolve at a steady rate. With the population expanding several challenges face the Hispanic population.

While there have been recent gains for Hispanics in school completion rates, college enrollment, and overall academic achievement. There are many factors associated with the poor status of Hispanic education. As noted by Schneider, Martinez, and Owens initial disadvantages often stem from parents' immigrant and socioeconomic status. Lack of knowledge about the U.S. education system and how to navigate it creates an obstacle. As Hispanic students proceed through the schooling system, inadequate school resources and lack of access to those resources creates a disadvantage. These disadvantages continue to accumulate, resulting in Hispanics having the lowest rates of high school and college degree attainment, which hinders their chances for stable employment in the future. Furthermore, Hispanic families have a higher propensity to live in segregated communities that tend to have poorly-funded, overcrowded schools, poor facilities, and teachers with inadequate preparation. This results in Hispanic students not always being exposed to rigorous coursework or placed on a college preparatory track. In some cases, Hispanic parents lack the resources to help their

## Narratives

children in school or need support to be effective advocates for their children's education.

Current achievement data indicates that Hispanic children begin their education well behind Whites in letter recognition, understanding beginning sounds of words, understanding the ends of words. They also lagged behind Whites in sight reading words, which is an advanced skill for entering kindergartners. (2012 National Center for Education Statistics) Hispanic fourth-graders scored at 206 on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading test (on a scale of 0-500, 500 being the high score). In comparison, White fourth graders scored at 231 on the NAEP reading test that year. Similarly when Hispanic students reach the 8th grade the gap stays the same with Hispanic students scoring 252 and their White counterparts 274. Comparably, math scores showed a similar gap. While Hispanic students have made recent gains they still lag behind. White fourth grade students scored 249 while Hispanic students came in at 229 on math proficiency levels. The gap in eight grade was slightly higher with white students scoring 293 and Hispanic students 270. Accordingly, as of 2010 the Hispanic dropout rate remained at a high of 15.1%% compared to the national average of 7.4%. (NCES). These challenges have larger implications beyond the classroom. Hispanic Americans that face these educational challenges struggle as they attempt to make the transition into the workforce and earning potential.

Bureau of labor statistics reports that half of Hispanics working full-time earned at least \$549 per week in 2011. This median weekly wage was only 71 percent of that earned by Whites. Some of the wage differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics can be explained by the usual differences in education and other standard worker characteristics, such as experience and certain demographic characteristics.

According to the Department of Labor (DOL) the unemployment rate averaged 11.5 percent among Hispanics in 2011. As of February 2012 the rate lowered to 10.7 but still higher than the national average of 7.9%. Most striking however for Hispanics between the ages of 16-19 the unemployment rate is 27%. While the lack of education accounts for some of the reason for the high unemployment other factors competition from older workers for limited number of entry level jobs or lacking specific skills for better paying jobs.

KIDS COUNT® warns that the lack of education, opportunity and connection to school or work has long-term implications. Disconnected individuals might not be able to achieve financial stability and have limited employment prospects.

The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program is requesting a Fixed Amount Grant to support 96 Full time (FT) Member Service Years (MSY) to provide tutoring and employability services. Full time MSY are

## Narratives

integral to the NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program design. Having FT members will allow for consistent delivery of services over the course of the year and allow the Members to develop meaningful relationships with the recipient of the services.

NCLR AmeriCorps LENS Member will provide tutoring during school and after school hours to school age k-12 students. 49 FT MSY AmeriCorps Members will provide the tutoring in a one on one or small group setting to 1200 students over the course of the program year. Each student will receive a minimum of 30 hours of tutoring. Prior to commencing the tutoring each tutee will undergo a pretest to determine their reading level. Afterwards the AmeriCorps Member will work with students on key literacy skills which include reading, word recognition, phonics, fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and writing. Members will work with local schools to identify students who qualify for tutoring. Members will work closely with teachers, particularly those serving in the classroom. Upon successfully completing the tutoring the AmeriCorps Member will administer a post test to determine progress against the pretest.

This type of tutoring also known as ¿cross age¿ tutoring (Gaustad, 1993) has been shown to be effective and beneficial. The research shows that there are three common benefits often cited: learning of academic skills, development of social behaviors, and enhancement of peer relations (Greenwood, Carta, and Hall 1988). Trained AmeriCorps Members will provide tutoring that will assist the tutee in improving their academics. Additionally, the Member will model positive interactions and social behaviors that will improve their peer relationships. Damon and Phelps in their paper "Strategic Uses of Peer Learning in Children's Education¿ make the case that one of the reasons this type of tutoring works is because the tutor and the tutee speak a similar language. Because of this the tutee is more comfortable to express them and develop a rapport that will enhance the experience and free them to ask more questions. Lastly, our program evaluation conducted by Contigo-Research, Policy, and Strategy confirmed that peer and cross age tutoring is effective in bringing impact to the tutee. Over three quarters (76%) of students participating in the program have shown gains in literacy levels. The emphasis on individualized and small group tutoring has proven to be a successful strategy in meeting the literacy needs of Hispanic youth. Furthermore, with over 3,500 community volunteers mobilized for service, the NCLR LENS Project provides critical capacity-building support to meeting unmet needs in Hispanic communities. (Mirabal and Layba 2010). AmeriCorps members will serve as Financial Literacy and Employment Coaches. 47 Members will provide financial benefits, planning, and competitive employment assistance, supporting teen agers and adults by empowering them to become more financially self-sufficient, economically independent,

## Narratives

and empowered job seekers. AmeriCorps members will also assist clients with topics ranging from resume building to budget creation and related workforce development skills, and other employment soft skills. Members will provide counseling on financial, professional, and personal goals, in addition to assisting clients in recognizing the short and long-term impact of larger financial and career decisions. Members will provide these services in a one on one and classroom setting. Members will lead financial literacy and employment classes on a revolving schedule.

In order to stabilize income, individuals need to learn how to keep and grow in a job. This is why the Mid-Valley Partnership in Oregon conducted a study to assess the workplace readiness of graduates of work readiness programs as they transition from education to work, specifically with local employers after graduating from a work readiness program. Partnering employers in the study added that there is a strong need for soft skills such as communication skills, professional standards and etiquette, receiving feedback, lack of work ethic, time management, ability to prioritize work, and a sense of competitiveness in new employees, as well as generational and cultural barriers that inhibit success and growth in the workplace.

Among their recommendations on how to effectively prepare graduates for the workforce were: developing and requiring completion of career specific curriculum, service learning and team work learning environments.

With this model the NCLR AmeriCorps program will be able to expand the capacity of our sub grantees to reach a greater numbers of individual that otherwise would not be served. Programs will have the ability to have Members devoted primarily on addressing these issues through their service. Members will also have the ability to recruit additional community volunteers to expand the reach of those services. With this model in place the goal at the end of three years is to continue to build on this success, meet our performance goals, and prepare the tutees to be successful in their current and future educational goals. More importantly we hope to achieve an increase in academic skills, development of social behaviors, and improved peer relations. NCLR LENS AmeriCorps Members will tutor 1200 unduplicated students on an annual basis. 80% of tutored students will show an increase in one grade level of reading and math. Over the course of three years 3600 tutees will receive tutoring services. Similarly, our AmeriCorps Members will provide employment services to 1600 unduplicated individuals with 70% completing training and 60% finding employment. At the end of three years 4800 individuals will have received financial literacy and employment services. The goals were determined with input from the sub grantees, regional education and workforce data, and internal capacity. The NCLR AmeriCorps program will track this progress through pre and post

## Narratives

testing, tutor logs, and stakeholder interviews and will report annually via the Grantee Progress report.

Our performance measurement goal for the 2011-2012 grant year was: 1000 students from kindergarten to high school students from low-income families from 7 sites located in 4 states will receive at least 15 hours of tutoring over a 9-12 month program year and increased their literacy by one grade level. All sites were successful in enrolling students into their tutoring program. 126 NCLR AmeriCorps Members tutored 2984 students from kindergarten to high school students from low-income families, and of those 2488 received at least 15 hours of tutoring over a 9-12 month program year and increased their literacy by one grade level. Sub grantees were able to recruit a total of 1499 new volunteers to their AmeriCorps efforts to bring sustainability and awareness to the program. Members will be recruited using a variety of resources available to our sub grantees. These include using the internet to post AmeriCorps positions on agency and job search websites such as craigslist.com and idealist.org. Sub grantees have also begun using Twitter and Facebook as a way to promote AmeriCorps positions to a wider audience. Beyond the internet sub grantees will use internal resources to recruit members. The program director will promote the program to staff, board, and other stakeholders. Program staff will be able to identify service recipients that would be a good fit for the program. Over the last couple of years NCLR has worked to organize the exiting members into AmeriCorps Alumni Chapters or to begin them. With the goal of keeping them engaged in service but also as a tool to promote the program for local program. Sub grantees will continue utilizing partnerships with local high schools, colleges, and universities. Partnering with local colleges and universities has allowed our sub grantees to work with school departments, such as Education, that provide a natural recruitment pool for students interested in gaining real world experience while studying for their degree. Lastly, sub grantees will use their visibility in the community as a way to recruit individuals in the program. This will be accomplished by presenting at community resource fairs, during service projects, and other appropriate community events.

With that visibility in the local community ensures that sub grantees are recruiting from the local community. During the last full program year NCLR sub grantees recruited close to 90% of their members from the community they serve. Those communities are largely composed of low income individuals, people of color, and opportunity youth. NCLR sub grantees are able to work closely with these groups because they are located in the communities where these groups live. These communities are racially and socio-economically diverse.

Program begins with a multi-day member orientation covering topics that include an overview of the

## Narratives

Corporation for National and Community Service, overview of AmeriCorps, term of service expectations, and member responsibilities, main service activity overview/objectives, position descriptions, , disciplinary policies/procedures, member contracts and files, forms and paperwork, and prohibited activities. Furthermore, Members receive information about their operating site and site location, including the mission, vision, overview of all programs, and the important role of AmeriCorps members.

Furthermore, each site location provides an orientation specific to their position that covers essential personnel, site supervisor contact and hours, a tour and introductions to staff, signing in and out protocol, weekly schedule and annual calendar, map of grounds, work spaces (e.g. computer lab, library), on site specific rules and policies, supplies (including copying and faxing), lunch and breaks, parking, safety, and any other topics as determined by the site location.

During orientation and through ongoing trainings, the operating site helps AmeriCorps members develop skills and talents. The proposed NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program focuses on leadership development by making each member responsible for creating and overseeing service learning projects that engage students and parents. AmeriCorps members are trained on basic fundraising and donation requests, and in the past Members have raised funds for service projects, and student incentives.

NCLR operating sites emphasize strong communication skills and encourage Members to develop these skills through regular contact with service recipients, parents, administrators, teachers, and site location staff to report on project progress and challenges. Members develop time management skills by ensuring each service recipient receives the amount of dosage according to their service plan, as well as management skills through work with other AmeriCorps Members, colleagues, coworkers, teachers and students.

Members improve on public speaking through monthly trainings and opportunities to present information. By collaborating with other Members during service related activities such as mentoring, facilitating, tutoring, service projects, and community events, Members develop teamwork skills. They recruit and oversee volunteers during service a project, which increases proficiency in volunteer management. The NCLR operating sites; final AmeriCorps training focuses on Life After AmeriCorps through resume writing and interview skills to help members in their job search when their term of service ends.

The proposed NCLR AmeriCorps LENS Member program provides ongoing Member training on at least a monthly basis throughout each term, when Members each check in with the AmeriCorps

## Narratives

Program Director to provide data, review hours, address any disciplinary concerns, and share success stories from their service. Members also check in monthly with their site supervisors to provide feedback, address concerns, and adjust the service program based on teacher recommendations and students' progress. The proposed NCLR AmeriCorps LENS AmeriCorps program provides 20 trainings over 12 months that cover: (1) Orientation; (2) Child Abuse and Mandated Reporting; (3) CPR & First Aid; (4) Reading curriculum; (5) Math Curriculum; (6) Financial Literacy; (7) Homebuyer Education Basics for Facilitation (8) Classroom Management/Behavior; (9) Lesson Planning; (10) Learning Styles; (11) Academic Mentoring; (12) Teambuilding; (13) Leadership; (14) Communication; (15) Community Asset Mapping; (16) Civic Engagement and Responsibility; (17) Community Service; (18) Volunteer Recruitment and Management; (19) Fundraising and Donation Requests; and (20) Life After AmeriCorps- Resume and Interview Skills. Members, volunteers, and site supervisors are trained at the initial AmeriCorps orientation regarding prohibited activities. The Director will ensure that all individuals, including volunteers, seeking to work with AmeriCorps members are thoroughly informed of the prohibited activities prior to any service event.

### f. Member Supervision (5 points)

Sub grantees are required to have a program director and a coordinator that will be the leads for the program. All sub grantee staff will be required to receive an orientation on the AmeriCorps program to ensure that they are aware of scope of the service being provided and of the prohibited activities. Each sub grantee is responsible for hiring and selecting the individuals that will provide supervision and oversight for the program. Our current group of sub grantees has identified the individuals that will serve as program directors, Coordinators, and site supervisors. Those individuals were selected to serve in these capacities because of their experience in supervising AmeriCorps Members in the past, they possessed management (people and grants) experience, and had experience with federal grants. Members serving at school or educational institutions will be supervised by the appropriate staff and teachers.

Program directors/coordinators are responsible for the day to day operation of the program. To that end they will be responsible for providing the daily supervision of Members during their service. The supervision plan will be detailed during the Member orientation where the program will specify the details of that plan. This will include informal daily check ins with the members, the organizing of weekly/monthly Member meetings, time log review, and the scheduling of performance reviews. Program directors will also provide an orientation and training to the site supervisors, other sub grantee staff, and their board. Orientation will cover introduction to CNCS, AmeriCorps regulation

## Narratives

and provisions, Member activities, goals of the program, and prohibited activities. This orientation will give them an overview of their role and responsibilities with the program and the role of the members. Additional topics will include management styles, teambuilding, retention, and motivating Members.

The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program fully complies with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutoring qualifications and training. NCLR successfully recruits candidates who are enrolled in college or are college graduates. Members not meeting this requirement will be assigned to other projects. During recruitment, NCLR is clear about required qualifications and collects documentation to verify qualifications (either a transcript or copy of a diploma) prior to hiring a Member. NCLR's tutor training is high quality and research-based, across sites and provided to Members prior to and during service terms. Members receive pre-service Literacy and Math curriculum training before going to school sites, which is provided through charter school teachers, curriculum instructors for k-12 as well as university professors among other resources such as Literacy Works, the Retired Teachers Association of Chicago and World Vision's KidREACH program to name a few. Ongoing trainings support Members with lesson planning, classroom management, and learning techniques, and site supervisors work with school academic coaches and other instructional staff to provide additional training so tutoring is aligned with the school's curriculum and state standards.

NCLR AmeriCorps LENS Members have a powerful service experience through the combination of education, economic opportunity and service learning activities they engage in during their term and which impact the community through improved academic achievement and projects that benefit the community while increasing engagement at the school and in the community.

The tutoring and formal mentoring component of the program builds personal mentoring relationships between Members and students that have a strong impact on both. The service learning component builds Members' sense of community and desire to give back. The facilitation component builds the skill set if the Member in housing counseling and sets up an atmosphere of learning from each other as the client builds confidence in their ability to purchase a home. Together these produce powerful service experiences that connect members to each other and to other service participants. Members have structured opportunities to reflect on and learn from their service, as they are responsible for recording monthly informal reflections ("Stories of Service") that describe their service and impact on their students and community. Members share these stories with the Program Director and other Members during monthly trainings, as well as NCLR AmeriCorps staff. Preliminary, mid-year, and end of year evaluations are another opportunity for members to reflect on their service.

## Narratives

The initial AmeriCorps orientation will provide Members with the knowledge of what it means to be an NCLR AmeriCorps LENS Member and the duties and responsibilities that come with that title.

Members will receive ¿AmeriCorps gear¿ to wear throughout their service, which helps identify the AmeriCorps members, both to other AmeriCorps members and the community.

The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program connects Members with each other through teambuilding activities and ice breakers during monthly trainings, which enhance AmeriCorps "esprit de corps." Members are asked to create committees within the Corps for fundraising, donations, and service projects, which encourages teamwork and outreach to other local, state, and national programs. The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program fosters a sense of connection with the AmeriCorps identity by continuously identifying AmeriCorps Members as Members (not staff or volunteers), by initiating Members with the AmeriCorps pledge, and asking that monthly Stories of Service are relevant to the pledge they have made. The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program highlights Member accomplishments to other programs, and partners with other AmeriCorps programs to host service events. The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program will establish potential service days with other AmeriCorps grantees in their respective states to connect with other AmeriCorps Members.

The NCLR AmeriCorps LENS program fully complies with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutoring qualifications and training. NCLR successfully recruits candidates who are enrolled in college or are college graduates. Members not meeting this requirement will be assigned to other projects. During recruitment, NCLR is clear about required qualifications and collects documentation to verify qualifications (either a transcript or copy of a diploma) prior to hiring a Member. NCLR's tutor training is high quality and research-based, across sites and provided to Members prior to and during service terms. Members receive pre-service Literacy and Math curriculum training before going to school sites, which is provided through charter school teachers, curriculum instructors for k-12 as well as university professors among other resources such as Literacy Works, the Retired Teachers Association of Chicago and World Vision's KidREACH program to name a few. Ongoing trainings support Members with lesson planning, classroom management, and learning techniques, and site supervisors work with school academic coaches and other instructional staff to provide additional training so tutoring is aligned with the school's curriculum and state standards.

Describe your organizational commitment to branding national service. How will your program ensure that it and any sub grantees and/or affiliates and/or service locations will use the AmeriCorps name on websites, service gear and public materials such as stationery, application forms, recruitment brochures, on-line position posting, or other recruitment strategies, orientation materials, member

## Narratives

curriculum, signs, banners, press releases and publications related to their AmeriCorps program? NCLR is committed to branding national service and is dedicated to ensuring that sub grantees and service locations will use the AmeriCorps logo in addition to us, the parent organization. As a part of our compliance checks during site visits we check for correct signage at program site and site locations. In addition, we regularly review materials generated by sub grantees to ensure that the branding is correct and apparent in each publication that is made. In regards to the parent organization commitment, it is policy that all materials proudly carry the AmeriCorps logo, internal and external.

### Organizational Capability

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) is the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States; works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. NCLR began in 1968 in an effort to organize the Hispanic serving organizations that existed at the time. In the early 1980s they moved their headquarters to Washington DC to better advocate for the needs of all the Hispanic sub groups living within the United States. NCLR has been operating and overseeing AmeriCorps programs since 1995. As a long standing grantee of CNCS it has successfully promoted national service across the country and to a demographic that may not be very familiar with service options.

NCLR has been led by Janet Murguia since 2005. Ms. Murguía has been recognized on numerous occasions for her work. She has been selected twice as one of Washingtonian magazine's 100 Most Powerful Women in Washington; and featured in Newsweek magazine's Women and Leadership issue. Ms. Murguia spoken at CNCS events and invited CNCS staff to speak at NCLR events. She firmly believes in the power of national service and is a strong advocate for the program.

Rogelio Quintanar will serve as the program director and Veronica Alarcon will be the program coordinator. Combined both NCLR staff have over 20 years of experience managing and promoting AmeriCorps and national service. Mr. Quintanar has been with NCLR since 2002 and has supported the program for over 10 years. As the program director he will be responsible for the overall performance of the program. This will include financial oversight, ensuring program policy and procedures are compliant with CNCS and AmeriCorps regulations and provisions. In October of 2012 Mr. Quintanar participated in the American Leadership Academy after being nominated to attend by CNCS. Mrs. Alarcon started at NCLR in 2006 and is responsible for the day to day operations of the LENS program. In this capacity she oversees sub grantee reporting and performance, AmeriCorps member's enrollment and exits, managing egrants and My AmeriCorps Portal. Additionally, Mrs.

## Narratives

Alarcon worked at the Oklahoma state commission and managed a state AmeriCorps program and is an AmeriCorps Alum. Both Mr. Quintanar and Mrs. Alarcon have attended CNCS sponsored and organized trainings. These have included grantee meetings, National Conference on Volunteering and Service, disability inclusion, financial institute, and the Best Practices conference. The AmeriCorps program is housed within the Program Component at NCLR. This component is home to the all of NCLR's program initiatives and led by Vice President for Programs Delia Pompa. Ms. Pompa has an extensive education and nonprofit background and provides external leadership to the program in connecting with other stakeholders. NCLR AmeriCorps program staff work closely with our fiscal colleagues and meet regularly to review changes in policy and regulations. This ensures that all staff working directly with the program is aware of any changes in the program or provisions. Fiscal staff have also participated in CNCS training and the plan will be to continue to send staff to appropriate trainings. Staff have also visited sister programs or other National Directs to view their programs and learn best practices.

NCLR AmeriCorps program staff is not directly engaged in training members but they do provide training to the sub grantee staff that oversee the program.

Describe how your AmeriCorps program is integrated and supported within your organization.

Provide evidence that you have managed the program well, have performed satisfactorily, and have a record of compliance and responsiveness.

The NCLR AmeriCorps program is housed in the Programs component which allows us to connect us with other programs and we can leverage resources through our colleague's programs. We're consistently invited to present at regional meetings within our network. At NCLR signature event, our annual conference, we're able to present workshops on AmeriCorps, our AmeriCorps awards are integrated into Lideres which is out youth development/leadership program at conference. In addition, we have an AmeriCorps page on the NCLR website and a Facebook fan page.

NCLR has consistently met our performance goals in past years and anticipates that we will meet and exceed our goals in this grant year. For our performance measurement in the current grant cycle, last year our goal was to tutor 1000 students in literacy tutoring, we exceeding our goal by tutoring 2984 students. We highlight the service performed on national days of service such as MLK day and others and promote national service initiatives in local areas where we have presence. We have demonstrated by collaborating with other AmeriCorps programs in sharing best practices and learning from each other. We are proactive in seeking out potential weakness by setting policy and revising our handbook to reflect this progress. By having a working version of a handbook, we can empower our sub grantees

## Narratives

with the knowledge and information so they can see for themselves where the policy comes from and why. Through this transparency, it instills confidence in our sub grantees, therefore making us a stronger program in management.

In areas of compliance we have had success with our recent audit, resulting in minor findings as well as limited compliance issues on the GPR. If we do have issues we work closely with CNCS to correct and ID corrective actions.

Our program has secured and continues to work towards securing additional resources. Due to the success of the program partners have made commitments to support the program. Realizing the benefits of AmeriCorps and its impact partners and funders are excited about the potential for collaborating with national service. All of our sub grantees are well established in their communities and have strong records of fundraising. Six of our sub grantees are current programs and have experience in raising funds for AmeriCorps. Those agencies have worked closely with state and local funders to find support. Programs have established working relationships with colleges and universities where they have leveraged resources to train members and volunteers. This type of collaboration will continue beyond the AmeriCorps program. This will in turn strengthen the volunteer recruitment and ensure our programs continue beyond the current program. All of our current grantees have experienced resource development offices and are constantly securing diverse funding sources. With AmeriCorps members recruiting and supporting volunteers ensures that the program will have a pool of individuals that will support their efforts on an ongoing basis. Critical to this effort is developing strong volunteer training and recognition programs.

What are your plans for monitoring program and service sites for compliance?

NCLR has developed a multifaceted plan to monitor programs for compliance with CNCS policies, AmeriCorps provisions, and NCLR procedures. Prior to the start of the program we conduct a risk assessment to determine which sub grantees have the need for additional support. NCLR provides the sub grantee with a sub grant agreement. The agreement details some of the necessary details related to the program. Also at the beginning of the program year NCLR organizes a multiday program director's training and meeting. At this gathering we provide sub grantees with updates, share best practices, roll out new policy and procedure, and create an atmosphere for peer exchange. Sub grantees are provided with a copy of the AmeriCorps regulations and provisions and the NCLR policy and procedure manual. The policy and procedure manual provides guidance to the sub grantees on a wide variety of topics. Sub grantees are then required to provide them to their site supervisors and provide an orientation on the program. Sub grantees are free to develop their own orientation agenda

## Narratives

but at a minimum they have to include a review of the regulations and provisions, goals of the program, and the prohibited activities. . Program directors are required to participate in monthly program director's call. NCLR organizes these calls and the purpose is to discuss the program, share activity and upcoming projects, discuss any updates, and create a forum for program development. Also throughout the year sub grantees are required to submit monthly fiscal reports. At the end of each quarter they are required to submit a programmatic report. The report provides details of the previous quarter's activity related to member enrollments, progress towards performance measures, service activity projects, and great stories. Also on a monthly basis NCLR reviews egrants and My AmeriCorps Portal to ensure compliance with the 30 day enrollment and exit policy.

Additionally, throughout the year NCLR will hold random desk audits to review compliance with the background check procedure and to review member time logs. Each sub grantee will undergo a site visit. The visit usually last for a minimum of two days. The site visit is an opportunity to see how the program is operating and to meet with the AmeriCorps members and staff supporting the program. After the visit NCLR will provide a report that details the highlights, compliance issues noted, areas for improvement, and any training that was provided. Sub grantees are then given 30 days to respond with corrective actions to any compliance issues notes. Compliance issues are taking very seriously and are communicated with the Corporation.

For the 2011-2012 program year three compliance issues were noted in our grantee progress report (GPR). The first issue concerned our enrollment rate. During that period our enrollment rate was ( 87%). The main reason for that number is the lack of enrollments with our education award only (EAO) positions. Sub grantees were having trouble filling them due to the lack of a stipend. We indicated that we would be phasing the EAO positions out and were asked to provide a timeline. For the 2012-2013 grant period we reduced our number from (12.42) to nine MSY. A reduction of more than 3.42. We did not completely eliminate all the MSY positions because a couple of our grantees that have partnerships with colleges needed those for students filling those positions. In this current proposal we will be supporting stipended positions only and will have completely phased out EAO positions.

The second issue was specific to the type of information members were provided during recruitment. NCLR reviewed orientation material and made changes to what is presented so Members have a better idea of their commitment.

As noted in our GPR NCLR AmeriCorps grantees for the 2011-20112 continued to improve the job of filling their slots, however the program did not reach 100% enrollment, only 87.2. In the current

## Narratives

.year, we decided not to continue with the site that had the lowest recruitment and retention, and we instilled a policy that all positions must be filled by October 1st otherwise we will transfer them to sites who can fill the positions. This has increased the speed in filling slots tremendously, and is leading us into an upward trajectory in a better slot fill rate.

In regards to full time position fill rate, grantees have had more success in filling those slots above all others with a 90% fill rate in the 2011-2012 grant year. We expect this success to carry on into the proposed program.

In regards to the programs retention rate, and noted in the GPR, the program experienced a higher retention rate for the 2011-2012 program year, improving further in this area of compliance. Sites based this on a higher number of second and third year members and now fourth year serving in their corps. Third, these members took active roles in how the program functioned. By giving members an opportunity to invest in different parts of the program it increased the likely hood that they would want to finish their service.

Once we had completed the selection of the sub applicants that would be a part of the application, we filled out the consultation form that was created by each of the state commissions either online or fax. Most of these forms were found online (California, Texas, Maryland), and the other one was emailed to us (Illinois).

### Operating Sites and Member Service Sites

In Chicago, IL our Operating sites are: - Gads Hill Center, Calmecca Academy of Fine Arts and Dual Language, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Association House of Chicago. In California our operating sites are: San Diego, CA: MAAC Project; Los Angeles, CA: Youth Policy Institute and AltaMed; Oakland, CA: The Unity Council. In Texas: Austin, TX: Southwest Keys.

Process for selecting operating and service sites consisted of formulating a committee of individuals inside and outside of NCLR with varied knowledge of AmeriCorps and our proposed program design to read the applications, and score according to a point system assigned to various portions of the application. In addition to the scores, conference calls were held with the review committee to discuss the strengths, weaknesses and concerns they had when considering the applicant's ability to manage the program based on the information in the application. In addition included in the materials submitted in the application the most recent audit and financial survey were submitted for review to ensure that the proposed organizations were stable and secure enough to manage an AmeriCorps program.

In the instructions provided to the potential sub grantees - they were asked to answer several

## Narratives

questions on how they would implement, support, and promote the program. The score sheet that was attached to the applications for the review committee to grade assisted in determining how well the affiliate answered those questions. Points were assigned for quality, innovation, sustainability, quality of leadership, past performance, and community involvement.

Current relationship with the sites: Seven of the ten proposed sub grantees are current grantees therefore a program and funding relationship has been established with them since 2010, but for many of them, much longer.

Previous relationship with the site: All ten proposed sub grantees are Affiliates of NCLR and submit financial documents and programmatic documents in order to stay *in good standing* with NCLR. Many of the proposed sub grantees operate other programs of NCLR in areas of education, health, wealth building, workforce development and civic engagement.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

NCLR is requesting \$1,200,000 in Corporation funds a fixed amount grant that supports 96 MSY. This represent an average cost per MSY of \$12,500. This is \$500 below the maximum allowable cost per MSY or \$13,000. The average cost of \$12,500 per MSY is also lower than our current program average cost of \$12,568. NCLR and its sub grantees are aware that although the match requirements are different from a cost reimbursement grant they are prepared to cover the additional cost associated with supporting the grant. In addition to the funds requested from CNCS the program estimates an additional \$750,000 in supporting funds. NCLR and our sub grantees have secured and will secure the additional funds through collaborations with other partner agencies. Due to the success of the program partner agencies are open to partnering with our program and providing both in-kind and financial resources. Our program will also pursue support from state and local resources. Furthermore, all our program sites have extensive experience in raising funds and resources. From fee for service to fund raising campaigns our sites and programs will focus their efforts to raise the necessary funds for their programs.

Please list all sources of organizational funding and what percent the proposed AmeriCorps project represents in your budget: NCLR receives funds from a wide and diverse source of funders. There are too many to list but they include: The UPS foundation, The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, Pepsico, Wal-Mart, Bank of America, Wells Fargo. In addition to those Corporation and private funders we receive funds from Government sources that include the Corporation for National and Community Service, Department of Education, US Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban development, and US Department of Labor

## Narratives

The proposed AmeriCorps budget represents 2.5% of the total operational budget.

Over the last five years NCLR has received CNCS funds in the form of National Direct AmeriCorps funds and a onetime grant made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The NCLR AmeriCorps approach to tutoring and employability is a cost effective approach. Specific to our tutoring efforts 49 AmeriCorps Members or 49 MSY will provide tutoring to 1200 unduplicated students. The average cost in federal funds to tutor those tutees is \$510. Each tutee will receive a minimum of 20 hours of tutoring and the cost per hour is \$25. Furthermore, in past years our programs have exceeded their tutoring goal so that average cost could be lower as the number of service recipients increases. Adding this resource to our targeted area increases the opportunity for success among the students. All of our program sites are located in cities where resources are scarce for low income and at risk students. Additionally parents or student stakeholders do not have the resources to access for profit tutoring and educational services. By having AmeriCorps led tutoring services, as detailed in the evidence, this increases the academic success for tutees and increases their chances of graduating from high school. Compared to the cost of a for profit tutoring services or general education cost, i.e. teacher salaries the return on investment is much higher.

Similarly, 47 AmeriCorps Members or 47 MSY will provide employability services to 1600 unduplicated individuals over the course of the program year. The average cost in federal funds to provide services to recipients is \$367. AmeriCorps Member led financial literacy classes on average will last eight weeks and that translate to \$45 dollars a week to provide those services. Compared to the average salary cost for a program coordinator (\$39K) in a nonprofit the cost benefits have a high return on investment.

The proposed budget meets the needs of the proposed program and is more efficient. By pursuing a fixed amount grant the program ensures that the funds are used based on the ability for the program to enroll AmeriCorps Members. If a program does not enroll Members into those slots the program does not receive those funds. Grantee budgets have been created to support the efforts of AmeriCorps members in providing tutoring and employability services in the communities where they will serve. All budgets will support a program director/coordinator to oversee the program. Budgets will also cover program supplies that Members will use in supporting the program. Additionally, the budget is adequate in providing for member training. In addition to the federal funds sub grantees have secured in kind support from partners to provide training for the members. All sub grantees will cover all aspects of the back ground checks with their budgets. All Member support costs are also covered including health care

## Narratives

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

The NCLR LENS Project has demonstrated that tutoring efforts are having a positive impact on Latino students throughout the country. Over three quarters (76%) of students participating in the program have shown gains in literacy levels. The emphasis on individualized and small group tutoring has proven to be a successful strategy in meeting the literacy needs of Latino youth. Furthermore, with over 3,500 community volunteers mobilized for service, the NCLR LENS Project provides critical capacity-building support to meeting unmet needs in Latino communities. Moreover, the project has woven in parent engagement strategies to train and educate parents on how to be advocates for student success. The training of parents (in terms of numbers) across NCLR Affiliate sites varies greatly. This can be attributed, in part, to parent engagement being a relatively new focus of the initiative. NCLR LENS Project Directors suggested more professional development and training to successfully implement a strong parental involvement piece to the LENS Project. While research suggests that parental involvement leads to better student outcomes, it is critical for the NCLR LENS Project to examine program specific parent involvement efforts and their causal link to student performance.

### **Amendment Justification**

Not Applicable

### **Clarification Summary**

Not Applicable

### **Continuation Changes**

Not Applicable