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Executive Summary

28 AmeriCorps members will prepare low-income students for success in post-secondary education through academic and college preparation programming in Milwaukee, WI. At the end of the each year of this project, students will demonstrate improved academic performance in literacy and math, and will demonstrate increased preparation for higher education and careers through college admission and persistence. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$336,000 will be matched with \$1,000,000 in private contributions.

Rationale and Approach

A. NEED

Nationwide, only 8% of people from low-income backgrounds earn a college degree by age 24. In fact, students from upper-income families are ten times more likely to earn a college degree than those from low-income backgrounds (Postsecondary Education Opportunity). This disparity in college access and success has a powerful impact on both individual students' lives and their community's economic future, highlighting the need for solutions to prepare low-income students for success in post-secondary education.

The impact of post-secondary education on individual prosperity is striking. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, a college graduate will earn approximately \$1 million more over his/her lifetime than a high school graduate and will experience unemployment rates 30 percent lower than high school graduates. Among adult wage earners in Wisconsin in 2010, workers with bachelor's degrees had median earnings of \$44,534, compared with \$27,342 for high school graduates.

Post-secondary success is not only crucial for low-income students: our state's future prosperity depends on our ability to raise, attract, and retain college graduates. By 2018, 1.9 million Wisconsin jobs - 61% of all jobs in the state - will require some post-secondary training beyond high school (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce 2010). Degree attainment rates are not rising quickly enough to meet this projected need. It is critical that all Wisconsin students with the potential to succeed in college actually have the opportunity to attend and earn degrees.

Many Milwaukee high school students are in the demographic groups least likely to attend college: minority, first-generation, and low-income students. 85% of Milwaukee Public Schools students are minority students, and more than 80% receive free or reduced-price lunch. Upon high school graduation, only 21% of Milwaukee students report plans to attend a four-year college, compared to 50% of students statewide (Wisconsin DPI).

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While other factors certainly contribute to low-income students' low rates of college admission and graduation, lack of academic preparation for college can disadvantage students before their pursuit of higher education even begins. According to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) data, Milwaukee Public Schools students demonstrate significantly lower scores on the ACT, an exam commonly used to gauge academic preparation for college-level coursework. The average ACT score for Wisconsin students in 2012 was 22 (of 36 points possible). The average score for Milwaukee high school students was 15.9, placing many Milwaukee students at a disadvantage in the increasingly competitive college admissions process and indicating that they are not adequately prepared for academic success in college.

Given this need, College Possible provides free services targeted to low-income Milwaukee students, specifically around improving academic outcomes and preparing for success in post-secondary education. We do this through programming that combines academic readiness instruction with mentorship and guidance through college completion. See Section 1 B for program information.

B. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

College Possible's mission is to make college admission and success possible for low-income students through an intensive curriculum of consulting and support. The 28 full-time AmeriCorps members we are requesting are the heart and soul of that mission, serving low-income high school students, and following them through college.

AmeriCorps members lead in the delivery of College Possible's three main program functions: our high school program, our college program, and early preparation workshops for 9th and 10th graders. Each of these programs and member activities are described in more detail below. All AmeriCorps members have full-time (1,700 hours) service terms, ensuring that they deliver the high level of service needed to successfully support our students.

1. HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: AmeriCorps members ("Coaches") work with students over the course of their junior and senior years in high school in a series of activities using our copyrighted curriculum. Coaches lead after-school sessions at our partner high schools for groups of 10-15 low-income students, preparing them for college admission, meeting twice a week for two hours each session over the course of those two years. Coaches are available in the schools during the school day to work with students individually (during lunch hours and study periods), and use this time to build relationships and align program activities with school staff and other after-school program providers.

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Our intensive, 320-hour program is aimed at improving students' preparation for college and prospects for success, as described below:

*Understanding opportunities: Coaches introduce students to the advantages of college, provide resources for students to explore, and lead students on campus visits.

*Academic support and test preparation: We work to ensure that students are academically prepared for college and careers. Coaches deliver academic readiness programming that focuses on the topics covered on the ACT exam, a tool used to gauge both academic progress and readiness for college-level coursework. College Possible's curriculum reviews and reinforces the academic content found in the exam, especially on math and reading comprehension, and teaches test-taking strategies that help students best demonstrate their knowledge. Students receive one-on-one support as needed and take four full-length practice exams to prepare them for the real test.

*Application preparation: Coaches help students complete their college applications, provide intensive coaching on essays, and provide support in identifying and working with teachers to write recommendation letters.

*Financial aid consulting: Coaches give students intensive support identifying, pursuing, and applying for a wide range of financial aid, including state and federal aid and local and national scholarships.

2. COLLEGE PROGRAM: We also serve students who have completed our high school program who are either in college or hoping to enroll. College coaches develop strategies to reach students and help them find the resources they need to be successful in college, following a detailed curriculum.

*Summer bridge programming supports students from high school graduation through their fall enrollment. These activities ensure that students complete all the steps it takes to actually enroll and arrive on campus, and that they do not lose courage to take this big step!

*Coaches use a variety of technology platforms - everything from Facebook to text messages - to reach students on campus or wherever they are. These contacts are guided by a structured curriculum covering topics such as:

-Academics: building good study skills; finding a tutor; choosing a major

-Finances: finding a work-study position; reading a tuition statement; FAFSA

-Social/cultural: connecting on campus; dealing with family demands

*The "CP 2.0" initiative follows students who dropped out of college or never enrolled, working to identify and support students who are done with high school and want to be enrolled in college.

*Internship, job, scholarship, or other leadership opportunities are regularly shared with students to help strengthen their resumes and prepare for life after college.

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3. COLLEGE READINESS WORKSHOPS: AmeriCorps members lead a series of workshops that high school seniors in our program deliver to 9th and 10th grade students. These workshops help underclassmen understand the importance of preparing for college early in their high school career. The 9th and 10th grade students who attend the workshops see other students who attend their schools, live in their neighborhoods, and share their experiences. Junior and senior role models tell them, "I am going to college, and you can, too."

AmeriCorps members are a unique, highly effective means to solve the community problem that Milwaukee's low-income students face: lack of access and unpreparedness for educational opportunities. College Possible serves students who have the potential to go to college, but are not likely to get there without additional support. These students need a caring adult who can help them navigate the complicated application process, and a mentor who will encourage them to believe that they can in fact make it to and through college - an ideal role for AmeriCorps members.

Members are themselves recent college graduates; many of them are people of color and/or first generation college graduates, so are especially relatable mentors for our students. Furthermore, the structure of AmeriCorps attracts idealistic, energetic, and talented people who are fully committed to serving the community. The constant, unwavering support of a coach telling them "you can do it" is a vital resource that students need. As one student said, "College Possible completely changed my views about college and helped me to understand that it's an actual option for someone like me and to keep hope. I love College Possible and my coach for everything we stand for and the stereotypes we're breaking. I aspire to give back to College Possible once I graduate from college."

As the first program in the country to apply AmeriCorps members to the issue of college access, we have seen nation-leading results for students while running a cost-effective program that highly leverages federal funding to achieve broad community support. The structure and brand of AmeriCorps allows us to attract talented people whose costs are funded in part through the grant. The federal funding itself provides a powerful lever to seek support from private donors to match those funds. Our strategic use of volunteers through AmeriCorps increases our capacity to serve students and grow to scale more quickly, creating a much larger impact on the community's education needs than we otherwise could.

A June 2011 Harvard study confirms the effectiveness of AmeriCorps members in this role: College Possible students were more than twice as likely to enroll in college as a similar set of peers who lacked a College Possible coach to guide them.

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C. EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Through the program activities described in Section 1 B, AmeriCorps members serving with College Possible carry out interventions that are evidence-based, supported by research-based findings and practices in three key areas:

1. **ACADEMIC/STANDARDIZED TEST PREPARATION:** Perna (2000) finds that in addition to scores on standardized tests, test preparation itself is strongly predictive of four-year college enrollment. Buchmann et al. (2006) find that college admission test score increases are associated with a higher probability of enrollment in any four-year college or university, with a 99% confidence interval. ACT's own research of scores matched against actual grades earned by students later in college, suggests standardized test score increases directly relate to a student's readiness to succeed academically in specific first-year college courses (English composition, college algebra, introductory social science and biology).
2. **COLLEGE APPLICATION ASSISTANCE:** Roderick et al. (2008) highlight the anxiety students have about college application essays, highlighting the need to move beyond an 'information-only' model and provide more intensive support. Furthermore, Perna (2000) finds that, although getting help on college admission requirements does not significantly predict college enrollment, not receiving assistance with those requirements is a significant pitfall to enrolling in college.
3. **FINANCIAL AID AND FAFSA ASSISTANCE:** Bettinger et al. (2009) present evidence that simplifying the financial aid process increases college enrollment. Dynarski (1999) estimates that each \$1000 of grant aid received by a student increases their probability of college enrollment by 7%.

Independent evaluations of College Possible's results reinforce academic research and demonstrate the measurable community impact of our program:

ICF INTERNATIONAL, 2009: A validation study of student outcomes confirmed that the students served during the 2008-09 academic year saw: 1) growth in ACT test scores from pre- to post-test periods of 22% per student on average; and 2) a 98% college acceptance rate for the class of 2009.

AVERY, 2011: Harvard Kennedy School professor Dr. Christopher Avery conducted a historical analysis of College Possible, examining college enrollment data for more than 3,000 program applicants over three years and comparing college enrollment rates for students who were admitted to the program to those for a similar group of students who did not participate in the program. Dr. Avery found that College Possible students were more than 30 percentage points more likely to enroll in college than their peers, and more than twice as likely to be admitted to a four-year college. The results of this analysis strongly suggest positive program effects; a randomized controlled trial is now

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underway with the class of 2013.

This proposal seeks funding to support continued growth of our high school and college programs, allowing us to serve 2,600 high school students and 1,000 college students by the third year of the grant. Through interventions that are both evidence-based and evidence-informed, we expect to make a demonstrable impact on the number of low-income Milwaukee students who are academically prepared for college, earn college admission, and graduate from college. We will measure our impact through these national performance measures:

*ED5: The number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math, as measured by pre-test (baseline) and official ACT test scores. Year 1 Target: 150 of 300 students.

*ED10: The number of students who enroll in a 2- or 4-year college in the year following their senior year of high school. Year 1 Target: 160 of 225 students.

*ED11: The number of students who earn a 2- or 4-year college degree. Year 1 Target: 50 of 300 students.

Performance measure targets were determined with the intention of maintaining or improving on our top-of-field results from previous years of programming. We plan to maintain or improve our results while significantly expanding to meet the needs of even more low-income Milwaukee students. We will report on these measures through internal data collection and analysis, and through external data analysis and program evaluation when available.

Our past success gives us confidence that we can continue to significantly impact students' chances of earning admission, enrolling, and being successful in college. In 2011-12, College Possible Milwaukee served more than 1,000 low-income students and achieved the following outcomes, demonstrating our success by meeting and even exceeding our targets:

*High school juniors' ACT scores, showing academic performance in math and literacy, increased an average of 19% (Target: average increase of at least 9%).

*151 of 159 participating high school seniors (95%) were admitted to college (Target: 75 students).

*Additionally, nearly 80% of students enrolled in public and private colleges in WI and nationally.

D. MEMBER RECRUITMENT

We have great success with member recruitment, generating five or more applicants for each available AmeriCorps position. We strive to recruit members from traditionally underrepresented populations, reflecting the demographics of the students we serve: people who are low-income, of color, and/or who are among the first in their families to attend college. Our retention rate, as well as

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the results they are able to achieve, speak to our success in working with these populations. Nearly 30% of our members this year are people of color and 25% are first-generation college graduates; we are working to build on this diversity among AmeriCorps in the coming years. Many grew up in or attended college in the local community, giving them firsthand experience with community issues. We work to ensure that the opportunity to serve is open to all people, including veterans, those with disabilities, and opportunity youth who may be disconnected from other career opportunities. We also hope to intentionally recruit College Possible program alumni once they graduate from college; their experience as program participants could make them highly effective AmeriCorps members.

In order to maximize the number of people who hear about AmeriCorps opportunities with College Possible, we take the following approach to recruitment:

***RAISING AWARENESS:** When spreading the word about our AmeriCorps positions, we use many different tactics: flyers posted around Milwaukee; information sessions at local colleges and job fairs; emails and print newsletter announcements to our database of more than 6,000 people, as well as to college list-servs; newspaper advertisements; postings on the AmeriCorps website; and job descriptions posted on websites such as Idealist.org.

***RECRUITMENT PARTNERS:** Public and private colleges and universities both locally and across the country remain key recruitment partners. In addition, we work through different local community organizations, such as the YMCA/YWCAs; through national entities such as African American fraternal and sorority groups; and with national service organizations like Teach for America.

***PARTICIPATION FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS:** We have students on college campuses throughout the country, and they are wonderful recruiters for our program. They know the value of our services and have a great understanding of what makes an effective AmeriCorps member.

E. MEMBER TRAINING

We are committed to training our AmeriCorps members in the specific skills required to deliver college preparation services, as well as providing personal development training that will help our AmeriCorps members prepare for future professional opportunities and become better overall citizens. Our leadership team is dedicated to overseeing the AmeriCorps member experience, including member development, training, and supervision.

ORIENTATION: AmeriCorps members will participate in at least 10 days of orientation, including a retreat that helps build the esprit de AmeriCorps that is a key sustaining factor throughout the year. Topics covered during this orientation include:

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*What is AmeriCorps?; What is Service?; College Possible organizational history

*AmeriCorps civic engagement activities, prohibited activities & compliance

*Demographics of Milwaukee/Wisconsin; No Child Left Behind; Educational Achievement Gap; introductions to key communities we serve (e.g., Hmong culture; Latino culture)

*College Admissions 101; Financial Aid 101; lesson planning; setting the tone in the classroom

*Team-building activities; social activities led by returning AmeriCorps members; leadership opportunities

ONGOING TRAINING: In addition to this extensive orientation, all AmeriCorps members will come together at our headquarters every Friday. AmeriCorps members will participate in trainings that are specific to the mission of the organization, relevant to their positions, or focused on developing the members as citizens. As we intensify the focus on academic readiness in our high school program, we are adding additional training for AmeriCorps members on this topic.

A general timeline for training is as follows:

Fall: Teaching/leading a classroom; college admissions; visiting colleges and attending college fairs; preparing letters of recommendation; working in schools

Winter: Academic readiness and ACT preparation; financial aid and scholarships; citizenship and government; teaching/leading a classroom

Spring: Preparing resumes; transitioning from high school to college; citizenship; life after AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps members are also trained and regularly review the prohibited activities for AmeriCorps participants. We hold a session in orientation focused on this topic; as a wrap-up to orientation, members prepare presentations for each other on all AmeriCorps rights and responsibilities including a review of prohibited activities. We regularly revisit this topic throughout the year to ensure that AmeriCorps members remain aware of and adhere to the rules regarding prohibited activities.

F. MEMBER SUPERVISION

In order to achieve excellent results for students and run a strong AmeriCorps program, we are very attentive to member supervision. College Possible hires Program Coordinators who each directly supervise 6-8 AmeriCorps members, meet with them individually on a bi-weekly basis to observe their work with students and provide feedback and support, conduct member evaluation and trainings, and help lead member recruitment and orientation. They assist in preparing training sessions, service projects, recognition activities, and other events, as well as preparing reports and other paperwork

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required to maintain our AmeriCorps grant. This intensive management structure allows us to ensure that our AmeriCorps members have a fulfilling experience and achieve outstanding results - as evidenced by our student success rates and our ability to retain AmeriCorps members through their term and, in many cases, for a second year.

We seek Program Coordinators who have had significant work experience prior to joining our team; ideally, who have experience with AmeriCorps and have previously supervised teams. All new program staff complete an orientation and training process that introduces them to the organization; covers supervisory and project management topics; and reviews our performance goals. They also attend separate trainings that review AmeriCorps program management requirements, and shadow experienced program staff in observing sessions, checking in with AmeriCorps members, and leading Friday meetings and trainings.

Our Program Manager provides oversight related to AmeriCorps member management, supported by our national office. This includes training, support, and accountability in managing member files, ensuring compliance with AmeriCorps regulations including prohibited activities, and providing a positive experience for our members.

G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

We are committed to ensuring that all AmeriCorps members who serve with us have a powerful experience that produces measurable community impact, builds organizational capacity, and leads to continued civic participation and a life-long spirit of service. This commitment aligns with Serve Wisconsin's 2013-15 State Service Plan objective of enhancing AmeriCorps member experience, with the ultimate goal of creating a sustainable service solution for our community around education.

College Possible provides a powerful member experience through:

- a. Empowerment to solve community problems: AmeriCorps members are ideally suited to address a key community need, and are uniquely effective in doing so, which in itself creates a powerful experience for members. When members are able to dedicate themselves for a year to a problem where they can see a direct impact on the results, it creates a sense of power and efficacy that is energizing, and carries through to their future career plans.
- b. Significant responsibility and autonomy: College Possible AmeriCorps members are immediately vested with significant responsibility for helping a group of students prepare for college or continue through to graduation. They take the lead in planning events, connecting with high school and college admissions staff, and serving as community spokespersons for the organization and for their students.

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c. Member recognition: We have a number of one-time and ongoing activities to recognize our AmeriCorps members' achievements.

*An end-of-term celebration recognizes the accomplishments of the team and individual members, and thanks and honors members for their commitment to service.

*An "AmeriCorps Member of the Year" award is given each year to the one or two most outstanding AmeriCorps member(s). This award is based on the nominations of other AmeriCorps members and is usually in conjunction with public recognition such as a mayoral proclamation.

*Frequently, we offer rewards or incentives for our AmeriCorps members. Examples of this include appreciation breakfasts and an ice cream social to recognize team success in meeting new goals.

*Each week, AmeriCorps members can recognize each other for an "Idealistic Leader" award. These nominations are read aloud in front of the entire team, publicly recognizing the ways in which AmeriCorps members exemplified College Possible's Idealistic Leader traits and the spirit of service.

*Whenever possible, AmeriCorps members are featured in our media coverage.

We provide multiple structured opportunities for members to reflect throughout their term of service. Supervisors prompt AmeriCorps members to discuss their experience at bi-weekly check-ins, and the service year is book-ended with overarching conversations about service. During orientation, members talk about their decision to dedicate a year of their life to service. At our mid-year retreat, members reflect on their service experience to date and set personal goals for the remainder of their term of service. At the end of the year, members are asked to write about their service year and what they have learned from it; they share these reflections with each other at our year-end celebration. College Possible Milwaukee hosts both AmeriCorps and VISTA members, and is proud to collaborate with other national and community service programs supported by the Corporation. We have hosted and attended joint trainings with other youth-serving AmeriCorps members, and we participate in statewide efforts with other AmeriCorps/VISTA programs whenever possible. We also encourage our AmeriCorps members to take advantage of opportunities to connect and collaborate with other AmeriCorps members through technology, including webinars, social media, online discussions of service, and sharing program resources and best practices electronically. As a program, we regularly participate in National AmeriCorps Week activities. Members of our AmeriCorps plan and participate in multiple organization-wide service projects during the course of the year, reinforcing the connection to national service and lifelong civic engagement.

Our training and preparation efforts are built to foster a connection and identity as AmeriCorps members. Orientation and training for members is divided into four main strands (see Section 1 E);

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one strand of training is focused on AmeriCorps. From a session in the first day of orientation called "What is Service?" to regular updates throughout the year about policy related to CNCS programs, members are highly attuned to their relationship with AmeriCorps and gain a sense of pride in "getting things done for America."

H. VOLUNTEER GENERATION

College Possible strategically leverages volunteers to increase our organizational capacity to meet our mission, greatly expanding the impact of our work. The first source of volunteers who help to expand our reach in the community is our local board of directors (see Section 2 A for further information about board members). In addition, we also have many people who volunteer their time to help increase our staff knowledge and capacity. These volunteers are recruited through personal networks of our AmeriCorps and staff members and through our growing network of community partners.

College personnel, career advisors, school counselors and staff, and cultural experts offer their time and expertise to help our AmeriCorps members prepare for and understand the responsibilities they will undertake throughout the course of the year. Our cross-sector collaboration with these volunteers builds relationships in the community and increases our ability to achieve program objectives.

We use volunteers in many ways, but are most proud of our efforts to engage students themselves in volunteerism. We do this for two main reasons. First, we want students to recognize their own power to serve others, not just to be recipients of service. Second, we hope students will see service to the community as an opportunity to give back to a community that has supported them. Through this process, we hope to help students develop an ethic of service that will carry throughout their lifetimes. Every year, we conduct two major community service efforts with our students: one massive effort such as park clean-up or disaster preparedness outreach, and one doing various improvement projects at each of the high schools we serve. These efforts are built into the College Possible curriculum and reflect the importance we place on volunteer generation.

Another volunteer recruitment effort involving students is the presentation of college readiness workshops, delivered by College Possible seniors to 9th and 10th graders within the high schools we serve. These workshops not only help our students learn to become engaged citizens, they also advance our organization's mission: to help low-income students prepare for and earn admission to college. College readiness workshops engage seniors in more than five hours of service.

AmeriCorps members play an important role in volunteer recruitment and management, directly contributing to Serve Wisconsin's objective of developing organizational capacity to engage volunteers

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(2013-15 State Service Plan). They plan volunteer opportunities, publicize them to participants, and provide guidance and training to carry out the projects. Their work ensures that volunteer opportunities are carefully planned and coordinated for maximum impact, while also providing a positive and meaningful service experience for participants. We ensure that volunteers are not recruited for or engaged in prohibited or unallowable activities by thoroughly educating AmeriCorps members on these regulations; AmeriCorps members then have the knowledge needed to plan and manage volunteer activities appropriately. See Sections 1 E and 2 C for further information on how we ensure compliance on prohibited activities throughout College Possible.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

In addition to the actions described in Section 1 G to promote AmeriCorps identity among AmeriCorps members, College Possible demonstrates an organization-wide commitment to AmeriCorps identification. College Possible has a wide reach in the community, with AmeriCorps members interacting with high schools, colleges and other community organizations. This breadth of visibility gives us many opportunities to promote our AmeriCorps partnership. AmeriCorps and state commission logos are featured prominently on our communication materials (website, newsletters, etc.), on College Possible clothing and nametags, and in our offices. Our recruitment materials for potential AmeriCorps members describe in detail the AmeriCorps connection and commitment of our organization. We often leverage our community visibility and our active social media networks to share AmeriCorps news and promote our AmeriCorps affiliation, especially during events such as National AmeriCorps Week. We generated media attention to promote AmeriCorps and the College Possible AmeriCorps experience in two Milwaukee news outlets for AmeriCorps Week 2012.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

College Possible's mission is to make college admission and success possible for low-income students through an intensive curriculum of coaching and support. The organization was founded in Minnesota in 2000 and expanded to Milwaukee in 2008. Since 2008, College Possible Milwaukee has grown from serving 60 students at three local high schools to serving more than 2,000 students in high school and college. In this time we have worked to match our programmatic growth with growing management expertise, community support, and financial investment in our work. Our management structure includes outstanding, experienced management staff overseeing our program in Milwaukee. They include:

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Kelly Schaer, Program Manager. Kelly is a licensed school counselor and has worked in several Milwaukee high schools. Her master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is in educational psychology with an emphasis on school counseling. Prior to becoming a school counselor, Kelly served as a volunteer with Lutheran Volunteer AmeriCorps. Her role with the program is to ensure that program management, record-keeping, and activities are in compliance with all federal and state requirements; supervise and provide support for program staff; oversee member recruitment and orientation, training sessions, service projects, recognition activities, and other events; and develop program objectives and evaluate the AmeriCorps program.

Aileen Aragonés & Jessica Eilbert, High School Program Coordinators. Aileen is a former College Possible AmeriCorps member, having served one term in the Twin Cities and one term as a founding AmeriCorps member in Milwaukee. After her time as an AmeriCorps member with College Possible, Aileen earned a master's degree in educational policy and leadership from Marquette University. Jessie has completed two terms of service through AmeriCorps: one with City Year Rhode Island, and one with College Possible Twin Cities. She holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Simpson College. As former AmeriCorps members, Aileen and Jessie are able to direct the replication of the College Possible culture, work ethic, and standard of success for current AmeriCorps members.

Staci Hamilton, College Program Coordinator. Staci holds a master's degree from Marquette University in educational policy and leadership, with a focus in College Student Personnel Administration. Staci began her career as an admissions counselor at the University of St. Thomas and has experience in multiple areas of student affairs, including residence life, student orientation, and financial aid.

Program Coordinators' responsibilities are described in Section 1 F, above.

Edie Turnbull, Executive Director. Edie came to College Possible following an extensive career in communications and marketing, government relations, strategic planning and fundraising at Wisconsin-based organizations. She earned her B.A. from Marquette University and master's from the University of Iowa. As executive director, Edie is responsible for the overall operations of the organization in Milwaukee, including program management and compliance, fundraising, and collaboration and relationship-building with partners and supporters.

In addition to these Milwaukee-based staff, the program is supported by key staff in our national office who are experts in AmeriCorps grant administration and member recruitment. This includes: Jim McCorkell, Chief Executive Officer and College Possible Founder. Jim has a master's degree in public administration from the Harvard Kennedy School, where he studied nonprofit management

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and strategic organizational development. Prior to founding College Possible, Jim worked with City Year in Boston, directing their expansion strategy.

Traci Kirtley, Director of Programming & Evaluation. Traci has a master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School, where she studied education policy and organizational management. She has worked for a government contracting firm and has extensive experience managing government contracts, and has overseen College Possible's AmeriCorps grant management, record-keeping, and compliance efforts since 2004.

Our organization is led by a diverse, talented Board of Directors who provide leadership and oversight for our efforts. Two board members are former participants in our program. They ground our program in the realities and needs of the students we serve. College Possible Milwaukee also has a local board that helps identify funding sources, build relationships, and increase community awareness of College Possible. Local board members represent major law firms, education and youth-serving agencies, retired corporate executives, and other community leaders.

College Possible has 11 years of prior experience administering AmeriCorps grants, including three years as a Serve Wisconsin grantee (2009-12). Our organization's total CNCS support comes in the form of AmeriCorps State and National grants and VISTA placements. In 2012-2013, 24 AmeriCorps members and two VISTA members serve with College Possible Milwaukee.

The AmeriCorps program is the foundation of our work at College Possible; we do not run any other programs beyond our AmeriCorps college access and success efforts. Because of the importance of AmeriCorps to our organization, proper management of our program is a top organizational priority. College Possible has received high marks for program performance and management, and we work continuously to ensure compliance and responsiveness to recommended changes.

B. SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure that our program has maximum impact in the community and is around as long as our services are needed, we take a number of steps to be sustainable.

Our first step toward sustainability is ensuring that we have diverse funding sources. College Possible is able to leverage four private sector dollars for every dollar of government support we receive. Since our launch in Milwaukee in 2008, we have identified funding partnerships that have provided adequate revenue to cover our growing budgets each year as we grew student services. Our mission is one that resonates strongly with a broad audience of constituents: from corporate partners dedicated to workforce development to individuals compelled by issues of equality in education. Investment in College Possible has remained strong even as charitable giving has become increasingly unpredictable

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in the current economy. Our revenue plan includes continuing to build a diversified portfolio of support from private foundations, corporations and individuals.

College Possible is committed to raising private dollars to support the service activities and initiatives that make our programming so effective. College Possible was founded entirely on private-sector support and has built a strong support base over a number of years, demonstrating the long-term financial sustainability of its model. College Possible Milwaukee has secured organizational funding from numerous corporate funders, including Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, Northwestern Mutual Foundation, USA Funds, and Brady Corporation. Our private foundation funders include the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, Helen Bader Foundation, and many local family foundations. A growing percentage of our organization's funding comes from individual donors. We project that local support from corporate, foundation, and individual donor bases will continue to grow as we create partnerships with new funders and build a stronger presence in the community. Given these varied funding streams, our proposed AmeriCorps project represents roughly 25% of our 2013-14 organizational budget.

Our relationships in the community also contribute to our sustainability. Community stakeholders and partners include:

LOCAL PARTNER HIGH SCHOOLS: College Possible has established crucial partnerships with the ten high schools we currently serve. These schools do not have the capacity to provide intensive college preparatory programming to all students on their own; College Possible brings expertise, curriculum and dedicated staff into school buildings to help greater numbers of students access college. Schools help our organization recruit eligible students for the program and provide office space for coaches working in the school, as well as classroom space for after school sessions. We have established strong partnerships with school administration, counselors and staff that enable us to work within these schools to provide services to our students.

LOCAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES: College Possible prepares diverse students for college, creating a competitive applicant pool for colleges to review, and helps colleges understand what students need to be successful once enrolled, thus helping colleges shape policies that support low-income and first generation student success. More than 20 Wisconsin colleges have hosted campus visits and student panels for hundreds of our Milwaukee high school students over the past three years. These visits have enabled our students to find colleges and programs that best fit their career goals and to make connections with college representatives.

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS: College Possible often partners with local youth-serving

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organizations by presenting college preparation workshops to their participants. We work with a variety of organizations, including other college access programs, to reduce duplication of services and maximize overall impact for students. Through these relationships, College Possible Milwaukee is part of a pipeline of support for students, from early childhood through college completion.

We are well integrated into the Milwaukee nonprofit sector and have taken a leadership role in multi-organization educational efforts with federal elected officials. We are a key contributor to metro-wide strategic efforts to improve education like that of the Talent Dividend and Milwaukee Succeeds, the local Strive Network partnership. College Possible is a member of Milwaukee Succeeds' collaborative action network developing plans for their K-12 Academic Success focus area. Our program goals align directly with the initiative's college and career academic readiness outcomes; College Possible is playing a key role in helping the broader community move the needle on educational achievement.

LOW-INCOME STUDENTS: College Possible students and their families are crucial stakeholders in our programming, so we take multiple steps to ensure that they are involved in planning and implementing our programming. We solicit student feedback via suggestion/evaluation forms at the beginning and end of every school year. We review these forms carefully, and we often incorporate our students' thoughtful ideas into our planning to improve the effectiveness of our program.

C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

College Possible takes compliance with AmeriCorps regulations very seriously and holds all members of our team accountable for knowing and abiding by these regulations. To prepare supervisors for their monitoring role and to ensure compliance, we take the following steps:

*College Possible holds training sessions for all new program staff to cover all AmeriCorps regulations and review organizational policies and procedures related to program management. They also receive training and hard copy summaries of prohibited activities within AmeriCorps, as well as file checklists to ensure that we are collecting and holding all required member management documents.

*College Possible has a member management manual, available electronically and in hard copy to all program staff responsible for member management. We conduct regular member file audits and internal time sheet audits to ensure that we are able to detect, address, and prevent compliance issues. If noncompliance or risk factors are found, we have an escalating disciplinary system that ultimately would result in removal from a program management position should these issues not be resolved.

*While members may serve at sites around the city, program staff regularly visit members in those sites to check in and observe their service activities. During these visits program staff are able to observe member compliance with their position descriptions as well as with AmeriCorps regulations.

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DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE: After each Serve Wisconsin site monitoring visit, we have made changes to our management processes in response to their feedback, increasing our organization's compliance and efficiency in managing AmeriCorps members. Our actions have been effective: our 2011-12 Serve Wisconsin review was clean, showing no compliance issues or risk factors.

ENROLLMENT: In 2011-12, our last full year of program operation, we enrolled 100% of our 24 AmeriCorps slots. In fact, for all three years of our Serve Wisconsin program grant, College Possible Milwaukee achieved 100% enrollment.

RETENTION: College Possible Milwaukee's member retention for 2011-12, our last full year of program operation, was 95% (19 of 20 members). We had one member who did not complete her term of service: she took a job and moved out of state to help support her family during financial hardship. To prevent similar situations from happening again, we have placed renewed emphasis on the commitment of a term of service during our member recruitment and orientation processes, as well as member monitoring and openness with supervisors to help address situations like this without ending a term of service early. In total, College Possible Milwaukee achieved a 96.7% member retention rate for the three years of our most recent Serve Wisconsin grant.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

The attached budget and related materials demonstrate that we are committed to providing a budget to fully support the proposed program design at a cost per MSY of \$12,000 - a decrease from our current MSY cost of \$13,000. Knowing the importance of leveraging scarce AmeriCorps resources, we are willing to take this reduction in funding and commit ourselves to increasing our share of costs from private funders. In addition, we propose to expand our reach even with this reduction in federal funding support: we will nearly double the number of students we serve, growing from serving 2,000 high school and college students in 2012-13, to serving more than 3,500 high school and college students by year three of this grant cycle (2015-16).

Our total budget for our AmeriCorps program in 2013-14 will be roughly \$1,300,000. Our request for this AmeriCorps proposal totals \$336,000 (about 25% of the program cost); this amount was determined by reviewing our private sector funding potential; recognizing the need to carefully steward AmeriCorps resources, we felt we could push ourselves to cover more of our program's costs, including the cost of criminal history checks and FBI checks, through private sector fundraising. To support the project, we plan to raise the remaining \$1,000,000 from non-Corporation sources. Our organization has a diverse base of non-federal support, with both cash and in-kind contributions coming from a variety of private, non-profit, and public sector sources. In 11 years of AmeriCorps

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grants, including three as a Serve Wisconsin grantee, our fundraising strategy has enabled us to consistently significantly exceed the Corporation's match requirements each year; we are confident that we can continue to do this in the coming year and into the foreseeable future.

Non-federal sources of support that we have been able to secure include:

*Corporate foundations: Corporate foundations have donated nearly \$1,400,000 to College Possible Milwaukee (about 65% of all funds raised).

*Private foundations: College Possible Milwaukee has raised nearly \$670,000 from private foundations (about 32% of all funds raised).

*Individual donors: To date, we have raised more than \$70,000 from individual donors and are working to increase this base of support.

*In-kind donations: Local businesses have donated office supplies, furniture, food, beverages, and resources to support program efforts.

We plan to secure additional funding commitments from each of these sources to support our program as it grows to scale. We believe that we are a model AmeriCorps program in terms of the results we obtain and the resources we secure to meet the costs of achieving this level of quality.

We will raise the additional funding required through fundraising strategies including:

*Increased funding requests from existing supporters based on the aggressive growth plan outlined that will serve more students.

*Development of a prospective funder list to identify new institutional donors.

*Securing challenge grants to encourage new and increased donations.

*Holding a series of "friendraisers" and fundraiser events hosted by local board members and other key supporters that will help increase our individual donor pool.

Our program is a cost-effective approach for addressing the community need for college access and success services for low-income students. Staffing makes up the majority of program costs, but our use of AmeriCorps members to staff the program and directly serve students makes this expense more cost effective. Other program costs are minimal or are offset by in-kind contributions (teaching materials, etc.). Many of the overhead costs associated with this program are eliminated or minimized through our partnerships with local high schools: they allow us to work within their infrastructure (use space in schools for programming, etc.). Our program is also cost effective through our structure as a national organization, with headquarters in Minnesota's Twin Cities and a growing network of local site programming, including in Milwaukee. This structure allows us to share management expenses, such as accounting and auditing, communication services, and information technology,

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across the organization, making these services more cost effective for our site.

Other organizations also work to address gaps in college access for low-income students, including federal TRIO programs, state-run GEAR UP programs, and nonprofit organizations. While these programs have shown some success, they either do not offer the intensity necessary to achieve success for students or cannot offer the cost-efficiency to do so at scale. College Possible can provide this programming at one-seventh the cost of similar federally-funded programs. By strategically leveraging AmeriCorps members, College Possible outperforms similar organizations in results and cost-effectiveness, and, as a result, is able to have a powerful impact on the community. This makes our program a sound investment for the Corporation and a cost-effective way to provide Milwaukee students with the educational supports that will help them succeed.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

During this grant cycle, we will conduct an evaluation of the impact of AmeriCorps service on members' future plans, specifically seeking information about whether members are more likely to participate in the education field or the non-profit sector than they were prior to their service. Utilizing a pre-post design, we will investigate future plans of members; this will be followed by data collection on post-service activities of these members. We will investigate the influence of different factors (e.g., demographics, field of study, etc.) to see if these have an influence on outcomes. This evaluation will initially be conducted internally; dependent on initial results, we may engage an external evaluator to conduct further detailed analysis and provide publishable findings.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A