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Executive Summary

Experience Corps, a 501 © (3) organization affiliated with AARP, is proposing to implement a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in Chicago, Illinois (Illinois Opportunity #2R) beginning July 1, 2013. Experience Corps's Chicago RSVP Program will recruit, train, and place 500 (80% of target provided by CNCS) unduplicated volunteers, who are 55 and older, by the third year of program operations. Building on its evidence-based model and expertise in engaging older adult volunteers, Experience Corps will address the Primary Focus Area of Education to improve educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children. There is consensus across the education community that it is critically important for children to read at grade level by the end of third grade. Research has demonstrated the correlation between a student's reading ability at this juncture and his or her subsequent academic success. On the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading exam, 82 percent of 4th graders in Chicago were not reading at the "proficient" level and 52 percent were reading at the "below basic" level. On the Reading portion of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), 38 percent of 3rd graders fell below the standard. To meet this need, by the end of year three, 500 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve as follows: 425 will serve directly in schools (volunteer stations) providing literacy tutoring and mentoring to 6,375 students. These volunteers will provide over 102,000 hours of service to the community. Of the students being served in year three, 6,375 (100%) will complete the program, and 3,825 (60%) of students will have improved academic performance in literacy. 25 volunteers will serve in capacity building roles, helping to recruit and manage volunteers. 50 volunteers will serve at volunteer stations meeting other community needs. Over a three year period, RSVP volunteers will serve approximately 13,830 K-3 students in the Chicago Public Schools, meeting a critical community need of improving students' academic performance in literacy while strengthening school communities through the presence of caring, well-trained, older adult volunteers.

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Strengthening Communities

Experience Corps, a 501 © (3) organization that is affiliated with AARP, is proposing to implement a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in Chicago, Illinois (Illinois Opportunity #2R) beginning July 1, 2013. Experience Corps's Chicago RSVP Program will recruit, train, and place 500 (80% of target provided by CNCS) unduplicated volunteers, who are 55 and older, by the third year of program operations. Building on its evidence-based model and expertise in engaging older adult volunteers, Experience Corps will address the Primary Focus Area of Education to improve educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children. Over a three year period, RSVP volunteers will serve approximately 13,830 K-3 students in the Chicago Public Schools, meeting a critical community need of improving students' academic performance in literacy while strengthening school communities through the presence of caring, well-trained, older adult volunteers. Community needs: There is consensus across the education community that it is critically important for children to read at grade level by the end of third grade. Research has demonstrated the correlation between a student's reading ability at this juncture and his or her subsequent academic success. According to The National Research Council, "academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of 3rd grade. A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school." In 2010, The Annie E. Casey Foundation released the report Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. It documents the millions of American children who reach fourth grade without learning to read, a phenomenon most pronounced among low-income children in high-need schools. The report describes effective methods for building early reading proficiency, including providing children with high-quality learning opportunities. Despite our nation's efforts to build reading skills, the need for effective early reading intervention persists. Between 2007 and 2011, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grade 4

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reading scores across the country remained unchanged. In many of the communities served by Experience Corps, students performed well below the national average. The Casey Foundation report asserts: "If current trends hold true, 6.6 million low-income children will be at increased risk of failing to graduate from high school on time because they won't meet NAEP proficiency in reading by the end of third grade."

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) are working tirelessly to provide the education and support young people need to become proficient readers. Even with these efforts, on the 2011 NAEP reading exam, 82 percent of 4th graders in Chicago were not reading at the "proficient" level and 52 percent were reading at the "below basic" level. On the Reading portion of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), 38 percent of 3rd graders in Chicago fell below the standard. Further, CPS has not meet Adequate Yearly Progress, which measures student performance on standardized tests in reading and math (as well as graduation and attendance rates), for the past seven years. Given poor student performance in reading, failure to meet AYP, and a high school drop-out rate hovering around 40 percent, the need for intensive early reading intervention programs in Chicago is critical.

A wide body of research has established the connection between poverty and poor literacy skills. The average child living below the poverty line has limited access to parental time and attention and to pro-literacy materials and activities including games, learning toys, and books. As a result, they often enter school with a vocabulary of only 5,000 words. By comparison, children who grow up in a language-rich environment enter school with a vocabulary of 20,000 words. Experience Corps serves schools with significant numbers of low-income children whose test scores and literacy proficiency rates are below state standards and No Child Left Behind benchmarks. In 2011, 86 percent of students in Chicago Public Schools were low-income and nearly 16 percent had Limited English Proficiency. The child poverty rate in Chicago was 32 percent between 2009-2010, while the national child poverty rate in 2010 was 21.6. These statistics provide further indication of the need for evidence-based

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programs, such as Experience Corps, to help children achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade, setting a strong foundation for long-term academic and career success. By engaging senior volunteers in service to academically struggling students, Experience Corps will harness the talent and experience of older adults to meet this critical community need.

Experience Corps's Proven Approach: Independent research has proven that Experience Corps's approach improves reading skills, increases program attendance, and helps create a positive school climate, while enhancing the lives of older Americans. Experience Corps has been evaluated by Washington University in St. Louis, Johns Hopkins University, Public/Private Ventures, American Institutes for Research, and Policy Studies Associates. The most recently published study of the impact of Experience Corps on high-need students, and the one most relevant to the impact our RSVP volunteers can have in our Primary Focus Area, is one conducted by Washington University in St. Louis, with Mathematica Policy Research, to measure the one-year effect of the Experience Corps 1:1 tutoring on specific literacy skills for first through third grade students. The Washington University evaluation is one of the largest studies of a community-based tutoring program conducted in the past 10 years. The U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse recognized the study as "consistent with What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards," and as a "well-implemented randomized controlled trial." The study showed that:

1. Experience Corps works for students across a wide spectrum of abilities. Twenty-five percent of the students studied spoke English as a second language and half of them tested at or below the 16th percentile (nationwide) in reading.
2. In a single school year, students with Experience Corps tutors made over 60% more progress in learning two critical reading skills than similar students not served by the program, including statistically significant gains over the academic year on reading comprehension and sounding out new words. Experience Corps tutors delivered similarly significant results for students regardless of gender,

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ethnicity, grade, classroom behavior or English proficiency.

3. As an intervention, the Experience Corps program compares to a smaller class size. Students with Experience Corps tutors get a boost in reading skills equivalent to the improvement they would show from being assigned to a classroom with 40% fewer children.

4. Teachers overwhelmingly rate the program as beneficial to students, and report that it represents little or no burden to them.

The Experience Corps program had statistically significant and substantively important effects on reading outcomes. The effect sizes associated with these gains are .10, .13, and .16, which are considered substantial effects. To better understand the impact of the Experience Corps program and to provide context, comparisons of the effect sizes were made to other types of reading interventions. Studies by experts at Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Public Health further demonstrate the benefits of the Experience Corps program both on academic progress for students and well-being of older adult volunteers. Researchers conducted random control studies to determine the impact of the Experience Corps program on children in grades K-3. Participating schools gained between 10 and 20 percentile points, whereas percentile ranks dropped from 4 to 6 percentile points among the schools that did not participate. The study also confirmed that classroom behavior improved, and teachers and principals reported high satisfaction with the Experience Corps program. Using this proven model, Experience Corps's RSVP program will engage volunteers to use their time and talent to meet the need to improve reading skills among K-3rd graders in Chicago.

Description of Service: Since 1995, Experience Corps has demonstrated the effectiveness of engaging older adults as community volunteers. With over 10,000 Americans reaching the age of sixty every day, older adults represent a powerful and expansive human resource. Older adults are seeking ways to engage in community solutions and RSVP provides them with the opportunity, training, and support to do so. Experience Corps works in partnership with schools and other service providers to

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provide meaningful service that is changing the lives of volunteers and the students, schools, and communities they serve.

Based on Experience Corps's evidence-based, proven intervention, RSVP volunteers will be engaged in small group tutoring of elementary school students; mentoring students who need additional support from a caring, committed adult; and providing classroom assistance. In accordance with our national standards, each student receiving the 1:1 intervention has, at a minimum, 35 literacy tutoring sessions per academic year. RSVP volunteers will commit to providing five to 12 hours of service per week to the same classroom so that they can build strong relationships with the students and teachers. The majority of each volunteer's time will be dedicated to tutoring individuals and small groups with the remaining time dedicated to mentoring and providing classroom support. Capacity building volunteers will serve in volunteer recruitment and support and implementing community outreach activities such as school book drives. No more than five percent of volunteers will be dedicated to capacity building activities.

RSVP volunteers will bring critical capacity to each school in which they serve. Volunteers boost the resources that schools have available, thereby increasing the individualized attention that each student receives. The program will also build the capacity of the local Chicago community by helping hundreds of older adults become more actively engaged and involved in the mission of national service and RSVP.

Volunteers are assigned to serve as tutors in classrooms and provide the one-to-one and small group intervention model, designed in conjunction with the needs of individual volunteer stations (schools) and volunteer interests and skills, which are determined in the application and screening process described below.

Plan to manage RSVP volunteers: With a history of managing volunteers who are 55 and older since 1995, and as an AmeriCorps grantee since 2001, Experience Corps is well-positioned to manage RSVP

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volunteers. The Chicago RSVP program volunteer management structure will include an RSVP Volunteer Engagement Specialist, who serves as Project Director, to oversee program design, implementation, and compliance; and three Volunteer Engagement Associates (VEAs) to provide RSVP volunteers with effective training, support, placement, and supervision. The VEAs ensure that volunteers receive adequate onsite supervision and support, maintain regular contact with volunteers and school personnel at each volunteer station, and oversee the completion of volunteer performance reviews.

At each volunteer station (a local elementary school), volunteers will be led by a Team Leader who runs monthly meetings, monitors timesheets, answers questions, serves as a liaison between volunteers and school staff, and provides additional support at each station. Team Leaders and the VEAs also work with teachers or instructional coaches on a regular basis to make sure that the program is running effectively.

Twice per year, the VEAs, in conjunction with teachers at the school or the Team Leader, will conduct a performance review of each volunteer, providing feedback about the effectiveness of their service and adequacy of their volunteer skills. Informal check-ins allow RSVP volunteers to discuss any challenges or problems they are having, and to develop plans to address them. On a monthly basis, the VEAs will lead team meetings at each volunteer station to answer questions, address issues, and consult with volunteers about their progress. Program staff will meet regularly to share program successes, challenges, and solutions. The Chicago RSVP staff will use a number of assessments (described below) to track volunteer and student progress. The information gathered is used to make adjustments in supervision and provide additional training, as needed.

Other Community Needs: In year one, Experience Corps will establish MOUs with other volunteer stations so that in year two and beyond, a part-time Volunteer Outreach staff member will be able to track, manage, and direct volunteers to service opportunities that meet other community needs. These

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will include food drives or providing meals to hungry seniors; and assisting low and moderate income individuals in filing their tax returns. These volunteer opportunities fall within the Healthy Futures and Economic Opportunity focus areas. While our Primary Focus Area is Education, we want to provide meaningful service opportunities to volunteers who have other interests and skills.

Meeting National Performance Measure Outputs and Outcomes: It is essential for children to reach reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Meeting this critical benchmark helps students succeed academically, graduate from high school and, longer-term, succeed in the workforce and other areas of productive adulthood. In Chicago, however, 82 percent of children fail to reach the proficient level by the end of the third grade. Experience Corps pairs struggling students with older adult volunteers who provide in-school literacy tutoring and support for an entire academic year. Tutoring sessions take place under the direction of classroom teachers and follow complimenting the school curriculum.

Highlights of the Experience Corps model include:

- * Students learn to recognize, read and, write letters and new words;
- * Students and volunteers read books aloud and ask questions that encourage textual analysis and foster higher levels of reading comprehension;
- * Students engage in follow-up activities that allow them to relate what is read to their own life experiences;
- * Volunteers track student academic progress and areas that need more attention; and
- * Volunteers work alongside teachers, building strong and trusting relationships with students.

Experience Corps will recruit, train, and place RSVP volunteers in a service activity that directly addresses this community need and the following National Performance Measure output and outcome:

Output ED2: number of students that complete CNCS-supported K-12 education program.

Outcome ED5: number of students with improved performance in literacy.

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In year one: 200 unduplicated RSVP will serve as follows:

190 will serve directly in schools (volunteer stations) providing tutoring and mentoring to 2,850 students. These volunteers will provide over 45,600 hours of service to the community. 10 volunteers will serve in capacity building roles, helping to recruit and manage volunteers.

In year two: 350 unduplicated RSVP will serve as follows:

307 will serve directly in schools (volunteer stations) providing tutoring and mentoring to 4,605 students. These volunteers will provide over 73,680 hours of service to the community.

18 volunteers will serve in capacity building roles, helping to recruit and manage volunteers. 25 volunteers will serve at volunteer stations meeting other community needs.

In year three: 500 unduplicated RSVP will serve as follows:

425 will serve directly in schools (volunteer stations) providing tutoring and mentoring to 6,375 students. These volunteers will provide over 102,000 hours of service to the community. Of the students being served in year three, 6,375 (100%) will complete the program, and 3,825 (60%) of students will have improved academic performance in literacy; 25 volunteers will serve in capacity building roles, helping to recruit and manage volunteers. 50 volunteers will serve at volunteer stations meeting other community needs.

By the end of year three, 13,830 students will have completed the CNCS-supported K-12 education program.

Service to veterans and/or military families: The Experience Corps RSVP program will serve children in the Chicago Public Schools in years one through three. According to the Department of Defense, there are approximately 88,500 veterans and 700 active duty personnel living in Chicago and the average military family in the area has one child. Because we will serve entire K-3 classrooms within each school, our service delivery should reach a similar number of veteran/military families as are seen in the general school population. In years two and three, we will add volunteer stations that

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meet other community needs, including tax preparation for low-income older adults and providing meals to the hungry. As we add new volunteer stations, we will emphasize outreach to veterans/military families through targeted outreach and partnerships with veteran-serving organizations.

Recruitment and Development

Experience Corps has a 17 year history of creating high-quality volunteer opportunities for older adults. The Experience Corps model has its roots in the "encore career" community and was created based on the belief that older adults have unparalleled skills and experience to share with subsequent generations. Our RSVP program will build on this tradition and provide volunteers with meaningful, rewarding service, primarily to high-need elementary school students and in other services that meet community needs. We will assess each volunteer's skills, abilities, and interests to ensure that we place them in a volunteer experience that is right for the individual. Our staff will work one-on-one with each volunteer to make sure that they are effectively placed in the community.

Volunteer Recruitment: Experience Corps's Chicago RSVP program will follow established procedures for recruitment and screening of volunteers that have proven successful since we began a CNCS program in 2001. Recruitment efforts are focused on engaging diverse groups of volunteers from the communities to be served. Our Chicago RSVP program will utilize community partners such as faith-based organizations, community associations, public housing resident associations, AARP's Illinois State Office, the Chicago Public Schools volunteer clearinghouse, and others to conduct community outreach. We utilize high-quality recruitment materials and online content to reach volunteers as well. Through these efforts, in other locations across the country, Experience Corps is able to recruit very diverse groups of volunteers that reflect the communities we serve. Nationwide, our volunteers are 68% African American, 28% White, and 84% female serving a student population that is 61% African American, 21% Latino, and 12% White. We plan to recruit a diverse corps of volunteers in

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Chicago that reflects the local demographics: 32 percent White; 29 percent Latino; 32 percent African American; and 5.5 percent Asian. We will also make a concerted effort to find RSVP volunteers who served in the program before it was relinquished. We will attempt to locate any rosters of former RSVP volunteers and invite them back into the program.

Once a community member has expressed interest in the program and filled out an application, Experience Corps's Chicago RSVP staff will conduct a basic eligibility screening including the requirement that potential volunteer possess a high school diploma or GED to serve in a school.

Potential volunteers are screened for their propensity to participate in a school-based literacy program and are required to submit to a mandatory criminal background check (National Sex Offender Public Registry, state criminal background check, and FBI background check). Potential volunteers are also asked to provide personal or professional references.

Volunteer Training: Experience Corps has established a training protocol for volunteers that effectively prepares them for service in an elementary school setting, ensures a quality experience for volunteers and outcomes for students, and supports strong volunteer retention. Once selected for the program, volunteers receive a total of 25 hours of pre- and in-service training that covers: orientation to RSVP and national service; Experience Corps's mission and programs; policies, procedures, and paperwork required; basic training in child development and early learning; academic enrichment including the five components of literacy; tools for behavior management in one-on-one and group settings; working with English Language Learners; communicating with teachers and school staff; and team-building. Once volunteers have been placed in a school, they receive additional orientation specific to the school community including behavior policies, a tour of the facility, and an introduction to teachers and staff. All volunteers will receive a handbook for easy reference during their term of service.

Pre-service training is supplemented by monthly in-service training as well as ongoing coaching at

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volunteer stations. In-service training enables volunteers to assist students in reaching grade level proficiency in reading, aligned with the standards of the Chicago Public Schools. In-service training may also focus on working in teams, spotting signs of abuse, and other timely topics. In 2011-2012, 91% of teachers stated that their classroom volunteers had good or excellent understanding of basic tutoring and mentoring strategies, as determined through teacher surveys.

Volunteer Supervision: Experience Corps's Chicago RSVP staff will provide volunteers with effective supervision. Staff positions include the RSVP Volunteer Engagement Specialist (Project Director) and three Volunteer Engagement Associates, supported by school liaisons/site coordinators, and Team Leaders. The Project Director and VEAs ensure that volunteers receive adequate onsite supervision and support, maintaining regular contact with personnel at each volunteer station, and that volunteer performance reviews are completed twice a year. At each station, volunteers are lead by a Team Leader or site coordinator who runs monthly meetings, oversees timesheets, answers questions, and serves as a liaison between volunteers and school staff and who provide additional support at each site. Volunteer service is also overseen by a teacher or reading support specialist on a regular basis. In 2011-2012, 96% of volunteers were satisfied with guidance, as reported through volunteer satisfaction surveys.

Twice per year, RSVP Experience Corps staff will conduct a performance review for each volunteer. The evaluations provide volunteers with an opportunity to receive feedback about the effectiveness of their service and develop their volunteer skills. Check-ins allow volunteers to discuss any challenges or problems they are having and to develop plans to address them. On a monthly basis, staff will lead team meetings at each station to answer questions, address issues, and check in with volunteers about their progress. Program staff will meet regularly to share program successes, challenges, and solutions.

Experience Corps uses the following documents to track volunteer and student progress; information

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gathered is used to make adjustments in supervision and provide additional training, as needed:

- * **One-to-one Pre and Post Tutoring Assessment** - Teachers complete this form for each 1:1 tutored child when a child enters and exits the tutoring relationship (generally beginning and end of school year). The form captures student demographic information, and request the teacher to assess the student's reading progress and skills, motivation to learn, participation, and concentration in class.
 - * **Teacher Program Evaluation** -- Teachers complete this form at the end of the year. The survey captures the teacher's satisfaction with their Experience Corps volunteer's impact on improvements in student behavior, academic performance, and overall satisfaction with the Experience Corps program.

 - * **Volunteer Progress Review** -- Volunteers receive 2 performance reviews a year, at mid-year and in June. Volunteers are evaluated by the Volunteer Engagement Specialist or staff, with input from teachers.

 - * **Annual Volunteer Satisfaction Survey** -- Volunteers complete a survey at year-end on their satisfaction with the Experience Corps program, including the amount and content of training and effectiveness of supervision.

 - * **Activity Logs and Time Sheets** -- Volunteers maintain activity logs detailing their service with students. Activity logs serve as a means for volunteers to record their time spent with students in the classroom, the activities conducted during each session, and challenges and successes of each session. Logs are reviewed by staff to ensure service hours and guidelines are being met. Similarly, volunteer timesheets are completed daily and reviewed by Team Leaders and/or the VEAs.
- Volunteer Retention:** Retention can be a challenge with older adult volunteers. Health care and family care constraints are the two biggest factors impacting retention and enrollment. Experience Corps's retention rate averages around 80% year over year. We attribute this success to our thorough training protocols and communicating to volunteers the level of commitment that is required to participate in

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the program. We also set up a network of substitute volunteers who can fill in for individuals if they are sick, on vacation, or have other responsibilities to manage.

Experience Corps's RSVP program will provide older adults with a supportive network of other volunteers. The benefit of being part of a large group of dedicated volunteers is another key reason why our volunteers enjoy serving with us year after year. Studies by Johns Hopkins University prove that Experience Corps boosts volunteers' mental acuity, decreases depression, and contributes to overall better quality of life for participants.

Volunteer Recognition: Experience Corps celebrates its volunteers on an ongoing basis, in ways both formal and informal. Volunteers are recognized throughout their service at one-on-one meetings with staff and group meetings. They receive certificates of appreciation, are featured in articles in publications and online, and are honored at celebrations such as MLK Day of Service and year-end recognition events.

National Performance Measure outcome work plans above the 10% minimum

In year one, Experience Corps's Chicago RSVP program will place 95% of unduplicated volunteers in service that meets an Education National Performance Measure output and outcome; and 5% of unduplicated volunteers will be placed in capacity building positions.

In years two and three, Experience Corps will place 85% of unduplicated volunteers in service that meets Education National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes; 5% of unduplicated volunteers will be placed in capacity building positions; and 10% will be placed in other service areas.

Program Management

Experience Corps was founded in 1995 to harness the time and talent of older adults to help children succeed by building stronger schools and communities. The program has grown from a five-city demonstration project to an award-winning national service program that spans 19 cities across the country. Today, 2,000 older adult volunteers serve 22,000 elementary school students in 19

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communities. The program's approach is simple, but highly effective: volunteers are trained and deployed to high-need public elementary schools, offering small group and one-to-one tutoring that builds reading and literacy skills for K-3 students identified as in need of intervention. Working in the classroom under the direction of the classroom teacher, Experience Corps volunteers provide support in the five components of reading identified by the National Institute of Child Health and Development and the Secretary of Education: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension. Experience Corps is a truly innovative model that provides an intensive level of reading intervention from well-trained, adult mentors within a standardized practice.

Experience Corps is planning major growth over the next five years to meet the increasing need for tutoring and mentoring across the country. The effort will expand the program's service delivery from 22,000 students per year to 100,000 students per year. Our first expansion will take place in Chicago. We have received a letter of agreement from Chicago Public Schools to begin service in 2013 and are in the process of meeting with superintendents to identify target schools, primarily on the city's west and south sides, where student performance in reading is particularly low.

Experience Corps is currently developing strategic alliances with other organizations that share our vision and mission to support this growth plan. Most notably, Experience Corps became affiliated with AARP, the nation's largest social welfare organization representing people over the age of 50, officially on January 8, 2012. This new relationship will support priorities of both organizations: Experience Corps desires to increase its capacity to engage older Americans who want to give back to their communities through volunteering in its program; AARP seeks new ways to engage older Americans in one of its top service priorities, which is volunteering through tutoring and mentoring youth. We anticipate that our growth goals and affiliation with AARP will have a positive impact on our proposed Chicago RSVP Program. Moreover, we expect it to have a very positive effect on what

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Experience Corps is able to accomplish going forward, in terms of serving more children and having more senior volunteers in communities. For example, we will have access to a significantly bigger pool of older adult volunteers for recruitment purposes, including over 700,000 AARP members in the Chicago Metropolitan area. Through AARP's extensive communications network, we will have the ability to share program outcomes with a much broader audience. In short, the changes proposed will allow Experience Corps to more effectively serve students in Chicago and will prepare us to serve a greater number of children in the years to come.

RSVP program compliance: Experience Corps will operate and manage its Chicago RSVP program in compliance with all CNCS regulations and will ensure that volunteers do not engage in prohibited service activities as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 2553.91. All Chicago RSVP staff will be trained in CNCS regulations and volunteers will receive a written list and discussion of prohibited activities in pre-service training. Each volunteer will sign an agreement that lists the prohibited activities and requires compliance with the rules.

Community needs outside focus area: As described above, in year one, Experience Corps will recruit and train volunteers who will engage in service designed to meet the Primary Focus Area of Education. In years two and three, we will train and place volunteers at stations that meet other community needs including combating hunger and filing tax returns for low and moderate income individuals.

Graduating volunteer stations: The previous Chicago RSVP program was relinquished and as such there is no incumbent program from which to graduate stations. We will work to recruit volunteers from the former program and reach out to former stations that fit within our strategic goals for RSVP.

Collecting and measuring National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs: As described above, an independent study of the Experience Corps program performed by Washington University School and Mathematica Policy Research demonstrated that students who work with Experience Corps

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tutors for a single school year experience more than 60 percent greater gains in two critical literacy skills--sounding out new words and reading comprehension--compared to similar students who were not served. Further, studies by Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Public health showed that participating schools with the small group approach gained between 10 and 20 percentile points, whereas percentile ranks dropped from 4 to 6 percentile points among the schools that did not participate in Experience Corps. Our proposed program design will mirror the design of these studies. We will align our program with the Chicago Public Schools curriculum; train our volunteers in the five components of reading which makes the intervention highly adaptable to individual students' needs; provide feedback to volunteers via performance reviews; and, incorporate teacher feedback to improve the quality of our program.

To report our outcome, ED 5, the number of students with improved academic performance in literacy, we will utilize Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as the pre- and post standardized assessments to measure student progress, as approved by Chicago Public Schools. AARP Experience Corps has a signed letter of agreement with the Chicago Public School system that includes a requirement for the school district to provide us with standardized test data that supports our program goals, including our performance measures related to improved academic performance. Memoranda of understanding will also be created individually with each school that hosts RSVP volunteers, so that the principals and teachers understand that the collection and sharing of performance measurement related data is a requirement to having AARP Experience Corps/RSVP volunteers. Each school measures student progress at least twice a year allowing us to establish the number of students that demonstrated the indicated improvement in academic performance. In the event that a school does not use DIBELS or converts to using a new standardized assessment after our partnership begins, we will ensure that the new assessment meets the requirements of ED 5 and alert RSVP immediately. We will not serve in schools that cannot provide us with pre and post data from

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reliable and valid standardized assessments. Our output, ED 2, will be the number of students who complete the program. Students complete the 1:1 model when they have completed 35 sessions. Students complete the small group model when they are still in the class at the end of the school year. The number of sessions a student completes is tracked in activity logs and students in the classroom will be tracked through student classroom rosters or through information provided by the teacher at the end of the year.

Managing Project Resources: Experience Corps staff has over thirty years of combined experience in managing federal grants. Our financial management systems are overseen by the Chief Financial Officer, Ron Mezo, who creates organizational policies and procedures required by federal grants with a particular focus on compliance with OMB circulars. Julie Hecker, the Director of Branch and Grants Accounting, is responsible for tracking the expenditures and the distribution of federal funds for the Chicago Field Office. Laura Chambers, the Interim Field Office Director for Chicago, oversees development planning, budget development, and grant compliance. The Evaluation and Education Department is responsible for the collection of program data and is instrumental in making sure statistical and narrative reports are prepared. They also provide training and technical assistance focused on evaluation, data collection, and performance measures. The RSVP Volunteer Engagement Specialist (Project Director), to be hired, will be required to have a good understanding of complying with CNCS regulations and managing project resources.

Organizational Capability

Experience Corps has been an AmeriCorps grantee since 2001. The most recent AmeriCorps National Direct grant enabled EC to serve nearly 11,000 children each year in 130 urban public schools and neighborhood organizations across 14 high-need communities. Last year, through this grant, 798 classrooms were provided assistance from volunteers. Ninety-two percent of teachers surveyed rated the volunteer's ability to help address student's learning needs as "good" or "excellent". Seventy-six

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percent of teachers reported that the volunteer had a "strong impact" on providing them with extra time to assist students who were struggling academically. Sixty-seven percent of students in the EC 1:1 program model demonstrated increased motivation to learn and sixty-five percent of tutored students demonstrated improvement towards attaining grade level benchmarks as rated by their teachers.

Chicago RSVP Staff and Resources: Experience Corps recently received a letter of agreement from the Chicago Public Schools to begin service in 2013. We will replicate our successful service delivery model in Chicago, hiring local staff. The RSVP staff will include a Volunteer Engagement Specialist who serves as Project Director and three Volunteer Engagement Associates. Under the direction of Interim Field Office Director Laura Chambers, we will hire RSVP staff that understand the local community needs, are skilled at recruiting and supporting older adult volunteers, and are committed to the mission of RSVP, Experience Corps, and community service.

The Chicago office has entered into a sublet agreement with the AARP Illinois State Office in Chicago to share office space. This strengthens the relationship between the local Experience Corps program and the State Office and ease the management of RSVP volunteers. Since the Experience Corps program is being launched in Chicago, first time purchases of desks, office supplies and computers will be required.

AARP is investing in the expansion of Experience Corps into Chicago, providing a solid base for our RSVP program.

Governance structure and operations: Experience Corps has a Board of Directors comprised of four members, including two representatives from the AARP Board. The Board oversees organizational finances, assists with fundraising, sets the mission and vision of the organization, and supports the leadership of the CEO. Experience Corps has an Advisory Board comprised of community members and individuals with expertise in education, nonprofit management, and evaluation among other subject areas. They provide feedback and input to Experience Corp's program model and fundraising

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strategies. A local Chicago RSVP Advisory Board will be established to engage a wide range of input, experience, and leadership from the local community. This is described further below.

To effectively and consistently manage staff and internal policies, Experience Corps has an Employee Handbook that includes policies and information such as a anti-harassment and discrimination policy, employment status and benefits, performance evaluations, personnel records and leave policies. Since Experience Corps is affiliated with AARP, we also follow AARP's Code of Conduct which has similar policies, and strict regulations regarding procurement.

Community Input: Experience Corps will create a Chicago RSVP Advisory Council to include volunteers and other community members to provide input that will enhance the quality of the program. Their input will be helpful in ways to improve volunteer outreach, recruitment, training, supervision and recognition efforts, increase parent engagement, partner with area nonprofits and schools among others. The RSVP Advisory Council will meet at least four times per year. The Chicago RSVP program will also seek opportunities to become members of educational, community, or aging collaborative groups to better understand community needs and trends.

Robust financial management systems and past experience managing federal grant funds: Experience Corps has successfully competed for and been awarded several large federal grants, including a grant from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention for the past three years. In addition, we have been a recipient of AmeriCorps National Direct funding since 2001 and we are the largest national direct grantee of AmeriCorps targeted for adults age 55+. While this is our first application for RSVP funding, Experience Corps has over 11 years experience administering and managing an AmeriCorps grant. Through its experience administering large federal grants, Experience Corps has developed the expertise to manage a breadth of volunteer, budget, and program data accurately and efficiently. Proper controls have been developed and systematized throughout the program and accounting departments to avoid duplication of cost allocations and volunteer activities

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for the varying grant programs. To this end, Experience Corps received high marks from the AmeriCorps Senior Grants Officer in the last monitoring report. The auditor commented, "Individuals responsible for the use of federal grant funds were knowledgeable regarding the organization's systems ... and exhibited a sincere concern for compliance with federal grant requirements. The organization has a high, appropriate level of involvement [in] oversight and monitoring." These tight controls will ensure that federal funds will never be co-mingled or supplant one another. Experience Corps has developed internal controls that ensure high standards in the areas of program implementation, budget development and financial management, volunteer supervision, fundraising, and evaluation. Progress towards meeting performance measures is monitored on a regular basis. These practices will be utilized by the Chicago staff for the proposed RSVP program. Internal controls will identify and address any non-compliance issues in a transparent way and any issues and corrective actions will be shared with RSVP.

Non-federal financial share: Experience Corps is well positioned to meet the 10% non-federal share in year one and to reach the 30% non-federal share by year three. These funds will be derived from corporate and foundation partners.

Other

Applicable costs and reimbursable expenses to volunteers; RSVP volunteer recruitment, support, and recognition; and Reasonableness of required non-federal funds budgeted: Experience Corps's total request to the Corporation is \$222,924 for one year of program implementation. Experience Corps will exceed the 10% match of \$22,924, providing \$177,585 in direct and in-kind support. With at least 45,000 hours of service projected to be provided by RSVP volunteers, this translates into \$4.90/service hour covered by federal funds. This represents a highly cost effective approach to provide a proven literacy intervention to thousands of high-need students. The most significant program cost is staffing. We ensure that local staffing is sufficient for both direct support for volunteer activities and support

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for maintaining volunteer records and other auditable documents. We will ensure that the Project Director becomes fully engrained in RSVP best practices by attending the CNCS National Conference. Another significant cost is training, which is essential to effective program implementation. We also have included significant volunteer support including transportation and criminal background checks.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not Applicable