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## Executive Summary

The Serve for Success/AmeriCorps (Okeene Public Schools intermediary grantee) will have sixty-three AmeriCorps members who will tutor low performing pre-k through 12 grade students in reading and math in thirteen rural Oklahoma school districts: Alva, Canton, Cimarron, Dover, Drummond, Fairview, Geary, Kingfisher, Okeene, Pond Creek-Hunter, Ringwood, Waynoka and Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School in Kingfisher. At the end 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increased academic performance of reading and math in low performing pre-k through 12th grade students in twenty-three schools. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 600 student volunteers that will be engaged in service learning projects. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$363,749.00 will be matched with \$383,860.00, \$212,046.00 cash from each participating school district and \$171,814.00 in-kind from partner school districts.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

COMMUNITY PROBLEMS/NEEDS: Partners with Serve for Success (SFS) come from a wide-spread, sparsely-populated region in rural northwest Oklahoma with very limited resources. The AmeriCorps members serving in these sites provide services for twenty-three schools in thirteen districts spread across six counties. Enrollments in the districts range from: Saints. Peter and Paul Catholic Schools with 51 students in pre-k through 8th grade to Kingfisher Public Schools with a total district enrollment of 1,279 students, pre-k through 12th. The average district has an enrollment of 458 students. Our partnering schools have locale codes ranging from 41 to 43 which means they are located in a census defined rural territory. Kids Count Fact Book 2009 (pg.21) states that, "Incomes are the lowest, unemployment rates are the highest and economic distress is entrenched in our poorest rural Oklahoma Counties." These small remote communities do not have organizations such as United Way, YMCA, or YWCA to provide programming and homework help for children and youth, nor do they have large populations, large industries, or businesses to provide employee volunteer programs.

The most recent district state report cards based on the Stanford-9 Achievement Tests and the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests indicate that our partner school districts have 1st through 3rd graders who need reading and remediation. Our partner districts noted an average of 26.58% of students need reading remediation with the highest listed at 62%. These state reports also indicate that all of our listed districts were below the state average on achievement test scores in reading and math

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for various grade levels. Students who do not develop the necessary academic skills are at risk for continued school failure, underemployment, and inability to participate fully in society, according to Hocks' findings noted in "The Effects of an After-School Tutoring Program on the Academic Performance of At-Risk Students and Students with LD" (<http://www.diversity-project.org/pdf%20files/The%20Effects%20of%20an%20After-School%20Tut%20article.pdf>). Hocks examined two studies which indicate before and after school tutoring can have a positive impact on student achievement for at-risk students and those with learning disabilities. In addition, students learn strategies for studying and learning complex material that stays with them even after tutoring ends.

Oklahoma is forty-ninth in the nation in per pupil spending. Rural Oklahoma schools have suffered severe budget cuts in the last eight years. As a result, almost all of our partner school districts have been forced to eliminate teacher positions due to budget cuts. Class sizes that once consisted of twelve to fifteen students per class have now burgeoned to twenty-five to thirty students per class. One teacher is expected to carry the workload shared by two individuals only a few years ago. Under such conditions, classroom teachers are finding it even more difficult to give their students with diverse learning needs the one-on-one attention they need. As a result, all of our partnering school districts report significant increases in the numbers of students who fail to complete homework consistently or who turn in unsatisfactory homework resulting in poor grades.

Although, our communities are very small (8 have populations under 700 people) significant diversity exists from community to community. Ringwood, Kingfisher, and Okeene have large, growing Hispanic populations. These districts are challenged with the need to educate students who speak little or no English, and many parents are unable to help their children with homework due to language barriers.

Oklahoma School Report Cards indicate that our partner school districts struggle with high dropout rates and poor attendance. The state dropout rate is 9.7%, and our partner districts often have even higher rates. For example, Canton Public Schools reported an 11.5% dropout rate while Drummond reported 30.4%. As a result, a higher percentage of residents in these communities have less than a 12th grade education. According to Kids Count Fact Book 2009 (pg. 30), "Children of high school drop outs are at a higher risk of quitting school themselves." "The majority of Oklahoma inmates are high school dropouts." Parents with less than 12th grade educations may have difficulty helping with homework and may be unable to provide adequate academic support for their children.

According to Kids Count Data Center, Oklahoma is ranked 36th in the nation for children living in

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poverty. Thirty-one percent of the children in rural Oklahoma under eighteen are living in a household that has an income that is less than twice that of the national average. On average, fifty-eight percent of students in our schools receive free or reduced lunches indicating the communities suffer economic disadvantages that statistically results in poor academic achievement.

In addition to the impact that lack of resources, low income levels, language barriers, and drop-out rates have on rural schools, students in remote areas have limited access to afterschool or summer programs. Research from the Rural Kids Count Data Book 2004, indicates an enriched childhood can have a positive effect on adult health and achievements. Kids Count Data Center (Pg. 5) reports, "All low-income families require connections to economic opportunities, supportive and effective services, and a strong community network. In some cases, the same strategies for implementing solutions that work in urban areas cannot be applied to rural areas where families are much more spread out, and supportive social and economic institutions are few and far between." Students in our partner communities have minimal access to opportunities for positive interaction with adults and other children for these very reasons. Why help the students in rural Oklahoma? Drop-out rates, language barriers, low economic status, budget cuts, and large class sizes drastically impair the academic achievement of students in each district. This means that the urgency to provide students with academic intervention and support is vital.

EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE PROBLEM: The U.S. Department of Education notes increased efforts to provide during and after school tutoring programs which include services ranging from homework assistance to one-on-one strategic skill building. Supplemental one-on-one instruction offers an effective avenue for increasing student achievement, especially for students at risk for academic failure. Evidence also indicates that well-designed tutoring programs utilizing trained volunteers and non-professionals effectively improve children's reading skills. The National Education Association Dropout Action Plan states "that the best way to reduce dropout rates is to make sure students receive individual attention in safe schools, in small classes, and in programs during the summer, weekends, and before and after school that provide tutoring and build on what students learn during the school day" (<http://www.nea.org/home/18106.htm>). This statement describes exactly what we do through SFS with the service of AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members provide one-on-one and small group tutoring for students during and after school that would not be feasible for individual schools to provide. Members offer science and math enrichment activities along with reading and skills practice during the summer to provide positive, educational opportunities not otherwise available. After school tutors/members play an important role in assisting students to

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successfully complete their homework assignments. They also actively assist students in acquiring the organizational, management, and study skills that lead to consistent homework completion and academic success. After school tutors facilitate homework completion by reinforcing the work students do during the regular school day, and students who participate regularly in after school tutoring programs show increased academic achievement.

Last year an outside evaluation was completed by Annie Farris (BA Education/Master Teacher Piedmont Schools) that included two of our partner sites. Twenty-nine teachers from the Alva and Waynoka school districts were asked to evaluate the serve for success program. All of the teachers surveyed felt that the AmeriCorps members were a huge asset to their students and their school sites. The members helped in all grades, Pre-K through 12th grade including special education and English language learners. Most AmeriCorps members tutored students in reading and math but other skills and subjects were covered as well. The length of time varied from 20 minutes to two hours depending on the age level and type of intervention. Some students received help during school hours and others utilized afterschool times. Teachers felt that members provided much needed one-on-one tutoring to their struggling students. They also replied that they were able to re-explain concepts that the student may have missed in class and were too inhibited to ask. Teachers felt that the after school time members spent with students who just need extra work time and/or a quiet place to work and stay focused was valuable. Teachers with students in the middle school and high school levels felt that the extra help students received was the difference in some of them passing or failing the class. The primary teachers noted that the one-on-one daily interventions members provided helped their early readers gain much needed confidence and successes in their literacy foundation skills. The surveys showed that the teachers felt the Serve for Success members were well trained, very helpful, and become integral members of their school sites.

Various models we have examined over the years reinforce our commitment to the kind of tutoring program we have developed and continue to try to enhance. Most recently we reviewed the following study to determine if our program meets research-based standards: "Background Research: Tutoring Programs" published by the Center of Prevention Research and Development, within the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois ([http://www.cprd.illinois.edu/files/ResearchBrief\\_Tutoring\\_2009.pdf](http://www.cprd.illinois.edu/files/ResearchBrief_Tutoring_2009.pdf)). This document was compiled to provide a summary of research used to develop standards of evidence-based practice for Standards for Tutoring Programs (Jan. 2009). We found our program utilizes many of the same strategies and protocols suggested by this article. Our tutors are rigorously trained, monitored, evaluated, and

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supported. We continually evaluate the program to assess successes and shortcomings and to make improvements where necessary. Also, our after school homework help practices model findings described in the literature review, "Homework Help in Afterschool Programs" found at the following URL: [http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/homework/pdf/hw\\_lit\\_rev.pdf](http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/homework/pdf/hw_lit_rev.pdf). The SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (June 2008) developed this guide for the U.S. Department of Education Technical Assistance and Professional Development for 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The research supports programs like SFS and indicates programs like ours have a significant impact on student achievement and success. Students who receive homework help through tutoring programs like ours are more likely to successfully complete homework, and homework completion has a direct correlation to increased academic achievement.

Due to lack of funds and other community resources in these small rural areas, our partner school districts have pooled their district dollars to sustain an AmeriCorps tutoring program over the past eleven years. The survival of small, rural communities depends on the successful education of the students of today. SFS partners agree that a multitude of concerns exists for each school district. These concerns or areas of need vary from student to student, from district to district, and from year to year. SFS targets pre-k through 12th grade students who perform below grade level, fail subjects, fall below expected levels in a subject, or struggle to understand various concepts (especially in the core subjects of reading and math). SFS allows each site annually to determine their greatest areas of student need and then utilize AmeriCorps members to help address those needs. For example, Canton Schools might place members with students in grades three through five where reading proficiency is the greatest identified need, while Okeene Schools place members in pre-k through 1st grade to enhance the early childhood learning curve.

SFS is a teacher guided tutoring program. Each district assigns teachers to assist members with curriculum by providing specific instructions for tutoring individual students and supervising members. Members are available every school day for students who need extra one-on-one help apart from the larger class. One-on-one tutoring provides students at risk of falling behind and those with poor attendance the assistance they need to improve academically. A member might listen to a student practice oral reading, read to non-readers, tutor students using sight words, or practice math facts and other skills that need much repetition to master. When needed, members work with students learning English as a second language (ESL) by providing homework support and additional language practice. Academic improvement leads to increased confidence and self-esteem which positions the child for even greater success in the classroom.

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This program includes a total of thirty-nine SFS/AmeriCorps members. Twenty-four members serve combination part time (900 hours) slots from August through January and then serve consecutive reduced half time (675 hours) slots from February through June. This adds up to a total of 1575 hours. These members serve on a full time basis for approximately 175 school days and through the month of June. In addition, the program has fifteen part-time members, the majority of whom serve August through May. The size and needs of the district determines the number of members assigned to each site. A typical full-time member serves 40 hours per week tutoring students before, during, and after school. Part-time members serve 25 hours per week. Members either tutor within the classroom or in an area designated for one-on-one or small group work. During a typical day, a member will tutor ten to twelve students. Members observe and assist in critical subject area classes such as math and English, often providing students with reading and math skills practice on computers, tablets, or smart boards. The member has the opportunity to hear the teacher explain the lesson and thus becomes familiar with the material so that he/she may effectively assist students after the lesson within the school day or during the after school sessions. On average, members work with individual students two to three days a week for 30 to 60 minutes per day as recommended in evidence-based tutoring practices. The time varies according to the age level and attention span of the student. In 2008, our outside evaluation studied 3rd-5th grade students at Fairview Elementary School. This study compared students who participated in the AmeriCorps tutoring program over the course of a two year period both during the school day and after school with those who participated in only one or the other--during the school tutoring program or in the after school tutoring program. Average reading scores of students who participated in either the afterschool or in-school tutoring program increased from 38.4% to 48%. Students who received tutor sessions during school as well as after school increased their average score from 12.33% to 41%. This was an excellent indicator that our AmeriCorps tutor sessions were successfully able to significantly improve academic performance.

Many children need an extra educational boost with supplemental reading programs in the summer to keep them on track academically and to help prevent learning loss in the months spent out of school. The SFS/AmeriCorps members who serve hours in June provide or supplement summer school programs. SFS partners have found member service critical to their ability to offer these needed programs since half of our partnering school districts would not be able to supply after school or summer help without AmeriCorps members. SFS/AmeriCorps tutors provide a variety of supervised activities to enhance hands-on learning in these summer sessions. The AmeriCorps

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members also provide a variety of reading practice and a multitude of hands-on math and science activities along with some recreation, crafts, and food-nutrition activities. During a typical summer program day, summer school sessions last from 8 am until noon. Certified teachers responsible for the summer school program assist members in identifying appropriate lessons and activities.

School staff or SFS members regularly administer standardized tests before and after teaching and learning take place. These tests include but are not limited to: WRAT, STAR reading, STAR math, BEAR, DIBELS and SUCCESS MAKER. Our goal is for seventy-five percent of the students who receive consistent assistance or tutor sessions based on a minimum of thirty-five sessions over the course of the program year improve academic performance according to standardized pre- and post-test scores. Serve for Success members record standardized test scores in tutor logs for program tracking purposes.

SFS actively seeks diverse individuals from each partner community or surrounding communities with various ages, backgrounds, abilities, and skills to serve as members. Detailed service descriptions for each position are developed by each of our thirteen school districts before member recruitment begins. These service descriptions include specific qualifications, roles and responsibilities, member slot type, and the term of service needed for each position. All prospective members must have a high school diploma or higher in order to meet AmeriCorps requirements for tutoring program participation. We also screen members for self-motivation, the ability to work independently, and prior experience working with children. We continually strive to place members who show the potential to utilize the education award by furthering their education, transferring their education award if eligible, or utilizing it to pay on a student loan. With only an average of 17.17% of the population in our partnering communities with a college degree, the education award offers an excellent opportunity for members to pursue further education. Recruiting members from the respective communities in which they serve positively impacts our member retention and overall dedication to the program. SFS uses a multi-faceted recruitment strategy to identify a pool of qualified applicants for the program. Recruitment occurs in each of the partner communities, through newspaper articles and ads, school and program websites, distribution of flyers and pamphlets, and information placed in the guidance offices at local high schools and colleges. In addition, partners, members, and program staff visit civic clubs to further publicize service opportunities. Current and alumni members are encouraged to inform people about SFS AmeriCorps - word of mouth has been a great recruitment tool. The vast majority of our recruitment and subsequent interviews take place between March and May. SFS staff works diligently with each site to

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make certain they have quality applicants in place prior to pre-service training in August.

AmeriCorps applications go through an initial screening process conducted by each partner site. Candidates are then interviewed by both SFS staff and at least one site official. The interview process serves as a way to screen applicants but also to insure each applicant understands the details and commitments involved with serving as an AmeriCorps member. Prospective members receive both verbal and written details regarding AmeriCorps service. Shortlisted applicants undergo National Sex Offender Public Registry checks, and all selected applicants undergo a standard background check prior to service. Program staff is responsible for ensuring that all required documentation is in place before placement including proof of citizenship/legal residence in the United States.

MEMBER TRAINING: Five days of pre-service training for members starts the first day of August. The three main focus areas include: (1) AmeriCorps and program rules and requirements, (2) tutoring and educational assistance strategies, and (3) leadership and other basic life skills. The AmeriCorps program orientation component includes extensive explanations of benefits, prohibited activities, and details for accurate completion of contracts and necessary forms. Members are trained to fill out on-line time sheets, student tutor logs, and volunteer log sheets. Members also receive and review a written manual that outlines all prohibited activities and all policies and procedures concerning their AmeriCorps service. The manual also includes specific school district guidelines for partner schools.

In correlation with evidence-based practices, members are required to complete fifteen hours of tutoring skills training using research-based materials and trainers based on "The Five Basic Components of Reading" and the guidelines from the Literacy First Program ([http://www.literacyfirst.com/downloads/LiteracyFirst\\_ResearchBase.pdf](http://www.literacyfirst.com/downloads/LiteracyFirst_ResearchBase.pdf)), "Hands on Math" using the KESAM program from NCLB (<http://kesammath.com/>), "Learning Styles and Modalities" by ILSR ([learningstyles.org](http://learningstyles.org)), and the "Ages and Stages of Development" (<http://extension.missouri.edu/FNEP/LG782.pdf>). Members are required to pass a tutoring skills proficiency test before beginning their service as a tutor. We also provide workshops on general classroom management, discipline, tips for dealing with behavioral issues and difficult situations, team building, leadership, reporting abuse, CPR, and First Aid Certification.

During pre-service training and at the end of the year, we implement a service project in which members and program staff collectively participate. Past service projects include creating tie blankets for foster children and neck coolers for soldiers. We have seen firsthand when members spend time together on service projects and in training sessions how they develop a sense of belonging and pride in being a part of the AmeriCorps program. Also, during pre-service training, members discuss a

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multitude of ideas and instructions about working with students on service learning projects.

Members are expected to develop a citizenship project in which students have an opportunity to serve as a volunteer. Last year SFS/AmeriCorps members gave 1058 students the opportunity to participate in at least one service project. A short list of the projects includes food bank collections, playing bingo and board games with nursing home residents and community/school clean-up projects.

After pre-service training, members report to their assigned site before the school year begins. They receive school-specific training from teachers, administrators, and other staff. These sessions familiarize the members with both the district and the school, introduce them to staff and their particular roles, and provide additional skill-building to ensure members' success in working with underachieving students. Topics include how to handle confidentiality with student information (including grades and test scores), fire, tornado, and lock down procedures, dress codes, and basic school/district policies and procedures. At this time, members are assigned mentors at their respective sites, and they receive information about particular situations; for example, the reading specialist may instruct and provide tips to help members better address individual student needs based on ability.

SFS program staffers provide group member training sessions at each individual site in September to further practice and reinforce the proper way to fill out time sheets, to process tutor tracking forms, and to collect pre-test data. We host a training session in November if pre-service member surveys indicate any specific needs or requests. On-going member needs assessment and communication allows program staff to identify additional training topics to provide during the program year. Members attend a training session in March covering the topic of collecting and recording post-test data and finalizing tutor records. In May, we offer sessions on "Life after AmeriCorps," future career planning, guidance for using the education award, eligibility for additional terms of service, and additional reflections and sharing experiences from their service. At this time members also participate in an additional group service project.

**MEMBER SUPERVISION:** Each school site has at least one site supervisor who is responsible for day-to-day member monitoring and who also serves as an advocate and advisor. SFS staff works with the school administration to select the most qualified and helpful site supervisors. Our supervisors are very dedicated to the program as they see firsthand every day the value members bring to their school. Site supervisors monitor and approve weekly time sheets and help complete evaluations on each member at least two times per service term. After the evaluations are completed by program staff and site supervisors, the site supervisors sit down one-on-one with each member to review results and develop a tailored improvement plan, if needed.

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COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: During the interview process, we highlight the importance and significance of being an AmeriCorps member. During pre-service training, members are given a wealth of information about AmeriCorps across the nation, specific information about the local SFS/AmeriCorps program, and the significance of their particular service as AmeriCorps members. At the end of the pre-service training, a staff member from the Oklahoma Community Service Commission reviews important expectations and prohibited activities and then swears in our SFS/AmeriCorps members. Members receive name tags with the AmeriCorps logo and apparel sporting the AmeriCorps logo. The member contracts and policy booklets include instructions to wear name tags during all service hours and AmeriCorps apparel when possible. Partner sites display AmeriCorps signs with the logos in windows, on bulletin boards and on the school web sites. We highlight the AmeriCorps program by placing pictures and articles in each local community paper. Each year SFS members provide school staff with a handout that explains the SFS/AmeriCorps program and its funding through a federal grant made possible by the Community Service Commission. During training, members are provided with information about the program, and they are encouraged to share this information and their experiences as an AmeriCorps member. Site supervisors and members share their AmeriCorps experiences by speaking at meetings for the local school board, Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, Lions Clubs, and other organizations. Flyers and newsletters provide an additional means of sharing member experiences with communities.

### **Organizational Capability**

The SFS/AmeriCorps program has been supported and managed successfully by the Okeene School District for the past eight years. The legal applicant (Okeene Public Schools) operates a yearly budget of just over three million dollars. Last year, 12% of this budget came from CNCS. Okeene School administrators and board successfully manage seven separate funds and have extensive experience with the policies and procedures necessary to manage CNCS and other federal funds. Okeene Public Schools are governed by a board of five elected members who have a state-mandated checks and balances system in place to protect funds and staff. This same board and administration oversee the SFS/AmeriCorps program. Okeene Public Schools provide the AmeriCorps grant with support and management through administrative in-kind that includes: Office space for staff, a bookkeeper and payroll clerk, a treasurer, and an oversight administrator. The grant provides two full time staff to oversee programmatic and budget aspects of the grant. All of the program and school staff members have provided grant oversight since its beginning. Okeene Public Schools serves as the intermediary for twelve additional partner school districts. Each of these school districts along with Okeene Public

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Schools all provide a cash match per member. Serve for Success has always consistently remained within the budget limits of the grant.

Kim Wardlaw, the full time director, established the SFS/AmeriCorps Program in July of 2002. She has served as director since the inception of the program. As director, she oversees the budget and manages the program goals. Prior to serving as director, she worked as a classroom teacher for 17 years. Her experience as an educator in the classroom gives her a unique understanding of how to work with teachers and administrators. She oversees half of the sites and members, completes quarterly and monthly financial reports and performance measurement reports. Her education background also enables her to be a readily available tutor resource for members and sites.

Becky Bedwell serves as full time co-director. She was instrumental in developing the SFS program by developing a planning grant in 2001. She has been on staff since the start of the program, first with a part-time position and now with a full-time position. Previously, she was a 4-H Youth Educator for 15 years. Her experiences with both 4-H and Community Leadership Programs provide us with many valuable resources for training members. She is responsible for planning and scheduling instructors for member training, she handles members' monthly paperwork, and she oversees half the sites and members. Both Wardlaw and Bedwell work very effectively together to make certain that the program, sites, and members are in compliance with all federal grant guidelines and that members and sites have a high quality and positive experience with AmeriCorps. Both staff members plan to remain with the program for the next three year grant cycle. All staff positions are reviewed and hired on a yearly basis by the Okeene School Board.

Our accounting and bookkeeping staff is provided by the grantee. Kristi Kraft, the district finance officer, has 19 years of bookkeeping and accounting experience and works closely with the director and co-director to assure project activities are within our budget limitations. Kraft and board-appointed treasurer, Kerry Westfahl, work with staff to make certain all expenditures and receivables are coded correctly and monthly financial statements are completed efficiently and on time. Kraft attends trainings at least quarterly to stay current with fiscal regulations. Ron Pittman, Superintendent of Okeene Public Schools, provides administrative and program staff oversight and evaluation.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Each partnering school district is required to make a written commitment to the program through a Memorandum of Agreement. This agreement assures member, program, and cash match support. Each partner cooperatively provides support, supervision, and guidance to the members and is very much an integral part of the overall success of

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the program. Appointed representatives from each school district determine the district slot requests and approve the cash match increases prior to grant submission each year.

As an additional evidence-based practice, SFS staff visit all sites at least once a month to monitor the proper use of members, to assure progress toward meeting objectives, and to provide each member and supervisor with support to help ensure a successful service term. Site visits also allow program staff to build and maintain close relationships and open communication with members and sites. As needs or concerns arise, we take immediate action to understand the situation and then address the problem or concern. Site supervisors also receive timely updates by program staff on events, program changes, or other topics during site visits and through emails, phone calls, and/or letters. Program staff remains readily available by phone and email to answer questions as they arise and to provide any needed ongoing support between visits.

Program staff monitors tutor records to ensure members are set up with schedules conducive to boosting academic success of their students. During each monthly site visit, staff speaks with both school staff and members, observes members in actual tutoring sessions, and reviews required documentation. We complete site compliance forms after each visit to document that the site is allowing members consistent opportunities to tutor students and providing adequate member supervision and support. We also document whether sites are up to date on cash match payments and adequately documenting in-kind contributions, and we address any other concerns. If issues are identified, we take immediate action to rectify the situation working with the school site and district administration as necessary. We also communicate with site staff and members using a variety of means between site visits to ensure things are running smoothly. The advisory committee (Program Director, Program Co-Director, Okeene School Superintendent, appropriate site representatives and the Director of the Oklahoma Community Service Commission, when needed) reviews site compliance forms annually. The committee then recommends continuation or discontinuation based on the documented information and reports their decisions to each school district. If a site does not stay in compliance after instruction and assistance from staff, they will be eliminated as a partner with SFS.

PAST PERFORMANCE: In 2010-2011, we utilized teacher surveys to measure academic improvement. At the end of this service year, members recorded a total of 832 students that received tutor sessions, with 275 of those students receiving 35 or more tutor sessions. We projected we would meet the needs of 275 students on a consistent basis and hit to the exact number projected! We had a target of 75% of the students increasing their academic performance. We exceeded our benchmark

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with 78% of the students increasing or significantly increasing their academic performance as noted on teacher surveys. We have completed two full service years (2011-2012 and 2012-2013) using the National Performance Measures ED1, ED2, and ED5 utilizing standardized test scores to measure academic improvement. In the two years measured using test scores, we nearly doubled our goal of 500 students who start in the AmeriCorps tutoring program. In 2012-2013 we doubled our target of 300 students who receive at least thirty-five tutor sessions over the course of each program year. Our performance measures also state that 78% of the students who receive thirty-five or more tutor sessions will improve their academic performance by at least five percentage points measured by standardized pre- and post-testing. In 2011-2012, 65% of students achieved improved academic performance. However, 70 students who received 35 or more tutor sessions had no pre-test score available for comparison which led to a failure to meet the 78% target. We worked diligently with site supervisors over the summer and made certain all sites administered standardized tests at the beginning of the school year and that the post-tests were given at the appropriate time. The following year, 750 of the 937 students or 80% of the students noted an increase in academic performance. This exceeded our goal of 78% by two percentage points.

Even though we go over prohibited activities with members and site supervisors at the beginning of each year, last year one of our partnering sites was in desperate need of a long term half-day substitute teacher. After the search came up empty, they placed one of our full-time AmeriCorps members in the classroom for half of the school day. We became aware of the situation and immediately contacted the State Commission and the State Commission told us that the hours spent substituting would be disallowed. The Commission discussed corrective action steps that were recommended to our advisory committee to develop a plan to ensure compliance. We documented the substitution hours and the member removed all substituting time from their AmeriCorps time sheet. The two members at this site were allowed to finish their service hours with close supervision by our program co-director. We discontinued our partnership with this particular school site for the following school year. Since this issue arose, we have amplified our no substituting policy. Our written policy clearly and specifically states this rule, and each site supervisor and other school staff who might place members in this situation receive written and verbal reminders. If a member chooses to substitute, they must make a notation on their time sheet and not count any substituting time on their AmeriCorps time sheet.

Ideally, we hope to have each member successfully complete their term of service. However, when this does not happen, we look at each member loss individually and strive to make improvements

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based on each situation. This past full service year, 93% of our members successfully completed their terms of service, but we lost three members before the end of the year. Two members left the program for higher paying positions, and one chose not to complete her term of service due to the cost of summer day care and gas to commute to her site. We pursue the highest retention rate possible each service year. We stress the importance of member commitment to the program during the interview process and during training at the beginning of the service year.

**CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT:** Staff continually monitors and works with each site to make certain that members serve a reasonable number of students on a consistent basis and tutor at the desired intensity according to age level. The monitoring occurs during site visits in which we observe members and obtain feedback from site supervisors and members. We make needed adjustments on a weekly and monthly basis. Teachers provide feedback to members weekly to assist members with strategies and good practices in the ongoing tutor sessions. Teachers and site supervisors report individual student progress from tutoring sessions to parents every six weeks. SFS staff sends a quarterly progress report to the Oklahoma Community Service Commission. We also share progress with members and site supervisors on an ongoing basis and with our board, partner school districts, and other community stakeholders through our annual newsletter.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

We have collected written agreements from each partnering district securing \$212,046 in cash with the cost per member @ \$6,650 per PT/RDH member and \$3,500 per part-time member. Partners have verified in-kind amounts of \$2,500 per member which totals \$97,500. Okeene Schools grantee has an administrative in-kind of \$66,470 and \$7,844 for staff insurance. This is a grand total of \$171,814 of in-kind match from the school districts. Our budget has a grantee share of fifty-one percent (51%). This exceeds the required 50% match. The budget has a cost per member of \$12,701 which is below the cost per member during the last grant cycle which was \$12,714. Last year we needed an overall grantee match of 42% and ended the year with 47.66%. SFS/AmeriCorps has consistently met the increasing overall match limits; each year the cash match has increased and partners have all determined the benefit is well worth the increase. In theory, if a school district were to hire a private tutor for each student it would cost \$20 per hour. A full time member serves on average 8.5 hours per day for 195 school days. The cost for a full time tutor would be \$170 per day. The total cost of an AmeriCorps member per day is \$56.41 with a district cost of \$32.31 per day.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

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Members work with students who are struggling to understand core academic concepts offering tutoring throughout the school day, before and after school, and in the month of June. Seventy-eight percent of the students who receive consistent tutoring sessions from AmeriCorps members will have improved academic performance in tutored areas.

The plan for evaluations is to continue with our individual site evaluations to help each site capitalize on strengths and improve weaknesses. Five of our thirteen partner sites have been included in previous outside evaluations. SFS/AmeriCorps shares evaluation information so individual sites and our overall program can continue to strive to improve students' academic performance by sharing methods and strategies from district to district. This also allows individual sites to have specific information for their stakeholders.

The purpose of our evaluation is to gauge the overall impact and cost effectiveness of AmeriCorps member service at individual sites. The evaluation is also used as a means to monitor member and supervisor training and update needs. We use the findings to gain a better understanding and to improve the impact of AmeriCorps service for individual members. The evaluation compares standardized test score results with classroom teachers' noted improvements, student skills improvement, homework and assignment completion, and grade average improvement.

Together with Dr. Charles Cox, Professor at Oklahoma State University, we developed a combination of implemented and outcome survey questions when we started our individual site evaluations in 2007. Site supervisors and school administrators answer the following questions with responses ranging from None to Very Much or NA: Is participating in the Serve for Success/AmeriCorps program cost effective for your site? Do you feel members receive adequate training before and during service? Do you feel members receive adequate support and updated information from Serve for Success staff? Do you as a supervisor or partner feel you receive adequate support and updated information from SFS staff? Supervisors and administrators are also asked to respond to the following prompt: Describe the impact you feel individuals gain from serving as an AmeriCorps member and describe the impact AmeriCorps members' service provides to the site.

Classroom teachers who assist members or have tutor students served by AmeriCorps members within their classroom answer the following survey question with a response ranging from None to Very Much or NA: Do you feel members receive adequate training before and during service? Teachers are given the following response questions: What subjects or tasks do members assist student with? How many students do members assist from your particular classroom? Approximately how much time each day does the member spend with students from your classroom?

## Narratives

Teachers are asked to circle tutor situations that apply: Tutoring within the classroom, tutoring from a pull-out situation, tutoring before school, or tutoring after school. Teachers also complete a survey on the following questions with the choices of significant decrease, decrease, no change, increase, or significant increase: What improvement, if any, did you notice in the students' skills in which the AmeriCorps member provided assistance? (Examples: math facts, letter recognition, or sight word retention). What improvements, if any, did you notice in the students' abilities to complete classroom and homework assignments? What improvement did you notice in the students' grades after receiving assistance? Has the student improved his/her grade point average by at least one letter grade in the subject(s) in which they received assistance from the AmeriCorps member(s)?

SFS/AmeriCorps members answer the following questions with responses ranging from None to Very Much or NA: Has the training in which you have participated as an AmeriCorps member been beneficial? They are also given space to list suggestions. Do you feel you received adequate support and updated information from Serve for Success Staff? Do you feel you received adequate support and tutor strategies from teachers? Do you feel you received adequate support from site supervisors? How many terms of service will you have completed by the end of this service year? In addition, they are asked to respond to these questions: Please tell how you have utilized or plan to utilize your education award(s). Would you recommend someone to be an AmeriCorps member? (Yes or No) Overall, how would you rate your experience as an AmeriCorps member? (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Poor or Very Poor) Describe the impact serving as an AmeriCorps member has made in your life. Finally, corresponding student tutor logs with the numbers of tutor sessions and pre- and post-test scores are also used for the individual site evaluations.

Program staff gives members a packet with supervisor, administration, and classroom teacher surveys with detailed instructions for members to each distribution in April. Program staff collects the completed survey packets from members in May. Members complete their relevant survey information at the training in May. Members track tutor sessions and report pre- and post-test scores in an on-line reporting system. This information is complete and available by the end of June. Program staff is responsible for collecting all the completed surveys and needed tutor logs for outside evaluators use.

At the end of year one, tutor logs and member surveys will be collected from all SFS/ AmeriCorps members. The specific surveys and data will be collected from partner sites: Drummond, Kingfisher, Pond Creek-Hunter, and Dover Schools. This data information will be compiled, and a report will be released by December 2015. At the end of year two, information and data will be collected from all

## Narratives

members and these partner sites: Ringwood, Canton, Sts. Peter and Paul, and Okeene. The data will be compiled and interpreted, and a report will be released by December 2016. We have a verbal agreement with Kathy Thomas, Portfolio Specialist-Adjunct Professor in the Professional Education Unit at OSU for outside evaluations which includes updating surveys if needed and completing the evaluation reports. \$1,000.00 is budgeted for each of the years listed for the cost of the outside evaluation.

The evaluation results will be shared with the Corporation for National Community Service, the Oklahoma Community Service Commission, Okeene School Board, each individual partner school district, and AmeriCorps members.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

Clarification 2014

Application ID #14AC155797

Okeene Public School Serve for Success

Date:

April 10, 2014

1) Programmatic clarification items

a) Revised Executive Summary

The Serve for Success/AmeriCorps (Okeene Schools intermediary grantee) will have thirty-nine AmeriCorps members who will work with students struggling to understand core academic concepts (especially in reading and math) and offer tutoring throughout the school day, after school, and through the month of June in thirteen rural Oklahoma school districts including the following school districts: Alva, Canton, Cimarron, Dover, Drummond, Fairview, Geary, Kingfisher, Okeene, Pond Creek-Hunter, Ringwood, Saints Peter and Paul and Waynoka. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving the academic performance of underachieving pre-k through 12th grade students in twenty-three schools. Seventy-eight percent of the students who receive consistent tutor sessions from AmeriCorps members will improve academic performance in tutored areas as measured by standardized pre-and post-test scores.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education from Tier 2 using Complementary and Priority Measures with 100% of the MSYs utilized as tutors. The CNCS investment of \$363,749.00

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will be matched with \$383,860.00, \$212,046.00 cash from each participating school district and \$171,814.00 in-kind coming from partner school districts.

b) Clarify number of members requested.

We are requesting 63 slots but the program will place 39 members. Twenty-four members will serve a two consecutive terms within one program year. The first term will be a PT position with the member contract date of August-January. The second term will be a RHT position with a member contract date of February-June. These 24 individuals will serve on a full time basis or 40 to 42 hours per week. For the 2013-2014 program year we piloted this idea with five members serving two consecutive terms. The sites and members are very happy with this combination. In the past members were serving 1,700 in a school year which average to 45 hours per week. Combining two terms within a school year has been more conducive to our school sites needs since our members do not serve a twelve month contract. Therefore, 24 members serving two terms = 48 slots plus 15 additional part time members equals a total of 63 slots.

c) Clarify pre-service and in-service training is consistent with instructional program of local agency and with state academic content standards.

The pre-service training provided for Serve for Success/AmeriCorps members has been developed following the Oklahoma Department of Education guidelines that paraprofessionals must be able to demonstrate knowledge of, and the ability to assist students with reading, writing, and mathematics, or reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness. Highly qualified trainers provide members with training sessions using state and nationally recognized training curriculum. This includes ¿The Five Basic Components of Reading from the Literacy First Program. The KESAM math workshop includes training for pre-k through Algebra using the NCTM process linked to common core practices required by the State Department of Education. Surveys given to members, supervisors and teachers include a review of training sessions and the opportunity to rate the training provided to AmeriCorps members and make suggestions for future training needs. Training sessions on dealing with behavioral issues and difficult situations have evolved from these surveys. Surveys also help us to plan additional training sessions as needed during the service year. Once on site, members have the opportunity to observe and work under the direct supervision of highly qualified teachers. Member in-service training includes observing teachers using site and curriculum specific teaching techniques and strategies. The classroom teachers and specific specialists provide on-going assistance to members with state and local instructional strategies, techniques and the planning of tutor sessions so that each student¿s specific needs are addressed.

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d) Clarify that Members are not displacing staff.

Many of our school sites have Para-professionals or other staff that assist teachers and students. Oklahoma law requires schools to place aides or teacher's assistants in specified lower elementary classrooms to maintain a certain teacher to student ratio. Special Education regulations call for Para-professionals to be placed with particular students or within classrooms to help special needs students. The member position for each Serve for Success/AmeriCorps member specifies that members are not filling a staff roll. Members are providing tutoring in reading and math for students in these partner school districts that is separate and in addition to these school staff positions. Serve for Success staff stays up to date on these state and federal regulations and works closely with each school district to make certain that members are not displacing staff. This specific information is reviewed with school superintendents, school principals and each teacher that works with AmeriCorps members. We have a written agreement that each superintendent and site supervisor signs that states members will not displace or supplant staff. Serve for Success staff visits each site on a monthly basis to make certain members are not serving in a situation in which displaces staff.

2) Performance Measure Clarifications

a) ED5: Please clarify how you ensure that you only count improved academic performance in literacy and/or math even though tutors also work on science enrichment activities.

During in-service training members are given specific instructions and a written manual on how and what to count as a tutor session. During the first three months of service, Serve for Success Staff meet with members at each site and once again go over these specific instructions and clarify any questions members might have about tracking tutor sessions and other service activities. Members do not count science enrichment or similar activities as a part of their daily record of tutor sessions with students. Members note these activities separately and report a total count of students in which they provide enrichment activities and a brief summary of activities provided on a separate report at the end of the school year.

b) ED5: Please describe how the standardized tests: (a) measures the types of student skills/knowledge the program is trying to improve through its efforts, (b) is appropriate for the grade level, (c) has demonstrated validity or reliability for the population they are serving, and (d) is compatible with, and acceptable to, the school where the program is providing services (different tests may be used at different schools).

Each individual school district has specific board approved standardized tests in which they already utilize to gauge student progress specific to reading and math. These instruments are state and

## Narratives

nationally recognized as a valid and reliable source in which to note students' progress appropriate to their grade level and subject matter. Serve for Success staff works closely with each district to determine a valid pre and post test instrument in which Serve for Success members can record to help our program improve efforts with our tutoring program. In most cases, the classroom teacher or determined school staff administers the standardized pre and post tests to the students. Members are then allowed to list these scores for progress with our performance measures.

3) Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification:

a) What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is your program's plan if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community?

Each year Serve for Success strives to recruit and place a diverse group of quality applicants in our school districts. We most generally have 3% of our slots filled with members from the disability community. Members are recruited from each of our local and surrounding small communities. These small rural communities do not have specific agencies that help with job placement for those with disabilities so we utilize local school superintendents, school principals, school staff, community members and area career technology centers to help identify quality applicants from the disability community.

b) We will not be requesting any additional MSYs to be filled with members with disabilities.

4) MSY With No Program Funds Attached Clarification (No Cost MSYs):

Serve for Success will not be requesting any (No Cost MSYs).

CLARIFICATION 2014

April 15, 2014

Programmatic clarification items:

1. (The requested revisions were made directly to the Executive Summary section of our application)

Volunteers: Each member or group of members from each site are required to provide at least one service project each year in which students have an opportunity to serve as a volunteer. Serve for Success/AmeriCorps members recruit student volunteers from each respective school site to engage in service learning projects such as, reading to nursing home residents, cleaning parks and planting flowers, and creating cards for soldiers.

2. Members that serve two consecutive terms of service during the service year have two separate contracts. Prior to serving the first term of service the member is provided with a contract and an explanation that their service obligation for August through January. Prior to the end of the first term

## **Narratives**

of service, program staff meets with members and site supervisors to go over the requirements for the second term of service, to answer any questions relating to the second term of service and make any adjustments to the hours required for the second term of service if needed. At this time staff makes certain that members are willing and able to serve an additional term of service. In January, members are provided with an additional contract for service from February through June.

Performance Measure Clarifications:

(The requested revisions were made directly to ED5 of the performance measure section of our application)

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A

### **Grant Characteristics**