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Executive Summary

The United Way of East Central Iowa will have 15 AmeriCorps members who will provide academic support to low-income children and families through early literacy programming, literacy and math tutoring, and enrichment programming in an effort to decrease the achievement gap and build engagement in six selected schools and community sites. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for helping to lessen the achievement gap in the Cedar Rapids community. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 100 volunteers that will be engaged in enrichment and support programming for low-income youth.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$197,020 will be matched with \$148,591, \$0 in public funding and \$148,591 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

The United Way will address one problem: the achievement gap of low-income students in Cedar Rapids schools.

2A. PROBLEM/NEED: ACHIEVEMENT GAP. The achievement gap that exists between low-income students and their higher income peers in Cedar Rapids, Iowa is startling, and with 2012-13 data showing that low-income students make up 46% of the total student population, it is essential that the achievement gap is addressed. Local data indicate that the achievement gap emerges at a young age, with low-income students identified as those who qualify for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (meaning they live in a household with a total income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level). In 2009, only 50% of low-income kindergarteners in the Cedar Rapids Community School District were proficient in early literacy skills compared to 72% of their higher-income peers (Iowa Department of Education, 2009). This achievement gap afflicts many low-income children for the duration of their academic career. Data from 2011-12 school year show that only 53% of low-income 4th grade students were proficient in reading compared to 81% of their higher-income peers; in 8th grade the gap was 48% to 79%; and in 11th grade the gap was 66% to 91% (Iowa Department of Education).

In 2012, third grade reading proficiency for low-income students at Youth Achievement AmeriCorps elementary sites was: Johnson (39%), Harrison (51%), Van Buren (48%), and Grant Wood (38%). Each school is identified as a School in Need of Assistance (SINA) for reading and has a high

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enrollment of low-income students at (85%), (72%), (71%) and (55%) respectively.

Math data for 2011-12 shows 65% of low-income fourth graders in the Cedar Rapids Community School District were proficient in math compared to 86% of their higher income peers; in 8th grade the gap was 54% to 87%; and in 11th grade the gap was 66% to 90% (Iowa Department of Education). As a result of this gap, it is not surprising that the 2011-12 graduation rate for low-income students (75%) was lower than the overall graduation rate for the student population (88%).

According to Gallup, Inc., a national expert on research and evaluation, there are three key indicators of student success in academic settings: hope, engagement, and wellbeing -- with engagement defined as "the involvement in and enthusiasm for school." In 2013, Gallup Student Poll results showed 25% of Cedar Rapids Community School District students were not engaged, comparable to the 28% nationwide average, a factor contributing to the achievement gap (2012).

2B. AMERICORPS AS EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL. The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program aligns with the mission of the Corporation for National Community Service, improving lives and strengthening communities. As demonstrated in the Logic Model, the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program addresses the achievement gap by: (1) providing academic supports to close the achievement gap through Early Literacy Assistants, Elementary Literacy Tutors and Middle School Math Tutors; and (2) promoting engagement in students at enrichment sites to build success in academics.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps Program provides academic supports from birth through middle school through: (1) RED Ahead early literacy program with two full-time members; (2) elementary school literacy tutoring with ten full-time members; and (3) middle school math tutoring with three full-time members.

(1) Literacy Assistants- RED Ahead: Read Every Day to get Ahead is an early literacy program that provides support to low-income parents in order to help their children, ages birth to five, develop language and literacy skills that support kindergarten readiness. Members who serve with RED Ahead, housed in the Urban WIC Clinic (serving the target population of families at or below 185% of

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the Federal Poverty Level), will perform core activities such as: providing early literacy instruction (30 minutes per visit; year-round), assemble and deliver learning kits (estimated four hours per kit; year-round), assist in outreach (four hours per month; year-round), and connect families to resources to meet basic needs (30 minutes - 1 hour per visit; year-round). As a result of this intervention, low-income parents will be better equipped to support their children's literacy development resulting in more low-income children entering kindergarten prepared.

(2) Elementary Literacy Tutors: In 2012, average third grade reading proficiency for low-income students at Youth Achievement AmeriCorps elementary sites was 43%. Members will serve as Elementary Tutors at four schools identified as Schools In Need of Assistance (SINA) for reading. Tutors will perform core activities of one-on-one or small group tutoring with low-income students using Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLi) and PREP (PASS Reading Enhancement Programming) intervention (30 minute sessions; 3-5 sessions per week per student; 36 weeks per year); and provide classroom assistance (1 hour daily; 5 days a week; 36 weeks per year).

(3) Middle School Math Tutors: Three full-time members will serve at McKinley Middle School, identified as a School in Need of Assistance (SINA) for math with 2012 average proficiency rates of low-income students at 49%. Members will provide math tutoring in small group and one-on-one settings based on preliminary benchmark testing (50 minute sessions; 2-3 sessions per week per student; 36 weeks per year) using tools aligned to remediate identified skills.

PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT TO DECREASE THE GAP. The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program partners with three after school enrichment programs to implement strategies found to increase engagement. These strategies are: more personal interactions with adults, preparation for the rigor of middle school, and developing student strengths (Gallup, 2011). Members will serve a minimum of four hours per week year-round in one of the three programs listed below:

(1) Kids on Course (Elementary Literacy Tutors): Kids on Course is an enrichment program housed in two elementary schools. It exposes children to fun and educational opportunities year-round, with a unique focus on family engagement. Six full-time AmeriCorps members will serve at this site coordinating and facilitating programming including: lunch groups, family club, family events, field trips and electives (e.g. ceramics and dance) designed to develop student strengths.

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(2) Jane Boyd programming (Elementary Literacy Tutors): The Jane Boyd Community House provides safe out-of-school time programming. Four full-time AmeriCorps members will provide homework support and facilitate Read Naturally, a research based literacy intervention helping to decrease the achievement gap (2 hours day/2 days a week, year-round).

(3) McKinley STEM Academy (Middle School Math Tutors): To address middle-school math gaps, Youth Achievement AmeriCorps members will engage students in a year-round STEM academy for two hours twice a week and math lab enrichment two additional days of the week for two hours each day. STEM Academy programming includes projects, speakers, and interactive trips to local businesses such as Rockwell Collins, Kirkwood Community College, and Alliant Energy.

EVIDENCE BASE. The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program has strong evidence for all interventions. As the primary intervention of the program focuses on reading assistance, the following studies pertain to this area in the interest of space. Youth Achievement AmeriCorps work is based on extensive research using scripted randomized control trial experimental studies and its own quasi-experimental study. These studies combined present an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence (8 points).

Utilizing a graduate student at the University of Iowa, students at Grant Wood Elementary school were evaluated on the efficacy of AmeriCorps intervention using the PASS Reading Enhancement Program (PREP) and the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLi) compared to basic instruction. As this quasi-experimental study measured the AmeriCorps program itself, the evaluation perfectly models the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program. 190 students were surveyed using the LLi with 19 students receiving the AmeriCorps intervention and 171 students receiving the standard school reading curriculum. The 19 students receiving AmeriCorps intervention were selected because they were already struggling in reading, allowing improvement to be assumed as more difficult for this group compared to improvement of other students. The average (mean) change in reading level was 4.3 levels for those students who worked with AmeriCorps and 3.1 for those who did not -- a 1.2 level increase above average due to AmeriCorps intervention. This study was conducted very recently over the 2012-2013 academic year. The independent samples single-tailed t-test showed that this difference

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was significant; $t(188)=2.432$, $p=.008$, showing a positive effect on students receiving intervention from AmeriCorps members.

Along with this internal study, the scripted tools themselves have experimental evidence behind them. The PASS Reading Enhancement Program (PREP) was established in 1984 as a literacy intervention in both clinical and research situations (Brailsford, Snart, & Das, 1984). As this is a scripted tool, the program model evaluated in the study below closely matches the one AmeriCorps members use in the program. In a recent study of 40 grade school students, the PREP tool yielded significant results in both Word Identification, with a mean increase of 3.94 percentile points over the control and $F(1,38) = 61.08$, $p < 0.001$, and Word Attack, with a mean increase of 10.46 points over the control and $F(1,38) = 24.78$, $p < 0.001$ (Papadopoulos, Das, Parrila, & Kirby, 2003). As this tool was created and validated many times over the course of thirty years, recent re-validations are sparse. That being said, the 2003 study is still fairly recent and provides considerable continued evidence for PREP's efficacy. As shown above, this study yielded very strong findings.

The other literacy tool, the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLi), utilizes 96 separate research references for its research base. As this is a scripted tool, the program model evaluated in the studies below very closely matches the one utilized by this program. In one of the randomized control trial studies measuring those who were given the LLi intervention against a control group of a total sample size of 65 first graders, researchers found statistically significant results favoring those who were given LLi ($F(1, 128) = 31.74$, $p < .001$, $n(\text{squared}) = 0.20$) (Center for Research in Education Policy, An Empirical Study to Evaluate the Efficacy of Fountas & Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Intervention System LLI, 2010). As this study was conducted in 2010, it is very recent. The findings are also very strong, with recipients of LLi achieving a mean gain of 4.46 benchmark levels as compared to 2.63 benchmark levels in the control group LLi (ibid).

2C. MEMBER TRAINING. The United Way provides orientation the first week of a member's service over multiple day-long training sessions at United Way and respective host sites. Topics include: an introduction to AmeriCorps, its mission and values, member benefits and rights, requirements, conditions of service, AmeriCorps prohibited activities, demographics of Cedar Rapids, and local community needs data. Topics at host sites include: training on interventions, organizational history, policies and procedures, and a site tour, and introductions.

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The Program Director at the United Way hosts monthly meetings to cover required topics and topics of interests as determined by member needs assessments. The meeting timeline is as follows: August (Orientation/Volunteer Management), September (Behavior Management), October (Life in AmeriCorps), November (Needs assessment topic), December (Citizenship), January (Needs assessment topic), February (Disaster Preparedness), March (Needs assessment topic), April (Communication), May (Needs assessment topic), June (Citizenship), July (Needs assessment topic), August (Life after AmeriCorps). Needs Assessment topics include: cultural competency, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), meeting facilitation, motivational interviewing, and first aid training. Over the year, the Program Director also connects members to United Way and United Way community partner trainings to immerse members into the community and create a powerful service experience that leads to continued civic engagement.

Members reflect on their AmeriCorps experience and revisit important AmeriCorps rules and regulations at monthly trainings. Prohibited Activities are addressed on a monthly and as needed basis through: (1) scenario based quizzes -- designed to identify prohibited activities and appropriate responses; (2) interactive role playing -- members discuss scenarios involving prohibited activities in pairs and review as a whole group; (3) written responses -- members provide a short answer regarding protocol around a prohibited activity. The Program Director will ensure generated volunteers do not perform prohibited activities through a project verification form that: (a) lists all volunteer activities to be performed; (b) is signed by the site supervisor verifying no prohibited activities will be performed; and (c) provides an overview of allowable/prohibited activities and is given to volunteers the day of the activity.

2D. MEMBER SUPERVISION. Members in the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program have two different levels of formal oversight: The Program Director and the Host Site Supervisor.

The Program Director is the primary coordinator of the program and leads efforts regarding member and partner support; continuous improvement efforts and strategic planning; and program reporting and evaluation. The Program Director directly supports the AmeriCorps team by recruiting members, enrolling members, and providing ongoing member training and team-building opportunities. This includes: collecting weekly tutor logs and monthly progress reports, conducting quarterly host-site

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visits, performing background checks, completing enrollment paperwork, providing overall supervision, and ensuring that AmeriCorps members attend required meetings and trainings.

In addition to providing member support, the Program Director supports Host Site Supervisors, providing assistance and oversight regarding hosting of AmeriCorps members. This includes: communicating with partners regarding AmeriCorps guidelines, grant requirements and performance measures, and providing follow-up support to ensure Host Sites provide adequate supervision of AmeriCorps members. The Program Director creates and distributes Host Site Supervisor handbooks and convenes quarterly Host Site Supervisor meetings to allow for greater collaboration and quality improvements.

The second level of member supervision is provided by the Host Site Supervisor. Site Supervisors are chosen by each Host Site to supervise day-to-day member activities. The Program Director and Host Site Staff have created a Site Supervisor job description to make clear the responsibilities and expectations of the position. These include: observing AmeriCorps members on a regular basis, providing ongoing feedback to AmeriCorps members, setting schedules for AmeriCorps members, providing professional development, and setting performance goals. Prior to a member's start date at a site, the Program Director orients Site Supervisors by providing training with an overview of the AmeriCorps program and its policies and procedures, as well as how to monitor, evaluate and recognize members throughout their service term.

Host sites sign Memoranda of Understanding documenting their key responsibilities, including feedback and supervision, professional development plans, and two formal evaluations during the year.

2E. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. To solidify a strong connection to AmeriCorps, members receive an overview of the history of the Corporation for National Community Service and AmeriCorps at orientation. Members are provided opportunities to reflect on their service at team meetings, with one meeting (Life in AmeriCorps) devoted to members drafting out talking points about their service experience to share with others. Host sites will have AmeriCorps signage visible to the public to create community awareness of the service provided by AmeriCorps members. Members are identifiable at all times by wearing an AmeriCorps emblem. The host site Supervisor

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enforces this requirement.

Organizational Capability

3A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING. The United Way of East Central Iowa has addressed the needs of the Cedar Rapids community for 100 years. Housed at the United Way, the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps Program is managed through multiple tiers of oversight including: the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps Program Director, the Sr. Manager of Education, the Education Initiatives Coordinator, and the Community Building Vice President.

The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps Program Director devotes 95% of her time to the program and is responsible for the day-to-day programming items such as: host site oversight, member supervision and training, reporting, recruiting, strategic planning, maintaining CNCS compliance, and ensuring continuous improvement. The Program Director reports to the Senior Manager of Education who uses 5% of his time to provide direct supervision to the Program Director and assist with budgeting and strategic planning. Together they work with the Community Building Vice President, who devotes 2% of her time to ensure strategic growth and community integration. The Education Initiatives Coordinator provides data collection and reporting support 5% of her time. As a team, the staff members involved has over 5 years experience combined with the program.

From a financial perspective, United Way has significant experience administering Federal Funds both through the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Linn and Jones Counties (since 2010) as well as through its current experience with the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program (since 2011). The United Way Finance Department, including Senior Controller and Senior Coordinator, provides fiscal oversight of the AmeriCorps program with a combined three years of experience managing federal funds. The department uses a stringent internal system of checks and balances to make certain it operates soundly. United Way also receives an annual audit by McGladrey & Pullen, LLP, an independent public accounting firm, which is reviewed by the audit committee and approved by the United Way Board of Directors.

3B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: In order to prevent and detect compliance issues, United Way implements multiple levels of oversight regarding compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations. At a grantee level, United Way staff ensures compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations through: (1) AmeriCorps state trainings; (2) feedback from the Iowa Commission on

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Volunteer Service; and (3) internal and external checks and balances (e.g. financial desk review, member file reviews, payroll compliance processes, etc.). If an issue of non-compliance is found, United Way will report the issue to the Iowa Commission Program Officer and take appropriate action based on the feedback received.

To assure compliance, AmeriCorps Rules and Regulations are thoroughly reviewed at a Host Site and Member level during orientations at the beginning of the year. Host Sites complete a Memorandum of Agreement outlining the terms and conditions of hosting AmeriCorps members, including an agreement that AmeriCorps members will not engage in any AmeriCorps prohibited activities. Members also sign and initial an agreement (Member Service Agreement) in which they pledge not to perform any prohibited activities. Site Supervisors and Members receive a handbook that outlines their duties and responsibilities and restates allowable and unallowable activities. To detect compliance issues, Host Site Supervisors and AmeriCorps members must direct any questions regarding activities or issues of non-compliance to the Program Director. If the Program Director is uncertain if something is allowable, he/she immediately contacts the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service for clarification.

AmeriCorps Members review compliance regulations at monthly team meetings. Host Site Supervisors review compliance regulations quarterly at host site meetings. The Program Director mentions regulations as needed in e-mail and phone correspondence with Youth Achievement AmeriCorps partners. Additionally, the Program Director conducts quarterly site visits at each host site observing AmeriCorps members during their day-to-day duties and completes an evaluation. This evaluation includes questions on the subject of compliance with AmeriCorps Member Regulations. The Program Director will contact the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service Program Officer if issues of non-compliance are identified on any level, and will take appropriate action as instructed.

3C. PAST PERFORMANCE. Over the past two years, the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program has achieved and exceeded all of its National Performance Measures. In that period, 78 students participated in one-on-one tutoring and afterschool programming (Goal of 40); 50 students completed CNCS supported education programs (Goal of 36); and 48 students showed improved academic performance as a result of Youth Achievement AmeriCorps intervention (Goal of 36). In the area of early learning and literacy, 663 children started in a CNCS supported early childhood

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program (Goal of 240); 112 children completed participation in a CNCS supported early childhood program (Goal of 80); and 163 children demonstrated gains in school readiness (Goal of 90).

The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps Program has demonstrably lessened the achievement gap. As a result of elementary literacy tutoring, 94% of children improved their reading scores from fall to spring, with the average growth of 1st graders increasing by 5.6 reading levels, almost one whole reading level above the average growth of 1st graders school-wide. For 4th graders tutored, 50% of students tutored ended the year at or above grade level with 83% of them showing overall improvement. Furthermore, 100% of teachers whose students received literacy support from an AmeriCorps member stated that the member contributed to an increase in literacy skills. At the middle school level, 92 students received 593 hours of tutoring over the course of the year, and 34 students explored science, engineering, and math careers in the summer STEM Academy. Feedback from the Academy showed that some students were interested in pursuing a career in STEM as a result of participation in the program.

Youth Achievement AmeriCorps did not meet all of its program-identified performance measures in year two due to recruitment challenges at the host site. United Way and the site came to a mutual agreement to not partner together for a third year.

The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program filled 130% of the slots awarded in its second programming year, and retained 70% of members who served with the program. Three members were terminated for cause and three released for compelling personal circumstances. To decrease turnover in the future, United Way has improved its recruitment and hiring techniques--including revised interview questions, recruiting for tutors on local school websites, and conducting Skype or Face Time interviews with out-of-state applicants. Additionally, United Way hired a Chief Operating Officer who serves as a resource and mentor for the Program Director in the area of Human Resources.

3D. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. In order to obtain feedback for continuous improvement efforts of the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program, the following actions are taken: (1) Members submit monthly reports stating any ideas they have/anything they need help with; (2) Host sites attend quarterly meetings to discuss best practices and work through challenges; (3) Members and

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Host Site Supervisors provide anonymous feedback on programming via a quarterly survey; (4) Teacher evaluations are administered to get feedback on AmeriCorps member contributions; and (5) the Program Director conducts quarterly site visits to observe and implement change as needed. The Program Director takes all feedback into consideration immediately and documents changes annually in member and host site handbooks.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

4A. COST EFFECTIVENESS. The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps proposal is for fifteen full-time, year-long AmeriCorps positions. This is a 50% increase from the previously funded grant request, with growth proposed in response to program demand and success. United Way of East Central Iowa continues to grow more efficient with its resources, and is committed to providing a stronger program at a lower cost per MSY.

The CNCS cost per MSY is \$13,135, which is \$203 lower per member than the previously funded grant request. United Way and partner sites will achieve this lower MSY by securing \$148,591 of the total costs, resulting in a 43% grantee match. This surpasses the Year 4 program match requirement by almost 20%, and exceeds the match requirement for the next five years. Achieving this match displays the commitment that United Way and local partners have to this program, and to keeping costs as low as possible.

The Program Director utilizes 95% of their time managing the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program; the other 5% will be used to support and carry out the mission of United Way and its Volunteer Engagement program. The Board of Directors and Human Resource Committee review salary and benefits annually and adjust them as needed.

The budget narrative attachment shows funds for operating costs that include: one Program Director, training, supervision and support, member travel, IT support, materials and supplies; and member benefits that include a sufficient living allowance, health insurance, and workers compensation. United Way supports the proposed budget and believes it is an accurate depiction of funds needed to successfully execute the program.

Not only is the proposed budget cost-effective, the interventions provided through the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program are also cost-effective. Investing AmeriCorps members in early

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childhood education provides considerable benefits throughout a child's lifetime. Early interventions have been shown to offset community costs related to dropout rates, teen pregnancies, special education, incarceration, and lost revenue from the lack of a highly skilled workforce (Ounce of Prevention, 2013). Results of elementary reading supports also show great benefits: trends indicate that patterns of achievement and behavior are set by the third grade, which can predict dropping out of school, further contributing to lost community revenue (Hammond, 2007). The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program assists children starting at birth to avoid negative social costs (e.g. high drop-out rate) through interventions that will lead to a stronger workforce in the Cedar Rapids community.

The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps Program is much more cost-effective than alternative programs. Using AmeriCorps members to supplement educational programming at local community agencies provides a great benefit at a much lower cost than if the program operated as a start-up. By collaborating with schools and agencies, the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program does not need to purchase costly supplies and equipment, and it can focus funds on member costs and training. By providing services that supplement, but do not supplant, current work, AmeriCorps members provide a service that either would go undone or would require additional dollars to build similar capacity. If capacity fell at these sites because of a lack of AmeriCorps members, service quality and quantity would decrease, which would lessen the long-term economic benefits.

The Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program is cost-effective because of the reasonable and low-cost budget, sufficient program match, utilization of pre-existing programs and equipment, and high return on investment via interventions in early education and workforce development.

4B. BUDGET ADEQUACY. As indicated in the budget narrative, the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program totals to \$148,591. United Way has currently secured the following non-CNCS resource commitments: (1) \$30,524 in United Way in-kind contributions including: staff support, technical assistance, supplies, occupancy, and staff training; (2) \$22,500 in partner in-kind donations and (3) \$51,000 in partner cash contributions.

United Way is presently working to secure the additional \$44,567 for successful program

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implementation. In partnership with Iowa State University -- Extension and Outreach, United Way is working to secure \$6,000 through a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant. This grant will help build the STEM Academy that AmeriCorps members facilitate at McKinley Middle School. United Way also applied for a \$25,000 Interactive Intelligence grant to support the program. If these grants are not awarded, United Way will secure the additional funds to support this program through businesses that support the United Way campaign and/or through foundations, groups, or organizations interested in financing education initiatives. United Way is also making targeted asks for contributions from businesses in the community who have a vested interest in the STEM workforce. Based on expressed interest and the community climate, United Way is confident the total amount of non-CNCS funding required is attainable and will be secured prior to the 2014-2015 programming year.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

In the fall of 2013, the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program completed a quasi-experimental quantitative study on the Elementary Tutor literacy intervention as described in section 2b. The intervention consists of one-on-one or small group tutoring using the scripted Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLi) and PREP (PASS Reading Enhancement Programming) intervention with 3-5 sessions a week/student (30 minutes per session; 36 weeks/year). Outcomes anticipated from the intervention include increasing reading scores of students so that more low-income students are proficient in their grade to reduce the achievement gap.

The program evaluation design used to evaluate this outcome was a quasi-experimental quantitative study, using a pretest and posttest control group design. The research investigated the impact of research-based reading interventions, LLi and PREP, among first through fourth-grade students who were at risk for reading failure. The research question posed is: Does the AmeriCorps literacy intervention using the LLi and PREP provide statistically significant results in increasing literacy rates against a control group of similar peers? To test this question, data was collected from students through the LLi both at the beginning and the end of every year to determine success of the intervention.

Data was collected using the internal data collection process of the LLi where all students take a reading test both at the beginning of the year and at the end. 190 students were surveyed using the LLi with 19 students receiving the AmeriCorps intervention and 171 students receiving the standard school

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reading curriculum. The average (mean) change in reading level was 4.3 levels for those students who worked with AmeriCorps and 3.1 for those who did not -- a 1.2 level difference due to AmeriCorps intervention. The independent samples single-tailed t-test showed that this difference was significant; $t(188)=2.432, p=.008$.

From this information the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program will continue to invest in early-grade reading interventions and will consider expansion into further elementary schools. The program also plans to evaluate further with a greater sample size for more precise results.

Amendment Justification

n/a

Clarification Summary

Year One: 2014-2015 Grant Clarification Question Responses

A. BUDGET CLARIFICATIONS

1. Section C - Staff Travel - Please confirm the calculation for the travel to CNCS meetings, it appears incorrect.

The amount for travel is accurate at \$1525 and calculations were corrected in the budget narrative.

2. Section G - Staff Training - What costs are included in the ICVS Midwest conference?

Only registration costs for the ICVS Midwest conference (renamed in the budget narrative as Regional Cluster Training) are included in this line item. Based on registration costs of the conference last year, anticipated cost of registration is: $\$43.75/\text{day} \times (4 \text{ days}) = \150.00 total. The remaining costs (travel, per diem, hotel) are included in the 'Travel' portion of the budget narrative.

3. Section G- Member Training- Please include the number of trainings, trainers, and cost per trainer for the member training line item.

There will be 10 monthly trainings which will utilize an outside trainer at approximately \$50/training

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for a total cost of \$500. This change has been made in the budget narrative.

4. Section H - What costs are included in the evaluation line item?

The evaluator will be contracted in year 2 of the grant, as stated in the budget, at \$5,000. The evaluator is budgeted at 10 days x \$500/day (cost including all supplies, travel, meal expenses incurred, and consultation with statistician). This change has been made in the budget narrative.

5. Section I - Please clarify the purpose of the Iowa Commission management fee line item.

This line item has been relabeled "Member Timekeeping System Fee". The \$18.00/member included in the budget is the cost per member to use the Iowa Grants timekeeping system for tracking AmeriCorps hours.

6. Section II -- B. Please clarify calculation for health care.

The calculation is as follows: $\$151.25/\text{month} \times 12 \text{ months} \times 15 \text{ full time members} = \$27,225$.

7. The narrative refers to management positions at the United Way with time allocations and they are not identified in the budget. Please include all costs referred to in the narrative in the budget. If those costs are not part of the budget then remove such specific time allocations.

The time allocations attributed to various positions at the United way (Vice President, Education Manager, Education Coordinator), other than that of the program director, are included in Section III "Administrative/In-Kind Costs" under the "United Way in-kind contributions" line item as "staff support".

B. PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATIONS

1. The Executive Summary refers to 100 volunteers being leveraged but this is not identified further in the application. Please clarify the role of the 100 volunteers in delivering these interventions or remove this reference if their role is not significant.

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100 volunteers will be leveraged through the Youth Achievement AmeriCorps program. These volunteers provide much needed support to enrichment programming provided by Youth Achievement AmeriCorps host sites, which will increase capacity to serve students, families and clients. Examples of this support includes: support for family nights/enrichment activities with Kids on Course, volunteer support in stuffing food backpacks for schools that utilize the 'Backpack program'; support preparing outreach mailings for RED Ahead; support in STEM initiatives including volunteering at STEM Academy activities and the schools' STEM festival which engages Youth Achievement AmeriCorps families. All volunteers are oriented on the program mission and vision and prohibited activities for volunteers.

2. Confirm that the program meets the requirements of an AmeriCorps tutoring program, including:

a) The Tutor must meet the following qualifications: High School diploma or its equivalent, or a higher degree;

Youth Achievement AmeriCorps tutors are all required to have received a High School diploma or its equivalent, or a higher degree.

b) successful completion of pre- and in-service specialized training, as required in 45 CFR § 2522.940.

All Youth Achievement AmeriCorps members must successfully complete pre- and in-service specialized training, as required in 45 CFR § 2522.940.

3) Please confirm that all pre-service and in-service tutor training is research-based and consistent with the instructional content of the local education agency and with State academic content standards.

Tutors receive pre and in-service training on the specific interventions they provide at their specific host sites. For example, to administer the PREP curriculum at the elementary level, AmeriCorps members receive pre-service training by a certified PREP trainer with other school-staff. On an ongoing basis, the AmeriCorps members are observed by individuals who are certified in PREP who

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provide feedback on their performance. All AmeriCorps members receive ongoing training through in-school staff development training that is research-based and consistent with the instructional content of the local education agency and in alignment with State academic content standards. Examples of this include training on: Jolly Phonics, Common Core Standards, PBIS (Positive Behavior Support), Mimio and Read Naturally.

4. Please confirm the tutors are supervised by individuals with expertise in tutoring.

At all sites, AmeriCorps members are supervised by either licensed teachers or instructional coaches in the district. All host site supervisors provide tutoring and instructional intervention on a daily basis in their positions, and provide tutor training and guidance to the AmeriCorps members at their site in addition to formal curriculum training that AmeriCorps members receive as described above.

C. PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATIONS

1. Please demonstrate that the students being counted in ED2 are coming from schools in which the largest percentage of students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and/or have special or exceptional needs, as defined in the ED2 performance measure.

Each school that has been identified to receive Youth Achievement AmeriCorps intervention is a school with a majority of economically disadvantaged students (majority of students eligible for free or reduced lunch). These include: Johnson (85% economically disadvantaged), Harrison (72% economically disadvantaged), Van Buren (71% economically disadvantaged), Grant Wood (55% economically disadvantaged) and McKinley (50% economically disadvantaged).

2. Please identify for ED2 in the Described Instrument what is defined as completed the program to be counted in the result for ED2.

To complete the tutoring program students must attend 12 or more tutor sessions with AmeriCorps members.

3. Please confirm the data for academic improvement in math meets the requirements for ED5 for pre

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and post testing using standardized tests.

The data used to measure academic improvement in math as described in ED5 are standardized tests utilized by the Cedar Rapids Community School District. These standardized tests are the SLE (student learning expectations) tests administered school-wide and the Iowa Assessments which are administered at a state-level. There are pre-tests and post-tests to measure growth. Both tests measure student progress towards mastery of state common core mathematics standards, which the program is trying to improve through its intervention. Each test is grade level specific and has demonstrated validity and reliability.

4. Please clarify if the students reported in ED27 are also reported in ED5 or if these are the beneficiaries of a specific intervention being reported in this measure that is not reported in ED5. If the intervention that results in academic engagement is different than ED5, then create a different performance measure for that intervention.

The students reported in ED27 are a subset of those reported in ED5.

5. The early literacy measure is not aligned properly as the outputs for ED20 or ED21 should include either the outcome of ED23, ED24 or ED25. Please review the Performance Measure instructions to create an aligned measure and ensure appropriate data collection or remove this measure if the data cannot be collected.

We have amended the items previously listed as ED20 and ED21 as Program Identified outputs because we still believe these data points capture information that is useful in telling the overall impact of Youth Achievement AmeriCorps and the individuals we reach. The decision to change them to program identified measures, as opposed to adding ED23, was made currently because the projected number of individuals we could report on with the ED23 or ED24 measure would be lower than that of the original ED20 or ED21 number because the screening tool we utilized (Ages and Stages questionnaire) is given to a sample rather than the whole RED Ahead population.

D. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS

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1. 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?

Our program attempts to recruit a minimum of 10% of our slots for members of disabilities. We include language in our position descriptions that states that individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply. Additionally, staff is informed of what questions are appropriate to ask of individuals who are applying and there is a specific question in our interview process regarding ability to perform minimum essential functions.

2. In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies.) In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If you would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs your program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to your budget.

We do not wish to request any additional slots.

E. MSY WITH NO PROGRAM FUNDS ATTACHED (NO COST MSYS)

Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs. These additional no-cost MSYs are national service positions in which no grant funds will be awarded. In other words, grantees could receive additional AmeriCorps positions but no additional grant funds. Programs will be responsible for using their own or other resources to pay program costs, member support costs and other operating expenses. Keep in mind that full-time AmeriCorps program costs include expenditures for the AmeriCorps living allowance, health care and criminal history checks. Programs are not required to pay living

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allowances or cover health care for less-than-full-time members.

If you would like to request No-Cost MSYs, please edit your budget as appropriate (for example you may need to revise line items for member gear or criminal history checks).

We do not wish to request any additional slots.

F. Healthcare

1. Please provide the name of the health insurance provider you are proposing to use to insure your AmeriCorps members.

At this time, we have not selected another insurance provider and therefore will tentatively plan to use our current provider, Summit America, which provides us insurance through the Corps Network.

2. How did you select the provider? (for example, direct marketing ,through the Health Insurance Marketplace or other means)

We have used this provider for the past three years and identified them as offering insurance for AmeriCorps members through a list of insurance providers.

3. Does your proposed budget for member healthcare provide for Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) coverage, as defined by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), for your full-time members?

Currently our insurance for this programming year did not meet the requirements for Minimum Essential Coverage. Members who elected into our insurance this year had to also enroll in a supplemental plan offered on the exchange. We are not certain of how our budget will compare to the cost incurred for a plan that meets the ACA requirements, but it is the best estimation based on the information we have now.

4. If not, what adjustment to your budget is necessary in order for you to provide Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC)?

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We are not yet certain how the new ACA will affect the costs of providing health care next year, but we anticipate if there is any change in the budget it will be an increase in the amount needed to cover insurance costs for members.

5. If you do not have enough information to answer question (4), please explain why not and/or what prevented you from being able to obtain the necessary information.

We have actively participated in calls with other programs across the state to identify options to mitigating this issue in the next programming year. Like most other programs we are waiting for guidance on what will be considered acceptable coverage to provide, and what options are available for programs.

Continuation Changes

n/a

Grant Characteristics