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Executive Summary

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Dubuque will have 32 AmeriCorps members who will provide supplementary reading instruction to 600 at-risk children during the school year. At the end of the 1st program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible increasing reading scores of 150 Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade children. One AmeriCorps member will be responsible for planning and implementing teen programming for at-risk youth and will engage 50 teens on a monthly basis. Seventeen AmeriCorps members will engage 200 youth in academic summer enrichment programs in Dubuque, Iowa, thereby decreasing summer learning loss. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 300 volunteers that will be engaged in Days of Service activities.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$210,581 will be matched with \$177,391 including \$97,642 in local funds.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

2. RATIONAL AND APPROACH/PROGRAM DESIGN

a. PROBLEM/NEED:

Only 72% of Dubuque's 3rd through 5th graders are proficient in reading comprehension according to results collected from the Iowa Testing Program (ITP) in 2010. In 2011, community members and agencies in Dubuque began the 3rd Grade Reading Coalition in order to make sure all students read at grade level by third grade. To achieve this, the coalition developed goals around school readiness, summer learning loss and attendance. Dubuque's vision is to have at least 90% of our students in grades 3, 4 and 5 be proficient in reading comprehension.

Like many Midwestern cities, Dubuque has experienced a demographic shift and schools in particular are becoming more diverse. While the number of young people age nine and under represents just 12% of the population, this age group has greater diversity than the rest of the community: 82% white, 8% black, 5 % Hispanic/Latino and 2.6 % other. When we break down the reading proficiency statistics even further we begin to see a very disturbing trend, of the students proficient in reading, just 49% of African American Youth in grades 3, 4 and 5, 40% in grades 6, 7 and 8 and just 25% in grade 11 are proficient in reading.

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Dubuque's child poverty rate is 13 % (vs. 15.6% statewide and 21.6% nationally); for young people under 5 it is 20.6 % (vs. 19.6% statewide and 23.0% nationally).

Another issue contributing to low achievement in reading proficiency is summer learning loss among at-risk youth. According to Chapter 281-Iowa Administrative Code 12.2(256) the definition of at-risk means "any identified student who needs additional support and who is not meeting or not expected to meet the established goals of the educational program (academic, personal/social, career/vocational). At-risk students include but are not limited to students in the following groups: homeless children and youth, dropouts, returning dropouts, and potential dropouts."

National Summer Learning Association believes all young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. More than half of the achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college (Alexander et al, 2007). A 2007 study by researchers at John Hopkins University examined data from a nationally-representative sample, found the achievement gap at ninth grade mainly traces to difference in summer learning during the elementary school years. A study in 2004 found that all achievement gaps among students tend to be exacerbated by summer breaks. While Dubuque has not collected this data on a large scale, school officials have confirmed that summer learning loss is apparent in Dubuque.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS/EVIDENCE BASE AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT:

THEORY OF CHANGE/LOGIC MODEL

As shown in the logic model, by providing AmeriCorps support to at-risk youth in the Dubuque Community School District we will increase the reading proficiency of our most at-risk youth. A total of 75% of our MSY's are in our identified performance measures, thus creating a strong probability for success.

Members will provide supplementary reading instruction based upon LEAD 21 Curriculum to children in grades Kindergarten through 3. These students will be identified as needing assistance through the Response to Intervention (RtI) process. This process has three tiers of interventions. Identified

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students will receive Tier 2 assistance a minimum of three times per week for 15-30 minutes per session and will continue receiving assistance for at least 10 weeks/30 sessions and until the child has been reassessed and results show the child performing at expected grade level. There are thirteen elementary schools in Dubuque, each of these schools will receive the support of two AmeriCorps members, one half-time and one quarter-time. An additional six members will be split up according to the greatest need of the school district. In total, members will provide supplementary instruction to 600 students within the district. A total of 400 students will complete the tutoring program as described above (10 weeks/30 sessions or until performing at grade level) and 150 children out of the 400 will show progress toward grade level reading proficiency based upon beginning and end year DIBELS assessment scores. In addition, we expect to see 360 of the students receiving support improve attendance by attending school at least 90% of the time. Increasing attendance and receiving more academic time in school, combined with reading interventions, will result in at-risk children reading at grade level by third grade.

Throughout the school year we will have one member at the Multicultural Family Center providing out of school support to at-risk youth and teens. This member will plan and implement programming which will take place 2-3 times per week, further engaging youth in academic and social programs. With regular attendance, approximately 50 youth and teens will form meaningful relationships with adults in our community. They will become more engaged in our community, increase their self-esteem, and actively pursue post-secondary educational opportunities and careers.

In the summer, members will lead Future Talk. Future Talk is a free program intended for at-risk youth age 13-17. This program provides young people the challenge of community based learning by engaging and serving the community, learning about and experiencing nature and doing meaningful work in natural areas for a stipend. Members will be team leaders for 20-40 at-risk teens who will participate in Future Talk. Programming begins the second week of June and ends the first full week of August. Throughout this time they will work on academics and also do conservation projects throughout the community. The program combines natural areas management with the use of the Leopold Education Project's non-traditional curriculum. Partnering with the Dubuque Community School District, students chosen to participate in this program are also eligible to receive an English or science credit which ultimately helps them meet graduation requirements in order to graduate on time.

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Summer members will also provide educational and recreational programs through the local library, Summer Academy, and neighborhood parks. A total of 200 at-risk children will participate in the programs being offered. Activities will vary from weekly reading programs to daily academic and recreational programs. Individual supplementary reading support will also continue through the summer for students enrolled in the Summer Academy. Summer programming ranges in length from 6-8 weeks. Children participating in the summer programming will maintain or improve their reading skills.

By pairing a strong school year program with increased educational programs during the summer we will meet CNCS's high expectations of improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged individuals, especially children. Through our summer program we will offer support and educational activities that address the "summer slide." Through both school year and summer programs we will engage our most at-risk youth population in educational opportunities, economic support and environmental learning that will provide them with enhanced reading skills, a deeper sense of community, and a greater sense of pride. In the long term we expect to see children reading at grade level by the end of third grade, at-risk youth graduating from high school, pursuing post-secondary education, becoming employed and overall being engaged in our community.

EVIDENCE BASED

Adult-delivered, one-to-one instruction is considered by many to be an ideal teaching practice especially when used with students who are considered at-risk for school failure. Unfortunately, due to logistical and time constraints common across general education classrooms, teachers rarely are able to provide this type of individualized instruction. In response, many schools and parents have employed tutors (e.g., certified teachers, paraprofessionals, or volunteers) to provide additional instruction for their students.

The Dubuque Community School District utilizes the LEAD 21 reading curriculum; all components within LEAD 21 are built around evidence based research. In addition, the District utilizes Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means of identifying and working with students in need. "RtI is an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasingly intensified services using

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progress monitoring data" (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006, p. 2).

In 2009, the Institute of Educational Sciences and the What Works Clearinghouse published a practice guide titled "Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades." There were five main recommendations from this guide:

The first recommendation is to screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the year. Regularly monitor the progress of students who are at elevated risk for developing reading disabilities.

The second recommendation is to provide differentiated reading instruction for all students based on assessments of students' current reading levels (tier 1).

The third recommendation is to provide intensive, systematic instruction on up to three foundational reading skills in small groups to students who score below the benchmark on universal screening. Typically these groups meet between three and five times a week for 20-40 minutes (tier 2).

The fourth recommendation is to monitor the progress of tier 2 students at least once a month. Use these data to determine whether students still require intervention. For those still making insufficient progress, school-wide teams should design a tier 3 intervention plan.

The fifth recommendation is to provide intensive instruction daily that promotes the development of various components of reading proficiency to students who show minimal progress after reasonable time in tier 2 small group instruction (tier 3).

According to the panel of experts, Russell Gersten (Chair) Instructional Research Group, Donald Compton-Vanderbilt University, Carol M. Connor-Florida State University, and Joseph Dimino-Instructional Research Group, there is strong evidence supporting tier 2 interventions. There are 11 studies that met WWC standards or met with reservations. These studies on supplemental instruction in reading support tier 2 intervention as a way to improve reading performance in decoding. Six studies showed positive effects on decoding, (Ebaugh (2000); Gunn et al. (2000); Jenkins et al.

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(2004); Lennon and Slesinski (1999); Vadasy, Sanders, and Peyton (2005); Vaughn et al. (2006). Of these studies, four showed effects on both decoding and comprehension, (Gunn et al. (2000); Jenkins et al. (2004); Vadasy, Sanders, and Peyton (2005); Vaughn et al. (2006).

According to the RtI Action Network, another study in 2008 by Vellutino, F. R., Scanlon, D. M., Zhang, H., & Schatschneider, C. was conducted using response to kindergarten and first grade intervention to identify children at-risk for long-term reading difficulties. The purpose of the study was to answer two questions: What is the effectiveness of an RtI model on literacy development relative to normal reader controls?; Do RtI measures more effectively distinguish between continued-risk and no-longer-at-risk children than kindergarten-screening measures, measures of intelligence, or measure of reading-related cognitive abilities?

A total of 462 students were identified as at-risk in kindergarten. Four different models were compared. The predictors for the first model were measures from the psychometric screening battery administered at the beginning of kindergarten. The predictors for the other three models were RtI measures of incremental growth in emergent literacy skills, along with baseline measures of these skills to control for correlation with the composite measure used to classify the two groups. These variables were initially identified with hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) procedures.

Of the total sample of at-risk children who received intervention through the project and were available at the end of 3rd grade, 84% were meeting grade-level expectations in reading by the end of 1st grade, either through kindergarten (Tier 2) intervention alone or through both kindergarten and 1st grade (Tier 3) intervention. In contrast, only 16% of the children identified as at-risk at the beginning of kindergarten demonstrated substantial difficulty with reading at the end of 2nd and 3rd grade.

According to the Journal of Educational Psychology, and authors Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, in 2000, a meta-analysis study (a study that empirically synthesizes several other studies, to be confident in the research) of supplemental, adult-instructed, one-to-one reading interventions for elementary students at risk for reading failure was conducted. This study suggests well-trained adult volunteers in small-group settings can serve an important function in helping struggling learners to read, and can do so in a way that is more cost effective than expensive one-to-one reading programs

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that require the instruction to be led by a certified teacher or specialist.

According to Terzian, Moore & Hamillton, 2009 in the white paper: Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children & Youth, there is a lack of experimental research to measure the impacts of summer learning programs on children and youth. At the same time, preliminary evidence from the Terzian paper suggests good summer learning programs can improve the educational outcomes of economically disadvantaged students. Strategies for preventing summer learning loss include: (a) extending effective school-year, out-of-school time programs that have academic components through the summer; (b) identifying effective summer learning programs and approaches; (c) improving existing programs by incorporating characteristics of effective and promising programs; and (d) developing models of extended-year or year-round schooling.

c. MEMBER TRAINING

The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps program has a strong training program. Members are provided 12 hours of AmeriCorps orientation in early September. Training topics covered at orientation are: general information on the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service; member's rights and responsibilities; code of conduct; prohibited activities; Drug Free Workplace Act; grievance procedures; suspension and termination procedures; and sexual harassment and discrimination policies. Members will be provided three hours of communication/team building activities by participating in a low/high ropes course. This allows members to bond as a team, work together to accomplish a common goal, and learn various communication techniques.

Orientation training is provided by the Program Director. Members will also be trained on student logs (data collection), monthly reports, time sheets, and other program specific information. The training will conclude with signing of member service agreements which includes another review of prohibited activities.

Throughout the year each member will receive training on all topics required from the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. Members will meet on a monthly basis. During these monthly/team meetings members will discuss their success

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and challenges in their position; they will receive support, suggestions and feedback from their fellow members. Training topics will be conducted by the Program Director or a Community Member. The training schedule is as follows: September- Orientation and Tutoring; October-Effective Citizenship; November-Volunteer Management; December-Open topic/review; January-Tutoring refresher; February-Disaster Response (How to Operate a VRC); March- Portfolio Completion; April-Life After AmeriCorps.

The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps program has a strong partnership with the Dubuque Community School District. The school district staff with professional expertise will provide training to members in September on the following topics: LEAD 21, the current reading curriculum used in the district; Response to Intervention (RtI); tutoring tips and techniques; how to handle challenging behaviors; and the importance of student attendance. Members will be given the opportunity to practice their supplementary reading techniques before being placed with children and will be provided follow up training in December and January.

Throughout the member's term, the program director will meet with both member and site supervisor to assure member activities continue to fall within the scope of allowable activities. These discussions will take place at monthly team meetings, midterm reviews, site visits, and in general discussions via email/phone as needed.

Members will be recruiting volunteers for days of service activities. Members will consult with the Program Director prior to the events to make sure the activities being performed do not violate the prohibited activities identified through CNCS. In addition, the Program Director will provide a scenario at each monthly meeting for the members to discuss and decide if the activity being presented would be acceptable under the guidelines or prohibited. By doing so, members will understand the importance of the prohibited activities and have concrete examples of what is and is not acceptable.

d. MEMBER SUPERVISION

Member supervision is a combination of supervision from the AmeriCorps Program Director and each Site Supervisor. Members are provided day to day supervision at their assigned site.

Due to our members having access to vulnerable populations, members will have a three part

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background check initiated prior to their start date. If results are not received prior to placement, then the site supervisor will accompany the member at the service site until all clearance is completed.

At the beginning of the program year the Program Director trains each site supervisor on behavior expectations of the member, prohibited activities, non-duplication, and how to proceed in contacting the Program Director should problems arise.

Sites conduct weekly or bi-weekly meetings with their assigned member in order to provide in-depth, clear guidance to the member, as well as, review of the child's progress the member is working with.

In addition, midterm reviews are conducted on each member in January and February. The midterm review consists of an evaluation of the AmeriCorps guidelines and expectations provided by the Program Director, an evaluation of member duties on site provided by the Site Supervisor, as well as an opportunity for the member to evaluate the service site and give feedback. This review is conducted at the member service site with the member, AmeriCorps Program Director and Site Supervisor in attendance.

The Program Director and Site Supervisor provide an end of year service evaluation on each member. The Program Director has an open door policy and members may contact the Director via in-person meeting, email, phone or text, at any time for any reason.

e. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

Partners In Learning AmeriCorps members identify themselves as an AmeriCorps member first by going through member orientation and learning what it means to serve with AmeriCorps.

Each member receives AmeriCorps logo polo or t-shirt, as well as, a photo id which includes the AmeriCorps logo, these two items consist of their "uniform." Members are required to wear their name tag at all times when providing service and their AmeriCorps logo apparel once per week or more frequently if clean, so community members will be able to identify them as an AmeriCorps member. Repeated failure to do so will result in the member being disciplined.

Partners in Learning AmeriCorps is part of the Dubuque National Service Partnership which

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collaborates monthly to discuss and plan service activities across all National Service Programs in the area. Members participate in three service projects throughout their term of service and are placed on teams with other National Service Members in Dubuque.

All service sites are provided a laminated "AmeriCorps Members Serve Here" sign and are instructed to display it in a prominent location.

During the member's term of service there are several opportunities for members to speak about their experience. Members are invited to participate in outreach events the AmeriCorps Director is involved in, thus having the Director initially help guide the new member when publicly speaking. During monthly team meetings the Program Director provides activities which allow members to take on leadership roles in their small groups, thereby increasing their confidence and leadership abilities. At the end of service each member will develop and present a portfolio of their service experience to all members, Program Director, Site Supervisors, and other key partners within our program.

Organizational Capability

3. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps program has been in existence since 2000 and has been sponsored by the City of Dubuque since 2007. The City of Dubuque is a Municipal Corporation governed by an elected mayor and six-member council. The City relies on its expertise personnel to plan and implement the grant and provides in-kind administration, personnel and fiscal support. The City Council reviews the grant and budget documents each year with the AmeriCorps staff and city Manager. The City of Dubuque has a number of federal grant awards, including HUD grants, and in 2012 successfully managed \$24,366,673 in federal funds.

The AmeriCorps Program Director, Deb Bell has been the Director for three years and has an additional three years prior experience as a RSVP Program Director which managed a grant from CNCS. Marie Ware, Leisure Services Program Manager oversees the activities of the AmeriCorps Program Director and members. She manages a department with 33 full-time, 159 part-time/seasonal employees, and a variety of volunteers. The operating budget of the Leisure Service Department is over \$5 million. Marie has been involved in grant writing and has been the successful recipient of over \$2.5 million in grants. She has been directly or indirectly involved with grant award

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management for over twenty years for three cities and a non-profit agency.

Ken TeKippe, City Finance Director, oversees the accounting and fiscal management of the grant. Ken's expertise has contributed to multiple prestigious honors and accomplishments for the City including a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for twenty-five consecutive years.

b. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Partners in Learning Program places great importance on compliance and accountability and prides itself in having a reputation as a high functioning, low risk program. Through service agreements and initial training at each site the Program Director ensures site supervisors and all staff involved with an AmeriCorps member is fully aware and understands the prohibited activities and non-duplication guidelines.

Through monthly communication (trainings, reports, phone calls, meetings, etc..) with members and site supervisors, the Program Director will monitor the activities being performed. Should a compliance issue be suspected or arise, the Program Director will hold a meeting with all parties involved to review guideline and design a corrective action plan. If compliance issues continue to be a concern the AmeriCorps member will be removed from their assigned placement until the site is able to ensure all activities fall within the AmeriCorps guidelines.

The Partners in Learning Program ensures all job descriptions for service activities follow AmeriCorps guidelines. Service sites have an open door policy with the Program Director so the Director can visit any site at any time without prior appointment.

c. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEES AND FORMER GRANTEES ONLY

During the past three years the Partners in Learning Program has focused on working with children in reading and math in grades K-12. Our performance measures were met in all areas except one where we missed our target by 75 students. Our goal was to provide tutoring to 900 students, have 500 complete the tutoring program and 300 show improvements. We worked with 1291 students, had 574 complete the program and 225 showed improvements.

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Various factors resulted in the last target not being met. High transient rates among a few of our schools meant some students met the definition of completing the tutoring program but moved schools before the final assessment was made, therefore test scores were not available. Another factor is that our members are working with the most at-risk, below grade level performing students, throughout the year some of these students qualified for special needs services. Lastly, in the past three years we have moved from subjective data measurements (surveys, opinions, observations) to objective data (actual test results) which means our results are based upon actual performance not observation, this has resulted in a lower number of students showing growth than expected.

Our program has not had any compliance issues or areas of weakness identified in the past year.

Our enrollment rate from 2012 was over 100%. Our retention rate was 88.2%. During the course of the year we had 6 members out of 51 fail to complete the program. One member was dismissed due to quality performance issues, one member passed away during his term, and the other four members chose to discontinue their term due to college/work issues.

As a program that hires college students we are continually working to retain these members. The Program Director stays in communication with all members and works with members on an individual basis to help with schedule conflicts. Often times it is when second semester begins that members who are college students realize they did not set up or could not set up their college schedule to accommodate service. The Program Director is currently holding conversations with the local colleges to educate them on how the program operates, the benefit it provides to the student, and what the college can do to help. It is our hope that through these conversations colleges can better assist students who want to be part of our program.

d. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Partners in Learning Program will utilize various forms of assessment throughout the year to gauge success and make adjustments accordingly.

Internally, members will evaluate all training sessions and give feedback pertaining to the effectiveness of the speaker, knowledge gained, and information still needed. This will allow the Program Director to effectively plan for future meetings along with adjusting speakers and trainers for

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future sessions.

Members will be collecting data on all students they are tutoring. This information will be used to determine the results of our performance measures. We will collect information on who we work with, how often we work with them, and attendance.

Externally, service sites will be responsible for testing students and compiling results. We will use this data to make adjustments in how service is performed and what additional training needs to take place. Testing will occur at least three times per year.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

4. COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY COST EFFECTIVENESS

The cost per MSY is \$12,895. The CNCS grant share remains the same as the previous three years at \$210,581; however our cost per MSY increased \$266 due to restructuring our program model.

The reason for this increase is because our program is focused on one major outcome: Increasing reading proficiency in students. In the past, our focus was on academic mentoring in reading and math and also providing safe places and outreach to children and families. Because of the highly competitive nature of this grant and our community focus on Third Grade Reading Initiative we feel the need for member support is greatest in the schools and in academic summer programming.

This means instead of providing 12,000 hours of support to our schools we will be providing 21,600 hours in effort to make the most impact. Our partners pay \$3 per member hour as cash match for member placement. The Dubuque Community School District is our strongest supporter, in past years their financial cash match was approximately \$36,000. If we continued with the \$3 per member hour match it would increase the school district portion to \$64,800. Financially, this is not possible for the District. We have been able to negotiate a flat rate of cash match with the Dubuque Community School District in the amount of \$45,000. The District also provides us with in-kind supervision of our members in the amount of \$37,440 as well as an additional \$4500 of in-kind training by certified teachers and staff. Because our cash match will be a little lower this year and our overall match is high at 42% we had to request a slight increase of financial support from CNCS.

The Partners in Learning Program has secured the following resources: Due to financial shortfalls and

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the AmeriCorps focus on the Third Grade Reading Initiative our sponsor, The City of Dubuque, will financially support the AmeriCorps program in the amount of \$20,000. This is the first year our sponsor has provided this support. Our sponsor also provides personnel, budget, financial and program administration as in-kind services. In addition we will secure \$77,642 in cash match from partners and \$37,440 from in-kind supervision. In previous year's, Leisure Services with the City of Dubuque has paid the full living allowance for 5 minimum-time members, this year they will increase that support to 8 minimum-time members, thus increasing their cash match from \$11,135 to \$17,816. Clarke University is also a strong partner and will provide in-kind office, internet, phone, and training space.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

5. EVALUATION SUMMARY OR PLAN

a. EVALUATION REPORT

The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps Program completes a number of self-evaluations and continuous improvement processes.

Trainings: After each training members fill out a critique/evaluation sheet to rank the training topic and clarity, speaker effectiveness, what was learned and what they still want to know about the topic. Throughout the past year, all trainings earned a ranking of a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being high, with the exception of one training. The training topic that scored the weakest (3) was on the topic of volunteer management. Feedback received indicated low scores due to the delivery of the training through a power point presentation. The Program Director will seek other creative outlets to including small group exercises, guest speakers, etc... in order to deliver a training that is more engaging.

Site Reviews: Members are evaluated mid-way through their term of service on their volunteer duties at their site as well as an evaluation of meeting the AmeriCorps requirements. Members then fill out a confidential evaluation of their site. These evaluations showed high scores for all sites.

Evaluations include information on the site supervisor on the following: Expressing clear expectations of the AmeriCorps member and his/her duties; overall communication; resolving concerns; being easily accessible to the AmeriCorps member; being interested in the AmeriCorps member is doing; ensures the member is knowledgeable and comfortable with the site's policies and procedures; ensures

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adequate training; values the AmeriCorps member; and is knowledgeable about AmeriCorps and the Partners in Learning Program.

All sites are also provided with two site visits throughout the year. One at the beginning of the school year to review guidelines and answer questions and another midway through the service year.

Exit Interviews: At the end of every term members are evaluated on their performance and also fill out an evaluation on their experience throughout the year and suggestions for program improvement.

Members submit a portfolio of their experience and reflect upon how they have impacted their community and how they have been impacted as a result of their AmeriCorps experience. Most members report that volunteer service will become a lifelong commitment as a result of their AmeriCorps experience. In addition, members always comment that their service has changed their life, either by a revelation of the career they want to pursue or by experiencing profound moments while working with children in need.

Civic Engagement Survey: Members take a pre and post Civic Engagement Survey, results from this past year indicate that 92.5% of members felt their service had a positive impact on themselves. 95% rated their experience as an Iowa AmeriCorps member as excellent. 97.4% felt their experience had a positive effect on their community.

Student assessments: In conjunction with the Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) the Partners in Learning program strives to provide the most accurate information on student achievement as possible. In previous grant years student achievement was evaluated by the AmeriCorps member and the teacher working with the students. The evaluation was a ranking of how much or how little the teacher or member thought the student improved. After looking at the data the program director held conversations with the Dubuque Community School District to determine how we could work together to use standardized tests as measurements of success of students we are working with.

The last two years the Partners in Learning program has utilized MAP test scores from students in reading and math. Results indicated that we are making progress with students but perhaps not as much progress as we intended. Due to this evaluation we were able to work with DCSD to create a

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plan for success for the future. That plan entails the essence of this grant, focusing our efforts on K-3 and summer learning. We will also change our assessment tool next year from MAP tests results to DIBELS. We will be able to monitor children throughout the year with DIBELS instead of just the beginning and end of the year.

During this next grant cycle the Partners in Learning Program will hire an outside evaluator to review the program and all of its components.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

Year One: 2014-2015 Clarification Responses

A. Budget

Three budget clarification questions have been addressed and changed within the budget section of the grant.

B. Programmatic

1. The Executive Summary does not include the at-risk teen program that aligns with the applicant-determined performance measures for Summer Enrichment. Please revise the Executive Summary to include all AmeriCorps program components.

Executive summary has been updated to include the at-risk teen program.

2. An Evaluation Report was required, but not submitted. Please submit the required Evaluation Report.

The evaluation report has been sent via email to ICVS.

3. AmeriCorps members serving at tutoring programs must meet the following qualifications: (1) High School diploma or its equivalent, or a higher degree; and (2) Successful completion of pre- and in-service specialized training, as required in 45 CFR 2522.940. Does the program ensure that the

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members meet this requirement?

The AmeriCorps members who will be serving in our tutoring program will meet the tutoring requirement of having a high school diploma, GED, or a higher degree. Our program will ensure members meet this requirement by: 1) having members fill out an application which asks for specific high school graduation information, 2) reviewing the information with the applicant during an interview.

4. Please describe the criteria for selecting and qualifying tutors, including the requirements in 45 CFS 2522.910 and certify that selected tutors meet these requirements.

When selecting and qualifying tutors our program will seek potential members who: 1) are enrolled in the education field in college, 2) are retired teachers or other professionals looking to remain active in the educational field, 3) other members of our community who meet the requirements of a high school diploma, GED, or higher degree who wish to provide intensive service to young children. Our program certifies that all members selected for tutoring placement will meet the above criteria and will complete pre and in-service specialized training, as required in 45 CFR 2522.940 and 45 CFR 2522.910.

5. Describe strategies or tools the program will use to assess student progress and measure student outcomes.

We will use the assessment identified by the state of Iowa to measure and assess student progress. That assessment is currently the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

6. Certify that the tutoring curriculum is high-quality and research-based, consistent with the instructional program of the local education agency and with State academic content standards.

We certify that the curriculum that AmeriCorps members will use will be the same curriculum that is used for the intensive summer school reading program delivered by the Dubuque Community School District. Students who are not proficient in reading are targeted for this summer program. This curriculum will be identified by the Dubuque Community Schools by April 15th and will be

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researched-based. This curriculum will support the Iowa Core Content Standards and will also supplement the current researched-based LEAD 21 reading curriculum used by the school district.

7. Certify that the pre-service and in-service training content is high-quality and research-based, consistent with the instructional program of the local education agency and with State academic content standards; and consistent with the activities the member will perform.

We certify that Curriculum staff members of the Dubuque Community School district will train AmeriCorps members. This training will be specific to the reading content and contain strategies needed to work with struggling readers. The strategies will support reading content contained in the Iowa Core Standards. Training will occur at the beginning of the school year and periodically throughout the school year.

8. Describe how the program ensures that appropriate member supervision is provided by individuals with expertise in tutoring.

Members will be directly supervised by the classroom teacher. In addition, instructional coaches and other district curriculum staff will provide additional supervision and training as necessary.

9. The applicant marked SIG/Priority as a Geographic Characteristic; however the application does not mention that the program would serve SIG/Priority schools. Please clarify if the program intends to serve SIG/Priority schools and the percent of schools served that would be SIG/Priority. Please see the NOFO for further clarification on SIG/Priority, if needed.

In reviewing the NOFA guidelines on SIG/Priority, it appears that we marked a box that should have been left blank. We will be serving in some SIG schools within our school district; however, we will not be implementing one of the SIG Intervention Models as set forth by the Department of Education.

C. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS

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?

Narratives

Currently our grant has approximately 5% of our member slots filled with members with disabilities. We will continue to target 5% of our member slots to recruiting members with disabilities. We do not have a specific outreach plan in place; however we do participate in many community events that are attended by people with disabilities.

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.

At this time we are not seeking additional MSY's.

D. 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 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). Please ensure your performance measures align with these additional MSYs. Lastly, you must include a response to each

Narratives

item below in the Clarification narrative field:

1. The number and type of slots requested. Please confirm that for the MSYs requested, the additional members will only engage in activities aligned with the proposed member activities outlined in the application narrative.

At this time we are not seeking additional MSY's and therefore will not be answering the remaining questions in this section.

E. Healthcare

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

We do not have a health insurance provider because our program is not requesting any full time AmeriCorps member slots. Due to this we will not be answering the remaining questions in this section.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics