

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Minneapolis Public Schools' City of Lakes program will have 30 MSY AmeriCorps members who will provide evidence-informed tutoring, enrichment, and parent engagement to 180 Long-Term English Learners in grades 6-8 in Minneapolis Public Schools. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for accelerating students' writing skills and vocabulary acquisition as evidenced by scores on the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) proficiency test. AmeriCorps member will leverage an additional 30 community volunteers that will be engaged in assisting with school-year and summer programming. The program falls within the CNCS Education focus area. CNCS' investment of \$381,006 will be matched more than dollar-for-dollar with \$415,395, of which \$362,501 is public funding and \$52,894 is in-kind donations.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

a. Problem / Need - City of Lakes (CoL) seeks to continue our successful work with English Learners (ELs), deepening the focus on Long-Term English Learners (LTELs). Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) defines LTELs as students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status for 5 or more years. As a group, LTELs are at a significant educational risk. LTEL expert, Laurie Olsen, Ph.D. found in her 2010 research that, "The majority of LTELs are "stuck" at intermediate levels of English proficiency or below. Many have developed habits of non-engagement, passivity and invisibility in school."

MPS has a significant concentration of ELs: 21% vs. 8% statewide. 1,550 of the 7,130 MPS students enrolled in grades 6-8 are ELs and, of those, 76% are LTELs. On average, LTELs tend to have lower grades, lower standardized test scores, and face a higher risk of dropping out than non-LTELs. Currently, standardized test data specific to LTELs is not available; however, looking at data for ELs within MPS, of which a large percentage are LTELs, gives us a glimpse into the gap in achievement for LTELs. MPS 8th grade standardized test scores show that white non-ELs are at least three times more proficient than are ELs in Math, Reading and Science. This observation is supported universally by Dr. Laurie Olsen (2010), who writes, "By the time LTELs arrive in secondary schools, they have significant gaps in academic background. They have very weak academic language, and significant deficits in reading and writing skills."

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Middle school ELs are already doing "double the work" trying to understand academic content at the same time they are learning academic English. At the middle school level, academic language transitions from supporting concrete thoughts, such as descriptions, to abstract critical thinking skills, such as interpretations. In addition, the recent introduction of Common Core State Standards raises the bar even higher; they demand that a focus on high-level, complex language in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. While ELs almost always receive English as a Second Language (ESL) support, ESL alone has not been successful in accelerating English language proficiency among LTELs. ESL teacher caseloads are typically high (1:75), undermining their capacity to offer individualized supports. This structure does work for some - MPS has an exit rate for ELs (the rate at which students graduate from needing ESL services) of 15-33% - however, something more is needed to help LTELs accelerate their language acquisition and move beyond their LEP status.

Another reason middle school is the optimal time to address language deficiencies is because by the time LTELs get to high school, it is often too late. Researchers (University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, 2010) found that learning English is a strong predictor of graduation rates. Even among Latino students who were on-track as freshmen, those who didn't master English by the time they got to high school were less likely to graduate. Those least likely to graduate were Latino students identified as LTELs; they also had the worst academic performance in courses and poor attendance. This is evidenced in MPS graduation rates as well; in 2012, the MPS 4-year graduation rate of ELs was a mere 38.3%.

Exacerbating the challenges that middle school LTELs face, many LTELs in MPS attend high-poverty, low-performing schools. CoL will serve in nine MPS schools, which include four state-defined performance categories: Priority, the 5% more persistently low-performing Title I schools; Focus, the 10% of Title I schools with the lowest Focus Rating, a measure of a school's contribution to the state's achievement gap. Schools in Continuous Improvement are the bottom 25% of Title I schools that have not already been identified as Priority or Focus. Finally, Celebration schools are in the 60th to 85th percentile of top-performing Title 1 schools. Schools to be served include: two PRIORITY schools (Green Central, a preK-8 school with 95% Free/Reduced Price Lunch (F/R) and 60% English Learner students (ELs) and Hmong International Academy, a preK-8 school with 90% F/R and 60% ELs), three FOCUS schools (Andersen, a preK-8 school with 99% F/R and 68% ELs; Anwatin Middle School with 82% F/R and 29% ELs; and Folwell, a K-8 school with 86% F/R and 49% ELs); one

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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT school (Northeast Middle School with 81% F/R and 18% ELs) and one CELEBRATION schools (Sanford Middle School with 63% F/R and 23% ELs). The two remaining schools will be determined by the district using school demographic and standardized test data, including Spring 2013 WIDA ACCESS scores, and will be schools with F/R numbers over 50%.

b. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems. CoL's Theory of Change is that by providing 1:1 evidence-informed support for English language acquisition, supplemented by after-school programming that provides literacy support in engaging ways, and by involving parents, LTELs in grades 6-8 will significantly improve their academic outcomes. Participation in the CoL program will enable LTELs to increase their writing skills by double the state standard, and demonstrate growth in overall language skills as needed to be college and career ready. The significant educational risk of LTELs and the application of best practices within CoL's program design for this specific population makes CoL a program in which CNCS should invest.

Members will provide 1:1 pull-out tutoring to LTELs for 30 minutes during the school day and after school, 4x a week for at least 18 weeks using English Language Development (ELD)-specific instruction. Within this block, students will be taught academic vocabulary, using the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit, and writing strategies, using the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) of Kansas Writing Strategies. Quality writing instruction for ELs includes clear input, precise models, strategy instruction, guided practice, and clear expectations for output (Calderon, 2001a; 2011b), all of which are a part of this research-based writing curriculum. In addition to this tutoring, members will support the intentional transfer of strategies to learning in the content area. During the school day, members will follow their caseload students into their content area classes (particularly Science and Social Studies, where content vocabulary and language are heavy) to provide additional support and reinforce strategy use within the content activities.

AmeriCorps members also lead small group tutoring and enrichment activities after school for 1-2 hours per day at least 2 days a week for at least 18 weeks. Each class session will contain both an academic piece, involving continued tutoring with Kansas Writing Strategies and the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit, and an enrichment piece. Student voice and choice in enrichment topics are key. Members will offer literacy-imbued options (Book Club, Newspaper, Debate Club), and will be trained to incorporate literacy into student-selected activities. For example, students who are interested in

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fashion may spend time designing, reading about and blogging about fashion trends.

The holistic design of MPS's CoL program reaches beyond the school building to fully address the underachievement of LTELs and ensure parents are engaged as a part of the solution. Research (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008) finds that EL parents face significant barriers to school involvement. Many EL parents have limited exposure to schools, or prior negative experiences with school organizations. Parent engagement is positively associated with increased student academic outcomes and presents a significant opportunity in EL communities. To this end, members conduct parent outreach with regular progress phone calls, emails, and newsletters. Parents will participate in twice yearly meetings with a member and an ESL teacher to review student progress and discuss long-term goals for the student. Further, quarterly parent nights will respond to expressed parent needs and offer workshops in strategies that parents can use at home to support their children's academic success.

AmeriCorps members are uniquely poised to address the academic gaps of LTELs. Unlike existing school staff and volunteers, AmeriCorps members have the time, training and support to provide this daily intervention in 1:1 and small-group settings and personalize it to address each student. AmeriCorps members also have the flexibility to support students in all the environments in which they participate: tutoring during the school day, reinforcing skills in after school, assisting students in transferring language strategies and academic vocabulary into core content areas, and engaging parents for additional at-home support.

Evidence Base. In his book, "Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning," John Hattie rates different program components on their effect strength, stating that anything over 0.40 is effective. Many of CoL's components are listed: Small group instruction (effect strength of 0.49), writing programs (0.44), vocabulary programs (0.67), explicit strategy instruction (0.69), and parent involvement (0.51). CoL's method of explicitly teaching writing strategies to ELs is backed by other studies as well: One (Sengupta, 2000) found that explicit teaching of revision strategies helped improve the quality of student writing and helped students learn to write so that readers could understand them. CoL uses the SIM Kansas Writing Strategies, which provides explicit strategies around writing fundamentals. Originally intended for students with learning disabilities, SIM strategies have been successfully field-tested with students judged to be at risk for academic failure, and are a tool supported by the Multilingual Department of MPS for use with LTELs. The teaching of

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these strategies in a 1:1 pull-out setting matches best practices for accelerating English language acquisition, which include a separate, daily block of time devoted to ELD (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

Research (Feldman & Kinsella, 2005) on school-age second language learners concludes that, "vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of their academic achievement across subject matter domains." Members will utilize Kate Kinsella's Academic Vocabulary Toolkit to increase vocabulary skills of students. Kate Kinsella, Ed.D. provides consultancy nationally to school districts and state departments to increase instruction and achievement of Grade K-12 ELs and less proficient readers. The Academic Vocabulary Toolkit outlines a systematic process to target mastery of the high-utility words needed for school success, words such as convey, elaborate, infer, and assess.

The component of reinforcing strategies within content classes is based on the work of Margarita Calderon (2012), who states, "When ELs are given the opportunity to apply a strategy in all their subject areas -- math, science, social studies, as well as language arts -- knowledge of that strategy is reinforced." This practice is also backed up by research studies. In one such study (Menken, Kleyn, and Ascenzi-Moreano, 2010), taking place in 2008-09 with high school LTELs in New York and involving two experimental schools and one control school, researchers recommended that explicit literacy instruction become part of all content-area subjects. When literacy instruction took place within content, both experimental schools demonstrated gains from pre- to post-test administrations of more than one grade level. Alternatively, the control school demonstrated a loss of approximately half a year.

The after school component of CoL will build upon day school service. Studies have shown the positive impact high quality after school programs can have on student achievement: One (Vandell et. al., 2007) looked at 14 communities in eight states over three years and found that middle school students involved in after school programs demonstrated significant gains in work habits, reductions in misconduct (including skipping school and getting into fights), and reductions in substance abuse. In fact, after school programs can be particularly important for LTELs. Gardner, Roth and Brooks-Gunn write (2009) in "Can After School Programs Help Level the Academic Playing Field for Disadvantage Youth?" "Preliminary evidence shows that academically at-risk youth benefit more from participation in after school programs than their higher achieving peers."

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Finally, research continues to support the correlation between parent engagement and improved student outcomes. Researcher William Jeynes performed meta-analysis of 51 studies (2012) that examines the relationship between various kinds of parental involvement programs and the academic achievement of pre-kindergarten-12th-grade urban school children. Results indicate a significant relationship between parental involvement programs overall and academic achievement, both for younger and older (secondary school) students.

We believe it is the combination of all of these components that make CoL well poised for strong impact. After one study looking at a dual-language program in St. Paul Public Schools, two Johns Hopkins researchers published an article in the journal "The Future of Children" (Spring 2011) concluding that some comprehensive models to address the needs of ELs have been particularly effective. In their article, individual components of effective models are identified and include integration of language, literacy, and academic content instruction, cooperative learning, professional development, parent and family support teams, and monitoring implementation and outcomes (Calderon, Slavin & Madden, 2011). These are all components of the CoL program.

c. Member Training: Members receive over 200 hours of training throughout the year. Members begin their service in August with a week-long program orientation that introduces them to the AmeriCorps program and its expectations, requirements and prohibited activities; the History of National Service; youth development, including the Middle School Brain; school culture; and the basics of LTELs. Team-building activities are included to develop esprit de corps. Immediately following this, members receive a week of on-site orientation in their assigned schools.

Ongoing trainings are held in the form of Seminars (half-day workshops that focus on skills needed for service) and Corps Days (full-day reflections). Skill-based trainings are always led by licensed teachers and/or other experts in the district. Trainings are held approximately three Fridays per month for about 10 months, with topics progressing throughout the year. Topics typically include: Fall Seminars: Kansas Writing Strategies, Academic Vocabulary Strategies, Question Answer Relationship, Evidence Gathering, Databases, After School Activities 101, and Parent Communication; Fall Corps Days: Diversity, Civic Engagement & Reflection and Team-building ; Winter Seminars: Assessing students, Summarizing, Connections & Schema, Quality Matters in After School, and

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Volunteer Recruitment; Winter Corps Days: Poverty, Immigration, Educational Equity, Homeless and Highly Mobile Youth, Civic Reflection; and Spring Seminars: Life After AmeriCorps, Summer Service Planning and Creating Closure with Students; and Spring Corps Days: Health and Wellness, Service Projects, and Civic Reflection.

Volunteers recruited by CoL members undergo trainings provided by VolunteerMPS, standard protocol for all volunteers in the district. These trainings include online modules around volunteer policies, procedures, and prohibited activities, as well as strategies for working with the specific population of student with which the volunteer will be working. In addition, volunteers are invited to participate in CoL seminars throughout the year.

d. Member Supervision: Program staff are each assigned sites to supervise, troubleshoot, offer 1:1 check-ins with members, and provide other support as needed. Additionally, program staff conduct at least two observations of each member throughout the year in both the school-day and after-school environments to support quality implementation and fidelity.

Strong support is also provided at the site level. Each school site must designate a team of two to three individuals to support members. One of those people must be a licensed middle school teacher, typically the ESL Lead at the site, who will collaborate closely with members. A second licensed staff member will support the work of members in content areas. The third site support staff member will typically be the after school coordinator, who will oversee the service of members in the after school program. One of these people also serves as the official Site Supervisor and is also tasked with general supervision duties (approving timecards, having weekly check-in meetings with members, maintaining program-site communications, etc).

e. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: Each member receives several pieces of service gear: one black t-shirt, one colder weather piece of gear, one CoL AmeriCorps lanyard, and one AmeriCorps pin. All gear has the AmeriCorps logo on it. Members are required to wear at least one piece of service gear each day. Their signed member contract outlines this expectation, and program staff check to ensure this is happening during site visits and observations. Each site also receives a sign indicating that CoL AmeriCorps members are serving on site; they are required to post this sign in a visible area. This is also checked during regular site visits from CoL staff.

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During orientation, members are trained in communicating with parents of their students and other community members ensuring an awareness and identification of AmeriCorps extends to parents and the outer community as well. Members leave orientation with a well-prepared elevator speech to help them speak about their service with a variety of audiences.

### **Organizational Capability**

a. Organizational Background and Staffing. The Minneapolis Community Education Department of MPS has hosted the program administratively for the past 20 years. All program design and reporting requirements are fulfilled annually and all financial and program audits have been passed without issue. The Community Education department is supported by, and must adhere to, the financial and programming reporting policies of MPS, which administers many federal grants and is audited annually by the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche. Community Education staff work closely with the school district's Contract Compliance, Finance, and State & Federal Projects departments.

The CoL staff consists of four individuals in two part-time and two full-time positions. The part-time Program Director, Lisa Lambert, is responsible for administrative requirements, progress reports, support and supervision for a caseload of members and sites, new site support team training, attending state commission meetings, and liaising between the program and program partners. Ms. Lambert has been involved with AmeriCorps since 2002. She has served as an AmeriCorps member, Site Supervisor, and AmeriCorps Program Coordinator and Director. Her multiple perspectives within the AmeriCorps program give her the skills and insights necessary to thoroughly understand the training and support needs of the AmeriCorps members, as well as that of support staff. She has a BA in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

Full-time Program Coordinator Jean Fawver is responsible for coordinating member trainings and service events, expanding program partnerships, and support and supervision for a caseload of members and sites. Ms. Fawver is an alumnus of CoL, serving in the 1997-98 and 1998-99 program years. In addition, Ms. Fawver's previous work experiences - including as a Tutor/Mentor, Basketball Coach, Site Supervisor, and Education Paraprofessional - bring desirable skills to the position of managing and training AmeriCorps members. Ms. Fawver received her BFA in 2003 and is currently taking classes towards an MA in Special Education from the University of St Thomas, giving her insight and knowledge into the field of Education.

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Johanna Miller is the program's second full-time Program Coordinator and she is responsible for leading the member recruitment and hiring process, as well as support and supervision for a caseload of members and sites. Ms. Miller comes to the program with 14 years of experience in national service. She served as a member in CoL for two years, then spent five years as a CoL site supervisor also coordinating after school programs at a partner site. Following that, Ms. Miller worked as the Director of a VISTA program serving in MPS. With that program's close in Fall 2011, Ms. Miller joined the CoL staff. Ms. Miller holds a B.A. in Russian Literature and International Relations from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The final member of CoL's staff is District Program Facilitator, Lynn Harper. Ms. Harper is a licensed ESL K-12 teacher who has six years' experience as an ESL teacher for a variety of ability levels, and has extended training in the areas of sheltered instruction, technology integration, achievement gap and Understanding by Design (UbD). She is adept in educational equity, curriculum, collaboration strategies, accelerated second language literacy development, and responsive classroom management. Ms. Harper's position with MPS is 0.7 FTE with CoL and 0.3 FTE with the Multilingual Department, allowing her to act as a bridge with one of the major partners in this work, aligning goals, resources, and communications.

MPS Multilingual and Community Education Departments are strong internal collaborators that provide resources necessary for a high-quality program and consistently help to fine-tune CoL's services. Other departments also are being brought in as more active partners in program efforts: Research Evaluation and Assessment (REA) to assist in impact evaluation, Area Learning Center (ALC) to support after school academic efforts, Teaching and Learning to ensure members are trained in and can complement school day curriculum, and Family and Community Engagement to support members in creating a meaningful ongoing connection with parents.

b. Compliance and Accountability. With a long history as an AmeriCorps program, CoL has strong systems in place to ensure compliance with program rules, requirements and prohibited activities. Training for new sites is held annually before the program year begins and covers program design, AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and expectations of sites. CoL staff meet individually with each new site support team member if they are unable to attend this meeting to ensure they have a strong

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understanding of all components. In addition, all site and member agreements outline prohibited activities. Staff regularly check in with members, teachers, and site supervisors at their assigned sites to ensure members' activities are in line with program and CNCS grant requirements. These checks happen at least twice monthly at the start of the year, then at least monthly throughout the year. In addition, a mid-year site evaluation also checks for prohibited activity compliance. If it is found that a site is not in compliance, and the site does not immediately remedy the issue and become fully in compliance, members at that site will be moved to a new site effective immediately.

The current member-to-program staff ratio is approximately 1:10. The ratio is kept low to allow staff to really focus on supporting both members and sites, as well as attending to their other program responsibilities. Staff members are able to do regular check-ins with members, teachers, and site supervisors to ensure a clear understanding of the program and member roles. This structure of support results in a stronger member experience. As a part of the program's annual mid-year evaluation, members are asked to rank whether or not they feel adequately supported by program staff. On a scale of 1-6, with 1 being completely unsupported and 6 being fully supported, the top responses for the past two years have been a 5 (avg 31%) and a 6 (avg 31%).

c. Past Performance. For the first year of our current grant, CoL exceeded performance measure targets on both the number of students we worked with (goal 275, actual 343) and the number of students who completed the program (goal 207, actual 239). Spring 2012 marked the first time the district administered the WIDA ACCESS test; previously, it had used the TEAE (Test of Emerging Academic English) test. Because of this, we were unable to measure the academic progress as planned because the Spring 2012 WIDA ACCESS scores for CoL students were not comparable to the Spring 2011 TEAE scores on file. In light of this, a survey was sent to teachers who worked with CoL to get their input on student gains. The survey was taken by 27 teachers representing all sites that year. For the 2011-2012 program, 100% of teachers reported increased 1) comprehension, 2) usage of academic vocabulary, 3) improved writing skills, and 4) improved speaking skills; \* 96% of teachers reported 1) increased participation in academic discussions, 2) Improved listening skills, 3) improved reading skills, and 4) increased homework completion.

In 2012-2013, the program again significantly surpassed performance measure goals around number of students both receiving tutoring (goal 275, actual 341) and completing the program (goal 207,

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actual 244). CoL fell short by 5% on number of students who completed the program demonstrating targeted academic growth; we missed achieving 100% (145 students) by just eight students. When we calculated the scores of all CoL students who received tutoring (not just those who completed the program), we exceeded this goal by 27%, with 184 students showing targeted growth.

We do see indications that CoL students are outperforming ELs in grades 6 to 8 district-wide. Being a CoL student improved the likelihood of basic growth on the WIDA ACCESS (14% of CoL students demonstrated basic growth versus 11% of middle school ELs district-wide). Finishing the program pushed a greater number of students from basic growth to strong growth (45% of CoL students demonstrated strong growth versus 31% of middle school ELs district-wide). Finally, 97% of CoL students tested completed all four sections of the WIDA, vs. 78% of all middle school ELs district-wide. While these indications are encouraging, we feel CoL can and should cause a stronger increase in academic English proficiency than demonstrated by 2012-13 WIDA ACCESS scores. With input gathered from program stakeholders (members, teachers, site supervisors, Multilingual Department staff, and Community Education staff) we are proposing modifications in this grant application. For instance, members felt in-class tutoring made it difficult to fully focus on language development. Mandating daily 1:1 pull-out tutoring matches ESL best practices and allows members the time and space to focus on language development and utilize proven curriculum for improving writing and vocabulary knowledge. The more intensive structured daily intervention proposed here is geared to have stronger impact; however, logistically, it also means the number of targeted students will decrease.

An average school day is 6.5 hours long. Given the intense, individualized support proposed in our plan, it would be logistically difficult for members to provide 30 minutes of daily 1:1 ELD tutoring during the school day to more than six total students, considering each member also needs sufficient time to support students in content area classes. Chief Academic Officer of MPS, Susanne Griffin-Ziebart, strongly endorses this move to a smaller caseload in order to enable members to provide more intense, focused services to each caseload student. In reducing each member's caseload from ten students to six, we will aim to serve a total of 180 LTELs in grades 6-8. We will continue to aim for 75% of those students to complete the program; however, we are anticipating 80% of those (versus the previous goal of 70%) will meet academic growth outcomes on WIDA ACCESS scores.

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CoL has achieved 100% program enrollment every year, although retention, at 78% in 2011-2012 and 80% in 2012-13, was much lower than our goal, and a decline from our 2010-11 (86%) and 2009-10 (94%) retention rates. Among the reasons members exit the program early has been a trend of members leaving early for full-time employment as the economy improves. CoL has made adjustments to recruiting strategies, particularly around member commitment, as well as to the member support structure to ensure that a higher number of members complete their full year of service. Specifically, program staff have increased frequency of site visits in order to check in with members and provide support right away to anyone who is struggling. Professional Development Plans (PDPs) are completed with all second year members, who sometimes struggle more with motivation to finish their year, and reviewed to assist members in staying motivated and in utilizing their national service experience to best benefit their career path.

d. Continuous Improvement. CoL is committed to continuous improvement as is evidenced by modifications made to the program over the past three years and the indication of promising impact from these changes. CoL routinely undergoes a mid-year and year-end program evaluation process. In each of these processes, member feedback is solicited through a formal online survey. In addition, a meeting is convened with all major stakeholders to review member feedback and conduct an After Action Review. This process identifies program strengths and challenges and opportunities for improvements. Site visits allow program staff to gather feedback from teachers, and quarterly site supervisor meetings help to channel feedback from site supervisors. Moving forward, parent feedback also will be solicited for in the mid- and year-end evaluation processes.

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

a. Cost-Effectiveness. The program budget includes a cost of \$26,547 per MSY, with \$12,700 per MSY from CNCS and the remaining \$13,847 per MSY provided through in-kind and cash matches by the district. The majority of the cash match (approximately 70% of our total match) comes from the district level. CoL has received written confirmation from MPS and its Board of Directors that it will contribute the annual match of \$287,500 to the program from its general fund.

Each of the nine schools also provides support through a site fee of \$5,000 per year. Site fees are typically paid through principal discretionary funds, general school funds, or Title 1 money. In addition, site supervisors track time spent solely supporting the CoL program and its members at their site. These in-kind time donations are counted towards our cash match of \$52,894. The site fee and

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in-kind time donation commitments make up approximately one-quarter of the per-MSY cost contributed by MPS. The remaining 5% of the cash match has historically come from financial contributions from the Community Education general fund and a state innovation fund, to the sum of \$15,000 each. New funding sources are always considered and, if secured, would be used to offset CNCS funding. Past examples include Empowerment Zone funding, grants from the McKnight Foundation and Youth Service America.

Tutoring for ELs through private companies can range from \$20 per hour (School Tutoring Academy) to \$50 per hour (English Language Institute Tutoring Program at the University of Chicago). CoL offers a comprehensive tutoring program for LTELs that includes after school activities and parent engagement at an approximate cost of \$15.60 per hour. Moving students from LEP status to English-language proficiency presents an enormous return on investment. It facilitates high school graduation, which research indicates can mean \$1 million more in lifetime earnings than if that individual did not graduate. Research has estimated a societal cost of \$292,000 for each high school drop out to reflect the increased cost of social services and their decreased contributions, primarily through tax payments. If all of the high school students who dropped out in 2011 had graduated, the US would have benefited from nearly \$154 billion in additional income over the course of their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education).

b. Budget Adequacy: The proposed budget is very similar to our previous budget, which has proven adequate to support the program design and objectives. While by no means excessive, our budget is sufficient to allow us to provide the curriculum, training, and staffing required in the proposed design to meet the needs of LTELs in middle school in MPS. Designing the City of Lakes budget is a collaborative process with the City of Lakes Program Director, Community Education Manager, and the Community Education Accountant. Together they review the AmeriCorps budget guidelines and analyze past budgets and financial reports. The current budget is based on these findings. It incorporates school district guidelines as well as state and federal parameters. Expenses are based on current costs with a projected annual increase. All of the budget items are directly linked to the successful administration of the City of Lakes AmeriCorps program. The primary goal being the quality support and training for the AmeriCorps members so that they have a phenomenal National Service experience and are able to meet the goals and objectives for the program.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

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1) Description. Anticipated outcomes for LTELs who complete our program include increases in the district standardized test for EL proficiency, the WIDA ACCESS, as follows: (1) meeting district and state standards with at least a .5 increase in reading, listening, and speaking proficiency test scores, and (2) doubling district and state standards with an improved writing proficiency scores of at least 1 full point, and, finally (3) improved academic engagement as evidenced the MPS Student Survey, a survey taken by all K-12 MPS students each year that includes questions on academic engagement at school. (Please note that for the 2013-2014 program year, due to the newness of the MPS Student Survey, impact on academic engagement will be measured by a comparison of academic engagement of the treatment and control groups from a propensity matched analysis.) School attendance records will also be examined as another measure of student engagement.

2) Evaluation Design. The evaluation was designed by City of Lakes Program Director Lisa Lambert in partnership with the MPS Research Evaluation and Assessment Department (REA) and with the Multilingual Department. City of Lakes will evaluate our program through several methods: benchmarking through student portfolios, analysis of performance measures, and review of stakeholder evaluations. Benchmarking is an internal evaluation process to inform instruction and track student progress as evidenced by scores on curriculum-based assessments, logs, portfolios and observations in reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. Performance measures are analyzed quarterly with key performance measures being the number of students completing the program, as well as student growth on the WIDA ACCESS standardized assessment and the MPS Student Survey. Stakeholder evaluations are used for continuous improvement. Members, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders will be asked for their input informally throughout the year, and formally twice a year through online surveys, or pen-and-paper surveys. These will be administered by members (parent surveys) or by the Program Manager (teachers, stakeholders).

The key questions we seek to answer through our evaluation plan include: What impact is our program having on the academic English proficiency of middle school LTELs? What impact are we having on academic engagement? To what extent are LTELs in CoL exiting out of EL status sooner than other LTELs? To what extent is CoL impacting engagement of the parents of LTELs? To what extent is CoL creating esprit de corps for the members in our program?

3) Data Collection and Analysis. Data are collected weekly (attendance and participation); monthly

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(student progress), mid- and end-of-year (surveys); and annually (MPS Student Survey, standardized tests, focus groups / in-depth interviews). Data will be analyzed monthly, quarterly and annually, and used in a process of continuous improvement.

Members are trained in data collection and database tools during orientation and on-site over the first few weeks of service. Members will collect baseline data in September , then benchmarking data monthly from October through May. Members collect attendance and participation data for students weekly and enter this into QPID, a database created by the ITS Department of MPS and linked into district databases. The MPS REA Department oversees data collection and management of the performance measures data and will employ quasi-experimental methods to compare academic performance and engagement of City of Lakes students to the academic performance and engagement of similar students not receiving the intervention to illustrate an impact that is unique to City of Lakes. In addition to WIDA ACCESS scores, REA will evaluate MAP Reading scores in this way. Evaluations of stakeholders -- including members, parents, teachers and others -- are facilitated by the Program Director through surveys administered twice each month through Survey Monkey, or by pen-and-paper and then input into Survey Monkey to create reports. Focus groups and in-depth interviews are also used to gather stakeholder input.

4) Use of Results. City of Lakes is committed to continuous improvement. Each month, an ESL Teacher and the member(s) at each site review benchmark findings and use this data to inform or modify individual student interventions and accelerate their progress. Twice each year, internal stakeholder meetings review program progress towards goals, as well as feedback from members, teachers, parents, and students, to determine whether any changes are needed to ensure outcomes are met. Performance Measure progress results are reported to ServeMinnesota and CNCS quarterly. A full program performance measure evaluation includes the scores on the WIDA ACCESS and MPS Student Survey, which is reported to all funders and stakeholders annually, and used in planning programs, training and operations for the coming year.

### **Amendment Justification**

NA

### **Clarification Summary**

CLARIFICATION 2014 - April 9, 2014

## Narratives

1) Budget clarification items.

a) Section III, Administrative Costs, Corporation Fixed Amount: Please revise the calculation for this line item as it exceeds the allowable. Calculation is Sec I & Sec II CNCS funds x .0526. This sum is then multiplied by .60 for Grantee and by .40 for the Commission set aside.

This has been completed in the budget section.

b) The CCR registration is scheduled to expire on 12/02/2014. Please remember the registration must be current and active to receive an award from CNCS.

Mel Sanco, Executive Director of the Resource Development and Innovation Department of Minneapolis Public Schools, is responsible for renewing the CCR registration. I have confirmed with her that she plans to renew it in November 2014.

2) Programmatic clarification items:

a) Please describe how the proposed curriculum and the proposed pre-service and in-service tutoring training is research based and consistent with the instructional content of the local education agency and State academic content standards as required by 45CFR 2522.940. Please also describe how members that engage in tutoring will meet minimum qualification requirements to serve as tutors and will be supervised by individuals with expertise in tutoring, as required by 45CFR 9522.910-940. Both the Kansas Writing Strategies curriculum and the Academic Vocabulary Toolkit curriculum to be used by members are research-based methods for improving writing and vocabulary. They also show results; research results on the impact of Kansas Writing Strategies showed that students wrote an average of 65 percent complete sentences on the pretest and an average of 88 percent complete sentences on the posttest. Kate Kinsella's Academic vocabulary Toolkit walks tutors through a research and evidence based instructional routine for increasing academic vocabulary. Both of these curriculum are currently in use in Minneapolis Public Schools, and were selected for members to use by the Multilingual Department of MPS as consistent with their instructional content. (The Multilingual Department oversees all curriculum and services for English Learners in the district.) Members will be trained in these curriculum by staff of the Multilingual Department as well as a licensed Kansas Writing Strategies trainer.

In order to ensure high quality tutors, our program matches the paraprofessional qualification requirements under No Child Left Behind Act. CoL requires all members have completed at least 60

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semester credits or pass a paraprofessional praxis test to demonstrate the necessary level of knowledge before they are selected for service with our program.

Supervision comes from a variety of qualified individuals. City of Lakes has a licensed ESL teacher on staff, who oversees member skills training and acts as a connection to the Multilingual Department. Through this person, members have access to the resources, tools, and expertise of the Multilingual Department. This staff person also does at least two observations of each member during their in-class support work with students to ensure quality support and utilization of appropriate strategies.

Observations come from other sources as well; CoL staff Jean Fawver, a trained facilitator of Kansas Writing Strategies, observes members in their pull-out tutoring sessions as they use the Kansas Writing Strategies curriculum, and remaining CoL staff Hanna Miller and Lisa Lambert, both of whom have previous experience overseeing after school programs, observe members in their after school programs. Hanna and Lisa look to ensure members are including the necessary program components to the after school program, and evaluate them using the Youth Program Quality Assessment, a tool developed by High/Scope Educational Research Foundation to assess out-of-school program quality.

On a daily basis while on site, members are supervised by classroom teachers while working in their class, and by a Site Support Team, which consists of at least one building ESL teacher and an after school coordinator. Beyond this, each member has a progress monitoring meeting with a licensed ESL teacher on a monthly basis to assess student progress in the program and make any necessary adjustments.

b) The applicant states that AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 30 community volunteers that will assist with school year and summer programming. Please explain how AmeriCorps members will leverage volunteers and how volunteers will serve to support the program. Please include specific volunteer activities.

Volunteers will support our program in the role of Mentor/Role Model, Guest Speaker, or Program Assistant. Volunteers serving as Mentors or Role Models will be recruited from communities similar as that of our students. For example, a member this year recruited a Somali man to mentor one of her Somali male students who was struggling with balancing his Somali heritage while living in American

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culture. Other Role Model volunteers may be local successful business people or community members who come from cultures similar to our students. For example, one member recruited a volunteer (a Latino woman) who was the owner of a local shop. The students in the member's after school program (mainly Latino students) took a field trip to the shop for a tour and to hear what the owner had to go through in order to become a successful business owner.

Guest Speaker is another role volunteers may play. These volunteers will have the goal of bringing information and resources to the students and/or parents involved with our program. These speakers may make a presentation to an after school class about a local resource (ie the library) or might provide information on a topic around which the students are doing a service-learning project. Guest Speakers may also be recruited to present information or local resources to parents at the quarterly parent night members are required to hold.

Program Assistants are volunteers who are recruited to assist with after school or summer programming options. These volunteers may read with students, help them with homework/academic activity, or assist in leading the enrichment portion of the class.

To recruit these volunteers, members may utilize their own networks or service site community, or utilize resources provided by VolunteerMPS and other MPS Departments to recruit new volunteers. All volunteers who are recruited by a CoL member will adhere to policies and procedures put forth by VolunteerMPS, including requirements around background checks and which role volunteers can play in a classroom.

c) In the Clarification narrative field, please enter a statement confirming the desired grant award start and member enrollment period start.

The desired grant award start is August 1st, 2014 with the member enrollment period starting also on August 1st, 2014. Second year members continuing with the program will likely be enrolled right away; new members will be enrolled starting August 11th, 2014.

3) Please make the following changes in the Performance Measures screens in eGrants:

a) For ED2, please confirm that the students captured under the measure are enrolled in schools with

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a majority of economically disadvantaged students and/or a majority of students with special or exceptional needs as per the definitions found in the National Performance Measure Instruction for ED2.

This confirmation has been added to our ED2 performance measure.

b) For ED5, please specify the minimum level of improvement in academic achievement that will be required in order for a student to be counted under this measure.

This has been specified in our ED5 performance measure.

4) Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification:

a) What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is your program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community? CoL will target 10% of our slots, or 3 members, for recruiting members with disabilities. We utilize photos of former members with disabilities on recruitment materials in hopes of attracting new members with disabilities. All of our ads and our service description contain a reasonable accommodations clause, and our position descriptions distinguish essential and marginal functions. Moving forward, we plan to reach out to college campuses (specifically offices for students with disabilities or similar) to target this group in additional outreach. We also plan to network with other programs and tap into resources/suggestions that they may have.

b) Additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities and Additional No-Cost MSYs.

We do not request any additional MSYs at this time.

5) Healthcare Clarification Items: Health care clarification items are to be addressed by programs with full-time members (excluding EAP and Professional Corps):

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

We use the Summit America Corps Network for our health insurance provider.

b) How did you select the provider?

We have utilized Summit America's Corps Network for at least the past four years and have been very happy with the services they provide. They were originally recommended to us by another

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AmeriCorps program.

c) 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?

Summit America's Corps Network does not currently meet MEC as defined by ACA; however, the company is working hard to change this in time for the upcoming program year.

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

If Summit America is unable to make changes to the Corps Network in order to meet MEC, we will likely have to change providers. In speaking with other programs, another local AmeriCorps program uses BCS insurance company which does meet MEC. They budgeted \$180 per member under their plan, which is more than the \$130.25 we currently have budgeted per member. If Summit America is not able to provide coverage that meets MEC and we have to switch insurance providers, there may be an increase in cost to the program. However, typically only 1/3 of our members take our insurance, with most of the rest choosing to remain on current family coverage. While per member costs may increase, I do not foresee the total costs exceeding the total amount we currently have budgeted for member health care.

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

NA

### Continuation Changes

NA

### Grant Characteristics