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Executive Summary

The Robinson Community Learning Center (RCLC) will have 29 AmeriCorps members who will coordinate a range of educational programs, provide direct service, recruit/supervise volunteers, expand outreach, develop curricula, and assist with program evaluation, at the RCLC, the Notre Dame Center for Arts and Culture (NDCAC), the YMCA Urban Youth Services, and the OC Carmichael Boys and Girls Club. At the end of the 1st program year the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving educational outcomes for 350 local youth. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 550 volunteers that will engage in tutoring, implementing afterschool enrichment programs, and teaching conflict resolution/violence prevention. This program will focus on CNCS focus areas of education and healthy futures. The CNCS investment of \$196,215 will be matched with \$69,008 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Problem/Need:

The Search Institute (MI) has identified "developmental assets" that enable youth to grow into healthy, responsible, successful individuals. A community that provides assets such as support, empowerment, boundaries, high expectations, and constructive use of time is making a powerful investment in its future citizens. Unfortunately, in South Bend, a lack of these assets has created a population of young people at risk. Data from the Indiana Department of Education, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the South Bend Community School Corporation (SBCSC) indicates that future prospects for local youth are not encouraging (<http://compass.doe.in.gov>; www.smartgis.info/smart). For example, The SBCSC graduation rate falls 11% below the state average and 20% of 18-24 year olds have no high school degree. Only 58.6% of SBCSC children passed the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Assessment compared to 72.4% statewide. School attendance and stability rates are lower than Indiana state averages. A significant percentage of area children feel their schools are unsafe. SBCSC free/reduced lunch rates exceed the state average by 23.7%. The unemployment rate is 9.4%, with those 14-21 years old most likely to be unemployed. Lack of supervision leads to a high incidence of youth loitering on the streets from 3-6pm, which is the most vulnerable time for youth to engage in or become the victims of violent crime. St. Joseph County has Indiana's 5th highest juvenile arrest rate.

The RCLC adopts a multi-pronged approach to provide youth with the developmental building blocks they need to thrive. The majority of RCLC participants are minority, low-income youth, with a

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limited view of the future based on generational poverty. The RCLC provides opportunities for "changing family trees," through programs that provide consistent relationships, high expectations, and quality instruction.

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems:

The RCLC was launched in 2001 as an off-campus educational initiative of Notre Dame (ND) in partnership with the Northeast Neighborhood (NEN) of South Bend. Its mission is to "welcome community and Notre Dame partners that strengthen the Northeast Neighborhood of South Bend through relationship building and educational opportunities. By promoting innovation and excellence, the Center builds individual capacity and enhances existing systems throughout South Bend." During its first decade, the combination of volunteer resources and support from ND and community partners enabled the RCLC to offer programming within the NEN, and to begin to expand its reach. At that point growth and development of RCLC programs was constrained by availability of funding to hire additional staff. ND provided only partial funding and traditional funding sources had reduced grant awards as a result of the current economic climate. The need for youth programming, however, was stronger than ever, outstripping the availability of services. RCLC received a 2011 AmeriCorps grant, enabling it to greatly increase the number of participants, volunteers, and programs, and expand outreach in South Bend and beyond.

RCLC programming is divided into the following six program areas:

Youth Development offers daily afterschool tutoring and enrichment to 70 youth, grades 1-12, provided by more than 100 ND student volunteers.

The Robinson Shakespeare Company offers after-school drama programs and drama integration workshops to five partner schools, as well as an RCLC club for youth ages 8-18.

Youth Entrepreneurship provides a club for RCLC youth, ages 12-18, that focuses on entrepreneurial concepts and 21st Century Skills. The class is also offered at four high schools.

Take Ten teaches conflict resolution/violence prevention to youth, grades K-12. The program is implemented by more than 100 volunteers in 17 schools and 4 agencies, impacting 2000 local youth.

RCLC Literacy Corps provides free tutoring for children, grades K-6, at the RCLC, the NDCAC, and two community sites. This program also coordinates the "English as a New Language (ENL) Preschool," for children ages 3-5 whose parents are enrolled in the RCLC adult ENL classes.

Adult Programs include senior activities, computer classes, and the "Talk With Your Baby" (TWYB) parenting class. It is the RCLC belief that if youth are to look to adults as role models, then adults also

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require opportunities for education and a positive peer community.

RCLC programs complement each other as part of a comprehensive effort to support the overarching goals of improving educational outcomes for youth---preparing them to graduate, pursue higher education/employment, and ultimately become productive citizens. This effort incorporates three general approaches: afterschool programming (focused on academic enrichment, social skills, and personal development), tutoring (focused on literacy), and outreach to schools/agencies (focused on building instructional capacity and aligning curriculum toward common goals).

The evidence-base that describes the measurable community impact of these types of interventions has informed the development of RCLC programs. In *Out of School Time: A Meta-Analysis of Effects for At-Risk Students* (Lauer et al, 2006), researchers analyzed 35 "rigorous research studies" (as defined by the use of control or comparison groups) and concluded that "out of school time programs," including afterschool and summer programs, can have positive effects on the achievement of at-risk students. It was further concluded that program duration and student grouping influence effectiveness, with the largest effect on achievement in reading seen in programs that incorporate one-on-one tutoring or small group instruction. In accordance with these findings, RCLC offers multiple literacy tutoring programs that incorporate these elements. According to the National Research Council (*Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*, 1999) children need opportunities to:

- * Explore the many uses and functions of written language and develop mastery of them,
- * Understand, learn, and use the relationships between the spelling of words, and the sounds of speech to recognize and spell written words,
- * Practice and enhance vocabulary, language, and comprehension skills,
- * Have adults read to them and react to the literature,
- * Experience enthusiasm, joy, and success in learning to read and write,
- * Use reading and writing as tools for learning.

Following these recommendations, which are further supported by the National Reading Panel (2000) and the National Center for Education Evaluation (Shanahan et al, *Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through Third Grade*, 2010), RCLC tutoring sessions include: reading aloud, guided reading, writing, sight word recognition, phonemic decoding/encoding, and extensive discussion/analysis of text. These strategies are incorporated into daily lesson plans.

The above research concerning out-of-school time programs also noted that afterschool programs need not focus solely on academic activities to have positive effects on student achievement, but can

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also focus on social skills. In "A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents" (Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan, 2010), researchers reviewed 75 studies of 69 afterschool programs that had as one of its goals the development of any one, or a combination, of the following social and personal skills: "problem-solving, conflict resolution, self-control, leadership, responsible decision-making or skills related to the enhancement of self-efficacy or self-esteem." All studies involved control groups. Overall results revealed that afterschool program participants demonstrated significantly increased positive social behaviors, as well as positive attitudes about themselves and their schools. Problem behaviors were significantly reduced, and there was significant improvement in performance on achievement tests and grades. However, not all afterschool programs were effective, only those that incorporated specific procedures yielded significant results on outcomes. These procedures included: using a sequenced step-by-step approach/curriculum, emphasizing active learning to practice skills, focusing time and attention on skill training, and clearly defining goals. These strategies are most effective when used in combination. RCLC programs incorporate these elements and use researched-based curricula/assessment tools in order to maximize potential for long-term impact. For example:

* *Are They Really Ready to Work?*, a 2006 study of employers, identified deficiency in communication, professionalism, and problem solving as barriers to success for high school youth. RCLC Entrepreneurship addresses these using the research-based National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship and Foursight Creative Problem Solving curricula.

* RCLC's Take Ten curriculum was developed at ND and is rooted in Dan Olweus' (1993, 2007) seminal research on bullying. ND faculty-created assessment tools utilize aspects of quasi-experimental design, providing for internal consistency and strong cross-sectional analysis.

* Research shows that young drama students show improved reading comprehension, and a higher level of school-engagement than their peers. RCLC Shakespeare participants are instructed/assessed using tools developed by the Royal Shakespeare Company (UK, 2010).

Alignment with school curriculum and in-school support, the third RCLC intervention focus, has also been identified as a promising strategy for supporting long-term educational outcomes. The MetLife Foundation's Issue Brief No. 50 (2011) states: "Collaboration and alignment among schools, expanded learning programs and the greater community offers students the opportunity to enjoy a complementary learning environment where they can truly thrive. "Afterschool programs that are aligned with school day curriculum are in an optimal position to complement and reinforce learning. For these reasons, the RCLC programs support school instruction by aligning with Indiana State

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Standards. RCLC school outreach programs, such as Shakespeare and Youth Entrepreneurship, seek to support teachers by providing in-class coaching and enrichment. The Take Ten program, RCLC's most geographically widespread program, provides curriculum not otherwise offered. This is further supported by research conducted by the WT Grant Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence (Lanteri and Patti, 1996, 2003, 2007) which shows that conflict resolution education has a strong impact on school climate as well as pro-social skills and academic achievement.

Beginning in 2011, 3 to 5 AmeriCorps members have been assigned to each RCLC program area. Member responsibilities have included recruiting/training/coordinating/supervising volunteers, building capacity, teaching classes, tutoring youth, expanding outreach, developing curricula, and assisting with program evaluation. The RCLC is requesting funding for 9 full-time (FT) members, 8 half-time (HT) members, 6 quarter-time (QT) members, and 6 minimum-time (MT) members (a total of 15.865 MSY). The RCLC will continue to assign a full-time and several part-time members to each program area. These smaller "teams" provide a tiered structure of responsibilities and develop strong collaborative spirit. Addressing Tier 2 Funding Priority Measures, 1 FT member, 2 HT members, 1 QT member, and 1 MT member will serve toward the Healthy Futures focus area as part of the Take Ten program, while all remaining members will serve toward the Education focus area. Three minimum time members will be assigned to summer programs that will address academic "summer slide." The RCLC also proposes to partner with the YMCA Urban Youth Services and the OC Carmichael Boys and Girls Club, placing 1-2 AmeriCorps members at these sites. These community partners share the RCLC mission of providing after-school programs for low-income urban youth, but are not equipped to administer an AmeriCorps program; through these partnerships, the RCLC furthers its mission of building capacity and "enhancing existing systems throughout South Bend."

Member Training:

RCLC AmeriCorps members participate in a year-long training program, beginning with a two-day orientation, focusing on AmeriCorps policies/procedures, prohibited activities, contracts, grievance procedures, RCLC policies, and the local community. Throughout the year, members engage in multiple kinds of training, including AmeriCorps meetings, program team meetings, and monthly trainings. Past training topics have included: conflict resolution, literacy learning, Bridges Out of Poverty, the teenage brain, and community engagement. Members attend ND lectures, the Governor's Conference, and Member Retreat.

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Member Supervision:

RCLC Program Directors directly supervise AmeriCorps members serving at the Robinson Center. The RCLC Manager has attended all OFBCI statewide AmeriCorps trainings since fall 2011, and is well prepared to train Program Directors concerning AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and goals. Members serving at partner sites will have on-site supervisors, but will attend AmeriCorps meetings/trainings at the RCLC. Program directors and site supervisors will meet monthly; partner site-supervisors will receive orientation training and ongoing support from the RCLC Manager, who will monitor sites once/term. Program Directors and site supervisors will meet weekly with individual AmeriCorps members, and observe them serving at least twice/term. Additional support will be offered to members by the RCLC Manager via weekly group meetings, which will focus on fostering team camaraderie and mutual support through sharing of experiences. Members will be asked to regularly reflect upon their service in monthly reflection logs. Information gathered from reflections will be used to make program adjustments to help members be effective and experience satisfaction in their work.

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification:

RCLC members are provided with AmeriCorps gear to wear so they are clearly identified while serving. Information about the AmeriCorps program is provided on the RCLC web site, Facebook, and in RCLC press releases. RCLC's 2013 Annual Report contained an article devoted to AmeriCorps. Members have frequent opportunities to speak publicly about their service, the AmeriCorps program, and its value to the community.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Background and Staffing:

The RCLC is a department of the ND Office of Public Affairs. The University contributes one-third of the RCLC's annual budget of \$850,000. RCLC full-time staff consists of a Manager, an Assistant Manager and seven program directors. Numerous campus partners provide in-kind instruction and resources. The RCLC currently offers programs in partnership with the South Bend Community Schools, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and other local agencies. The Manager is responsible for overall administration of the RCLC, but is supported by ND departments such as accounting, payroll, and human resources.

The RCLC has offered community education for 12 years, and has expanded to impact 3,000

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individuals annually. It has been recognized for educational commitment by the Indiana Attorney General's Office, the Office of the Mayor of South Bend, the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development, and was honored with the 2012 ND Presidential Team Irish Award. RCLC youth have won top awards at the Indiana Shakespeare Monologue Competition and the Indiana Lego Robotics Championship. RCLC's strong track record, combined with University support and long-term community partnerships, ensures that the RCLC is uniquely positioned to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight for an AmeriCorps program.

Compliance and Accountability:

The RCLC AmeriCorps program operates at a high level of compliance, and received positive ratings from two OFBCI monitoring visits. One concern that was raised related to member training. During Year One, only 7.23% of member hours were devoted to training. To address this issue, a year-long training schedule was developed, with a wider range of opportunities; unfortunately, several sessions were ultimately canceled (the AmeriCorps retreat and trainings with the Red Cross). Member training hours for Year Two were 9.86%, which demonstrates a significant improvement. A training calendar for Year Three has been developed which should ensure that training hours reach the 12% target. RCLC administrative staff attend OFBCI trainings and maintain ongoing communication with AmeriCorps program officers. The RCLC Manager shares information with program directors, site supervisors, and members so that everyone can hold each other accountable for adhering to AmeriCorps regulations. RCLC staff use the member file checklist and the on-site monitoring tool provided in the Indiana State AmeriCorps Handbook to assess program compliance at the beginning of each semester, and immediately address any issues that may be revealed. The Manager meets regularly with ND departments, such as the Office of Research, Human Resources, Payroll, Accounting, and the General Counsel's Office, to inform them of relevant AmeriCorps procedures. This provides another level of oversight and accountability as these can help the RCLC address any compliance issues.

Past Performance--Performance Measures:

During Year One, RCLC AmeriCorps members recruited, coordinated, or supported a total of 558 volunteers, leveraging a total of 19,287 service hours. During Year Two, 19,568 service hours were leveraged from 536 volunteers. The RCLC has adopted the National Performance Measure of Improved Academic Performance. In Year One, 227 youth enrolled in RCLC tutoring (ED1), and 197

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(86%) completed the program (ED2), exceeding anticipated targets, and 100 (51%) students demonstrated improved academic performance (ED5), which fell short of the target. Changes were made in the RCLC tutoring program in response to these results. During Year Two, 187 students enrolled in RCLC tutoring (ED1), 156 (84%) completed the program, and 94 (60%) demonstrated more than 25% growth on a standardized assessment. These results exceeded anticipated targets. A Performance Measure for the Take Ten program was added during Year Two. The target goal was for 800 youth to receive two terms of Take Ten instruction. This target was exceeded at 883 children. The second anticipated target was that 60% of students would demonstrate 20% improvement in knowledge of violence prevention/conflict resolution, as measured by the Take Ten assessment. Although 801 participants took the pre- post survey only a small percentage demonstrated a 20% improvement in knowledge. The Take Ten assessment tool was developed by ND faculty and has been used to evaluate the program for the past five years. Specific items in the Take Ten survey are designed to ascertain knowledge of the curriculum gained over a school year. For several years analysis has revealed statistically significant gains for children who participated in the year-long Take Ten program; it was anticipated that this year would yield similar results, but this year's gains were not significant. The interpretation from faculty who provided analysis was that this is attributable to a "ceiling effect" found in students who have been involved in Take Ten for multiple years. Many children scored so highly on the initial assessment that upon completion of the post-implementation surveys their scores only increased slightly. These students made gains, but even "perfect" scores could not demonstrate significance or attain a 20% improvement. Work is in progress to revise the Take Ten assessment to address this ceiling effect in future years. At the present, questions were likely more "answerable" for students with longer exposure to Take Ten. A closer look at the Take Ten evaluation data supports this point. For example, comparison data from two similar schools revealed that students from the school in its first year of Take Ten participation demonstrated significant pre-post gains, while students from the school in its eighth year of participation showed only minimal gains. A new evaluative inquiry is being developed that will take students where they are and look to higher levels of achievement by re-determining where the ceiling is and allowing growth beyond limits now in place. Revised Take Ten performance measures are being proposed for this grant cycle. The Take Ten curriculum is also reviewed and revised by ND faculty and RCLC staff on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that students needs continue to be met.

Enrollment:

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The RCLC has multiple avenues for recruitment through local colleges/agencies, and typically receives 90-100 applications each year. During the past grant cycle enrollment was 100% or higher, with retention at 85.7%-88.9%. Two members exited early last year for health reasons and only received partial education awards. Those few members who resigned their positions did so early on, so positions were easily refilled. In these cases members decided they were unable to complete their service hours in combination with other responsibilities. To address this, initial interviews of potential members are now very explicit about requirements so that applicants can make well-informed decisions about their ability to complete their service. Each year, several members have returned to the RCLC for an additional year of service.

Continuous improvement:

Ongoing assessment, analysis, reflection, and revision are integral to all RCLC programs, which are assessed through a variety of tools including standardized instruments, enrollment data, work samples, academic records, focus groups, interviews, and written reflections. Feedback is regularly sought from internal and external partners. This information is synthesized into an annual report, and used to strengthen programs for maximum impact. Every three to five years, the RCLC undergoes a strategic planning process which also supports the goal of continuous improvement. As part of the current strategic planning initiative, seven focus groups were held during fall of 2013. These discussions were led by an external consultant, and focused on current RCLC strengths/weaknesses, community needs, and recommended directions for the future. Constituents engaged in these focus groups included: parents, youth participants, older adults, college student volunteers, community partners, ND partners, RCLC staff, and AmeriCorps members. Additional feedback was gathered from on-line surveys and individual interviews. Data is currently being analyzed, and will be used to develop the RCLC 2014 Strategic plan, due to be completed during spring semester 2014.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Cost Effectiveness:

The RCLC requests \$196,215 in AmeriCorps funding to support 15.865 MSY. This will be matched by cash contributions of \$9,543 from the RCLC, \$4000 in from partner-sites, and \$10,500 from the ND Office of Research, as well as \$44,965 in-kind from the University (waiver of F & A cost recovery over 5.26%). This match represents 26% of the program's operating costs. The RCLC is requesting funds to support 29 members (9 FT, 8 HT, 6 QT, 6 MT). The cost per MSY is \$12,373.93. This does not exceed the permissible amount.

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Two proposed changes to the RCLC AmeriCorps program impact the overall budget for this second grant cycle. The first is the addition of one HT and two FT members to serve at the following sites: the YMCA Urban Youth Services is an academic achievement/career development program which impacts 70 underserved middle/high school youth through an afterschool program and in-school mentoring, the OC Carmichael Boys and Girls Club provides an afterschool tutoring/enrichment program for 150 local youth, grades 1-12. Both sites are RCLC partners, sharing the common goals of providing academic support and enrichment for underserved youth. Members at these sites will be responsible for program coordination, curriculum development, as well as volunteer recruitment, training and supervision. The overall budget has been increased to reflect costs for these new members, and these host sites will each contribute \$2,000 to the match.

The second budget change relates to the living allowance for part-time members. As mentioned in previous continuation applications, the RCLC has had more difficulty recruiting/retaining part-time members than FT members---largely because of a comparatively low living allowance combined with a large number of required hours that made it difficult to maintain additional employment. An increase from \$1000 to \$3000 for HT members was granted during the second program year. It is still perceived as an equity issue among members, however, which has a negative effect on morale. Because resources are already stretched through raising the two-thirds of the annual budget not provided by ND, the RCLC is not able to provide additional funds for part-time members, and is therefore requesting that living allowances be raised so HT members receive \$4,500, QT members receive \$1500, and MT members receive \$1000.

Although these changes result in an increase of \$48,510 in the CNCS share of the budget from the previous year, the RCLC AmeriCorps program remains a cost-effective intervention. The RCLC brings together a unique combination of volunteers and ND/community partners, which allows for greater outreach that is less expensive than traditional afterschool programs that rely on paid staff or school-based paraprofessionals. During the past grant cycle, RCLC AmeriCorps members recruited, coordinated, or supported an average of 550 volunteers/year, leveraging an average yearly total of 19,247 service hours, and directly serving 3,000 youth/year. If each volunteer had been a paid employee receiving \$15/hour, program cost would have been \$288,705, or \$96 per youth participant. Instead, the CNCS funding for this program was \$147,705, or \$49 per youth participant--nearly half the cost. The program's cost-effectiveness is largely due to RCLC's relationship with ND, which not only contributes one-third of the RCLC Center's annual budget of \$850,000, but also houses the RCLC free of charge in a University facility with multiple classrooms, offices, and a fully-equipped

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computer lab. ND support is not solely financial, as numerous campus partners provide in-kind faculty instruction, resources, equipment, and student volunteers.

Budget Adequacy:

If fully funded, the RCLC will be able to host 7 FT, 7 HT, 6 QT, and 6 MT members, and to oversee 1HT and 2FT members at additional community sites. The budget includes living allowance, benefits, and payroll costs for all members. Expenses for training have been included, as well as for member gear, background checks, and supplies. The budget includes funds to implement a program evaluation. RCLC funding not provided by ND comes from grants, donations, program fees, and internal fundraising. Partner sites will also contribute an annual fee. Funders for 2013-2014 include: The Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, Key Bank, Wells Fargo, the Kelly Cares Foundation, the Indiana Arts Commission, Better World Books, and an anonymous local foundation. These sponsors have supported the RCLC for multiple years; there is reasonable expectation of continued support. These funds cover expenses such as maintenance, utilities, phones, computers, and RCLC staff time.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Background

The proposed design was crafted in to provide a deep but focused evaluation lens for supporting and improving the AmeriCorps assets deployed at the RCLC. Rather than propose an evaluation that blankets all RCLC programs at a surface level of coverage, our approach was to focus on a common set of initiatives, and evaluate them more comprehensively. Thus, the evaluation design specified here cuts across two RCLC program areas (i.e., Youth Development Program and Literacy Program) but hones in on tutoring efforts provided at the Center.

Site-Specific Evaluation Planning

The evaluation design emerged from a planning process that involved RCLC leadership in specifying the evaluation questions and design. A participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approach offers the guiding orientation for this effort. Essentially, this evaluation project is meant to provide key program stakeholders with feedback for program improvement purposes. Thus, the evaluation planning process has unfolded according to four distinct steps:

- * Orientation of the evaluator to the entire cadre of AmeriCorps programming offered by RCLC;
- * Orientation of the evaluator to the RCLC Tutoring Initiatives;

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- * Participating with RCLC staff in developing a logic model for the Tutoring Initiatives;
- * Developing the evaluation design anchored in the program's logic model.

The first step of the process involved the identification of the intentions and expectations that surround the RCLC Tutoring Initiatives, which is an umbrella term used henceforth to encapsulate the RCLC Afterschool Program, the LitCorps Afterschool Tutoring Program, and NDCAC Afterschool Tutoring and Arts Enrichment. Since the evaluator served as an advisory board member at RCLC for five years, there was already a working knowledge of program operations. The evaluator met with program providers, AmeriCorps members, and the RCLC Manager to learn about the method of delivery and desired end goals of the Tutoring Initiatives.

The second step of the evaluation-planning effort involved a focused investigation of the specific expectations that program staff have for the components of the Tutoring Initiatives. This step allowed the project to be mapped out, both in terms of how each program's elements relate to one another and in describing the presumed process through which "success" will be obtained. A logic model was constructed indicating the chain of events that link the program elements of the Tutoring Initiatives to the desired short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. As recommended by the funder, development of the logic model focused on the following elements:

- * Inputs -- the human, fiscal, and material resources that are needed to operate the program;
- * Activities -- what the program does;
- * Outputs -- the immediate consequences of having conducted the specified program activities;
- * Short-term outcomes -- the ways in which participants in the program demonstrate changes in knowledge, skills, and opinions;
- * Medium-term outcomes -- the ways in which program participants should manifest changes in behavior or action;
- * Long-term outcomes -- often referred to as impact, the extant mission that the program hopes to accomplish, including meaningful changes in the condition or status of life.

Looking at the tutoring initiatives as a whole, 3 full-time and 8 part-time AmeriCorps members will assist with coordination, planning, and implementation of Literacy Tutoring programs. These programs will be implemented at the RCLC and at several other sites, serving a minimum of 290 youth, grades 1-12. Members will recruit, train, coordinate, and supervise approximately 200 volunteers who carry out daily tutoring activities.

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There are three core project components. The RCLC Afterschool program serves 70 youth, grades 1-12, who receive an hour of one-on-one tutoring from volunteer tutors, four times/week, and participate in enrichment activities for five afternoons/week, throughout the academic year. The short-term outcome is that children will successfully complete 70 tutoring sessions. The LitCorps Afterschool Tutoring Programs serve 80 youth, grades 1-6, at 3 sites. The short-term outcome for this program is that children receive 30 hours of literacy tutoring from volunteer tutors. The NDCAC Afterschool Tutoring and Enrichment program serves 40 youth, grades 2-4. The short-term outcome for this program is that children receive an hour of tutoring, followed by an hour of arts enrichment, four days/week for ten weeks. All of these programs share the medium-term outcome that 60% of youth participants will demonstrate a gain of at least 25% on four identified reading goals, as measured by the SCOUT Achieve pre-post test. The long-term outcome for all programs is that participants will make positive academic progress, as measured by report card grades and promotion to next grade level.

Because of the involvement of key stakeholders in developing the logic model, we are highly confident that the narrative described above accurately indicates how the Tutoring Initiatives are supposed to "work." The logic model has been reviewed to reflect the collective thinking of the entire project team, bringing these individuals together around a common "picture" of what the initiative is trying to accomplish and how those objectives will be achieved.

In the third step of this process, the evaluation plan was developed using the logic model from step two. This model provided direction as to the shorter-term outcomes that are critical to assess within the evaluation. More generally, the evaluation design is directly informed by the interests and intentions of those persons who will use the data for improving the program and for demonstrating the program's outcomes to various stakeholders (including the Corporation for National and Community Service). As a result of the evaluation-planning process, the evaluator has developed a design that will guide the data collection and analysis.

Evaluation Design

In crafting the evaluation design, existing monitoring and evaluation structures were combined with pertinent insights derived from an evaluation model offered by the SRM Evaluation Group (2010) in

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their evaluation of the UCLA BruinCorps Tutoring Program.

The evaluation design specifies two evaluation levels that data collection will focus on, the most pressing evaluation questions that relate to each of those levels, and methods of data collection that will allow those questions to be answered. Specifically, there are a number of process-related evaluation questions which, when answered by the data, will provide the Tutoring Initiative team with guidance for refining and sustaining the overall program. The evaluation questions are broadly conceived in order to allow more detailed inquiries to be subsumed under their scope.

The process evaluation will provide detailed information describing what was done, how it was done, and to whom and for whom it was done. Specifically, the process component will: (a) examine the nature and implementation of the program strategies utilized in the Tutoring Initiatives; (b) document activities of the Tutoring Initiative's tutors; and (c) document and describe program successes and barriers. The following evaluation questions will be explored.

(a) Description of program strategies:

What do the program strategies as specified in the logic model look like in practice?

(b) Tutor training:

To what extent does tutor training equip tutors with the skills/knowledge needed to work with participating students? What are tutors expectations of tutor training? To what extent were expectations met?

(c) Tutors' program experiences:

To what extent do tutors implement the pedagogical strategies and resources to which they were exposed during training? What are the defining activities that shape a typical tutoring session? What are tutors' expectations of their tutoring experience? To what extent were these expectations met?

(d) Short-term evaluation of program strategy:

How well is the program operating relative to intentions and design (Model fidelity)? What are the successes of project implementation? What have been barriers to project success? What other strategies are needed to make more effective?

The process evaluation uses multiple quantitative and qualitative assessment measures including: attendance logs, observation of programs, review of program documents, interviews with staff and AmeriCorps members, tutor pre/post survey, and tutor focus groups.

The outcome evaluation will directly monitor the impact of tutoring on participating students' academic skills (i.e., reading goal gains, end of course grades, grade promotion). Methods of outcome

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assessment include school report card data as well as psychometrically sound and validated academic/cognitive assessments, some examples of which include: SCOUT Achieve Assessments, DIBELS, and diagnostic reading conferences.

Deliverables

One substantive product will be a "final" evaluation report prepared at the end of each project year that summarizes the findings from the various data collection strategies and makes recommendations as to how the Tutoring Initiatives can be made more effective. In addition to the final report, the evaluation team will prepare less formal summaries of evaluation findings during the program cycle. These documents will be designed to provide the Tutoring Initiatives team with data and recommendations that can be used in a timely fashion to understand the effects of their work and to make that work more effective going forward. The intent is to institute an active feedback loop that provides the decision makers with information and perspectives that lead to empirically grounded improvements in program strategies and process.

This plan was prepared by James M. Frabutt, Ph.D., who will supervise the RCLC AmeriCorps evaluation.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. Programmatic Clarifications:

1. The requested Grant Start Date and Member Enrollment Period State Date is 9/1/2014.
2. A number of RCLC AmeriCorps members will be expected to tutor children, supervise tutors, and act as site supervisor for tutoring sites. They will therefore receive intensive ongoing training from the RCLC Literacy Program Director. RCLC Tutor training involves a two-hour initial orientation, followed by monthly hour-long sessions, as well as on-site coaching. Each AmeriCorps member with tutoring responsibilities is observed multiple times per term, and receives direct feedback from RCLC Staff.

Tutor training is focused on the content areas recommended for literacy instruction by scientifically based reading research; these include: phonemic awareness/ phonics, vocabulary, oral language, writing, and comprehension. Members are also trained in the teaching strategies to be used in the

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tutoring sessions which include: guided reading, reading aloud, sight-word recognition, phonemic decoding/encoding, and analysis of text. Members are also instructed in accurate record keeping, administering assessment tools, and using data to inform planning.

Each child enrolled in an RCLC tutoring program is pre-tested using the SCOUT Achieve Assessment system. This measures the individual child's master of content objectives across twelve areas of literacy that are identified at grade level. The assessment reveals areas of strength and weakness, and also identifies specific goal areas for each child to work on. Tutors can place particular emphasis on these goal areas when working with a child. Curriculum is individualized by grade level and objective, and all lessons are aligned with Indiana State Standards. Tutors receive weekly lesson plans for each child they work with (developed by the RCLC Literacy Program Director). Plans include the overview/purpose of the lesson, guided reading material, writing prompts, sight words and spelling, and suggestions for strategies to use. Next to each item is the corresponding Indiana State Standard that is being addressed in the lesson so that the tutor can keep that in mind.

3. Tutor Training is conducted by the RCLC Literacy Program Director, Jennifer Wittenbrink. Ms. Wittenbrink has a Master's Degree in Education, as well as multiple years' experience running a Supplemental Educational Services literacy tutoring program and administering educational programs.

All tutors in RCLC tutoring programs, including AmeriCorps members and volunteers, must have a high school diploma or higher, and must attend the RCLC Tutor orientation and all subsequent trainings. When recruiting AmeriCorps members who will serve in tutoring programs, preference is given to those with a college degree and at least one year of related experience in teaching reading/language arts or tutoring.

B. Performance Measures Clarifications:

1. The students enrolled in the RCLC Tutoring Programs come from schools with a majority of economically disadvantaged students. RCLC youth come from several schools within South Bend. The overall free/reduced lunch rate for the South Bend Community School Corporation is 72.8%. The six schools that RCLC programs draw most heavily from have free and reduced lunch rates of 77%, 80%, 81%, 89%, 93%, and 94%.

2. "Completing" the RCLC tutoring programs is defined as completing the required number of tutoring hours. The RCLC Afterschool program runs for the full academic year, and in order to be counted as having "completed" this program, students need to have completed at least 70 tutoring sessions and

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taken the post-test. For the Literacy Corps and NDCAC Tutoring programs, which only run for one semester (but serve two cohorts of children per year), students need to have completed 30 tutoring sessions and taken the post test.

3. The minimum level of improvement in academic achievement that students must achieve in order to be counted in the ED 5 measure is a growth of 25 percentage points from pre- to post-test.

4. The information in the intervention description for OUTPT5890 and OUTCM5892 has been corrected. The Take Ten program serves youth in grades 3-8.

5. At the time that this application was first submitted, a change in this performance measure in the 2013-2014 program year was under review. The revision was approved, and on 1/7/2014 the 2013-2014 Performance Measure was revised to read: 75% (600) of youth receiving instruction in Take Ten will demonstrate increased knowledge regarding violence prevention and conflict resolution as measured by the Take Ten pre- and post-test. This revised performance measure is included in the 2014-2015 application. The reasons for the revision are detailed in the narrative section: Organizational Capability/Past Performance-Performance Measures.

C. Budget Clarification

1. In the initial proposal, an increase in living allowance for less-than-full-time members was requested. In response to the review of program cost-effectiveness, this request is being withdrawn. The budget has been revised to include the living allowance amounts that were in effect for the 2013-2014 program year. This results in a decrease of \$18,870 in the total CNCS share (from \$196,215 to \$177,345), and a reduction of \$1190 in cost per MSY. The proposed cost per MSY is now \$11,184. The budget has been revised to reflect these changes.

D. Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification

1. The RCLC AmeriCorps program has an inclusive recruitment policy, and seeks to enroll a diverse cohort of members each year, including those with disabilities, but it does not specifically target recruitment of members with disabilities.

2. No additional MSYs are requested to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

E. No-Cost MSY Clarification

The RCLC AmeriCorps program is not requesting any No-Cost MSYs.

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F. Healthcare Clarification

1. The RCLC AmeriCorps program has previously offered its members the "Corpsmember Healthcare Insurance Plan" (provided by the Corps Network and administered by Summit America), and plans to continue to doing so in 2014-2015.
2. This program was originally selected because it was being used by another AmeriCorps program located in South Bend, Indiana.
3. The proposed budget includes the cost for members to enroll in the above healthcare plan, but we have been notified by Summit America that the AmeriCorps coverage cannot be deemed Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) due to benefit limits that make the plan affordable.
5. We do not have enough information to answer question 4. We are not currently aware of another plan that we could offer to the RCLC AmeriCorps members that would meet both the MEC standards and the AmeriCorps criteria. The RCLC Program Director has communicated with other AmeriCorps Program Directors and OFBCI Staff in order to explore what options might be available, but no other programs have been recommended. In response to the information that the current healthcare plan did not meet MEC requirements, several current RCLC AmeriCorps members applied for Medicare early in 2014, but were denied. Since Indiana was not one of the states that extended Medicare coverage, our members were told they would not face the individual responsibility penalty on their 2014 tax return.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics