

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

UIC AmeriCorps Project MORE will have thirteen full and eight minimum-time AmeriCorps members who will support financial literacy and job skills services for economically disadvantaged Head Start parents. Members will provide financial literacy workshops and employment readiness trainings that will foster lifelong learning skills and encourage economic self-sufficiency. Members will also support GED and ESL classes and engage in capacity building by providing volunteer management workshops for Head Start and community organizations. Services will take place at UIC FAmily STart Learning Center (FAST) locations and on-site at Head Start centers. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for reaching 1300 parents under economic opportunity PMs; 80% of the parents will increase financial, education and employment readiness skills; 70% of parents will achieve adult basic education and language skills. In addition, the AmeriCorps Project MORE members will leverage an additional 100 community volunteers that will be engaged in supporting economic opportunity services. 30 Head Start Sites will be trained in volunteer management. This program will concentrate on the CNCS focus area of economic opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$151,474 will be matched with \$151,474; \$108,526 in public funding and \$42,948 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

i.PROBLEM/NEED The need for financial literacy and job skills development support services for economically disadvantaged Chicago Head Start parents is evident; 68.83% of the families enrolled as of November 2011 were headed by a single parent; 44.69% were unemployed; 36.95% were not high school graduates and 88.31% were not in training or school. Chicago 2011 Head Start parent demographics indicate 62% are African-American, 30% are of Latino origin and 80.84% meet the poverty guideline for income eligibility to enroll in Head Start (November 2011 Chicago Head Start Program Information Report (PIR)). The impact of the demographics above are further emphasized in studies that show 75% of the 49.7 million currently living in poverty are part of a generational poverty cycle. This is reflected in the long term unemployment rate which has seen a 50% increase in the last three years (PEWSocialTrends.org). A strong link also exists between education and poverty. Studies have noted that a parent's low educational attainment was the most consistent factor in predicting on going poverty for their children (Urna Institute of Social Policy). Poverty is a complex problem associated with issues that are interlinked such as unemployment, illiteracy and social welfare. Without intervention programs that aid families with access to financial, social and educational

## Narratives

resources, it is likely for those in poverty to continue the cycle for future generations.

The new Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE) supported by Head Start and the UIC Center for Literacy strive to address the needs of Head Start families. The Framework supports parents by providing them with resources promoting economic self-sufficiency while engaging them in the decision making process of their child's education.

According to the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, the 2011 Consumer Financial Literacy Survey Final Report indicates 56% of Americans do not budget or keep close track of expenses such as food, housing and entertainment. The survey also indicated, adults who earn less than \$50K are significantly more likely than higher earners to report some delinquent payment of their bills. African-American adults are twice as likely as Caucasians to report occasionally missing some payments (21%vs. 11%, respectively). Additionally, Latino adults are significantly more likely than Caucasians to report struggling to pay bills every month and receiving calls from collectors (10% vs. 2%, respectively).

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Center for Literacy and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) recognized the compelling needs of Head Start families. In 1996, a partnership was established to build upon the capacity of Head Start programs in community and faith-based organizations to more effectively meet the needs of Head Start families. Although Head Start was founded as a federal program to promote the school readiness of low income children ages 0-5 by enhancing their cognitive social and emotional development, services have expanded to benefit the entire family. Today, Head Start recognizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher and is reflected in the PFCE framework. The Framework supports increased financial security and parents advancing their own learning interest through: education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers and life goals ([eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2011/pfce-framework.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2011/pfce-framework.pdf)). The Head Start Act of 2007 also identifies economic self-sufficiency and financial literacy as one of the four components of a comprehensive family literacy program. AmeriCorps Project MORE (Making Opportunities for Reading Enrichment) will address these Head Start needs.

UIC FAST Centers serve communities with an increasing number of families living in poverty. An example of neighborhoods served are characterized by the following poverty rates in Chicago's west and southwest side: West Garfield Park 64.9%; Humboldt Park 50.7%; Englewood 64.3% (Children of

## Narratives

Chicago-A Community Assessment Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2010). Members are placed at our two FAST GED sites along with our Resource and Volunteer Promotion Program (RVPP), centrally located on the south and west side of Chicago. FAST ESL and Outreach programs including financial literacy and employment readiness serve parents at Head Start sites throughout the Chicago area.

ii. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY: IMPACT -(Theory of Change Logic Model Submitted):

Thirteen full and eight minimum-time AmeriCorps members will enable the UIC Center for Literacy to offer critically needed services to 1300 economically disadvantaged parents. Services will include: comprehensive financial literacy, parent education and employment readiness services, and capacity building to leverage volunteers. Volunteers will support economically disadvantaged parents through UIC Center for Literacy programs.

3 full and 2 minimum-time members supervised at FAST GED locations will support 200 Head Start parents enrolled in GED classes. 3 full and 2 minimum-time members supervised by FAST English as a Second Language (ESL) will support lessons and activities for 200 parents at Head Start sites (10 classes). GED Member activities will include tutoring parents in Pre-GED/ GED subjects such as reading, writing and math. ESL members will assist with multi-level classes that focus on daily communication. Both ESL and GED members will provide one-on-one assistance; track and report parent progress through monthly reports; plan activities with lead instructors; assist with parent literacy activities and parent participant recognitions such as the GED graduation and ESL achievement certificates; complete time sheets; and promote volunteerism. GED classes take place twice a day (2.5 hour classes), 4 days per week from Sept-June. ESL classes take place 4 days per week, 2.0 hours per day from Sept-June for 10 classes.

FAST Parent Outreach includes the Financial Literacy Initiative for Parents (FLIP) and Parent Education and Employment Readiness (PEER) Programs. 2 full and 2 minimum-time members supervised by the FAST Parent Outreach Program will facilitate research-based financial literacy lessons for 700 parents through the All My Money curriculum developed by the University of Illinois Extension Program, Consumer and Family Economics Team. The curriculum includes: (1) Making Spending Choices, (2) Envelope Budgeting, (3) Planning Your Spending, (4) Understanding Credit,

## Narratives

(5) Handling Credit Problems, (6) Building Consumer Skills, (7) Taking Consumer Action, and (8) Checks/Checking Accounts.

2 full and 1 minimum-time members will facilitate and/or support education and employment readiness trainings through PEER for 200 parents. Member activities will offer parents the necessary skills to transition to employment and post-secondary education. Services will take place in English and Spanish on-site and at Head Start locations. Members will facilitate the following lessons: 1) Educational Pathways to Careers, 2) Financial Aid & Applying to School, 3) Barriers to Employment 4) Creating a Resume 5) Interview Techniques 6) Professionalism 7) Soft Skills 8) Computer skills and others. Parent Outreach member activities will take place 4 days per week; up to six hours per day from Oct-Jun.

Members from FLIP and PEER will also be involved in the following activities: track and report parent progress via monthly reports; plan financial or work readiness activities with their respective teams; complete time sheets; support outreach efforts; collaborate with partner organizations to provide program related activities at conferences; meet with their site supervisors weekly and receive ongoing training to support financial and work readiness activities; and promote volunteerism.

The Center for Literacy has heightened its focus on non-AmeriCorps volunteers through the Resource & Volunteer Promotion Program (RVPP). To expand economic development resources and parent education services, 3 full and 1 minimum-time members at RVPP will provide resource and volunteer information sessions to patrons. Members will inform patrons about services and resources available at Center for Literacy programs, emphasizing volunteer opportunities at center sites. These sessions will assist Project MORE in recruiting at least 100 community volunteers. The RVPP coordinator will train members on volunteer recruitment, placement, management, and recognition practices.

Members will not only apply what they learn, but will provide best practice trainings to staff from at least 30 partner agencies in order to help them build their capacity in managing volunteers.

**EVIDENCE/MEASURABILITY:** Implementation of the Parent Engagement Framework is a new initiative in Head Start (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/press/national-parent-family-week-9-26-2011>). As programs transition from a parent involvement mindset to one of parent engagement, the services provided by Project MORE are facilitative. The indicator of parent progress related to Family Well-being and other areas of the Framework is measured by the parents' ability to identify their individual family strengths to cope with difficulties and overcome adversity

(<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2011/pfce-framework.pdf>, page 8). In planning

## Narratives

program services, staff also reviewed the "Head Start Impact Study" from January 2010. This study included various questions related to parents' practices and how they impact parent behaviors including literacy. The study began with 1,715 delegate agencies and was narrowed down to 87 (N=87); 2,783 children and parents participated in questionnaires. From the study, it was gathered that among programs those that provided literacy services benefited both the parent and child. Workshops, tutoring and other services supported by Project MORE help parents increase their knowledge and skills of financial literacy and acquire job skills development. Pre and post surveys administered at each workshop indicate if a parent gained knowledge about the topic and helps parents identify or reinforce their knowledge of their strengths as learners. GED and ESL assessments include standardized tests; the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Best English Skills Test (BEST Literacy. Common Core goal standards are followed and reoccurring goal-interviews help the parent/instructor team develop Individualized Education Plan goals (IEPs). Parent achievement is highlighted during recognition sessions in eight-week intervals and during graduation periods. Services and activities support parents to identify their strengths as learners and reflect on their parenting, career and life interests, which is an indicator of progress under the Families as Learners area of the framework (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2011/pfce-framework.pdf> page 12). Head Start sites surveys indicate a 100% satisfaction rating of the services provided by MORE (Source: FAST.CCEE FINAL Report 2007.2008). Parents complete end-of-the year essays and share not only their satisfaction but gratitude for the unique education services offered within a timeframe that allows them to pursue their education. One parent's essay stated: "...When I came to class, I could not write one line of words. But now, I have all the help I need to improve..." During the 2012-2013 service year, 1,340 parents completed financial literacy trainings. More than 80% of the parents demonstrated increased knowledge and indicated they learned something new about financial literacy. Five hundred parents completed job skills development through parent education and employment readiness workshops, and GED and ESL classes. More than 80% of the parents achieved goals and/or demonstrated improvement on standardized tests. These services allow parents to acquire skills and learn more about the strengths, which is the core belief of parent engagement.

iii. MEMBER TRAINING: MORE recruits individuals who are dedicated and committed to expanding their community service experience to educate Head Start parents on skill development and financial literacy topics. Our recruitment and training strategies accommodate the diversity of skill levels within our corps. Training topics develop and enhance their presentation, inter-personal communication, service- learning and computer skills. 21 members will receive an orientation, bi-

## **Narratives**

weekly professional development trainings, and bi-weekly site-specific meetings. MORE begins orienting and training members prior to the start of the service year. Pre-screening program involves five steps: 1) information session, 2) telephone screening, 3) 3-day screening with interview, 4) volunteer experience, and 5) second interview. Applicants schedule a volunteer day at FAST sites, providing an opportunity to better understand our programs and meet staff. Retention is better when members make informed decisions to join MORE. AmeriCorps orientation occurs during the member's first week of service and covers the following: Program Objectives and Performance Measures; service history; ethic of service, and the Member Service Agreement (MSA). The MSA explains requirements, service descriptions, code of conduct, suspension, exit for compelling personal and cause, member rights and responsibilities, reasonable accommodations and benefits. Prohibited Activities are paid close attention to during orientation. Members complete quizzes and engage in skits that highlight acceptable and unacceptable activities. Prohibited activities are reviewed throughout the year during member bi-weekly trainings and during member and staff team building meetings. Specific orientations are conducted at each of the FAST Centers at the onset of enrollment. Members are introduced to the curriculum related to their site placement (i.e. financial literacy, work readiness, ESL, GED/ Adult Education and volunteer management). Supervisors at each site have developed an orientation checklist to ensure members complete a thorough training before they begin direct service. Members meet with their site teams weekly throughout the year and one on one with their site supervisors, when needed to address individual or training needs. In addition, the FAST centers have built partnerships with organizations that provide additional training to members, such as Literacy Works, an organization that provides Adult Basic Education and ESL training to members. Members receive ongoing bi-weekly training where they gain leadership, public speaking, communication and civic engagement skills. Topics include time management; financial literacy; conflict resolution; leadership; civic engagement and life-after-service.

### **iv. MEMBER SUPERVISION**

Daily supervision of AmeriCorps members is conducted by UIC Center for Literacy management staff at the FAST centers. These centers are all UIC Center for Literacy program locations, overseen by the UIC Center for Literacy Director. Members will be assigned to specific sites that provide adequate support and guidance throughout their term. Site supervisors provide details on responsibilities, development training, conduct team meetings and have one-on-one reviews with members. They also provide members with performance evaluations at 12 weeks, mid-year and at the end of year. Site supervisors have Master's degrees in education or social work and are experienced in management.

## **Narratives**

The MORE Project Coordinator works closely with supervisors to assure members are engaged in appropriate AmeriCorps activities. Each site supervisor has attended local and national conferences related to their programs services, such as financial literacy and adult basic education. They have also received first hand training from writers of the curricula utilized by their programs. Prior to and during the service year, MORE supervisors receive detailed training on AmeriCorps regulations, policies, best practices and site procedures. They review and revise the Member Service Agreement to ensure it explicitly defines appropriate member roles and prohibited activities. Staff attends management, leadership and communication trainings offered by the University, and the MORE management team attends volunteer and service trainings to enhance their ability to manage members. Site supervisors and the MORE management team meet monthly to monitor member activities and ensure ongoing compliance with AmeriCorps regulations. The MORE management team also conducts site visits, using the monitoring tool provided by the Serve IL Commission to ensure the members are participating in allowable activities at their sites.

v COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION Through the intake and screening process members are introduced to the history of service and AmeriCorps. The process is focused on helping members understand their unique role and the value of AmeriCorps service. Project MORE is committed to service and promotes the AmeriCorps symbols, values and programs throughout the grant year. Upon entering a year of service, members receive AmeriCorps gear that consists of an AmeriCorps pin, polo shirt, and jacket or sweater. Each item holds the AmeriCorps emblem. Members are required to wear AmeriCorps gear during their regular service and at special service events. All program locations include AmeriCorps posters and literature. National Service information is also available for public review through the Center for Literacy website ([cfl.uic.edu](http://cfl.uic.edu)). All AmeriCorps related materials, such as applications, recruitment and orientation documents, and publications include the official logo. Finally, at the onset of the service year members prepare an elevator speech to be able to communicate the services they provide and the impact of national service.

### **Organizational Capability**

The UIC Center for Literacy was established in the College of Education in 1991, and is recognized as a leader in building collaborative partnerships to create innovative, research-based programs that serve as exemplary models for social service/educational program implementation. We are committed to engaging families in their role as educators, advocates, and leaders. One of the Center's key programs includes the Family Start Learning Centers whose mission is to work with parents to

## Narratives

promote economic self-sufficiency so that Head Start families are better prepared to achieve their educational and financial goals. The Center has developed model programs in adult basic education, volunteerism, school improvement, workplace skills, health, family and financial literacy. The Center has a history of developing volunteer programs dating back to the Student Literacy Corps in the 1990's that was the basis for a strong America Reads federal work-study program that continues today. The most recent development of the Resource & Volunteer Promotion Program (RVPP) seeks to increase community volunteer opportunities and provide quality volunteer management.

AmeriCorps key staff includes: Dr. Maureen Meehan, Director-Community Literacy Programs, who will supervise the AmeriCorps Project Director and Project Lead to ensure implementation of program goals in accordance with CNCS guidelines. Ruby Camacho, the MORE Project Director, will work with Dr. Meehan to complete the financial reporting aspect of the program as well as oversee the management aspect of MORE. Jennifer Jones, Coordinator, will collaborate with site supervisors to manage members. During the year, the Coordinator will also conduct periodic site visits to ensure compliance with program policies. Susie Karwowski, FAST GED (West/South) Supervisor; Barbara Burger, FAST ESL (Central/North) Supervisor; Samuel Austin, Parent Outreach Supervisor, and Barbara O'Laughlin, RVPP Center Director, will supervise their assigned members. Supervisors will conduct weekly meetings with their teams and meet with individual members as necessary.

**OVERALL STAFF QUALIFICATIONS** William Teale, Director, Center for Literacy is internationally known for his research on emergent and early literacy and has worked with schools across the United States. He recently completed the third Early Reading First Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education that the Center for Literacy has conducted. Dr. Maureen Meehan, Director, Community Literacy Programs, has over thirty years experience in adult and family literacy and had a key role in developing the center programs. Ruby Camacho, Project Director, completed her MA in Criminal Justice and BA in Sociology at the University of Illinois and has eight years of AmeriCorps program coordination experience. Jennifer Jones, AmeriCorps Coordinator and former member has a BA in Sociology from California State University Northridge and an MA in Public Administration. After completing her service, Jennifer was brought onto our staff to oversee the ARRA grant Parent's Researching Economic Planning whose success led to the development of our Financial Literacy Initiative for Parents (FLIP). The Management Team and Supervisors (all with MA degrees) along with lead staff collaborate to implement Project MORE services. The Project Director and Coordinator attend CNCS and Serve Illinois sponsored AmeriCorps trainings. These trainings include monthly

## Narratives

webinars on topics including: financial and grants management and allowable costs among others. Both attend AmeriCorps Program Director trainings hosted for all Illinois programs to cover changes in federal regulations, OMB circulars, prohibited activities, volunteer management, programmatic and fiscal training on the OnCorps tracking system. During the year, the Director and Lead also attend volunteer conferences such as the National Conference on Volunteering and Service and the Illinois Conference on Volunteer Administration, in which trainers and other volunteer programs share best practices. All of the information obtained is shared with site supervisors during monthly meetings as well as electronic communication to give them the tools they need to effectively manage their AmeriCorps members. Supervisors are informed on any changes in policies and prohibited activities.

Finally, the College of Education accounting staff is very experienced and works closely with the Office of Grants and Contracts to maintain all fiscal records. Separate accounts and coding procedures are created for each grant and the program director reviews fiscal reports to ensure all charges are allowable per regulations. Organizational strength includes UIC's experience managing state and federal grants, contracts, and foundation awards. The UIC Center for Literacy has received and managed AmeriCorps funding for over two grant cycles and audit result letters have consistently commended the Center for maintaining organized and sound records. The UIC Board of Trustees includes 13 members, 10 appointed by the governor and 3 student representatives elected by campus referendum ([uillinois.edu/trustees/meet.cfm](http://uillinois.edu/trustees/meet.cfm)). The Board exercises jurisdiction in all University matters except those for which it has delegated authority to the President of the University, other officers, or agencies of the University. Matters include a range of topics from Human Resources to University budget matters. The Director of the Center for Literacy reports to the Dean of the College of Education. Both the Board and the Dean are kept apprised of Center activities.

ii. COMPLIANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY To ensure program sites are following policies and procedures set by CNCS, the AmeriCorps Coordinator conducts periodic site visits during the grant year using a compliance checklist provided by the Serve Illinois Commission. The checklist includes items that should be in place such as written policies and procedures, fiscal reports with matching receipts, member files that include an application, proof of age, member contract, program reports, time sheets and others. Prior to member recruitment and enrollment the AmeriCorps management team and site supervisors complete several trainings and planning meetings to prepare for the incoming AmeriCorps group. Supervisors receive training by qualified consultants on communication,

## Narratives

leadership, teambuilding, and management. At planning meetings, Project MORE staff and supervisors review AmeriCorps policies and documents provided by the Commission. Each site is given a member orientation binder that contains the Member Service Agreement, Prohibited and Allowable Activities, Grievance Procedures and others. Supervisors meet with AmeriCorps members and site staff weekly to review member assignments, data collection, and member training needs. During monthly meetings with site supervisors, the MORE program management team provides updates on AmeriCorps regulations, policies, and procedures. They also assess if the program is on target for meeting output and outcome goals; enrollment; & discuss compliance issues. These meetings allow supervisors to share best practice strategies on managing members and provide on-going input on how to improve the program.

Written grievance procedures, supervision procedures, discipline and suspension/termination policies are in place should any compliance issues arise. If a member issue takes place the written procedure requires the actions to go thru 1) the site supervisor (verbal or written statement); 2) meeting with the AmeriCorps Coordinator; 3) meeting with the Director; 4) meeting with Program Officer; 5) meeting with the Serve Illinois Executive Director; 6) Communication with CNCS. Based on the severity, the Project Director and Coordinator communicate promptly with the Program Officer at the Serve Illinois Commission for guidance.

iii.PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEES During the last three years, MORE has met or exceeded performance measure targets. Members provided financial literacy services for 3,783 (unduplicated) economically disadvantaged parents (Goal: 3,625). Of parents surveyed, more than 90% indicated increased knowledge based upon a comparison of pre/post assessments (Goal: 80%). Members supported job training and/or other skills development services for 1,364 parents (Goal: 1260); and 85% (Goal 70-75%) achieved five or more goals. 134 parents passed the official GED exam. Members disseminated financial literacy and program resources; more than 95% of the patrons reported the resource materials enhanced their education program or home environment. Members also facilitated family literacy trainings for 4,888 (Goal: 3,600) unduplicated parents. Over 83% (Goal: 60-70%) of parents demonstrated increased knowledge based upon a comparison of pre/post assessments. Project MORE has consistently received satisfactory ratings from the Serve Illinois Commission and is compliant with both financial and program requirements. Financial and Progress Reports are submitted within deadlines set by the Commission. Project MORE strives to work effectively with the Program Officer and Commission staff. MORE has consistently achieved a 100% enrollment rate. Between 2010-2013, 92.6% (76 out of 82) of members successfully completed their

## Narratives

service requirements and received an education award. Due to personal social and economic factors 6 members were exited from the program without an education award. To address social and economic factors which may influence retention, MORE will continue to provide information to guide members to resources which may assist them in completing their service year while still attending to personal obligations. In addition, the Center for Literacy now has a social worker on staff that can assist members.

### iv. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Center for Literacy has been successful in developing key partners and involving stakeholders that help increase the quantity and quality of services. On-going community partnerships and input from key stakeholders such as the Citywide Parent Policy Council & current and former AmeriCorps members contribute to the ultimate goal of long-term sustainability. A key stakeholder includes the Citywide Parent Policy Council, comprised of parent representatives from Head Start agencies across the city. Many of the parents who are part of this council as well as the parents they represent, receive or have received services through Center for Literacy FAST programs. This connection gives way to a relationship where first hand participants are able to voice their needs as well as input on program improvement and implementation. This Council had input into the original and subsequent MORE proposals and receives regular reports on the program's progress through meetings which Center for Literacy staff attend. The Center and MORE management team maintains communication with the Council through: 1) surveys, focus groups, evaluations; 2) Monthly meetings between DFSS, Center staff, parent groups, education committees, and others 3) Direct and indirect outreach to Head Start delegate agencies; 4) Newsletters/publications; 5) Conferences and other literacy events hosted by the Center, where parents from the council are invited to attend. Since the parents on the Policy Council represent the population we serve, they continuously promote the program through word of mouth to fellow Head Start parents and community organizations. AmeriCorps members are also key stakeholders. The Center prides itself in noting that many former AmeriCorps members go on to become part of the Center for Literacy staff upon completing their service year.

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

**COST EFFECTIVENESS:** The proposed budget was developed to maximize service within the current environment of diminishing resources that has impacted all social service/educational programs. Although our programs are located in Chicago's south and west side neighborhoods that are recognized as economically distressed and resource-poor, our long-standing relationships with

## Narratives

agencies in these communities contribute to our efficiency. This cost-effective approach to address the needs of economically disadvantaged parents is further evidenced by the value of volunteers. The Independent Sector noted that the current value of a volunteer in the state of Illinois is assessed at \$23.19/hour ([independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time)). The cost comparison between CNCS funding requested for this project and the equivalent value of the volunteer time for 13 full-time and 8 minimum-time members serving a minimum of 24,500 hours is significant. The value of these volunteers would be equivalent to \$568,155 in comparison to the requested \$151,474. The benefits gained by Project MORE members and participants, far outweigh the costs. Ultimately, we should not dismiss the sustainability that is an inevitable result of high-quality literacy programs like MORE. Every time a MORE member tutors a parent to pass the GED, that parent has opportunities and employment options that will impact his or her life forever.

ii. BUDGET ADEQUACY Project MOREs proposed cost per MSY of \$10,311 is below the maximum allowable cost of \$13,300 and at level with the 2013-14 funding MSY of \$10,311. Over the years, Project MORE has continued to decrease its cost per MSY while still expanding services offered to parents. Sources that supported the Center for Literacy's budget of \$ \$11,941,500.00 include: State, City of Chicago, U.S. Department of Education, Mathematica Policy Research Inc, Bates Family Foundation, and University of Illinois. The requested AmeriCorps funding from CNCS for 2014-15 totals \$151,474, which represents 1.27% of our overall organizational budget. Support from CNCS for previous AmeriCorps grant cycles have covered the member living allowance and health insurance costs. The proposed 2014-15 AmeriCorps program budget is requesting \$151,474 in CNCS funds to solely support partial costs for member living allowance expenses. MORE has successfully increased its share of costs annually to meet match requirements and has identified diverse sources to accrue the 50% match for the overall 2014-15 AmeriCorps program costs (\$151,474 total match). The University of Illinois, Center for Literacy, grants, and our community partners provide support for all other program costs. Professional volunteers and organizations provide high quality training for AmeriCorps members and technical assistance for the program. Our success in these challenging economic times is rooted in our ability to build strong collaborations.

As noted in our sustainability plan, we have been successful in expanding our in-kind base. Both private sources of funding and community partners support costs for program implementation. Our budget summary (on e-Grants) is consistent with our program narrative and supports our program design. Non-federal State funds provide salary and fringe costs associated with the Project Director

## **Narratives**

and the Project Lead; travel costs for members and staff to attend CNCS sponsored trainings are provided by community partners; match sources for member supplies are provided by community partners and local merchants; Active Solutions & Knowledge provides a summative external evaluation; operating costs such as space are provided by community partners and a processing fee waiver by Signature Staffing Resources whom processes our AmeriCorps stipends; AmeriCorps criminal history/background checks and health insurance costs are provided by a community partner with funds not eligible for match. In addition, the University matches the difference between our federally-approved 26% admin rate and the 5.26% CNCS allowed rate.

Diversification of funding along with the support of partners and key stakeholders is a primary sustainability strategy. Over the past several years, we have benefited from annual support from the City of Chicago and, in addition, have received funds from the Chicago Community Trust, the Gustafson Family Foundation, USA Insurance Company, Employ America, the Bates Family Foundation, Signature Staffing Resources, and Target Corporation to support our programs. The Center for Literacy has also earmarked a portion of its State of Illinois basic funding to support MORE AmeriCorps activities. We continually strive to diversify our funding base. Currently, we have proposals under review by the Walmart Foundation and Jewel Osco Charitable Giving; proposal in development for Frye Foundation; and proposal planning for several other local foundations. We have also been successful in expanding our in-kind partner base. Support comes from within the Center (staff time and resources), the College of Education (faculty consultants), and the university (matching the difference between our federally-approved 26% admin rate and the 5.26% allowed). Professional volunteers continue to provide high quality training for AmeriCorps members and program participants. Local community businesses donate program resources and offer intern opportunities/employment counseling for members nearing the end of service. These resources and in-kind donations from community organizations will enable us to accrue a total of \$151,474 match this year and will position us to meet the on-going match requirements for this proposal.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

AmeriCorps Project MORE's 2012-13 evaluation has been sent to the Serve Illinois Program Officer. The UIC Center for Literacy conducts annual internal and external evaluations to review programs including data management and effectiveness of service delivery. Upper management staff has experience using databases such as Excel, SPSS, and on-line systems to run queries and statistical reports. Staff supports the external evaluator during site visits to provide the necessary data. The external evaluator interviews program staff to gain additional insight on the program. Formative

## Narratives

evaluations and recommendations are reviewed to inform program planning, monitor implementation, and guide program modifications as needed to improve goals and objectives. These reports are reviewed by the Director and submitted to the appropriate funding agencies. The program updates manual and web-based data collection systems and efficiency measures. Each office reviews national standards and incorporates these guidelines and systems where appropriate. MORE currently uses the Literacy, Adult, and Community Education System (LACES), a web-based reporting system, which captures participant demographics, assessments and goal progress for all programs. LACES adheres to the National Reporting System, which address accountability requirements for the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The Center for Literacy has customized queries within LACES to capture and extract necessary demographics and information required by CNCS and the Serve Illinois Commission.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATIONS 2014-15  
(application ID #14AC157312)  
April 10, 2014

#### A. INDIRECT COST-RATE

Project MORE confirms that we intend to claim less Administrative/Indirect Costs as match. Although we are approved at 26%, we have budgeted for 16% indirect costs as match. As for CNCS Indirect cost, there is a max of 5.26% allowed.

#### B. PERFORMANCE MEASURE REVISIONS:

Performance measures have been updated to reflect the requested changed to O9 (value change revised); OUTCOME6065 (value change revised).

O9:- A value change of +1 or more on post surveys will represent increased knowledge.

OUTCM6065: A value change of +1 or more on post surveys will represent increased knowledge. In addition, achievement of 5 or more individual education plan goals represents increased knowledge.

## Narratives

### C. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS CLARIFICATION

1. Project MORE strives to designate at least 20% (4) of slots to recruit members with disabilities. Project MORE's recruitment already incorporates outreach to people with all abilities. Our current AmeriCorps staff offices is located within the Disability, Health, and Social Policy building, where we already communicate with Disability program staff to inform them and their clients of National Service Opportunities.

In addition to the above, the program's plan for disability outreach and recruitment includes the following: contacting Lois Barnhart, Program Associate from Kreider Services to obtain information on organizations that serve individuals with disabilities in order to provide AmeriCorps recruitment materials; also, our University partners include organizations that serve individuals with disabilities. MORE will continue to provide outreach to these organizations. Our Center for Literacy, which houses our AmeriCorps program currently manages the Resource Center for Autism and Developmental Delays. Fellow UIC staff at the center are a valuable resource in distributing information related to our AmeriCorps recruitment.

### D. MSY W/NO PROGRAM FUNDS

N/A- MORE is not requesting any additional no-cost MSYs.

### E. HEALTHCARE CLARIFICATIONS

- 1) MORE will be using and has budgeted for the AmeriCorps insurance offered thorough ASRM/Beach Street BCS Insurance Company.
- 2) BCS is the current plan that Project MORE is using. We learned about the provider through other Illinois AmeriCorps programs who also use BCS. BCS meets the CNCS AmeriCorps insurance requirements.
- 3) Per Serve Illinois and information the Commission has received from CNCS, there are currently not any insurance companies that offer AmeriCorps group insurance coverage that complies with Minimum Essential Care (MEC) under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) for AmeriCorps members. Serve Illinois is keeping all programs informed on any information and regulations provided by CNCS.
- 4) A budget revision is currently not necessary. The program pays for member insurance thru non-CNCS funds that are not eligible for match. We intend to continue purchasing insurance thru BCS. To address MEC as defined by the Affordable Care Act, Project MORE will continue to offer full-time

## **Narratives**

members insurance through BCS (which meets CNCS regulations). As advised by Serve Illinois, we encourage members to enroll in Medicaid if eligible or enroll in coverage via their spouse or parents (if applicable). The program will clarify that BCS currently does not meet ACA requirements and that members may be liable for a tax penalty if they do not choose one of these other options to have insurance that complies with ACA. The program has reached out to Serve Illinois as well as community partners that offer information regarding health care to allow members to make a sound and reasonable health care choice.

5) Question 4 was answered.

### **BUDGET REVISIONS**

\*Budget and budget narrative have been updated to reflect the 1% ICR

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A

### **Grant Characteristics**