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Executive Summary

The West Fargo Public Schools-North Dakota Reading Corps (NDRC) will have 41 AmeriCorps members who will provide literacy interventions to students age 3 to grade 3 in Fargo, West Fargo, Jamestown, Bismarck and Mandan, North Dakota. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for 60 PreK students demonstrating improvement in early literacy skills and 456 K-3 students improving academic performance in literacy. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 82 volunteers that will be engaged in service activities at school host sites and community organizations. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$189,485 will be matched with \$334,989, which includes \$185,085 in public funding and \$149,904 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED: Learning to read is a critical skill: The ability to access, comprehend and apply written instructions is essential to functioning effectively in an information-based society. Learning to read by grade 3 is a critical benchmark that marks the shift from students learning to read to students reading to learn. Students who do not read proficiently by grade 3 are four times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school (Hernandez, 2011). The educational and public health consequences of this level of reading failure are dire. Of the 10 to 15 percent of students who will eventually drop out of school, over 75% will report difficulties learning to read.

Failure to develop basic reading skills by age nine predicts a lifetime of illiteracy. Unless these children receive the appropriate instruction, over 70 percent of the children entering first grade who are at risk for reading failure will continue to have reading problems into adulthood. On the other hand, the early identification of children at-risk for reading failure coupled with the provision of comprehensive early reading interventions can reduce the percentage of children reading below the basic level in the fourth grade (e.g., 38 percent) to six percent or less. (Statement of Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Chief Child Development and Behavior Branch National Institute of Child Health and Human Development National Institutes of Health) With research demonstrating that 95% of all children have the capacity to learn to read proficiently and over 11 years of impressive results from Minnesota Reading Corps, we are confident that reducing the likelihood of these negative outcomes is achievable.

There is persuasive evidence that far too many students in North Dakota, including those who are economically disadvantaged and English Language Learners, are already on a pathway to reading failure before they enter Kindergarten. In the Fall of 2013, 36% of students entering Kindergarten in

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West Fargo and 47% in Fargo were not proficient in Letter Naming Fluency, a key benchmark on the road to becoming a successful reader. Further, 481 out of 2,006 Kindergarteners in Cass County, which includes the Fargo and West Fargo school districts, are receiving Title I services this school year. These services must be focused on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing to meet State academic standards, including reading standards. With 24% of Kindergarten students receiving this targeted academic support, NDRC can provide additional support at the preschool level to reduce the number of students entering Kindergarten at risk of failing to meet academic standards.

According to the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), North Dakota was one of only three states that showed a statistically significant loss in the average reading score for fourth grade students; ranking 30th nationwide in fourth grade reading proficiency. The North Dakota state-mandated reading assessment shows that students are not reaching adequate reading levels. In the school districts targeted for NDRC between one out of every four or five students did not meet 3rd grade reading proficiency in the 2012-13 academic year (22% West Fargo, 17% Jamestown, 22% Fargo, 21% in Bismarck, and 25% Mandan). Other district-wide data point to an even more compelling need in the area of early literacy. The following data represents the percentage of third grade students who are not reading at grade level according to Spring 2013 Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test scores: 37% West Fargo, 36% Jamestown, 36% Fargo, 36% Bismarck, 46% Mandan.

Schools included in this project currently provide core reading instruction for all students and supplementary instruction to students identified with moderate to severe reading skill deficits who require the expertise of trained Title I teachers, Reading Specialists, and Special Education teachers. Schools, however, typically do not have resources to provide supplemental, one-on-one intervention services to students identified to be at-risk of reading failure but do not qualify for special reading services from a trained teacher. These students typically fall in the 35th to 49th percentile, and are the students targeted for NDRC. Educators often call these students "bubble kids", they are close to reaching proficiency but aren't given the attention to boost their abilities. They are falling through the cracks but with targeted, timely, supplemental interventions, there is a high probability of them reaching grade level benchmarks, thereby closing the gap while it is small, and preventing the need for more intensive instruction or special education services in the future. This group of students does not require the specialization of a certified Reading or Special Education teacher, as they can benefit from short term prescribed interventions, which can be carried out by a trained individual, the AmeriCorps member. The addition of this level of support can provide targeted interventions to the previously

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underserved student population that would not otherwise be available to them.

B. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: North Dakota Reading Corps (NDRC) is a replication of the highly successful Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) program, which is being implemented by West Fargo Public Schools, in partnership with the South East Education Cooperative, in an effort to ensure children in North Dakota are successful readers. NDRC is an integral part of a national effort to bring to scale a proven model that combines the people power of AmeriCorps with the science of how children learn to read.

NDRC will partner with school districts and early childhood programs to place AmeriCorps members in preschool classrooms and elementary schools for 10 months during the school year. How NDRC works can be outlined in 4 main points: 1) AmeriCorps members are trained to collect benchmark data, implement research-based literacy interventions and monitor the progress of students. 2) AmeriCorps members, along with Internal Coaches (host site supervisors), receive monthly coaching from the Master Coach to tailor interventions for each child based on the data collected on key literacy measures. 3) Members work one-on-one and/or in small groups to isolate a child's specific skill challenge(s) and tailor their tutoring to effectively build the skills needed by each child to become a successful reader. 4) Children learn literacy skills at a rate to "catch-up" with their peers, and graduate from NDRC. The member will continue to monitor the exited child to be sure that he or she maintains reading skills. The NDRC members will be trained to provide literacy interventions to either preschool or elementary students:

PREK SITES: Reading Corps members are embedded in classrooms of about 15 students. There, they assist teachers to create a literacy-rich environment for 3- to 5-year-olds that integrate literacy instruction and socio-emotional learning. Members will collect benchmark data each fall, winter and spring, and measure student progress monthly. They will coordinate with their Internal Coach and classroom teachers to determine which interventions to utilize based on the unique needs of each child.

K-3 SCHOOL SITES: Members provide up to 100 minutes per week per child of individualized, research-based literacy interventions to build phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills. Members collect benchmark data three times a year and monitor student progress weekly to guide interventions. Each member will tutor 10-15 children during the course of the school year. They will work with the lead classroom teacher and their Internal Coach to determine the appropriate interventions.

NDRC is requesting 41 AmeriCorps members. Each host site will utilize members with different

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levels of service, to meet the diverse needs of school schedules. Members are unable to work with students during times of core classroom instruction, recess, and lunch times. 8 reduced half-time members and 2 quarter time members will serve in buildings within the West Fargo School District, 7 reduced half-time members and 6 quarter time members will serve in the Fargo School District, 5 reduced half-time and 1 quarter time member will serve in the Jamestown School District, 2 reduced half-time members will serve in the Bismarck School District, and Mandan Public Schools will host 6 reduced half-time members. 4 reduced half-time members will serve children in preschool classrooms in Fargo/West Fargo. A reduced half-time member caseload will include 6-9 students, and a quarter-time member caseload will include 4-5 students at any given time.

EVIDENCE BASE: The interventions identified for use in the program are each designed to provide additional practice that is supplemental to the core reading instruction provided by the school. The interventions correlate to "The Big Five Ideas" reported in the National Reading Panel Report (2001) and have an extensive scientific base for their use. The MRC model includes the three factors that Vaughn et. al. (2007) identified as important to addressing prevention and early identification of students with reading disabilities. These factors are:

1) VALID AND RELIABLE MEASURES FOR ASSESSING STUDENT GROWTH: Evidence for valid and reliable indicators of student progress can be traced to the work of Deno (1985) and has been replicated by several studies, most recently by Fuchs et al., (2004) and Deno et al., (2006). NDRC will use Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) to administer Letter Naming Fluency, Letter Sound Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency assessments. These instruments have a moderate-to-high degree of validity and reliability.

2) EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTIONS: Research has demonstrated that providing strong early language and literacy experiences in both the preschool and early elementary years, as well as early intervention for any reading difficulties within these first few years of school, is the most successful and efficient method for ensuring that large numbers of children become proficient readers (Vellutino et al., 1998; Torgesen et al., 2003; Torgesen et al., 1999). NDRC members, with the support of their Internal Coaches, will determine which of the 11 researched-based supplemental reading interventions (K-3) and 12 research-based supplemental reading interventions (PreK) to use with their students. These interventions build on fluency for basic reading skills such as phonemic awareness, letter sound knowledge, decoding skill, and sight word recognition.

Recommendations from the National Reading Panel titled *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Reading Panel* (2008), were used to develop the PreK intervention protocols.

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3) SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO UTILIZING DATA FOR DECISION MAKING: Initial work by Fuchs, Deno, and Mirkin (1983) set the stage for data-utilization research which has been supported over the past decades by many studies (Deno et al., 2001; Howe et al., 2003; Fuchs et al., 2004). The Reading Corps model is based off of the Response to Intervention (RtI) approach which is a framework to support educators in using data to best meet individual student needs.

In addition to a strong, evidence-based model, MRC has been the subject of multiple studies to show impact. The Center for Learning Solutions (2012) study, conducted by Dr. David Heistad, demonstrated that Reading Corps participants were three times less likely to need special education services, when compared to students that did not receive Reading Corps services. The study matched 753 students that received Reading Corps services in Minneapolis Public Schools with 753 Minneapolis students that did not receive Reading Corps in that same year. The 1,506 students were matched on 11 similar demographic variables. The Chi-square statistic was used to determine whether differences in special education eligibility at the end of the year were statistically significant. A Fischer exact test of the association between binary and categorical variables yielded a "p-value" = .0004. This analysis can be interpreted that the probability of finding such differences in special education eligibility just by chance are approximately four in 10,000.

CNCS has also sponsored a randomized control trial (RCT) impact evaluation of over 1,300 K-3 students at 23 participating MRC schools during the 2012-13 school year. The goal of the impact evaluation was to determine both short- and long-term impacts of MRC on elementary students' literacy outcomes. All students at the sampled schools were randomly assigned to either the Reading Corps program (treatment) or control group during the first semester, and weekly assessment data was used to determine the impact of the Reading Corps program on student literacy outcomes. The study went on to say, "if implemented in a scripted and rigorous matter in other locations, MRC can be transformed into a model for the development of other successful literacy enrichment and/or reading tutoring programs for young students." The final results of the study will be released by CNCS in February, 2014. The study was conducted by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (NORC).

C. MEMBER TRAINING: Training will be based on the successful Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) training model for content and delivery, and will include:

1) SUMMER INSTITUTE: The pre-service Summer Institute spans four days and provides the fundamental content and skills that AmeriCorps members need to start the school year. The first day of training will be an AmeriCorps Orientation, delivered by the NDRC Program Coordinator, and will

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include: AmeriCorps 101, program expectations and requirements, including prohibited activities, program management and resources for support, and host site/community information. Members will also review and sign their Service Agreements during this session. All NDRC members will receive a copy of their member handbook to use as a resource for program policies throughout the course of their service. The remaining three days of the Summer Institute will focus on the literacy aspects of the program, including introduction to reading, student assessments, reading interventions, literacy environments, child confidentiality. Master Coaches from NDRC will co-train with an experienced MRC trainer, and will use the standard training materials provided by MRC.

2) ONGOING TRAINING: NDRC members and Internal Coaches will participate in ongoing training throughout the year to scaffold the knowledge and skills acquired during Summer Institute. The sequencing of the training allows participants to learn what they need to know, when they need to know it. PreK members and Internal Coaches will be expected to attend four additional trainings throughout the year (Student Assessment, RtI: Data-Based Decision Making, RtI: Tier 2/3 Interventions, and Winter Data Review). K-3 members and Internal Coaches will be expected to attend two additional trainings throughout the year (Student Data Management, Great Leaps & Data-Based Decision Making).

3) COACHING: Additionally, each member has an Internal Coach and Master Coach that provides on-site coaching. The Master Coach, who has been trained by Minnesota Reading Corps, provides on-site coaching on a monthly basis. Using an integrity checklist, he/she observes the member implementing the model to ensure it is being delivered with fidelity. This rigorous coaching model ensures that the members are implementing what they learn during training with a high degree of fidelity. The members also have access to all of the intervention and assessment training videos online, allowing them to review at any point in the year to refresh.

D. MEMBER SUPERVISION: One of the distinguishing characteristics of this program is its emphasis on and commitment to fidelity. Members will receive adequate support and guidance throughout their terms of service in three ways: 1) Each member will be assigned an Internal Coach, a site-based, school employee who will supervise and support their activities day-to-day. This individual is a literacy specialist that will also attend NDRC orientation and training each year. Internal Coaches are required to observe the member twice a month, using an objective tool called an integrity checklist, and provide feedback to the member. Internal Coaches are also required to meet with the Reading Corps member(s) each week to review each individual student graph to ensure students are making adequate progress. On the 2011-12 Minnesota Reading Corps year-end member survey, 95% of

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members reported feeling supported by their Internal Coach. 2) The Master Coach will visit the site monthly to also conduct member observations and provide feedback. In these monthly coaching sessions, Master Coaches will help Internal Coaches diagnose student skill gaps based on data, recommend interventions that are most appropriate for the students, assist in making decisions about exiting students, and ensure that members are implementing interventions with fidelity. 3) the NDRC Program Managers will monitor performance data (e.g., student caseloads, tutor logs, program requirements), maintain member files, timesheets, and other documentation required by CNCS, support sites in handling member disciplinary issues (if needed), and visit the site regularly to ensure that the members are meeting program goals and requirements. Further, the Program Managers will meet with all NDRC members periodically throughout the year, as an opportunity to reflect on members' terms of service, ensure compliance with AmeriCorps requirements, including prohibited activities, and to facilitate dialogue and engagement among members.

E. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: The North Dakota Reading Corps (NDRC) program will ensure that members are aware and understand their identity as AmeriCorps members in multiple ways. Throughout the member recruitment, interview and placement process NDRC staff will share the AmeriCorps goals and philosophy with all potential members. As part of orientation, all members will receive AmeriCorps 101 training and learn how to talk about their AmeriCorps service. Members also participate in ongoing trainings throughout the year that emphasize their role as an AmeriCorps member, including citizenship training and Life After AmeriCorps. Members will wear member service gear that includes both the NDRC and AmeriCorps logos at their service site and community events.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: The South East Education Cooperative (SEEC) will be responsible for administering the North Dakota Reading Corps (NDRC) program. The SEEC is the largest Regional Education Association (REA) in North Dakota, serving 43 school districts including more than 30,000 students and 32% of the student population in the state of North Dakota. The SEEC has experience in project management, facilitating communication and networking, identifying needs, delivering professional development and technical assistance to schools, and collecting and reporting data to show how services impact schools. The SEEC currently manages several federally funded programs, including a current state formula AmeriCorps grant.

The SEEC, in partnership with West Fargo Public Schools as the fiscal agent, will be the organization that provides fiscal and program oversight for the grant. All REA's within North Dakota

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utilize school districts as their fiscal agents and for their human resource management, as outlined by the ND legislature granting Joint Powers Agreement authority pursuant to NDCC Chapter 54-40.3. This type of partnership has been successful for the current funded AmeriCorps grant, Coordinated School Health grant, federal academic enrichment grant, and Title programs which are managed by the SEEC. West Fargo Public Schools, as the fiscal agent, will enter into contract with the SEEC for grant management services provided by the NDRC staff. The West Fargo School District has a 2013-2014 General Fund Budget of \$91,423,900. The district follows Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and has an annual audit, including a Circular A-133 Audit. In its most recent Circular A-133 Audit, the district reported expending \$5,604,497 from 17 separate federal grants. The school district utilizes a Chart of Accounts based on standards adopted by the National Center of Education Statistics and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. West Fargo School District business manager, Mark Lemer, will be responsible for accounting, payroll, and financial reporting requirements. He has held that position since September 1995. He has been employed as a teacher of mathematics and computer science and as the Assistant Director of School Finance for the ND Department of Public Instruction.

With the goal of expanding the NDRC program to schools in central North Dakota, the SEEC will also partner with the Missouri River Education Cooperative (MREC) for program delivery in that region. The MREC is also an REA serving 39 school districts in south central North Dakota. Like the SEEC, the MREC has experience in project management, providing technical assistance to schools, and management of various federally funded grant programs. The MREC will provide program management services for AmeriCorps members in Bismarck and Mandan. The partnership of the SEEC and MREC will allow NDRC the potential to reach over 2/3 of the student population in North Dakota.

In collaboration with West Fargo Public Schools in 2012-2014 and Jamestown Public Schools in 2010-2012, the SEEC has successfully managed AmeriCorps programming for the past four years. Formerly named SEECing Student Progress, the program began in 2010 and was selected by the North Dakota State Commission as a funded project for four consecutive years. In 2013, the program formally transitioned to North Dakota Reading Corps after being selected by the Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) as a full replication partner. Throughout the grant period the NDRC will be supported and mentored by MRC in managing, training and deploying members; implementing evidence-based interventions; monitoring for fidelity; measuring impact; and developing an effective plan for sustainability. MRC replication managers will facilitate bi-weekly conference calls to ensure effective

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planning, implementation and ongoing delivery with fidelity, and will provide technical assistance as needed. Locally, the NDRC is managed by a team of professionals that provides program support and management in their respective fields.

The SEEC Director of Student Services, Amy Walters, will serve as the grant manager providing financial and program oversight for the NDRC. Amy has served in this capacity for the past four years and has developed strong relationships with the host sites, MRC, and the United Way of Cass/Clay Counties. In her role as a Director for the SEEC she has extensive experience in program and budget planning, management, and implementation.

Two Program Coordinators, one from the SEEC and the second from the MREC, will be responsible for management and support of members and host sites. Their responsibilities include member recruitment, interviews, placement, as well as maintaining program and member files in accordance with AmeriCorps regulations. Jolene Garty, from the SEEC, will continue to manage the programs at the Fargo, West Fargo, and Jamestown sites. She is in her second year with NDRC and has seven years of program coordination experience, which includes experience working with federal government agencies to ensure federal regulations and requirements are properly implemented and followed. The Program Coordinator position at the MREC is currently open.

NDRC currently employs three Master Coaches whose responsibilities are to ensure that all interventions are implemented with fidelity, data is documented properly, and to provide literacy-related training and assistance to all members and Internal Coaches. Kimberly Pepin and Connie Molony of the SEEC currently provide Master Coaching support for the K-3 program sites. Pepin, the SEEC Response to Intervention Specialist, and Molony, the SEEC English Language Arts Specialist, have over 50 years of combined experience in the Education and literacy instruction fields. A Master Coaching position to support schools in the MREC is currently vacant but will be filled upon securing grant funds. NDRC PreK sites will continue to receive coaching from Anne Braeseth, who is in her second year as a Master Coach with NDRC. Braeseth has also served as an Internal Coach with Minnesota Reading Corps since 2011, providing direct supervision for two AmeriCorps members.

B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: MRC will provide NDRC with ongoing fidelity monitoring using a quality control/multiple site management system that address site recruitment, selection and renewal; site agreements; site visit observation checklists; and site assessments. It will provide guidance and support on AmeriCorps member recruitment including a member management guide with protocols for outreach, orientation, training, performance measure evaluation, and service requirements. Finally, a web-based dashboard data collection and reporting system will provide SEEC

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staff with real-time performance data at the student, member, site, district and state levels to facilitate accountability monitoring.

New and returning host sites will be asked to complete an application to host the NDRC program. The application process will outline the expectations and commitments of host sites and their staff, specifically in the areas of training attendance, member support, member roles, and fidelity of the Reading Corps model. Once accepted as a NDRC site for the school year, each school will also be required to complete a host site agreement. This agreement includes a list of prohibited activities. Internal Coaches will supervise the day to day activities of members, in addition to two formal literacy observations each month. Compliance with the host site agreement and AmeriCorps requirements will be reviewed during the site selection process each year.

Prior to beginning their term of service, each member signs a service agreement. The service agreement contains all required policies concerning timesheets, equal opportunity employment, non-discrimination policy, drug-free workplace, grievance procedures, and prohibited activities. The agreement will clearly outline the term of service requirements and the responsibilities in the position description. NDRC is the only program in North Dakota currently using an online system, OnCorps, for member time tracking. NDRC chose to move to an electronic system as an added compliance safeguard for timesheet submissions. To ensure compliance with AmeriCorps requirements, all NDRC staff members receive training on prohibited activities. The Program Coordinators will review member files for compliance twice a year to verify that all required documentation is contained in the files.

C. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEES: During the 2012-2013 program year, NDRC met the goals of all of its performance measures: Student Literacy, Member Development, and Volunteer Recruitment. As a state-formula project, the NDRC was required by the North Dakota State Commission on Community and National Service to report on Member Development and Volunteer Recruitment performance measures. The results for each measure from 2012-13 are as follows:

1) STUDENT LITERACY: The program served 421 elementary students, with 89% (or 374) of students achieving grade level reading proficiency. Students across all grade levels, in the program had average rates of growth per week higher than the target rate of growth. In many cases the average rate of growth far exceeded or was even double or triple, the target rate of growth. This means that overall, the students in the program were on track to make more than a year's growth in a year's time and were catching up to the achievement levels of their higher achieving peers. NDRC exceeded its performance measure goals of serving 250 students and its goal of 75% of students achieving grade level reading proficiency.

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2) MEMBER DEVELOPMENT: The outcome of the Member Development performance measure requires 90% of NDRC members that complete their service to demonstrate proficiency in literacy intervention practices. The end outcome goal was met as 100%, or 22 out of 22 members, demonstrated proficiency in the delivery of literacy interventions.

3) VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT: 53 volunteers were recruited to support literacy efforts and service activities of host site organizations and community organization. 100% of the 53 volunteers reported having a meaningful experience and that they were interested in volunteering again in the future. These outcomes exceeded the goal which was set to recruit 52 volunteers, 85% of which had a meaningful service experience.

Enrollment and Retention: In the 2012-2013 program year, NDRC had an enrollment rate of 85% and achieved a 100% retention rate for the program year. Recruitment activities were reviewed, resulting in the implementation of additional recruitment strategies. This review and improvement process has resulted in a 100% enrollment rate in the 2013-2014 program year. MRC is working closely with NDRC to continue this success by developing and launching a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan. A programmatic review conducted by the North Dakota State Commission in fall 2013 resulted in two findings regarding discrepancies with member enrollment dates. These discrepancies were immediately corrected. The SEEC created a corrective action plan to address these issues which includes an audit of all member files twice a year to ensure compliance. A fiscal review was also completed by the State Commission. All costs were found to be allowable and no material or reportable findings were discovered.

D. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: NDRC will seek feedback from members formally through a mid-year and year-end survey. Survey questions will be used to collect information on member experience and program efficiencies, including communication with NDRC staff and host sites. Information will be sought on the content and format of member trainings and the need for additional assistance. Members will meet periodically as a group throughout the year with the Program Coordinators. These meetings will include opportunities for members to discuss ways to enhance the program. School districts will be engaged in three ways: 1) Internal Coaches will complete a survey at the end of the school year soliciting comments on the content and management of the program. 2) The Master Coaches and Program Coordinators will be in frequent communication with the Internal Coaches during site visits. 3) Administrative level representatives from participating host sites and partner organizations will serve as a Program Implementation Team and meet regularly. Finally, principals and program directors will receive updates on the status of the program

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at their schools from the respective Master Coach, Internal Coach and Program Coordinator.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS: For a cost of just over \$1000 (includes CNCS, public and private funding) per student served, North Dakota Reading Corps (NDRC) is proposing to deliver a quadruple bottom line result: 1) Helping students on a trajectory of failure to achieve reading proficiency by grade 3 and advance in the general education population; 2) Providing members with valuable career skills while deepening their connection to their communities and national service; 3) Building school and community capacity to use data-informed instruction, assessment and evidence-based literacy interventions; and 4) Supporting national educational reform through integrated use of data, high-quality training and research based content and approaches that result in higher student academic achievement.

Reading Corps presents a unique opportunity for investment. Unlike other providers of literacy intervention, Reading Corps is a turnkey education solution by combining multiple evidence-based practices with system-wide implementation that is focused on getting results- and does so quickly, effectively and at less cost than other existing reading programs. The amount requested will enable us to provide services for 516 children, who would not otherwise receive literacy interventions. The host sites identified for the program have informed us that they could not provide this level of evidence-based, focused literacy intervention at the amount requested, much less guarantee the results that Minnesota Reading Corps has consistently been able to achieve. As a result, NDRC believes our ability to offer a proven program to a large number of at-risk students makes this request extremely competitive.

The participating host sites have determined the living allowance of \$600 per month for a reduced half-time member, \$400 per month for a quarter-time member. The AmeriCorps members that will be recruited will not be seeking full-time employment, but less than halftime to gain educational experience while in school or supplement existing income in a professional or retired setting. This living allowance will attract members that will be dedicated to the position in which the fidelity of the interventions is vital to student success. This calculates to a CNCS funds per MSY of \$12,999.

The participating host sites have committed to financially supporting a 40% cash match, or \$88,267 for the AmeriCorps members' monthly living allowance and support costs to attract quality applicants to the program. Both the SEEC and MREC will contribute \$25,000 of general funding to support the program. In addition to the cash match significant in-kind resources will be allocated to this project by the school districts, the MREC and the SEEC. The United Way of Cass/Clay Counties has also

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committed \$60,700 annually, for the next three years, to support the cash match for the implementation of the PreK services within childcare classrooms and the associated costs with replicating the Minnesota Reading Corps model. The remaining balance will be raised through private foundations and local organizations. This diversified funding portfolio of private and public funding sources demonstrates the broad support of the Reading Corps program and will lead to program sustainability. The total project match by the grantee is \$334,989 or 64% of the total budget.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY: The budget supports program activities with a focus on the delivery of services to the classrooms through an investment in member stipends, supervision, evidence-based reading interventions and high-quality training. Desired outputs and outcomes are incorporated into service delivery and supervision, facilitated through the use of management information systems, and measured annually with an evaluation. This project demonstrates a unique opportunity to leverage federal, state, and local funding to create a very large community impact of ensuring children are on track to become proficient readers.

The Program Operating Costs budget allows for quality program and fiscal management, member support, intervention support and training which will be provided by the South East Education Cooperative (SEEC). West Fargo Public Schools will enter into a contract with the SEEC to provide the above- detailed grant management and program oversight. In addition, \$60,700 per year has been secured from United Way of Cass-Clay to fund the costs of program replication to utilize the Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) model. These costs will include technical assistance, program evaluation, staff, internal coach and member training, and data management provided by the MRC. Other program operating costs include staff travel (travel to MRC national meetings), member travel (travel to attend training), supplies and training expenses. All program supplies, materials and member gear will include both the NDRC and AmeriCorps logo. Member background checks have been budgeted for in other program operating costs. The total for this budget section is \$221,561. The United Way of Cass-Clay Counties, SEEC, MREC and other private partners will contribute \$189,520 or 86% of program operating costs through cash and in-kind match.

The Member Costs budget support 41 member positions with a total living allowance of \$228,000 and member support costs for FICA and workers compensation of \$18,627. The total for this budget section is \$246,627 with the grantee share covering 40% of these costs. This grantee share will be cash match from the host site agencies' general fund. The commitment of general fund dollars is testament to the impact the program has on the school districts and student's academic success; the root of the program desired outputs and outcomes. The Administrative/Indirect Costs were calculated using the

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corporation-fixed percentage rate, a fixed 5% of the total of the Corporation funds expended with the grantee match 10% of all direct cost expenditures.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

EVALUATION PLAN: NDRC will undergo an evaluation by MRC as part of the technical assistance and national oversight for Reading Corps implementation provided through the replication partnership. The evaluation will demonstrate the impact of the program model on students, on members, and on the sites where the program is operating. Members and host sites will be required to complete a year-end survey requesting feedback on the effectiveness of training sessions, member experience, program support and technical assistance, and the value of the program. The evaluation plan for K-3 programs will include a review of the literacy interventions used and fidelity of delivery, student demographics, and data collection tools. Data will be collected regarding the literacy improvement of students in the areas of: growth rate by grade level, average linear growth rates, exit rates, percentage of students who exit and also meet or exceed the spring benchmark, and the number of 3rd grade students passing the state reading exam. PreK programs will track student demographics, the fidelity of data collection tools, implementation of interventions, and the literacy impacts of the program such as the percentage of students moving from "below target" to "at or above target", and the percentage of students on or above, near, and far from target for Fall, Winter, Spring.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Clarification of individual sub applicants for Prime application ID # 14AC157332

14AC157453 - West Fargo Public School District

The application is under consideration for a grant in the amount of \$189,485.00, 14.57 Member Service Years (MSYs), 41 slots, and 13,005.15 Cost per MSY.

4/16/2014 Clarification Responses

Section III - CNCS share exceeds 5% maximum. CNCS share has been recalculated to not exceed 5%.

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Section F - The calculation for the SEEC Program Coordination and Management line item has been checked and confirmed to be correct.

Section F - The SEEC Program Coordination and Management is a set contract between West Fargo Public Schools and the SEEC. West Fargo Public Schools serves as the fiscal agent for North Dakota Reading Corps. The employees are staff of South East Education Cooperative.

Section F - The Master Coach and Program Coordinator travel is included in this section because they are not employed by West Fargo Public Schools, rather South East Education Cooperative. The travel is included as part of the contracted services provided by SEEC to West Fargo Public school for program coordination and management of North Dakota Reading Corps.

Section F - Clarify the MN Reading Corps line item. This is a set contract. South East Education Cooperative enters into a contract with MN Reading Corps to provide ongoing support to replicate the highly successful MN Reading Corps model. Services provided include program evaluation and data management systems, research-to-practice implications, national replication training and technical assistance.

4/10/2014 Clarification Responses

a. Budget clarification items. The following items have been responded to in the clarification summary field of the narrative and/or in the budget narrative as is appropriate.

1. Section C - Staff Travel - Please check the calculation for the MN Reading Corps line item. It appears incorrect.

*Change made in egrants budget section.

2. Section C - Member Travel - Please check the calculation for the Travel to K3 Summer Institute Training line item, it appears incorrect.

*Change made in egrants budget section.

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3. Section F - Please check the calculation for the SEEC Program Coordination and Management and Master Coach and Program Coordinator travel line items.

*Change made in egrants budget section.

4. Section F - The SEEC Program Coordination and Management line item should be moved to Sections A and B of the budget.

*NDRC Program Coordination and Management expenses, and aligned travel expenses, have been included in Section F Contractual and Consultant Services because West Fargo Public Schools, the grantee, contracts with the South East Education Cooperative to provide program coordination and management services. West Fargo Public Schools will serve as the fiscal agent and provide fiscal and program oversight for the grant. The SEEC employs the Grant Manager, Program Coordinator, and Master Literacy Coaches.

5. Section F - The Master Coach and Program Coordinator travel line item should be moved to Section C of the budget.

*See above clarification for item a.4

6. Section F - Clarify the MN Reading Corps line item. Is this a set contract?

*Yes, this is a set contract. North Dakota Reading Corps enters into a contract with MN Reading Corps to provide ongoing support to replicate the highly successful MN Reading Corps model. Services provided include program evaluation and data management systems, research-to-practice implications, national replication training and technical assistance.

7. Section G - Member Training - What costs are budgeted for the AmeriCorps training?

*This training will occur in conjunction with other program training and accrue no additional cost to

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program. This cost has been removed from the budget request.

8. Section I - Please confirm background checks will be completed for staff and indicate how the costs will be covered.

*All NDRC program staff will have an NSOPR, State Background Check, and FPI check completed and maintained at the West Fargo Public School Human Resource office. The South East Education Cooperative will cover these costs as part of its in-kind support to the program.

9. Section I - Please check the calculation for the office supplies, it appears incorrect. Move this item to Section E.

*Change made in egrants budget section.

b. Programmatic clarification items: Please respond in the eGrants narrative field labeled "Clarification Summary"

1. 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 with State academic content standards as required by 45 CFR 2522.940.

*RESEARCH BASED CURRICULUM: The National Reading Panel (2000) identified the "Big Five" areas of reading instruction: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each reading domain has a direct relationship with overall reading achievement. Reading acquisition is an iterative process by which development of lower level skills (e.g., phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency) and higher level skills (e.g., vocabulary and comprehension) interact to strengthen one another, and in turn, overall reading achievement improves (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Tilstra, McMaster, van den Broek, Kendeou, & Rapp, 2009). The Reading Corps interventions address three of the five areas directly, while addressing vocabulary and comprehension implicitly. The development of, and proficiency in, these lower level skills are the best indicators of overall reading achievement, before a student 'reads to learn' (see Theory of Automaticity, LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Chall, 1983; NRP, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

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Literacy experts on staff at the Minnesota Reading Corps thus identified these skills as the target of the program's interventions. These interventions were derived from published experimental research in which effective instructional practices in reading were presented.

RESEARCH-BASED TUTOR TRAINING: The pre-service and in-service training for tutors is research based. A host of collaborators, who hold doctorate degrees in Educational Psychology, have developed the training modules used in Reading Corps nationwide. The training includes: Introduction to Reading, Administering and Scoring Reading Assessments, Intervention Delivery, Data-Based Decision Making and Family Engagement. The training is delivered by highly regarded literacy content experts who are well-prepared in the standard and consistent training content used in Reading Corps nationwide.

ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL AND STATE CONTENT STANDARDS: The Reading Corps model is well aligned to support local and state content standards. The evidence-based interventions are addressing the "Big Five" areas of reading instruction that were identified by the National Reading Panel (2000), as described above. Additionally, the Reading Corps interventions are directly supportive of the North Dakota Common Core, including elements in Reading Standards for Literature, Reading Standards for Informational Text, and Reading Standards for Foundational Skills.

2. 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 45 CFR 9522.910-940.

***MEETING MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:** The position descriptions for the North Dakota Reading Corps positions state that a high school diploma or its equivalent, or a higher degree, is required. The online application to become a member in North Dakota Reading Corps requires that applicants select that they meet this minimum qualification in order to submit their application; applicants who do not meet this minimum qualification are not able to complete the member application. In conducting an initial application screening, the Program Manager verifies that this qualification is met. Additionally, all members must sign a member contract that certifies that he or she has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. All tutors are required to participate in a pre-service training (called

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Summer Institute), which provides tutors with practical knowledge about how to deliver the Reading Corps model and an opportunity to practice the interventions and assessments. Tutors must attend pre-service training before they can begin service with students, and are required to attend additional in-service training. Additionally, tutors must demonstrate that they are able to administer the assessments with a 95% degree of accuracy before beginning tutoring.

SUPERVISION: The site supervisor for the tutor is a role called "Internal Coach" in Reading Corps. With the guidance of the Reading Corps Program Manager, the principal delegates the role of Internal Coach to someone on his or her staff who has a background in early literacy, reading instruction, assessment and intervention. The role is often filled by a reading teacher, intervention specialist, or a literacy specialist. The Internal Coach is required to attend the Reading Corps training with their tutor. The Internal Coach also has the support of a Master Coach. The Master Coach is a paid position of North Dakota Reading Corps; the Master Coach visits each site monthly to provide on-site support to the Internal Coach and tutor in implementing the literacy model. Master Coaches are highly-qualified to provide tutoring support and oversight.

3. Please explain what is meant by "defined exit criteria."

*Students who receive Reading Corps tutoring are assessed each month (preK) or each week (K-3) using a 1 or 2-minute valid and reliable assessment. The tutors enter the data from the assessment into the online database, edSpring, which produces an individual student graph. Each month, the Master Coach, Internal Coach and tutor meet to review each individual student graph to make instructional decisions, including whether or not the student is ready to be exited from Reading Corps tutoring. If a student is making adequate progress, his or her scores will increase at a rate similar to the graph's aim-line (i.e., some points above and some points below the aim-line). Students in 1st -3rd grade who have 3-5 consecutive data points above the aim-line with two of these scores at or above the upcoming season target score should be exited from Reading Corps services; Kindergarten students must have 3-5 consecutive data points above the aim-line with two of these scores at or above the spring target score; preschool students must have 2 points at or above the aim-line, with one of those scores at or above the spring target score. The target scores that produce the aim-line and guide decision-making about meeting exit criteria are predictive of a student's performance on the 3rd

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grade state reading exam. This means that when a student has met the exit criteria, he or she is on a trajectory to become a proficient reader by the end of 3rd grade.

4. Please remove the literacy development performance measures from the application (ED20, ED21 and ED24). While the program may internally track data related to the early literacy development component of the program, the program is not required to report to CNCS on this measure.

*Per the guidance of the CNCS Program Officer, we did not remove the PreK Literacy Growth Performance Measure (ED20, ED21, ED24) because four of the 41 members in the grant will be serving students in early childhood programs; this performance measure will allow us to capture the impact of the individuals serving in early childhood programs.

5. Base on a review of the cost effectiveness section in your application we feel your program did not make a compelling case for the requested cost per member service year (MSY). Please consider decreasing your cost per MSY by revising your CNCS share of the program budget or explain why your program is cost effective in terms other than what exists in the application.

*North Dakota Reading Corps is aligned to current economic thought that investments made in quality early education provide the greatest return to individual students and families, schools and communities -- in excess of 10% annually. We believe that delivering high-quality intervention service for \$1,000 per student is a cost effective solution to preventing reading failure. It should be noted that since the submission of this grant application, the Corporation for National and Community Service published an Impact Evaluation of Minnesota Reading Corps reporting the results of a randomized controlled trial, which showed that Kindergarten, first, and third grade students who received Minnesota Reading Corps tutoring achieved significantly higher literacy assessment scores than students who did not (NORC, 2014). The evidence suggests that when implemented with fidelity, North Dakota Reading Corps can expect similar results. This evaluation provides evidence that the model is effective and produces meaningful results for students. Additionally, an analysis conducted in Minnesota of the Reading Corps' effectiveness in diverting students from special education assignment indicated a savings estimated to exceed \$9 million a year in Minnesota alone. The study provides

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evidence that the Reading Corps model is catching students before they fail, resulting in significant savings.

6.ED1; ED2; ED5; The instruments you intend to use, ONCorps and EdSpring, are both databases and it is unclear what information each database is designed to specifically capture. Please explain how these databases will be utilized and what the database is designed to assess for the K-12 program activities.

*edSpring is a custom-built online database that is used by all Reading Corps programs nationwide, including North Dakota Reading Corps. Tutors are given a log-in to edSpring and learn how to use the system during an in-service training at the beginning of the year. Tutors are responsible for entering student data into the system on a weekly basis for each student served, including: 1) basic demographic information for each student served, 2) benchmark literacy assessment scores from the fall, winter and spring, 3) progress monitoring assessment scores [weekly in K-3 or monthly in preK], 4) daily tutor log data, capturing the number of minutes of daily intervention services, and 5) family engagement data. The database captures all of the data points that are required to report on the stated performance measures (ED1, ED2, ED5 and ED20, ED21, ED24). It is important to note that since the submission of this grant application, edSpring has been further developed so that the OnCorps database will not be utilized to capture student performance data. All student performance data will be captured in edSpring. However, OnCorps will continue to be used for member timesheet reporting.

7.For ED2, please confirm that the students captured under this measure are enrolled in schools with a majority of economically disadvantaged students and/or a majority a children with special or exceptional needs as per the definitions found in the National Performance Measures Instructions

*All students selected for participation in Reading Corps demonstrate a special or exceptional need as stated under "Measure ED2 Definition of Key Terms" as having literacy needs.

8.For ED2. 4. For ED2, please further describe how the program defines "completed K-12 education programs" in order for students to be captured under this measure.

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*The program defines "completed K-12 education programs" as a K-3 student who receives a minimum of 3 weeks of service (or 300 minutes of service), which is the minimum amount of service to be included in the growth analysis conducted to show improved academic performance in ED5.

9. Grant Start Date and Member Enrollment Period. Please review your desired grant award start date and member enrollment period start date in the Applicant Info section of your application. Please make any corrections necessary. In the Clarification narrative field, please enter a statement confirming the desired grant award start and member enrollment period start. In the Clarification narrative field, please also confirm your desired grant award start date and member enrollment period start date.

*We are requesting a grant award start date and member enrollment period start date of August 1, 2014.

c. Strategic Engagement slots Clarification:

1) What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is your program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community?

*10% of the slots will be targeted towards the disability community. Recruitment materials will indicate that NDRC is committed to the inclusion of all individuals, including those with disabilities and that reasonable accommodation is provided upon request. Recruitment materials will be sent to disability service departments at local colleges and to organizations working with disabled individuals such as Freedom Resource Center and the ND Vocational Rehabilitation Center.

2) In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with

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disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies.) In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If you would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs your program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to your budget.

*No additional MSYs are requested.

d. MSY with no program funds attached Clarification:

*We are not requesting additional No-Cost MSYs.

e. Health care clarification items are to be addressed by programs with full-time members (excluding EAP and Professional Corps):

*We are not enrolling any full-time members.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics