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Executive Summary

The Washington Reading Corps (WRC) will have 150 full-time AmeriCorps members who will provide evidence-based reading tutoring to students, based on assessed needs, one-on-one and in small groups of no more than six, through intensive 20-minute sessions at least three times a week in approximately 75 high-needs schools and early learning centers throughout Washington State. Members will be responsible for 3,300 students increasing one grade level in reading proficiency or meeting curriculum-based literacy benchmarks by the end of the first program year. Members will also leverage an additional 3,000 volunteers that will partner with members to provide the same type and intensity of tutoring. The program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$1,860,000 will be supported by \$1,397,000 state and local funds (\$950,000 provided by the Washington State Legislature through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and \$447,000 in local funding).

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Program Design: The WRC is a dynamic statewide literacy support program designed to promote reading proficiency for elementary school students and literacy development activities for early-learning participants. The first program of its kind in the nation, the WRC was created in 1998 through an unprecedented collaboration between the Governor's office; the Washington State Commission for National and Community Service; the Employment Security Department, which houses the Washington Service Corps (WSC); and the state's K-12 education agency, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Jointly led by the WSC and OSPI, the WRC plays a critical role in advancing the state's vision for basic education: provide all students the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives.

a. PROBLEM/NEED: A landmark research study by the National Research Council (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998), which has shaped current thinking about and responses to children's literacy development, showed that students who struggle with reading in early grades have greater difficulty than proficient readers in keeping up with schoolwork later on and are far more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school. Subsequent research (Hernandez, 2012; Lesnick et al, 2010) confirms these findings, and illustrates that students who do not become proficient readers are at increased risk of being unemployed, on public assistance, or in prison as adults (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Multiple studies have confirmed

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that struggling readers are disproportionately poor children of color (Jacob & Ludwig 2009; Spiegel, 2011; Chamberlin, 2012): nationally, only about 17% of low-income 4th graders are proficient in reading, compared with 50% of their middle- to upper-income peers (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). These national trends are echoed in Washington state: while more than 70% of all state 4th graders read at or above grade level, almost 30% are struggling readers (state student performance data as reported at www.reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us). For some groups of students in the state, the rates of grade-level reading proficiency are even lower: in 4th grade, only 61% of low-income students and only 34% of English Learners read at grade level. And, while academic outcomes for the state's 30,000 military children are not tracked separately, experience and anecdotal evidence indicates they also struggle with reading because of challenges related to frequent moves and multiple parental deployments (Cannon, 2011).

Washington has implemented several significant initiatives to increase reading achievement: In 2005, the state developed a K-12 Reading Model to help educators and other stakeholders address students' reading challenges. In 2007, the state legislature, which has provided consistent funding for WRC since 1998, passed legislation specifically designating almost \$1,000,000 annually for the WRC, through OSPI. In 2009, OSPI and the state's Department of Early Learning joined with the non-profit Thrive by Five Washington to form an Early Learning Partnership and, in 2010, stakeholders released the statewide Early Learning Plan (ELP), a comprehensive 10-year roadmap for building the state's early childhood system. In 2011, the state began a phased implementation of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), designed to ensure each child's successful start to the K-12 experience. And in 2012, the state expanded the K-12 Reading Model to create a statewide Birth-to-12th Grade Comprehensive Literacy Plan. The WRC's efforts advance each of these initiatives, helping move the state closer to its goals for student reading proficiency.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: The WRC harnesses the talent, energy and passion of AmeriCorps members to provide targeted literacy interventions and reading tutoring to struggling readers. THE WRC'S THEORY OF CHANGE is straightforward: by training dedicated AmeriCorps members to provide evidence-based literacy tutoring to struggling readers in collaboration with school and community partners, the WRC can help raise students' reading proficiency levels, improve their academic achievement, and, over the long term, support positive life outcomes.

WRC uses a strategically-developed Request for Proposals (RFP) process to identify placement sites, which can be elementary schools, school-based early learning centers, or community-based

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early learning programs. For the proposed grant-funded project year, WRC will issue an official RFP in Spring 2014, which will be disseminated to all schools through OSPI's iGrants system and to non-school sites and early learning communities through Washington Service Corps' extensive email and distribution lists. Review of applicant responses to the RFP helps WRC prioritize site selection based on each site's:

- a) need for services, as demonstrated by the percentage of low-income students, English Learners, and children in military families; low overall grade-level reading proficiency rates; and large reading-proficiency gaps among student subgroups;
- b) alignment with the state's K-12 Reading Model, as demonstrated by their implementation of research-based strategies, including valid, reliable assessments; evidence-based tutoring; literacy training and support; and core instruction that is provided by highly-qualified teachers;
- c) commitment to WRC and AmeriCorps service goals and objectives, as demonstrated by an articulated understanding of these goals and objectives, and a sustainability plan to continue programming after WRC support has ceased.

WRC services are aligned with the National Center on Response to Intervention's data-informed decision-making model and partner sites use a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework to assess literacy and reading skills and provide interventions. MTSS models call for increasingly-intense instruction and intervention, based on need, with Tier I instruction (core curricula) for all students, Tier II interventions (targeted one-on-one and small-group supports) for students who do not meet proficiency benchmarks, and Tier III interventions (more intensive supports) for students who are assessed with the most severe challenges. In Washington state, all students are guaranteed to receive Tier I-level instruction (commonly referred to as "core instruction") through ongoing curriculum and instruction supported by state funding and multiple federal sources. Students with the most severe academic challenges are also eligible to receive special education services funded through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Students in need of Tier II level supports are those who present academic struggles and are below grade level according to multiple measures in schools. Services supporting students qualifying as "Tier II" are often quite limited because of the limited availability of funding and, consequently, many fall through the cracks. WRC targets its work directly toward students in need of Tier II intervention to help ensure that these students get the support they need to become successful readers.

WRC members support struggling readers identified as needing Tier II interventions through five key strategies: 1) using screening tools to identify students experiencing reading difficulties and

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working collaboratively with teachers to determine which students need Tier II interventions; 2) using diagnostic tools to determine students' exact areas of difficulty and determine interventions, and using assessment-monitoring tools to track whether students are making adequate progress; 3) providing tutoring and literacy interventions individually and in small groups of no more than six during intensive 20-minute sessions at least three times weekly (for preschool age children, supports and interventions are provided during literacy activities throughout the day); 4) engaging parents and caregivers through family literacy events and activities; and 5) leveraging additional tutoring support from community volunteers.

Of the 6,000 students to be served in the 2014-2015 academic year, at least 85% (5,100) will complete the program by either participating for a full year or "graduating" from Tier II to Tier I (i.e. core instruction); and at least 65% (3,300) of those completing will make measurable gains in literacy skills and reading proficiency (either achieve grade level proficiency or meet core literacy benchmarks). By focusing on Tier II interventions, members are strongly positioned to: provide classroom teachers more time to focus on core instruction for all students; provide support service personnel more time to target Tier III services to students with the greatest learning challenges; and keep many students from needing Tier III supports.

Measurable Impact: All MSY hours are spent providing services directly related to Priority Measures from goals articulated in the CNCS 5-Year Strategic Plan: Goal 1) WRC helps increase the impact of national service on community needs by promoting improved reading proficiency, attitudes, and behaviors to help support improved student outcomes over the long term; Goal 2) WRC helps strengthen national service so that participants find satisfaction, meaning, and opportunity by providing AmeriCorps members with experiences that expand their educational, employment, and civic opportunities; and Goal 3) WRC helps maximize value to grantees, partners and participants by evaluating its programming to provide evidence of effectiveness to support best practice and by using AmeriCorps members to recruit and work with significant numbers of community-based volunteers, using CNCS support to leverage other community resources. WRC directly addresses the CNCS priorities by providing evidenced-based literacy tutoring to struggling readers, in collaboration with school and community partners, that is designed to increase students' reading proficiency levels and, thereby improve their academic achievement and life prospects.

Outputs include the number of: sites served (75); tutoring hours provided (270,000); students tutored (6,000); students who exit tutoring (5,100); participants who improve literacy skills, increase reading proficiency, or meet reading benchmarks (3,300); parents or family members who participate

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in literacy-focused activities (24,292); and community volunteers who serve as tutors (3,000).

Short-term outcomes include improvement in students' attitudes, behaviors, and self-confidence in reading; and an increase in students' literacy skills and reading proficiency. Medium-term outcomes include: an increase in the number of students who achieve grade-level reading proficiency; and a decrease in reading proficiency gaps. Long-term outcomes: Students meet college-ready benchmarks in high school; graduate from high school and successfully complete post-secondary programs; and gain meaningful, living-wage employment and participate actively in civic life as adults. Members use the skills and experience they gain to become leaders in their chosen professions and in their communities.

Data Collection Tools: Local control laws allow for WRC sites to use a variety of tools to collect service and outcome data, including: 1) tools that screen students, diagnose literacy and reading challenges, assess oral fluency, and monitor progress (although most sites use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills [DIBELS] or STAR assessments, use of specific tools is not mandatory); 2) tools that measure students' progress toward defined literacy and reading benchmarks for specific sites' reading curriculum; 3) the standardized WRC Student Tracking Log, which sites use to record and report assessment results, intervention (tutoring) dosage, and changes in reading attitudes, behavior, and self-confidence; 4) member training plans, which track completion of core required training; and 5) WRC Site Risk Assessment and Compliance-Monitoring tools, used to assess and monitor site performance in seven key areas (described in Section 2B, Compliance).

Evidence Base: Evidence indicates that the proposed interventions can lead to improved reading proficiency for participating students: 1) a meta-analysis of studies (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000) showed that one-to-one reading instruction contributed to improved performance; 2) rigorous evaluations of tutoring programs (Hock et. al., 2001) have found that strategic tutoring was effective in improving the academic performance of the majority of participating students; 3) an analysis of 65 studies of high-quality tutoring programs found positive achievement effects across all studies (Carnine et al, 2002); 4) a recent synthesis of studies of reading interventions (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007) revealed that interventions were effective when provided by well-trained implementers and that one-on-one instruction and very small group sizes were associated with high effects. This evidence supports the WRC's use of trained AmeriCorps members to reinforce core instruction through targeted reading interventions one-on-one and in small groups.

Research also demonstrates the effectiveness of specific WRC strategies, including: a) research which found that 71% of early learning students receiving Tier II intervention strategies showed

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marked increases in phonemic awareness that kept them from requiring more intensive interventions (Koutsoftas, Harmon, & Gray, 2009); and b) multiple studies showing that parental involvement in reading influences children's literacy development (Cutspec, 2006 and 2004; Naughton, 2004; and Fielding-Barnsley & Purdie, 2003). In addition, a study (see attached) conducted by a graduate student at the University of Washington measured the effectiveness of the WRC's specific model (Roe, 2013). A sampling of data from the 2011-12 WRC program year showed that over half of the students tutored by members achieved reading benchmarks or gained a grade level, and experienced significant improvement in reading attitudes, behavior and self-confidence. WRC and OSPI have jointly contracted an external evaluator to design and implement a quasi-experimental study to directly measure the connection between the WRC model and improved reading proficiency.

c. **MEMBER TRAINING:** The WRC ensures consistent, evidence-based training and technical assistance to help members support struggling readers. Like the tutoring members provide to students, the training the WRC provides to members is offered within a multi-tiered system of support.

All members participate in: 1) the Orientation/Initial-Service Webinar, produced jointly by OSPI and the WSC, which outlines the roles, responsibilities, and key duties of both the AmeriCorps member and the site supervisor and reviews prohibited activities; 2) AmeriCorps In-Service Training, provided through WSC's annual 4-day SERVES Institute conference for members statewide, which covers topics related to successful community service and includes a second review of prohibited activities; 3) WRC Literacy Tutor Training, an 8-hour session that encompasses the research-based Para Reading curriculum (Glaser, 2005) and covers topics related to literacy development, including literacy standards and skills; assessment tools; research-based interventions; strategies to engage families; and strategies to recruit, engage, and motivate community volunteers.

Members also receive additional assistance, as needed, through quarterly webinars, produced by OSPI and WSC, which are designed to help members facilitate implementation of the WRC model; and through support by phone or email or during regularly-scheduled site visits. WRC state partners also provide ongoing technical assistance, which may include training provided by Literacy Specialists from either OSPI or one of the state's nine Educational Service Districts (which provide regional coordination of services to school districts). Site supervisors also provide regular coaching and support, including site-specific information regarding school policies and procedures and support in training volunteers to serve as reading tutors.

d. **MEMBER SUPERVISION:** WRC AmeriCorps members are supervised at the site level by designated site supervisors and managed at the state level by WRC program staff. At the site level, the

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principal or a lead teacher typically is responsible for managing the service experience of each member placed at that site. Supervisory expectations are outlined in a contract with WRC (see section 2B, Compliance). All supervisors are required to have not only classroom teaching experience, but also specific expertise in literacy development or reading instruction. The supervisor assigns students to each member; provides coaching support to help members effectively address students' literacy needs and social-emotional behaviors; helps members adapt to school culture and follow school policies and procedures; and track members' time and evaluate their performance.

At the state level, WSC and OSPI Program Coordinators work directly with sites to support effective member supervision through technical assistance and training site visits and ongoing consultation via phone, webinars, and email. While program sites have primary responsibility for member recruitment and supervision, WRC state partners work in close collaboration to provide targeted training that helps supervisors provide the oversight and guidance needed for members' success in the program. This support helps ensure: 1) that sites recruit and select members with the knowledge, skills, and background needed to not only meet AmeriCorps standards but also be effective tutors for high-needs children and students and 2) that sites communicate information about program requirements and expectations fully and effectively.

During the past year, WRC has moved from a team-based placement model to an individual placement model, which enables the organization to provide more direct management of and support for members. Using an individual placement model (rather than the team-based model, which gave responsibility for administration and member management to intermediary community-based organizations) helps WRC more closely monitor sites and establish more direct relationships with individual AmeriCorps members. This direct connection with sites and members has two important benefits: 1) it helps WRC maintain closer scrutiny of site implementation, ensuring greater fidelity to the program model and greater compliance with AmeriCorps regulations and standards; and 2) it helps deepen members' affiliation with AmeriCorps, as members see themselves as providing service through Washington Reading Corps - AmeriCorps, rather than through the intermediary organization.

WRC is also developing a tool to track post-service experiences, including members' perception of the extent to which their AmeriCorps service improved capacity to find and succeed in personally- and professionally-rewarding employment.

e. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: The WRC is committed to supporting members with AmeriCorps identity. First, the annual SERVES Institute, hosted by WSC, is focused

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intently on building members' AmeriCorps identity by connecting them to each other as a part of a national service community. As a member development institute, SERVES gives WRC members the opportunity to be coached and to practice how they will speak about their AmeriCorps experience to members of the community. Second, the WRC helps schools promote their identification with AmeriCorps through appropriate language, appropriate use of the AmeriCorps name and logo in promotional materials, and by providing AmeriCorps gear for members to wear during service and community events. Third, as noted earlier, the WRC's move to an individual placement model facilitates more explicit and direct connection with WRC and AmeriCorps and fosters members' identification with the national organization.

Organizational Capability

a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: Established in 1998, the WRC is managed through a unique collaboration between two organizations with the extensive experience and capacity needed to ensure the program's success: the WSC and OSPI, the state agency responsible for K-12 education. This collaborative leadership structure provides unparalleled opportunity for cooperation and joint planning and enables state agency partners to play complementary roles that facilitate effective program implementation. Since the inception of AmeriCorps, WSC has administered national service programs; this background helps the agency ensure compliance with the CNCS/AmeriCorps rules and regulations, provide effective support for WRC AmeriCorps members and program sites, and promote a positive community service experience. OSPI's extensive educational best-practice and literacy support structure helps foster effective implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies that lead to student success. This collaborative governance helps ensure that all program efforts not only are fully aligned with the state's literacy development guidelines, reading standards, and comprehensive plans to improve student reading proficiency, but also are deeply rooted in the vision and goals of national service.

The specific roles of these two key partners include:

1) The Washington Service Corps. In 1983, the state legislature established the WSC to promote community service in the state by administering a statewide youth corps community service program. Today, WSC oversees four major national service programs: AmeriCorps*VISTA, focused on fighting poverty in local communities; individual and team-based placement programs that serve organizations throughout Washington; and the WRC, dedicated to improving literacy statewide. Through these programs, the WSC places AmeriCorps members in organizations across the state, from fledgling non-profits and faith-based organizations to well-established, administratively-complex

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school districts. The WSC is housed within the Workforce and Career Development Division of Washington's Employment Security Department. WSC Director Debbie Aoki provides administrative management and guidance for the program and helps ensure program alignment with WSC goals and strategic plans. Aoki has a BA in Sociology with 30 years' experience in non-profit management in youth-serving agencies and five years' experience as a program director in state government agencies with service-oriented programs.

2) Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: As the state's K-12 Education Agency, OSPI provides funding, resources, and technical assistance for educators and administers all state and federal funds related to education reform, including the state's biennial funding for WRC. OSPI serves a pivotal role in the successful administration and smooth functioning of the WRC. OSPI's Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Jessica Vavrus, is the agency's "executive sponsor" for the WRC and provides agency-level leadership and guidance for the program. With over 20 years' public administration and educational experience, Vavrus has worked closely with the WRC since 2000, including serving as a WRC program coordinator and as statewide WRC Director. In addition, Vavrus is an AmeriCorps alum. The day-to-day management of OSPI's support for WRC resides within the Department of Teaching and Learning's English Language Arts (ELA) unit led by ELA Director Liisa Moilanen Potts, who serves as the state lead for literacy support and works in collaboration with the lead Literacy Specialists in all nine of the state's Educational Service District regions. Potts has 20 years' K-12 literacy education experience as a teacher, coach, and administrator at the state level and holds an MA in English and Teaching.

OSPI provides the specific literacy and tutoring expertise necessary to ensure WRC's program model remains rooted in evidence-based strategies and has primary responsibility for issuing the Requests for Proposals (RFPs) used to select WRC placement sites. The ELA Team collaborates with WSC to provide ongoing literacy support, training, and technical assistance for all WRC AmeriCorps members and site supervisors. The ELA also collaborates with Literacy Specialists from the state's nine ESDs, who may also offer training, coaching, and other assistance to WRC AmeriCorps members and site supervisors. In addition, OSPI's Teaching and Learning department also supports data collection and analysis for the WRC through its Assessment & Student Information division and serves as the lead partner in coordinating with external experts to evaluate program effectiveness.

Day-to-day management for WRC program implementation is provided by a full-time WSC Program Coordinator, Terri Jack, who has more than 17 years' experience managing national service programs within the WSC, including the AmeriCorps*VISTA program. Jack's responsibilities as

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Program Coordinator include managing the RFP and site-selection process; providing WRC program-specific training for tutors and site supervisors; coordinating with the WSC SERVES Institute training; offering technical assistance and support for both sites and WRC AmeriCorps members; ensuring site compliance with AmeriCorps guidelines, rules, and regulations; coordinating data collection and program evaluation; and ensuring timely and comprehensive program reporting. Jack also coordinates with OSPI and ESD Literacy Specialists to provide literacy-focused technical assistance, training, and coaching. Upon receipt of grant award, WSC will hire three additional WRC Program Coordinators, and including Jack, will distribute the WRC caseload among the four of them.

b. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: The WRC state partners have multiple systems in place to ensure program and partner compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations. At the program level, the state's Employment Security Department provides financial management of and administrative support for all federal funds received by the WSC, including CNCS funds. The Department's WSC Compliance Coordinator reviews all AmeriCorps member applications, the Department's Contracts Office provides legal review and advice for all contracts, and the state Assistant Attorney General is assigned to support WSC in working with sites to address any issues or concerns related to compliance. OSPI's fiscal and contracts offices also provide guidance and support to facilitate WRC agreements and contracts.

At the site level, the WRC follows specific procedures to ensure compliance and accountability. Site expectations are outlined through a contractual arrangement with WRC. Applications from prospective members are thoroughly reviewed before enrollment to ensure members' eligibility to serve and to ensure that they have the background and experiences necessary for success in their roles as elementary school tutors. All covered positions will have criminal history checks and have appropriate skills and experience to support members. The WRC monitors sites' quarterly progress reports, responds to member issues that arise, and ensures that sites release members as necessary to attend required training and conferences. Site capacity for ongoing compliance is measured by a tool the WRC developed specifically to evaluate each site's compliance history and to assess the intensity of the need for ongoing monitoring, based on the site's governance structure; financial strength and solvency; program implementation; member recruitment and development; site support for WRC AmeriCorps members; report completion; and management capacity and infrastructure.

The WRC also embraces accountability and program effectiveness through ongoing scrutiny of data collection processes to help demonstrate the effectiveness of the program model and measure the extent to which sites -- individually and collectively -- are able to meet intended outcome indicators.

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Placement sites use WRC's Student Tracking Log to record and report data. Before forwarding student data to the program evaluator for analysis, WRC strips the data of student identifiers, in compliance with regulations in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (commonly known as FERPA), which protects the privacy of students' personally-identifiable information.

Every year, the WRC reviews its data collection processes and rigorously analyzes these processes to ensure compliance with CNCS rules and regulations. The recent evaluation of program effectiveness (described in section 1b.) is evidence of the WRC's strong commitment to rigorous data collection. In the WRC Study (Roe, 2013), the graduate-student evaluator reviewed WRC's data-collection procedures and provided critical feedback to strengthen data-collection tools and processes. WSC and OSPI have committed to continued investment in evaluation and, as noted earlier, have contracted with an external evaluator to build on the research conducted through the earlier evaluation and implement a quasi-experimental design study to strengthen the evidence of effectiveness for WRC's program model.

c. PAST PERFORMANCE: In the last three years, the WRC state partners have been able to demonstrate the strong, positive impact the program has on the students receiving services. In each of the past three years, between 56% and 61% of the students completing WRC AmeriCorps tutoring have met curriculum benchmarks or achieved grade-level proficiency. For these Tier II students, who are typically underserved, this is a strong achievement that the WRC intends to expand in the coming year. The WRC has met or exceeded all of its national performance measures. The WRC has no unresolved compliance issues and was 100% enrolled for the 2012-2013 program year. WRC's member retention rate for the 2012-2013 program year was 80%. WRC works intensively with site supervisors to ensure that they select candidates who are likely to succeed as members, communicate effectively so that members understand their commitments, and provide the support that members need to carry out their responsibilities. Delays in legislative decisions and funding for the 2012-2013 program year, however, led to a severely shortened time period for recruitment, screening, and enrollment; as a result, some applicants were enrolled who might otherwise have been screened out, which likely contributed to a lower rate of retention than normal. WRC state partners are establishing a more effective plan for reviewing applications to ensure selected candidates will be successful during their term of service.

d. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: WRC's collaborative approach is geared toward ensuring continuous improvement. At the administrative level, interagency collaboration between Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Employment Security Department/Washington Service

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Corps helps ensure that WRC's efforts to improve reading achievement effectively support the state's goals of improving educational attainment and economic well-being for all citizens as well as supporting AmeriCorps' mission to create socially-engaged and economically-stable communities.

At the program level, WRC regularly collects and analyzes data not only on program-level reading/literacy outcomes for the students served through the program, but on state-level kindergarten readiness and K-12 reading proficiency measures for students across Washington State to help determine the extent to which its work helps advance state efforts to improve academic performance and narrow achievement gaps. The state, currently working to link data from WaKIDS assessments to state academic assessments, will help determine how kindergarten readiness and grade-level reading proficiency correlate to better plan and implement early intervention strategies over the long term. Sites submit quarterly reports to WRC, with detailed data about number of students served, tutoring provided, and results of progress monitoring assessments. In addition to being reviewed in detail by WRC staff, this data is aggregated and submitted to the state Service Commission.

The WRC is structured to ensure ongoing joint planning and improvement through monthly partner meetings that include the state's Service Commission Program Officer, OSPI's Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, the Washington Service Corps Program Coordinator and Director of Programs and Operations, and the OSPI ELA Director (staff from OSPI's governmental relations and WSC and OSPI fiscal departments also join the meetings as needed). In these meetings, the partners review program data to monitor progress toward goals, problem-solve issues, and regularly review and make any necessary adjustments for long-term improvement. The meetings provide the opportunity for partners to analyze overall program strategies and research about program success from other states, making strategic choices about whether and how to "sunset" less-effective strategies.

WRC regularly solicits input regarding the effectiveness of services from internal and external stakeholders, including placement site staff, WRC AmeriCorps members, parents, and students during site visits, training sessions, and technical assistance. This feedback helps inform analysis of program effectiveness and helps the partners make appropriate strategic adjustments as needed.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS: For 2014-2015, WSC is applying for a fixed amount grant of \$1,860,000 (\$12,400 per member), which will cover approximately 58% of the total projected expenditures of \$3,257,000 (\$21,713 per member) for 150 WRC AmeriCorps members. Both the total and requested

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per-member amounts are lower than in previous program years, because the WRC state partners have made significant changes to program management, resulting in lower administration costs, including moving to an individual placement model that eliminates middle management costs and increases the cost-effectiveness of the program. Program administration is supported through complementary sources of funding, which cover costs above and beyond the WRC AmeriCorps member stipends funded through CNCS. These additional costs include staff time for WRC state partners to implement program activities and provide ongoing training and technical assistance and travel for members to attend WSC-sponsored training.

b. BUDGET ADEQUACY: As noted above, the Washington Service Corps projects the total 2014-2015 budget for the WRC to be \$3,257,000 and is applying for a fixed amount grant of \$1,860,000, which will cover approximately 58% of projected expenses and will be used for WRC AmeriCorps members stipends and required payroll taxes. Because WRC's program model includes expenses beyond the stipends WRC AmeriCorps members receive, WSC establishes an annual program budget that reflects the true expenses of program implementation in order to ensure that all costs are fully covered and that the program functions optimally. In 2014-2015, these additional costs are projected to include: remaining member payroll taxes, workers' compensation, health benefit costs, criminal history checks for covered positions, 5.55 FTE WRC staff members to provide site monitoring and technical assistance (total includes staff travel, payroll taxes and health benefits costs), in-person and webinar-based training (including the SERVES Institute, the Para Reading curriculum, costs for Educational Service Districts to provide technical assistance to site staff and WRC AmeriCorps members, and books to support the tutoring curriculum), WRC program evaluation, and miscellaneous expenses, including member travel, indirect costs, and other materials.

Funds to cover non-stipend costs come from two key sources: the state's annual appropriation to OSPI for the WRC and site member-placement fees. In 2014-2015, OSPI will receive a total of \$950,000 through the budget proviso. Sites contribute annual placement fees of \$3,000 per member (the requirement for placement fees is clearly outlined in the WRC's Request for Proposals). Upon being awarded member positions, sites fulfill payment responsibilities by contractual arrangement. WSC projects \$447,000 in annual member placement fees during the upcoming grant cycle.

WSC has received funding for the WRC from CNCS for 15 years and has consistently met the match requirements and cost-sharing commitments. WSC's share of match costs was 46% in Program Year 2012-2013. WSC's ability to meet its required share of program costs is a direct result of the state's commitment to the WRC. That continued support is a result of the program's success in

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reaching improvement targets and supporting the state's goal for increasing student reading proficiency.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

The WRC AmeriCorps members will provide tutoring and other literacy supports to struggling readers identified as needing Tier II interventions (students not meeting expected literacy benchmarks, but not experiencing the most severe learning challenges) to help ensure that students can read at grade level. WRC has chosen to focus AmeriCorps members' work on students in need of Tier II supports because, while these students have substantial literacy deficiencies, research indicates that targeted interventions can have a significant, positive impact on their reading proficiency. The number of participants receiving the full year of WRC support is targeted to be 6,000. Of those, 65% of students will have reached benchmark and/or will demonstrate reading skills at grade level and 60% of early learning participants will have gained in literacy development.

To support program participants, WRC members will implement five key strategies:

1. Members use valid, reliable literacy screening tools to identify students experiencing reading difficulties, determine which students need support, and focus on those needing Tier II interventions. This strategy enables members to target support to the students who can most benefit from the strategies used in WRC's model, helping to ensure both student AND member success. DIBELS and STAR are the screening tools used most frequently by program sites, although other valid and reliable tools can be used.

2. Members use valid, reliable diagnostic, oral reading fluency, and progress monitoring assessment tools to measure students' reading proficiency multiple times throughout the year and target tutoring to student need. Diagnostic tools determine the exact areas of difficulty and help members target interventions to specific lagging skills. Oral reading fluency tools identify students who need additional support in to meet fluency benchmarks. Progress monitoring tools track whether students are making adequate progress and identify whether students need more intensive or different intervention.

3. Members provide need-based tutoring and literacy interventions, founded on proven literacy development practices focused on the core components of reading success. Tutoring is provided individually and in small groups of no more than six:

- a) For preschool age children, members provide targeted supports and interventions during literacy activities that occur throughout the day. Supports and interventions build specific literacy skills such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, alphabetic principles, conversation, and print concepts.

- b) For elementary students, members provide tutoring through intensive 20-minute sessions at

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least three times a week throughout the academic year. Tutoring supplements and aligns with core elementary reading curriculum and is designed to build specific reading skills, including fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

4. Members engage parents and caregivers in reading with their children and creating a print-rich environment in the home. Family engagement efforts include family literacy events, take-home literacy kits, at-home reading activities, newsletters, and include approaches that support English Learners. Members work with the parents of young children to help them better incorporate literacy in their daily activities and promote literacy development through "dialogic reading," a research-based technique that helps children develop critical thinking skills as they develop foundational literacy skills.

5. Members leverage additional tutoring support from community volunteers. At some sites, members increase and strengthen an existing pool of volunteers, working with site supervisors to implement and enhance training and engagement strategies already underway. At other sites, members create all-new programs and help site supervisors both design and implement volunteer training and engagement strategies.

The theory of change that serves as the foundation for this work is straightforward: By training dedicated AmeriCorps members to provide individually-tailored, best-practice literacy tutoring to struggling readers, WRC can help raise students' reading proficiency levels, improve their academic achievement, and, over the long term, support positive life outcomes. Helping individual children gain the skills they need for academic and life success also supports AmeriCorps' goals for socially-engaged and economically-stable communities.

A three-year independent impact evaluation plan will be implemented by The BEREC Group, an external evaluator, who was successfully awarded a contract through a competitive RFP process conducted by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in collaboration with WRC to evaluate the program in the 2013-2014 school year. The WRC evaluation plan will include a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact between the intervention and student outcomes in literacy. The design includes an identified matched Washington State sample to use as a comparison group against the entire WRC program (treatment) group. Additionally, evaluators will select a sample of high and low performing schools based on literacy assessments, from both the WRC program and the comparison group to gather qualitative information to provide information on promising practices.

Evaluation questions proposed will include, but not be limited to:

1. To what extent are the WRC programs being implemented?
2. To what extent are the WRC programs meeting the three CNCS National Performance

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Measures?

3. To what extent are the WRC programs providing their projected program outputs?
4. To what extent are the WRC programs meeting or on track to meet their short and medium-term outcomes?
5. To what extent do student assessment scores differ between those served by WRC and those not served by WRC?
6. What barriers/contextual factors are influencing the WRC program implementation?
7. What best practices can be identified in WRC program design and implementation?
8. To what extent are the changes sustainable?

WRC schools will be selected as treatment schools. Comparison schools will be selected based on matching student demographics, geographic regions and the same criteria WRC uses to prioritize the needs for services of new WRC applicants. Treatment and comparison schools will include relevant standardized literacy assessment scores such as Measurement of Student Progress (MSP), STAR Early Literacy, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Information for identifying the comparison schools will be gathered from the OSPI school report card database.

Approximately 50 phone interviews will be conducted to target sites where there appears to be a difference between schools. The evaluation team will utilize the analysis outcomes from literacy and reading assessments to determine the top and bottom 10 WRC program sites to conduct phone interviews with, relevant personnel such as members, teachers with members in classrooms, principals, superintendents and/or directors of early learning centers. The evaluation team will synthesize the findings from data analysis and interviews into an annual report. The report will identify the effectiveness of the WRC program in improving student literacy scores, highlighting program strengths and weaknesses, identify practices in the WRC system that may have contributed to gaps in achievement for sub-groups when can be identified, and outline recommendations for growth.

This evaluation will utilize a variety of data collection procedures. WRC will provide the evaluator with all relevant data from their current data collection procedures including student tracking logs, quarterly progress reports, volunteer logs, surveys, etc. Evaluators will receive WRC program data for the remainder of the evaluation contract. Additionally, the previous three years of WRC program data will be reviewed to help inform best practices and analyze change over time, using an interrupted time series, for programs that are still active. Evaluators will conduct interviews with treatment and

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comparison groups and WRC program stakeholders. Data compiled from WRC, the OSPI website, and evaluator interviews will be compiled into a comprehensive database by the evaluator to conduct various data and content analyses including analysis of change over time and differences between treatment and comparison groups.

The ultimate deliverable each year is a complete report of annual progress to the WRC. The annual report will include process and product outcomes associated with grant goals and activities supporting grant progress. The report with findings will assist program administrators on reflecting on promising practices and implications. The report will be included in grant proposal process for CNCS in year two of the grant cycle if selected for the PY 2014-2015. Schools participating will receive a copy of the report, in addition to an array of internal and external stakeholders of the WRC.

The purpose of all evaluation activities is to add value to WRC program efforts and inform the extent to which the theory of change is occurring. The study will allow WRC to dig deeper into model design and indicators of impact. This report will contribute to system-wide improvements by the formative and summative assessment components that make up the evaluation including best practices identified through follow-up with successful programs. This will contribute to several years of analysis, and improvement can be tracked over time using the metrics of research findings.

Amendment Justification

None.

Clarification Summary

Programmatic Clarification:

1. Please provide additional, more specific description about the targeted communities / schools / school districts where AmeriCorps members will serve across the state and the need specific to these communities/schools.

Washington State's 295 school districts cover a broad geography, as well as a range of socio-economic factors. WRC is committed to serving rural schools and schools that serve economically disadvantaged students that are eligible for free and reduced lunch programs. The WRC uses the state School Report Card (<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>) to verify student demographic information for free or reduced priced meal(s) eligibility, percentage of migrant students and English Language Learners (ELL) served. To select service sites that meet this criteria, the WRC uses a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, jointly administered with Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), which is issued to all schools and early learning sites and community organizations. In their applications,

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sites answer detailed questions about their level of need and the services they provide. The WRC and OSPI score applications and select sites based on those responses, giving priority to those with the highest enrollment of children/students eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program (51% or higher). WRC also selects schools based on the extent to which sites indicate or specify how they effectively use data to inform instruction, have in place effective systems to support literacy-building, are dedicated to building community support, and promote positive volunteer interactions in their buildings.

2. Please further describe the activities the members will conduct as part of the pre-K literacy intervention in the early learning centers.

As recommended in Washington's Early Learning and Development Guidelines, WRC members receive training, technical support and coaching to provide literacy activities in small doses and focus on play-based literacy activities, using games, engaging materials, and fun activities to help children learn the names of alphabet letters and develop print awareness. Some of the Pre-K literacy activities include: encouraging children to scribble and experiment with pretend writing, and engaging them in shared book reading sessions with an adult at least four times a week. Members also send home "literacy bags" that include an engaging age-appropriate book with fun educational activities that help children process the book successfully. Finally, members also develop family literacy events that include group book readings, children reading with families, making bookmarks and choosing a book to bring home.

3. Please further describe WRC's shift from a team-based placement model to an individual placement model, to include clarification on what this means for the program and why the shift is taking place. In prior years, the WRC relied on seven teams housed in community-based organizations across the state to provide local program administration and member management; sites were assigned to the team-based program located in their geographic area. WRC moved to an individual placement model in PY 2013-14 with the award of a small formula no-cost MSY grant. By initiating an individual placement model, WRC and OSPI provide better oversight, direct assistance to supervisors and members, and timely communication about AmeriCorps, program requirements, tutoring interventions and assessment implementation. Both site supervisors and WRC members have direct access to the WRC program coordinator, who supports sites with case management, coaching, mentoring and training.

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In PY 2014-15, with grant funding and cost savings resulting from an individual placement model, the budget will allow a total of four program coordinators: the current Lead Program Coordinator and three new program coordinators hired to extend the capacity of the Lead Program Coordinator to oversee and support sites across the state. Program coordinators assigned to sites in a specific region of the state will manage and provide technical assistance to all sites in their region. The WRC staff will be based at the main office in Olympia, and have adequate budget funding and support to travel across the state to provide all necessary training, technical assistance, and support to ensure sites implement the WRC model effectively and successfully.

4. Please provide additional explanation outlining how the program will oversee site supervisors across all of the site locations in the state, and how members receive sufficient levels of support and oversight on a day to day basis in the schools.

As part of the RFP process, schools are required to designate a site supervisor for their members, and specify the supervisor's qualifications. Upon award of AmeriCorps member positions, the appropriate WRC program coordinator will contact site supervisors in their region, identifying themselves as the supervisor's WRC liaison for training and direct program support. The WRC will hold a webinar for supervisors on program overview, with a focus on recruitment and enrollment, in late May after grant awards are made. Prior to the beginning of the school year, an in-person orientation will be held to familiarize supervisors with program requirements, member management, data collection and reporting. Throughout the year, supervisors will participate in scheduled webinars that emphasize topics of relevance, such as member performance evaluations, life after AmeriCorps, and current educational trends. Program coordinators will travel regularly to program sites to provide coaching and technical assistance regarding topics such as member management, allowable and prohibited activities, and managing member issues at the site. Throughout the school year, supervisors will also have daily access to their coordinator via email and phone to ask questions, get program clarifications, or request troubleshooting support.

Program coordinators will also directly support WRC members. Shortly after enrollment, members receive a member-focused orientation on program components, requirements and expectations. Members will also attend a four-day member development conference in October. Since the focus of the members' activities is in reading, the Para Reading model will be taught by a certified trainer, as well as training relevant to serving within a school system, such as understanding school culture, working with ELL students, and managing students and classrooms. During site visits, program

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coordinators will coach members on allowable activities, proper data collection, and reporting requirements. Members also have daily access to the Program Coordinator via phone or email.

Performance Measure Clarification:

1. For ED2, please demonstrate that the students being counted are coming from schools in which the largest percentage of students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and/or have special or exceptional needs, as defined in the ED2 performance measure.

WRC uses data from the state School Report Card and Statewide Longitudinal Data System (<http://www.k12.wa.us/Data>), two statewide database systems administered by OSPI, to confirm the student population of potential service sites includes a majority (51% or more) eligible for federal free or reduced-priced lunch (FRPL). This data is compiled from student information acquired at the time of enrollment in the school. Sites with 51% or more students eligible for the FRPL program receive awards first. Secondary priority is given to rural sites, those enrolling high percentages of English Language Learners, or those that have unique situations such as high percentages of students from military families or high student mobility rates.

2. For ED2, please provide a definition for how program completion will be defined in order to qualify a student to be captured under this measure.

Program completion is defined as a student spending one year (school year) in the program, or "testing out" from needing Tier II services and returning to core instruction. Progress monitoring is done in most schools on a monthly basis, so students may not need the year to reach core literacy benchmarks or grade level proficiency.

3. For ED5, please state which specific assessments will be used to measure improved academic performance in literacy and math (note that different assessments may be used for different grade levels and/or school districts) and explain how they meet the requirements for standardized pre-post tests as specified in the performance measure instructions for ED5. Please also clearly state the minimum level of increase in academic performance that will enable a student to be counted under this measure.

In Washington, school districts have local discretion to select curricular and other assessment tools to measure student growth. Many schools select assessment tools based on the specific demographics of their students. WRC has designed its program to be flexible enough to accommodate multiple

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assessment tools. These tools, however, must be evidence-based and are required to incorporate screening, oral reading fluency, diagnostic, and monitoring assessments. Schools can use OSPI's Response to Intervention database (<http://www.k12.wa.us/Reading/Assessment/other.aspx>) to validate their tool is evidence-based. All early learning sites currently use Teaching Strategies Gold, a nationally-recognized assessment that supports all types of learners, including English Learners, children with special needs, and children with advanced knowledge and skills, to assess skills-development for the children in their programs. For K-12 schools, commonly used assessments include: a) the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS); b) DIBELS NEXT which includes research-based enhancements to the current DIBELS tool that increase the ease of use as well as the reliability and validity of the assessment to help better support literacy development; c) Benchmark Assessment System (BAS); d) Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and DRA2 (Second Edition); e) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP); f) Reading Benchmark Assessment (RBA); g) Imagine It assessment, which measures progress toward the five domains of reading taught in the Imagine It curriculum; and h) the STAR assessment (developed by Renaissance Learning). Sites use the standardized WRC Student Tracking Log to record and report assessment results, gains made, intervention (tutoring) dosage, and changes in reading attitudes, behavior, and self-confidence.

WRC identifies the minimum gain for a student to be counted as having achieved an increase in one core literacy benchmark as established in the evidence-based assessment tool used. However, WRC strives to have each student achieve grade-level reading proficiency. All assessments include a pre-test and post-test to track which students have made academic progress by reaching their specific literacy benchmark or grade level.

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.

This request is so noted and has been eliminated from the performance measurement section. Please note that we are still anticipating 25 MSY's allocated to early literacy development, making a total of 150 MSY's requested.

Healthcare Clarification Items for all applicants:

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

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AmeriCorps members.

Currently for PY 2013-14, Washington Reading Corps' health coverage is underwritten by Guarantee Trust Life Insurance Company with Summit America in place as the plan administrator (TPA).

Because this policy is a short-term policy, WRC will contract with another carrier to provide a plan for members and will initiate contact with our broker services to secure a plan carrier upon grant award.

2. How did you select the provider (for example, direct marketing, through the Health Insurance Marketplace or other means)?

As a state agency, we worked with an insurance broker, which assures a competitive process is in place. The broker seeks carrier bids, prepares comparative policy/plan information and price analysis for WSC staff review. The selection of a plan carrier is based on this information. Our understanding is that our agency is not eligible to use the Health Insurance Marketplace to select a provider as we do not have an employer-employee relationship with the members.

3. Does your proposed budget for member healthcare provide for Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) coverage, as defined by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), for your full-time members?

WRC experienced a 25% increase in premiums for the current program year with coverage that eliminated caps on preventative care and pre-existing conditions and increased the per-cause maximum benefit from \$50,000 to \$100,000. However, because a plan that is fully ACA-compliant will likely cost more, WRC's proposed budget incorporates a line item for insurance that accommodates a cost increase of up to 20% for Minimum Essential Coverage.

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

As noted above, WRC has adjusted its budget to accommodate anticipated cost increases in order to provide Minimum Essential Coverage for those without other health coverage, but may need to adjust if health costs are higher than anticipated.

5. If you do not have enough information to answer question (4), please explain why not and/or what prevented you from being able to obtain the necessary information.

It is difficult to project the actual cost of coverage as there is currently no list of companies that will offer ACA-compliant coverage to assure MEC and it is unclear how a new provider would rate

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member claims experience. Because coverage under a new plan will not begin until September 2014, WRC will not have a precise figure for coverage until then. Also, while the brokerage company for WRC's current plan is attempting to secure and compare quotes from other providers, there has been limited response from those providers. The key elements that will determine WRC's selection of a provider and the ultimate cost for coverage include: which insurance providers can and will provide an insurance quote, what the provider's administration costs will be, the plan's performance/claims experience, the underwriting method and trend figures used to project claims, the remaining benefit adjustment, and the cost to eliminate the \$100,000-per cause maximum and make the plan unlimited.

Continuation Changes

None.

Grant Characteristics