

Narratives

Executive Summary

Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) is an existing grantmaking institution. The SVCF Big Lift Social Innovation Fund (Big Lift SIF) is an ambitious, geographically-based SIF designed to increase the number of third graders reading proficiently in 16 cities in 11 high need school districts in San Mateo County, California.

While many places across the country have tackled elements of the third-grade reading proficiency problem, the proposed project takes an innovative evidenced-based approach that integrates high-quality learning experiences from preschool to third grade, a focus on reducing chronic absence and summer learning loss, and engaging parents and the broader community to support learning in school and at home.

Key measurable outcomes for the proposed project include: increasing the percentage of children ready for kindergarten from 50% to 80%; reducing chronic absence by 50%; increasing the percentage of children reading below grade level who attend inspiring summer programs to 80%; and increasing the percentage of families who have the resources they need to be strong advocates and participants in their children's education to 100%. Ultimately, the proposed project will lead to 80% of children reading proficiently by the third grade in target communities by 2020.

The Big Lift SIF requests the support of the Corporation for National and Community Service for \$2 million in Year One and \$16.5 million over the five years of the project. SVCF will provide a 1:1 cash match for every dollar of federal funds it receives and will support subgrantees to secure the same dollar-for-dollar cash match for every dollar they receive. At the time of this application, SVCF has secured 100% of the cash match requirement for the intermediary and subgrantee matches through county government as unrestricted cash on hand.

In San Mateo County, one of the most affluent communities in the country, 43% of third graders do not read at grade level. This rises to a shocking 60% among Latino, African-American and Pacific Islander children. As decades of research have revealed, children who start behind are likely to stay behind. The failure of communities to ensure that all children are ready for school and succeeding by third grade means fewer lifetime opportunities, lower productivity, higher social costs in public benefits and remedial education, and more crime and spending on prisons.

Narratives

San Mateo County has realized that the educational status quo is no longer an option and has launched the Big Lift, a collective impact collaborative made up of over 100 educators, nonprofits, businesses, and government and foundation leaders that together are spearheading a bold new vision for early learning to address the literacy gap in children of color and low-income children.

In Year One of the project, the Big Lift SIF will conduct an open, competitive process that will be completed within six months of a grant award to attract subgrantees that are committed to the Big Lift vision and capable of meeting rigorous program, fiscal and evaluation requirements.

SVCF will create a value-added system of technical assistance, data-sharing and peer learning that will drive subgrantee success and sustain the improvements beyond the term of the grant.

SVCF is uniquely positioned to lead this project. It has over five decades of grantmaking and capacity-building experience with nonprofit organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. It has the ability to strategically leverage existing partnerships and work to enhance a Social Innovation Fund investment. SVCF and its lead subcontractor, the San Mateo County Office of Education, have significant institutional leadership in the area of early learning locally and across the state. The Big Lift SIF is poised to achieve transformative change and to be a model for other communities confronting the challenge of third grade reading proficiency throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, California and the nation.

Program Design

1A) GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Big Lift Social Innovation Fund (Big Lift SIF) is a geographically-based SIF to improve third grade reading proficiency in 16 cities within 11 high need school districts in San Mateo County, California. The proposed project is part of a scalable approach to Youth Development, Economic Opportunity and Healthy Futures.

San Mateo County is part of the famed Silicon Valley, known for its innovation, entrepreneurs and wealth. In stark contrast to these popular conceptions, one-in-five households earn less than \$35,000 and middle-income households have been shrinking since 2002. While portions of San Mateo County are highly affluent, 42% of children are not reading at grade level by third grade; for Latino, African American and Pacific Islander children this number rises to over 60%, reflecting the major disparities that exist within the County. California is home to the largest number of immigrants in the nation

Narratives

and San Mateo County's immigrant population is growing faster than in any other county in the state, rising from 25.5% to 33.3% in the last decade. Almost half of all students in public schools in the county come from homes where English is not the primary or home language. School systems and communities are challenged to meet the needs of the community's most vulnerable populations, including a high percentage of low-income children and dual language learners. As decades of research have revealed, children who start behind are likely to stay behind. Significantly, on a national basis, 88% of high school dropouts cannot read proficiently by third grade. The failure of communities to ensure that all children are ready for school and succeeding by third grade equates to fewer lifetime opportunities, lower productivity, higher social costs in public benefits and remedial education, and more crime and spending on prisons.

Demographic trends indicate that these costs will only grow in the coming decades when California is projected to have fewer children, fewer people moving into the state and a surging numbers of retirees. The State is expected to have a severe shortage of working taxpayers to support the growing social security and healthcare needs. With this outlook, society cannot afford to allow half of its children to underachieve. It must educate every child as if the quality of our future depends on it, because it does.

Early learning is also a critical national concern. A review of national data shows that by age eight, most children in the United States are not on track in cognitive knowledge and skills, and that many are behind in the areas of social and emotional growth, physical well-being and school engagement. According to the study, only 19% of eight-year-olds in families with incomes below 200% of the poverty level and 50% of those in families with incomes above that level have developed cognitive skills appropriate to their age. Hispanic children lag behind white children in school engagement and physical health, and black children are below all racial and ethnic groups on most measures; only 14% of black and 19% of Hispanic children have age-appropriate cognitive skills (Child Trends' analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Program Kindergarten Third Grade Public Use Data Set, 2003).

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the California Department of Education, SVCF has identified 11 target communities for the proposed project that fall well below the surrounding region on measures of economic well-being. These measures include data

Narratives

such as the percentage of families living below 200% of the federal poverty line, the percentage of children participating in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program and the percentage of persons who are unemployed.

The target communities for the proposed project are those with school districts where reading scores are close to or below the county average. The targeted school districts had the following percentages of third graders scoring below "proficient" on the California Standardized Test in English Language Arts in 2013: Bayshore (64%), Brisbane (55%), Cabrillo (55%), Jefferson Elementary (49%), La Honda Pescadero (65%), Pacifica (40%), Ravenswood (78%), Redwood City (58%), San Bruno Park (56%), San Mateo-Foster City (42%) and South San Francisco (48%). These districts also serve communities with high percentages of low-income families--the average percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price meals in these districts combined is 46.7%-- immigrants and students of color, and some serve more rural and geographically isolated communities such as La Honda, Pescadero and Pacifica.

Unfortunately, there is a fragmented patchwork of supports for children in these communities, particularly in the earliest years when critical learning takes place, from quality private programs that most families cannot afford, to public programs of uneven quality that suffer from frequent funding cuts and low teacher pay, to relatives who provide baby-sitting but often little more. Of the estimated number of eligible low-income children in these districts, over one-third (36%) are not able to access high-quality early education programs. It is no surprise then that children from these communities are not entering schools with the requisite skills they need to be successful.

Addressing these challenges requires big thinking, big commitments and big changes. That is why San Mateo County has launched "The Big Lift," an ambitious collective impact collaborative made up of over 100 organizations representing the education, business, government, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors that together are spearheading a bold new vision for early learning to address the literacy gap in children of color and low-income children. Leaders of the Big Lift are compelled by a fierce sense of urgency to address the challenge of dramatically increasing the number of third-grade children, especially from low-income families, who read proficiently. With President Obama's commitment to early education as evidenced in his State of the Union address and his proposed 2014 budget, the nation and state have a critical eye on the early childhood field. In addition, the Big Lift vision also aligns with the President's recently launched "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, which seeks to address

Narratives

some of the key inflection points where boys of color can be better supported, including being proficient readers by the end of third grade. And in California, beginning in school year 2014-15, all students attending public schools in grades K-12 will be assessed on the new Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Implementation of these more rigorous learning standards will fundamentally change the way teachers teach and students learn, and makes the importance of entering school ready to learn even greater.

A Social Innovation Fund grant award would greatly accelerate the transformative work of the Big Lift and its vision, which begins with an ambitious goal to increase the percentage of third graders reading proficiently from 58% to 80% by 2020. To achieve this ambitious goal, SVCF's Big Lift SIF will advance the Annie E. Casey Third Grade Reading Campaign framework (Why Reading at the End of Third-Grade Matters, 2010 and Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, 2013), which combines the following evidence-based interventions: (1) a comprehensive school readiness strategy focused on high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year olds that leads to an aligned and sequenced set of high-quality learning experiences in kindergarten through third grade; (2) a focus on reducing chronic absence in the early grades based upon research regarding the importance of attendance in the early years to improving academic outcomes; (3) development of inspiring summer learning opportunities that enable children to maintain their academic and developmental gains from high-quality preschool throughout the early grades; and (4) strengthening family and community engagement through a substantial investment in strategies that support parents/caregivers to provide rich learning environments in the home.

An additional innovative element of the Big Lift SIF will be a focus on early math. A growing body of research is changing notions about what early skills set children on a path toward school success. Several large-scale studies reveal that early math ability is the strongest predictor of later academic success in third and fifth grade (School Readiness and Later Achievement, Duncan et al, 2007). Increasing the quality and quantity of math instruction increases both math learning and literacy skills (Schoenfeld and Stipek, 2011). Math and literacy are also inextricably linked in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, for example, as students will be asked to explain the reasoning behind mathematical operations, thus necessitating excellent literacy skills. As the Big Lift works with preschool classrooms to prioritize high-quality instruction, a major curriculum focus will be in the area of early math. The proposed project will be in the vanguard of programs

Narratives

providing this type of instruction.

The high-quality preschool element of the Big Lift SIF, and the focus of Year One subgrants, is based on a highly successful Preschool for All (PFA) pilot implemented in San Mateo County from 2005-2009. A rigorous evaluation of the pilot was conducted by the American Institutes of Research over a four-year period and showed statistically significant improvements in classroom quality as a result of the training and technical assistance provided through the pilot. PFA classrooms scored higher on independently administered assessments in comparison to a representative sample of California classrooms as well as a well-known, highly successful and well-researched universal preschool initiative in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A subsequent longitudinal analysis of children who had experienced two full years of high-quality preschool through PFA, carried out by the John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University, obtained the following second-grade proficiency rates for PFA participants versus a control group of non-participants: reading proficiency (74% versus 55%); writing proficiency (55% versus 43%); mathematics proficiency (62% versus 50%); and work study skills (75% versus 68%).

While the program was highly successful, funding for Preschool for All sunsetted in 2009 when First 5 San Mateo County shifted its focus to quality improvement for early learning programs countywide. The Big Lift SIF will build upon the success of this evidence-based preschool intervention, expanding its scope to several high-need communities and creating transformative, sustainable change by adding longer-term strategies it will ensure that the benefits of the high-quality preschool experience are sustained through the early elementary grades until each child is reading proficiently by third grade and each family is better prepared to support their child's educational journey. While there are many efforts underway throughout the country that are attempting to tackle dimensions of the third-grade reading proficiency problem, the Big Lift SIF is innovative and unique because it will address all four of the dimensions in the Annie E. Casey Third Grade Reading Campaign framework through a collective impact approach. In doing so, the Big Lift SIF will achieve impact and scale that goes well beyond the target communities to other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area, state and the nation.

With this framework in mind, the Big Lift SIF's Theory of Change is as follows:

IF we establish a comprehensive base of community support through a collective impact approach; and IF we assure adult-child interactions that produce high-quality teaching of the whole child, for every child, in every setting, every day; THEN more children will enter kindergarten ready to learn;

Narratives

and IF we continue to assure adult-child interactions that produce high quality, aligned learning experiences during the early elementary grades, paired with efforts to reduce chronic absence and summer learning loss, THEN more children will read proficiently by third grade; SO THAT all children in San Mateo County have the opportunity to be successful in school and in life.

The measurable outcomes for the proposed project are: (1) Increase the percentage of children ready for kindergarten from 50% to 80%; (2) Reduce chronic absence by 50%; (3) Increase the percentage of children reading below grade level who attend inspiring summer programs to 80%; and (4) Increase the percentage of families who have the resources needed to be strong advocates and participants in their children's education to 100%. Ultimately, the proposed project will lead to 80% of children reading proficiently by the third grade in target communities by 2020.

Given the importance of a high-quality preschool experience to improve outcomes for low-income children, Year One of the Big Lift SIF will focus on creating 300 brand-new high-quality preschool spaces and improving the quality of 500 existing spaces for 3- and 4-year-olds in the target communities with the ambitious goal of increasing access gradually until all 8,600 low-income 3- and 4-year-old children in the 11 target communities have access to high-quality preschool by 2020.

In order to help subgrantees achieve the measurable outcomes identified by the proposed project, Big Lift SIF will support them through the strategies described below. These strategies for strengthening kindergarten readiness and family engagement will be the primary focus in Year One, with activities related to chronic absence and summer learning introduced in years Two through Five:

(1) Direct financial support to help preschool classrooms achieve and sustain high quality, including resources for teacher planning and release time, learning materials, staffing, data/administrative support and operating expenses for new spaces; (2) Independent program quality assessment using the empirically valid Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS), providing the basis for subgrantee development of quality improvement plans; (3) Supports for teachers to improve and sustain early math instruction, shown by research to be the strongest predictor of academic success, including reading proficiency in third and fifth grade; (4) Evidence-based professional development, provided by experts on an ongoing basis, including specific Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) elements such as screening and teacher-child interactions; (5) Coaching and technical assistance based on classroom quality

Narratives

assessments, delivered on-site to help teachers apply professional development learning to their classroom work; (6) Support for developmental screening of all children, including support for classrooms to identify children with special needs early and provide needed services; (7) Supports for effectively serving dual language learners and their families, including training, coaching and family engagement provided through the Early Childhood Language Development Institute; (8) A spectrum of family engagement Strategies that builds upon family strengths, culture, language and experience to support parents as children's most influential teachers; (9) Higher education supports for early educators leveraged through the community college and workforce development systems, and bachelor's degree cohort programs; (10) Resources for facility renovations including improvements to existing classrooms and start-up funds to furnish new classrooms; (11) Targeted professional development, coaching and other supports to help 'pipeline' programs reach a level of quality at which they can fully engage in the proposed program; and (12) Implementing Pre-Kindergarten to third grade alignment strategies with subgrantee school districts in partnership with local initiatives Bridges to Success, the Early Learning Math Initiative and Transitional Kindergarten.

Big Lift collaborative partners have begun to align the work of The Big Lift with other similar efforts designed to improve the outcomes of young children. Across California and the nation, counties and states have spearheaded a movement to fundamentally alter the lens through which early childhood education programs are assessed and improved. This is known as Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRISs). A QRIS is a uniform set of ratings used to assess and improve early learning and care programs. The California QRIS, developed as part of a federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, will serve as an over-arching quality framework for the Big Lift SIF preschools, ensuring a minimum level of quality is achieved in all preschool settings and incentivizing increasingly higher levels of quality. Programs will need to meet a baseline entry requirement in order to be eligible for participation, and will be assessed regularly to determine if progress is being made.

Quality supports will be provided to new and upgraded classrooms through a combination of professional development, coaching and technical assistance. A growing body of research shows that professional development workshops on their own are insufficient and that in-classroom coaching and technical assistance is the key to helping teachers apply what they have learned to their classroom practices (American Institutes of Research and RAND Corporation, 2013). Targeted coaching and technical assistance, proven highly successful in San Mateo County's Preschool for All pilot project, is

Narratives

a critical feature of other universal preschool initiatives in neighboring counties and states, and will be the central quality improvement strategy to achieve high-quality early learning for all kids participating in Big Lift preschool programs.

SVCF will subcontract with the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE), which will serve as the primary technical assistance provider to Big Lift preschool classrooms. A highly skilled cadre of coaches will be established that includes those focused on general curriculum and instruction as well as specialists with more concentrated expertise in areas such as mathematics, children with special needs and dual language learners. Baseline program quality assessments will serve as the starting point for determining each classroom's unique technical assistance needs.

In addition to a continued strong focus on fostering school readiness through high-quality preschool programs, the other elements of the Big Lift SIF will be significantly expanded in Years Two through Five, including:

(1) Chronic Absence: A growing body of research has revealed that chronic absence is prevalent among young children and attendance has a critical role in student achievement. Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% or more of school for any reason, excused or unexcused. Nationwide, more than 10% of students miss nearly a month of school every year. As early as preschool, chronic absence predicts poor attendance and academic performance in later grades. Poor children are more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to lose ground academically. By sixth grade, chronic absence is a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Improving student attendance is an essential, cost-effective but often overlooked, strategy for ensuring our students are on-track to learn and succeed. (Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty, Chang, et al 2008).

Fortunately, research is also clear that chronic absence can be addressed when school districts, communities and policymakers work together to monitor the problem and implement solutions that address the underlying causes.

In 2012 and 2013, SVCF worked closely with South San Francisco Unified and Jefferson Elementary, two of the Big Lift target districts, to analyze their attendance data using Attendance Work's District and School Attendance Tracking Tools and to take action based on the findings. These data analyses,

Narratives

as well as an independent evaluation of Redwood City's K-12 attendance data, found that Kindergarten was the year with the highest level of chronic absence in the elementary and high school years. Redwood City's study found that students who were chronically absent were more likely to repeat their chronic absence in subsequent grades, underscoring the importance of early intervention (Truancy and Chronic Absence in Redwood City, John W. Gardner Center, 2012). In September 2013, SVCF and SMCOE collaborated to support Attendance Awareness Month activities with a focus on the early years and will do so again in September 2014.

In Years Two-Five of the SIF grant, the Big Lift SIF will seek community-wide solutions to chronic absence in the early years through interventions such as support to targeted school districts to examine and address chronic absence in the early years, data analysis, family engagement and professional development for preschool and elementary personnel.

(2) Inspiring Summers: More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income students can be explained by unequal access to summer-learning opportunities. Middle-class students are quite often enrolled in science, art and sports enrichment camps over the summer, keeping them engaged in learning. Students from less affluent families are often denied such access due to their financial situations. According to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, low-income students lose an average of more than two months in reading achievement in the summer months. By the end of fifth grade, disadvantaged children are nearly three grade equivalents behind their more affluent peers in reading, a gap from which it is very hard to recover. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college (Are Schools the Great Equalizer? Cognitive Inequality during the Summer Months and the School Year, Downey, Von Hippel & Broh, 2004).

High-quality summer learning is essential to preventing "summer learning loss" and improving students' academic achievement and readiness to learn. In Year One, the Big Lift SIF will organize a planning process to determine the best approaches to expanding access to summer programming in Big Lift communities by Year Two. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has developed a set of guidelines for investments in summer programs that the Big Lift will use - along with recommendations from Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning (Rand Education and Wallace Foundation, 2011) - as a framework for this planning effort, indicating that programs should: (1) Offer a six-week, full-day model; (2) Serve all youth living in

Narratives

poverty; (3) Blend academic learning in core subjects, hands-on activities, technology, and enrichment; (4) Strengthen and expand partnerships between schools, community organizations, and public agencies to leverage resources, identify gaps, and improve programs; (5) Provide incentives to students that improve attendance and engagement with enrichment activities such as arts, music, sports and free breakfast and lunch; (6) Offer innovative professional development for educators and youth development leaders; (7) Engage in rigorous evaluation of implementation and impact to strengthen the evidence base for "what works"; and (8) Move summer programs from the periphery to the core of school reform strategies through better planning, infrastructure, data collection and accountability.

(3) Family Engagement: The Big Lift SIF will employ a combination of family engagement strategies to meet the identified needs within each community, including the evidence-based Raising a Reader early literacy program developed by one of SVCF's parent organizations; Virtual PreK, a program of the Chicago Public Schools that engages families in expanding learning from the classrooms to the home with the believe that "learning takes place virtually everywhere"; and the Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI), a SMCOE-based program that recently received a \$500,000 family engagement grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, focused on helping families and teachers meet the needs of young dual language learners. ECLDI's goal is to shift the understanding and practice of family engagement in San Mateo County from one of parent education, or "random acts of family engagement," to authentic collaboration and partnership among families of dual language learners, educators, and the school system. ECLDI's definition of success is that children and their families from diverse backgrounds feel engaged in their education, supported in their learning, and respected and appreciated for the rich resources they bring to the classroom and the community. ECLDI will work in Big Lift communities to create a community-wide commitment and expectation that all parts of an educational system will integrate family engagement principles and practices.

At every level of the Big Lift SIF, the proposed strategies will build upon, integrate with, and leverage existing services. Over the past four years, SVCF and SMCOE have collaborated to implement the Bridges to Success Ready Schools Initiative in the seven lowest performing districts in San Mateo County. The Ready Schools Teams have brought together early childhood educators and administrators with their K-12 peers to align curriculum, assessments and teaching practices. In

Narratives

addition, over the past year, SVCF and SMCOE have successfully hosted a PreK-3 Leadership Series, convening teams from districts around the county to learn from experts and collaborate on issues such as Early Brain Development, 21st Century Learning, and Social and Emotional Development. The Big Lift SIF will build on the Ready Schools Team and Leadership Institute models and expand them to include family engagement specialists, summer providers, mental and behavioral health agencies, libraries and other organizations that serve children and families in Big Lift communities.

The Big Lift will be collaborating with the Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities, another important countywide effort, to bring expanded funding for enhanced mental health supports and family resource centers to directly impact children and families in the Big Lift SIF target communities. This effort began as a collaboration between SMCOE and the San Mateo County Sheriff to align school emergency protocols. After the Newtown tragedy occurred in December of 2012, the work drew in additional partners and gained the support of local and national leaders, including Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Much of the expanded funding for enhanced mental health supports and family resources centers will directly impact children and families in Big Lift SIF communities and Coalition staff will include preschool and summer providers in their new school-based collaboratives.

The Big Lift SIF is being spearheaded by a powerful collective impact collaborative under the leadership of Anne Campbell, the San Mateo County superintendent of schools; Carole Groom, a member of the San Mateo County board of supervisors; and Erica Wood, senior vice president of community leadership and grantmaking at Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

All participants in the collaborative have agreed to implement solutions that are evidence-informed via shared decision making, shared data and measurement systems. Participant activities are differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. There are four work groups that are driving the differentiated areas of the plan (school readiness, attendance, inspiring summer programs, and family and community engagement), and a leadership group that meets regularly to integrate their work at the community level. High-performing organizations working countywide in key areas of the plan have been identified and engaged to provide support in the target communities proposed for this project.

Narratives

The Big Lift has achieved broad investment and ownership from all participants in building infrastructure and resources to sustain the work and continuously improve outcomes. The collaborative reflects the diverse character of San Mateo County, which includes 23 school districts and 20 cities, with no dominant city. Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate entity with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and to coordinate the participating organizations and agencies. The backbone consists of three strong, countywide organizations--the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, the San Mateo County Office of Education, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation--supported by two half-time strategists and facilitators. The backbone and leadership of the Big Lift brings together a powerful combination of educational, government and philanthropic skills, which is more effective than having a single executive director with a more limited skill set, and is an approach often used by leading technology and social ventures in Silicon Valley.

The Big Lift maintains consistent and open communication across all partners to build trust, ensure mutual objectives and appreciate common motivation. The leadership of the Big Lift and the backbone strategists and facilitators meet twice a month to drive progress and share emerging opportunities; quarterly briefing sessions are held with the full Big Lift collaborative; a steering committee also meets quarterly to guide policy decisions; an email newsletter is sent every month to share updates, information, relevant articles and best practices; and the work groups meet monthly.

SVCF is well positioned to successfully support the focus, goals and approach outlined in this proposal. The institution has five decades of grantmaking experience based on open, transparent and competitive processes. Since 2009, SVCF has invested close to \$10 million in strategies to close the middle school achievement gap in mathematics and \$2.7 million to help school districts implement the Common Core State Standards, and through its competitive grantmaking in both areas, has become acutely aware of how disparities in education begin early and follow students throughout their lives.

In addition to its grantmaking, SVCF has significant institutional leadership in the area of early learning with a newly launched Center for Early Learning that provides best-in-class research, leadership, advocacy and innovative program strategies to ensure children enter school ready to learn and that they are successful by third grade. SVCF has been a pioneer in school readiness assessment,

Narratives

which has become a model for the state, helped to achieve a major legislative victory to preserve funding for early childhood health and education, and has provided thousands of at-risk children with a highly effective summer transitional program prior to kindergarten entry. SVCF was one of four community foundations in California that participated in a chronic absence network led by CFLeads (a national supporting organization that works with community foundations to advance the practice of community leadership) to identify and address issues of chronic absence in local communities. SVCF has also been a pioneer in venture philanthropy and has developed a model used in many of its initiatives in which program staff actively collaborates with nonprofit and public partners to define success, draft multi-year plans to reach that success and seek the necessary resources to support the work until explicit goals are met. This model aligns well with the spirit and intent of the Social Innovation Fund to support high-performing community-based nonprofits that validate and grow promising outcome-focused approaches to challenges facing local communities.

As a subcontractor and key collaborator on the proposed project, SMCOE brings immense experience and expertise in high-quality early education, including having served as the lead agency for the Preschool for All (PFA) pilot project that served 3,000 children in two of San Mateo County's highest need school districts. In its leadership of PFA, SMCOE provided many of the same supports and services it will provide for the proposed project. SMCOE is also a recognized pioneer in innovative and strategic thinking on early education in California and was selected by the California Department of Education to lead the development of the California Comprehensive Early Learning Plan, a strategic framework for improving quality and access to early learning for children birth through age five statewide over a nine-month planning period in 2012-2013 that included over 2,700 stakeholders across the state. SMCOE will also serve as the bridge between preschool and K-12 systems, using its relationships and infrastructure to ensure a seamless connection between the two as data and outcomes are tracked through the project. Together, SVCF and SMCOE will improve access to high-quality early education to underserved communities in San Mateo County and achieve the goal of 80% of third graders reading at grade level.

Raising A Reader National Office is a Supporting Organization [IRS 509 (a) (3)] of Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Though the organizations operate as distinct legal entities, Raising A Reader's finances are regularly consolidated with Silicon Valley Community Foundation's and therefore indirectly includes a federal award to SVCF. Raising A Reader National Office was awarded

Narratives

a US Department of Education Innovative Approach to Literacy Award (Award #S215G1201411). The purpose of this award, which concludes September 30, 2014, is to develop the language and literacy skills of four and five year olds through Raising A Reader's family engagement program in Baltimore, MD; Phoenix, AZ; and Boston, MA. Further, Raising A Reader submitted a pre-proposal to the US Department of Education's Investing In Innovation (i3) Development grant competition (CFDA 84.411), Grants.gov tracking number: GRANT 11628809. The proposal seeks funding to conduct a large-scale randomized control trial of Raising A Reader in San Diego, CA. Although the goals of these Raising a Reader's projects are in alignment with those of this proposal, the Big Lift SIF is distinct geographically (San Mateo County vs. Baltimore, Phoenix and Boston) and in scope (shared reading vs. high-quality preschool, family engagement, summer learning and school attendance).

1B) DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES: SUBGRANTEE SELECTION

Silicon Valley Community Foundation will hold a fair, open and competitive subgrantee selection process modeled after the many rounds of competitive funding the organization has previously managed. The process for subgrantee selection will include developing an application, publicizing the funding opportunity through multiple communication channels (e-mail announcement, website, press release) to reach preschool and school district administrators in the 11 target communities, hosting information sessions for prospective subgrantees, evaluating applications against the selected criteria, announcement of awards, contracting and evaluation planning. The expected timeline for these activities is as follows: Weeks 1-6: Develop application; Weeks 6-7: Disseminate application; Weeks 8-9: Hold a minimum of 2 information sessions; Weeks 10-15: Applicants design their proposals; Week 16: Applications are due; Weeks 16-19: Expert review process; Weeks 20-24: Announcement of awards, evaluation design and contracting; and Week 25: Implementation begins.

If successful in receiving a Social Innovation Fund grant, SVCF anticipates releasing a subgrantee application announcement within three-six months of receipt of the SIF award. In Year One, SVCF anticipates selecting between 10-16 subgrantees in two-four of the 11 target communities. The estimated range of awards to subgrantees will be \$100,000-\$500,000, based on provider capacity.

SVCF will solicit applications from eligible subgrantees in the target communities that provide high-quality preschool services. Eligible subgrantees will include private and public non-profits, including multi-service agencies and school districts, whose existing programs are in good standing with (or

Narratives

exempt from) California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing. Each prospective subgrantee will need to demonstrate commitment and capacity to meet the rigorous fiscal, program and data accountability requirements of the Big Lift SIF, which are described below. A critical requirement includes a memorandum of understanding between the subgrantee (if the subgrantee is not a school district) and the school district or districts within whose boundaries the subgrantee is located to ensure that all four of the dimensions in the Annie E. Casey Third Grade Reading Campaign framework area are addressed: a comprehensive school readiness strategy that includes high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year olds that leads to an aligned and sequenced set of high-quality learning experiences through the third grade, reducing chronic absence, inspiring summer programming and family engagement.

For preschool providers (including school districts if they apply as direct providers of preschool services), the specific requirements will include: (1) Organizational and leadership capacity to meet the data, evaluation and fiscal requirements of the Big Lift SIF; (2) Ability to meet the quality requirements, as evidenced by a minimum score of a Tier 3 on the QRIS; (3) Agreement to comply with external evaluators and participate in multiple evaluation activities, including, but not limited to: data use agreements, participation in external CLASS and ECERS assessments, provision of student attendance data, verification of QRIS status, and willingness to conduct valid child assessments, such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire; (4) Commitment to engage in ongoing quality improvement, including participation in activities that support progress on a Quality Improvement Plan (e.g., coaching, training on developmental assessments, etc.); (5) Participation in family engagement strategies outlined in Big Lift; and (6) Engagement in a whole child approach to curriculum, including the highlighted math component.

For school districts, whether or not they apply as a preschool provider, specific requirements will include: (1) Commitments to prioritize and actively engage in the Big Lift SIF's four focus areas; (2) Agreement to implement Pre-Kindergarten to third grade alignment strategies to ensure that children sustain the benefits of their preschool experience into the elementary school years, such as cross-grade professional development and sharing individual child data as the child progresses through the grades; (3) Agreement to comply with external evaluation, including various data agreements; (4) Agreement to track and make attendance data available; (5) Agreement to share standardized test results and report cards through their school years; (6) Progress towards assigning a California unique student

Narratives

identifier to children in preschool; and (7) Agreement to collect and share kindergarten entry data.

SVCF will assemble an independent review panel to assess the ability of subgrantees to meet the goals and requirements of the Big Lift SIF, including the commitment to the Annie E. Casey framework, rigorous evaluation requirements and capacity for growth. Other factors to be considered in evaluating applications will include: a commitment to increasing the number of full-day preschool spaces and summer programs available in the community; evidence of prior and/or intended PreK-3 alignment work; strong community collaboration; organizational capacity; community need; and capacity to serve the most vulnerable children.

To identify administrative capacity, the application will require submission of a staff roster and qualifications, all relevant audits, and include a section that requires subgrantees to describe their capacity to manage fiscal, evaluation, and reporting requirements. SVCF will rely on the QRIS and subsequent in-person validation visits to identify subgrantees that are ready to provide the level of program quality that is consistent with the desired outcomes. SVCF anticipates that the majority of initial applicants will be school districts and publicly-funded preschool providers with whom the community foundation and/or SMCOE have pre-existing relationships and whose capacity is familiar through past experience.

For preschool implementers, SVCF will assess capacity for subgrantee growth in two important ways: (1) by ensuring programs can expand to serve more children, and (2) by ensuring quality standards are being met. Program expansion will be determined if a subgrantee can identify appropriate facilities for additional preschool classrooms; has leadership staff who are committed to continuous quality improvement; demonstrates commitment to partnering with their school districts and community-based agencies to ensure that the needs of the children and families they serve are met in the most comprehensive ways possible; and has a track record of raising funds and being in sound financial standing, as demonstrated by clear audits.

In order to determine if a subgrantee is able to meet increasingly rigorous quality standards, SVCF will look for past improvements in the programs' independently assessed CLASS and ECERS scores. The CLASS has been shown through an ever-increasing body of evidence to predict children's performance in elementary school and it is the one element of QRIS that appears to be most strongly related to

Narratives

positive child outcomes ("Can Rating Pre-K Programs Predict Children's Learning?" Science, 2013). Therefore, when considering whether subgrantees are well positioned to grow the number of classrooms at their agencies, special attention will be paid to agencies that have succeeded in improving their CLASS scores.

1C) DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES: PROPOSAL FOR EVALUATION

The Big Lift SIF represents a significant investment of time, resources, and community collaboration in San Mateo County's youngest children. At the end of the day, it will be important to answer the question: Are third grade reading proficiency rates improving in the target communities? To answer this question, the Big lift SIF will require a rigorous evaluation that provides information about program implementation and child outcomes.

SVCF will engage and interface with an external evaluation partner to implement the most rigorous evaluation possible. SVCF and SMCOE will meet with the evaluation partner regularly to collaborate regarding all elements of the evaluation, including but not limited to the following: (1) Help articulate the key evaluation questions to be answered; (2) Discuss viable evaluation designs; (3) Discuss the subgrantee, subcontractor and intermediary agency roles and responsibilities in implementing the evaluation design; (4) Check in about the current status of evaluation activities; (5) Communicate with subgrantees about external evaluation requirements and coordinate with them to meet specific requests (e.g., survey dissemination, focus group recruitment, classroom observations, etc.); and (6) Develop communication and feedback loops necessary to disseminate findings to stakeholders and to subgrantees for use in program improvement.

The proposed budget includes funds for both data systems and an outside, independent evaluation of the initiative in order to assess short-term and long-term measures of progress with the ultimate measure being the third grade reading proficiency of participants. Specific budgeted amounts are: \$100,000 for database development and hosting; \$220,000 for external evaluation; \$110,000 for a dedicated data and evaluation analyst; and \$68,000 for ECERS and CLASS assessments. The Big Lift SIF envisions three primary strategies to assess its impact: (1) Data System. Build and implement a comprehensive online data system that will be used to store individual-level data at the child, parent, classroom, site, and agency level. The Big Lift already has developed a preliminary plan for database development, hosting, and maintenance; (2) Develop and Implement Short-Term Outcome Measures

Narratives

(combination of internal and external evaluation). Short-term outcome measures will include those that subgrantees can collect themselves using an online data system and valid child and program assessment tools using reliable observers. Short-term outcome measures for Year One subgrantees are likely to include the following, at a minimum: 1) 75% of children in target communities have access to quality preschool using preschool enrollment data and publicly available population data, as well as kindergarten entry data; 2) 100% of participating preschool classrooms will demonstrate improvements in quality on research-based program quality assessment tools using the Classroom Observation Scoring System (CLASS) and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS); and 3) 80% of participating children will make progress on school readiness domains using a validated developmental assessment tool such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile; and (3) Develop and implement long-term outcome measures (independent, external evaluation). Funds will be set aside for an independent, quasi-experimental evaluation that compares children in participating Big Lift SIF programs to children who did not participate. Outcomes that will be prioritized will include the following, at a minimum: (1) 80% of participating children will enter kindergarten ready to learn (using a battery of empirically valid assessment tools administered by outside observers); (2) 80% of participating children will demonstrate grade level proficiency in key academic areas between kindergarten and second grade such as math and reading (using report card data or assessment data collected by schools); and (3) 80% of participating third graders in target school districts will be reading proficiently at grade level (California Smarter Balanced standardized assessment).

SVCF and SMCOE will provide subgrantees with technical assistance in meeting evaluation requirements. Since all Year One subgrantees will implement high-quality preschool as the primary intervention, there will be one over-arching evaluation that looks at the quality and impact of preschool across all subgrantee programs. In Year One, QRIS results will be used to design a unique Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for each classroom, and SMCOE will provide the training, technical assistance, coaching and access to learning materials necessary to reach goals established on the QIPs. At regular intervals occurring at least every 24 months (or more frequently if necessary), classrooms will be officially re-rated on the QRIS. If program quality has decreased in some classrooms, funding for that subgrantee will be in jeopardy (especially if the subsequent rating puts them at Tier 2 of the QRIS). SMCOE will work with that subgrantee to provide intensive supports necessary to get them back on track, and will provide a time frame for doing so. If a subgrantee has plateaued and failed to make significant quality improvements, SMCOE will work with the program to study their QRIS

Narratives

results, re-examine the supports they have received and re-focus the efforts around more effective strategies. If a subgrantee has succeeded in improving quality and making movement to a higher Tier, SMCOE will assess what has worked and identify supports that will sustain and build upon those improvements. In summary, the performance and monitoring will comprise a cycle that starts with QRIS rating, moves to QIP goals, identifies and provides supports needed to achieve QIP goals, and tests the effectiveness of those results by conducting a new QRIS rating every 24 months. The cycle will continue to repeat over the life of the proposed project.

The online database that SMCOE will manage and that all subgrantees will be required to use will also play a central role in subgrantee accountability. Programs will be required to maintain child and teacher data for each classroom on a monthly basis and to certify these data each month in order to receive funding. While the details of reporting are still being determined, it is expected that subgrantees will submit detailed expenditure reports quarterly at a minimum, and narrative updates on scope of work progress twice per year. Site visits are built into the SMCOE technical assistance and coaching model and will occur at least monthly, ensuring that SMCOE staff have regular opportunities to see firsthand how well subgrantees are implementing quality standards and make changes to their quality improvement goals on an ongoing basis.

1D) DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES: PROPOSAL TO IDENTIFY INNOVATIVE, MORE EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

Third grade achievement is increasingly recognized as a crucial turning point in children's educational trajectories. High-quality preschool as a strategy to improve third grade achievement is recognized as an effective youth development strategy, leading to improved outcomes as children grow up, and better employment and health outcomes as adults ("Early Childhood Investments Substantially Boost Adult Health," Science, March, 2014; "Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40", 2005). While this is true, the Big Lift's collective impact strategy is built on the knowledge that without additional attention through the early school years, the benefits of high-quality preschool can diminish over time. This is why the Big Lift SIF is focused on a comprehensive approach that begins with two years of high-quality preschool paired with family engagement and then extends the investment through third grade so that children attend school every day, experience high-quality learning in kindergarten through third grade and have access to inspiring summer programs. This is what makes the Big Lift SIF an innovative and more effective solution to addressing

Narratives

the third grade reading challenge; because all too often policy-makers have focused on funneling funding into early childhood programs (birth to five) without pairing those dollars with the family engagement, early elementary and summer experiences that will ultimately move the needle on third grade reading achievement.

1E) DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES: PROPOSAL FOR GROWING SUBGRANTEE IMPACT

Big Lift will support subgrantee growth with technical assistance through two primary strategies, one staffed by Silicon Valley Community Foundation and the other by the San Mateo County Office of Education. SVCF's project officer will provide overall technical assistance to selected Big Lift SIF target communities and in this role will convene key stakeholders, including school districts, preschool, family engagement and summer providers and community-based organizations on a regular basis to build a coordinated, collective impact-like approach within each community. The focus of these convenings will be to build bridges between previously disconnected systems in order to leverage resources and strengthen the safety-net for children and families. These convenings will also serve as the foundation for developing plans for the Big Lift SIF for Years Two-Five and beyond to ensure sustainability built on collaboration and shared systems change priorities.

A highly skilled cadre of coaches will be established at SMCOE that includes those focused on general curriculum and instruction as well as specialists with more concentrated expertise in areas such as mathematics, family engagement, children with special needs and dual language learners.

The Big Lift Preschool Plan has a strategy proposed for growing new high-quality preschool programs. Classrooms who do not yet meet Tier 3 on the QRIS and who wish to become part of the Big Lift will become 'pipeline' programs. Pipeline programs will have access to technical assistance and coaching around areas of improvement needed to achieve Tier 3. They will also be given priority for SMCOE early learning professional development workshops that address QRIS (such as screening and assessment, dual language learners and instructional practices).

In Years Two-Five, the Big Lift SIF will subcontract with a technical assistance provider to support the development and expansion of high-quality summer programs in target communities. One such provider is the Partnership for Children and Youth, a San Francisco Bay Area nonprofit that has launched a first-ever statewide initiative, Summer Matters, focused on creating and expanding access

Narratives

to high-quality summer learning opportunities for all California students. The skills and expertise of this organization will be utilized to help develop a plan for long-term, sustainable expansion of high-quality summer programs for children in Big Lift communities. Funds have been set aside for Year One of the proposed project budget so that planning for this work can get underway.

SVCF's approach to supporting subgrantee growth is well aligned with the Big Lift Theory of Change. As Big Lift expands its scope over the five years of the SIF grant, beginning in Year One with the provision of high-quality preschool for high-need children and then building in Years Two-Five and beyond to include summer and family engagement providers, the ultimate goal of improving third grade reading proficiency and lifetime success of children in the 11 target communities will be achieved. Year One subgrantees will be supported to serve more children if they have leadership capacity, available facilities and/or if they are able to provide services in available space off-site. In Years Two-Five, summer providers will be added to the subgrantee pool. The SVCF project officer will provide support to Big Lift communities to ensure that, through collaboration between all subgrantees, all four Big Lift focus areas are well-integrated and leveraging resources to the fullest extent possible in each community.

Given the historically limited capacity of preschool and summer providers to raise funds to support their own programs and the relatively high cost of these programs, it is imperative that the larger Big Lift collaborative take responsibility for developing sustainable funding streams. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors has indicated strong support for the Big Lift and has committed \$10 million in Measure A funding (a 2012 voter-approved tax measure that is estimated to bring in \$60 million to San Mateo County over the next 10 years) to support the Big Lift initiative over the next two years and beyond assuming short-term outcomes are being met. In addition to this investment, SVCF and the Big Lift collaborative partners are pursuing both short and long-term financing strategies, which are detailed in section 2F (Strategy for Sustainability) of this application. In addition, with the support of the Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2), the Big Lift will be expanding its reach into the business community to make the case that investments in the early years have the highest rate of return and are the best way for businesses to ensure they have the well-educated workforce Silicon Valley needs.

Organizational Capability

2A) HISTORY OF COMPETITIVE GRANTMAKING

Narratives

Silicon Valley Community Foundation was created in 2007 through the landmark merger of two of the San Francisco Bay Area's oldest and most effective community foundations: Peninsula Community Foundation in San Mateo County and Community Foundation Silicon Valley in Santa Clara County. Today, the community foundation has over \$4.7 billion in assets under management and more than 1,600 philanthropic funds. As the region's comprehensive center for philanthropy, SVCF shapes critical public policy issues, partners with nonprofit groups and institutions advancing the best ideas, and directs resources swiftly and strategically when unforeseen needs arise.

In 2012, the community foundation distributed \$294 million in grants through funds established by individuals, families and corporations--more than ever before--and more than any other community foundation in the United States. SVCF's endowment and field of interest funds represent six percent of total assets and provide important resources for the institution to address urgent needs in our region, defined as San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Grants from the endowment and field of interest funds are awarded through a competitive process. Since 2007, SVCF has awarded 768 competitive grants from these funds, totaling \$61 million through work done by an expert team of eight program and initiative officers supported by a ten-person Grants Administration Department.

SVCF adheres to the highest standards of quality in its grantmaking to help advance the practices that we know will have the biggest impact on subgrantees and has received numerous awards for its grantmaking, including a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency award for its work in regional planning, and the prestigious Webby Award from the International Academy of Arts and Sciences for the development of www.citizenshipworks.org, a set of online technology tools to help immigrants navigate the naturalization process.

SVCF has a well-developed and competitive grantmaking process that begins with issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP). This is followed by one or two information sessions, due diligence to identify successful proposals, making funding awards and developing grant agreements, providing technical assistance and coaching, monitoring grantee compliance and performance through interim and final reports, and collecting evaluation data and reporting on results. The subgrantee selection process for the proposed project is detailed under the Program Design section of the application.

2B) EXPERIENCE GROWING PROGRAM IMPACT

Narratives

SVCF consistently supports the replication and expansion of effective subgrantee programs as a means to extend reach and impact. For example, the community foundation incubated one of the nation's earliest (and most successful) venture philanthropy enterprises, Raising A Reader, through one of its parent institutions, Peninsula Community Foundation. Since its founding in 1999 in San Mateo, California, Raising A Reader has grown to serve over one million children throughout the country. The program achieved steady growth through the support of an early network of influential supporters, thought leaders and researchers in the field of early childhood literacy. As evaluation studies on Raising A Reader began to show strong evidence that the program had a measurable impact on positive family bonding, as well as children's language and early literacy skills, the community foundation decided to scale and replicate the model nationally. A supporting organization has been created that now manages a network of over 2,500 community partners across 32 states.

Another powerful way in which SVCF has expanded grantee programs is through the use of technology as part of its grantmaking strategy to support immigrants. Silicon Valley is one of the most diverse regions in the country and home to large numbers of immigrants who need access to affordable and reliable legal services to navigate the citizenship process. In response to a 2007 SVCF-funded survey that showed legal services agencies needed to increase capacity three- and four-fold to meet current and future demand should federal legalization reform succeed, the community foundation brought grantees together with some of Silicon Valley's leading engineers to design a cloud-based application that matches the skills of professional legal volunteers with legal service agency needs.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation has a deep commitment and proven approach to supporting and strengthening the capacity and programmatic growth of its subgrantees. An important feature of this approach is frequent and ongoing touch points between program staff and subgrantees. For purpose of this project, SVCF and lead subcontractor, the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE), will commit to serving as facilitator, critical friend, and coach to help subgrantees succeed. SMCOE will use the empirically valid Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS) to develop a quality improvement plan for each subgrantee. These plans will be the basis for a combination of professional development as well as one-on-one coaching and technical assistance that will build the capacity of each subgrantee.

Narratives

These efforts will be strengthened and reinforced through a peer learning cohort among the portfolio of subgrantees. Research has shown that this kind of peer learning becomes the "glue" to help make capacity-building efforts "stick." SVCF has used learning cohorts extensively in past capacity-building initiatives and with each of its current grantmaking strategies. The learning cohort for the proposed project will provide a forum for peer learning, reflection, sharing of resources, and joint work and will take place quarterly.

In addition to the quarterly learning cohort meetings, subgrantees will be convened at least bi-annually to review evaluation data as a way to support capacity and program growth. SVCF and SMCOE will facilitate conversations with subgrantees about how to use evaluation findings to understand the impact of quality improvement strategies and how to adjust those strategies over time. Subgrantees will be provided with their own 'data dashboards' to use as they plan curriculum and instructional strategies. SVCF and SMCOE will also explore the development of a new, or customization of an existing, website that can serve as a repository of best practice resources for all subgrantees. The website would provide the latest early childhood research and curriculum resources that are directly applicable to subgrantee quality improvement plans. Through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant that First 5 San Mateo County has received, such a website is already available at the regional San Francisco Bay Area level and appears to be customizable at the county level. This could serve as an excellent information-sharing vehicle for all of the Big Lift stakeholders.

2C) EVALUATION EXPERIENCE

SVCF has extensive experience leading and supporting evaluation efforts of its grantmaking, special projects and initiatives. For example, SVCF worked with Learning for Action (LFA), a highly respected, national firm on the evaluation of its own grantmaking strategies, which involved the development of a logic model for each strategy and sub-strategy with defined outcomes and measurable indicators; the identification of data sources; and development of data collection plans, including methodology, process recommendations, and timelines that were used to guide the implementation of the evaluation plan for each sub-strategy.

Last year, SVCF engaged in an open, transparent and comprehensive review of these strategies. The process involved extensive conversations with grantee organizations, interviews with independent scholars and experts about trends related to SVCF's areas of work, and an independent third-party

Narratives

evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of each grantmaking strategy. The review led to a set of investment decisions about which strategies were achieving impact and important to continue and which strategies were not achieving impact and needed to be discontinued.

In addition to SVCF's own evaluation experience, the SMCOE brings considerable evaluation expertise to the proposed project in its role as a subcontractor. As was described in the activities section of this application SMCOE was the lead agency of a Preschool For All pilot project in San Mateo County that was rigorously evaluated over a four-year period by the American Institutes of Research and later by the John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University. Results showed that PFA children, especially those who received two full years of preschool, were performing on-par and in some cases better than their higher income counter-parts on standardized tests in the early elementary grades. The learning from this evaluation has provided the inspiration for the Big Lift SIF, which prioritizes two full years of high-quality preschool for children in the target communities.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation places a high value on the utility of evaluation results and has as one of its guiding principles that evaluation should not only prove a program works but also improve the way it works. SVCF can proudly point to several examples of supporting subgrantees to use evidence to improve program performance. For example, SVCF has been implementing a four-week summer program for entering kindergarteners (Kickoff to Kindergarten) who have never been to preschool, are from a low-income family and/or are dual language learners in nine communities within eight school districts for over a decade. In the early years of implementation, SVCF allowed each school district the flexibility to design its own program that met its particular community's needs. In the first three years of implementation, an extensive third-party evaluation was conducted and while the results showed that children overall who participated in the program did show statistically significant gains in the skills that are necessary to succeed in school, they also showed that the positive impacts varied greatly between communities. In Year Four of the project, the evaluation was focused on elements of program design and resulted in the development of the Kickoff to Kindergarten Program Instruction Guidelines. The guidelines, which are reviewed and updated annually, provide a consistent, standardized set of operating procedures that each KTK program is required to follow to ensure high quality, classroom instruction. The most recent evaluation of the program, conducted last year, showed statistically significant gains in children's school readiness skills in all of the communities where the program operates.

Narratives

SVCF's immigration work in the area of adult English language acquisition provides another example of supporting subgrantees to use evidence to improve programs. SVCF has worked with its cohort of subgrantees to regularly review the evidence base for this work, which has pointed to the importance of maintaining high-quality programs that bring together different community institutions -- government, community colleges, job-training programs and nonprofit organizations -- to achieve expanded use of services, persistence in study and achievement by adult learners. This led to the creation of a regional network of adult schools, community-based organizations and community colleges, the Alliance for Language Learners' Integration, Empowerment and Success (ALLIES), to develop a more coordinated model of service delivery, leading to improved academic and vocational pathways for immigrants. Because of its groundbreaking work, ALLIES received a \$2.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund, one of just 26 such grants awarded nationally.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation staff has considerable expertise and capacity to ensure successful evaluation of its subgrantees. Evaluation is an integral part of all of its programmatic work, from grantmaking to special projects and initiatives. Evaluation requirements are outlined in all RFPs and grant agreements clearly outline the outcomes to be achieved for each funded project. Progress toward outcomes is regularly monitored by program staff through frequent communication with grantees, quarterly learning cohort meetings and interim and final reports.

SVCF has an established track record and staff capacity to ensure successful evaluation of its subgrantees as described in previous sections of this application, and welcomes the opportunity to work with an experienced federal evaluation partner to ensure that the evaluations of subgrantees for the proposed project will achieve moderate or strong evidence of impact by the end of the three- to five-year funding period. The community foundation will also seek the expertise of a contracted evaluator to strengthen this component of the project. SVCF stands ready to commit the time and resources necessary to meet all of the evaluation requirements as outlined in the Corporation for National and Community Service' Social Innovation Fund Cooperative Agreement.

2D) ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROGRAM SUPPORT AND OVERSIGHT

SVCF has extensive experience setting and implementing goals with approximately 100 grantees

Narratives

annually through its economic security, education, immigration and regional planning grantmaking strategies. From the release of an RFP, goals form the basis of the work to be done under each strategy. For example, SVCF makes strategic investments in programs that provide low and moderate-income individuals with financial education as well as opportunities to save, invest and protect family wealth. The goals of the most recently released RFP were to:

(1) Expand effective existing programs that demonstrate a combined financial education and asset-building approach and can be scaled to impact larger numbers of individuals. (2) Introduce pilot interventions that show the potential for breaking new ground in the financial education and asset development area; and (3) Demonstrate innovation in the way programs are conceived, structured or delivered in order to increase efficiency and scale.

Program staff communicates with prospective subgrantees about their applications and proposed strategies to ensure that they are aligned with the applicant's stated goals.

The leadership team that will guide the proposed project consists of Anne Campbell, the San Mateo County superintendent of schools; Carole Groom, a member of the San Mateo County board of supervisors; and Erica Wood, senior vice president of community leadership and grantmaking at Silicon Valley Community Foundation. This team also co-leads the Big Lift collaborative through a collective impact model (described in Goals and Objectives) and has worked to lay the foundation for success.

The proposed project will be housed within the community foundation's Center for Early Learning, which includes a team of five. Avo Makdessian, the center's director, has 15 years of experience working in the fields of child development, education, public health and human services. Prior to his work at the community foundation, he served as policy director for First 5 Santa Clara County. Mr. Makdessian will oversee new staff with direct responsibility for implementing the proposed project as well as current staff working in the Center that will play supporting roles in the project. Qualifications of the current staff are described below.

Jessica Mihaly works with eight school-district-community teams to improve the transition for students between early childhood education and early elementary school and to increase alignment of curriculum, standards and approaches to teaching. Jessica holds a master's degree in early childhood

Narratives

education and a multiple-subjects teaching credential from Mills College in Oakland, California.

Michelle Sioson Hyman oversees the implementation of Kickoff to Kindergarten, a four-week summer transitional program for aspiring kindergarteners. She also leads the Center's major research projects, including the School Readiness Assessment project and the Parent Story Project, a first-of-its-kind, representative study of parents with children ages birth to age eight in Silicon Valley. She received her undergraduate degree from Case Western Reserve University and a master's degree from Yale University.

Patricia Flynn Sasso oversees the implementation of Raising A Reader, a parent involvement "read-aloud" book bag program, in San Mateo County. She holds an undergraduate degree in English and a master's degree in early childhood education.

A full-time project officer will be hired upon announcement of a grant award. As the lead staff person for this project, the project officer will have day-to-day responsibility for managing the proposed project. The project officer will be an employee of the community foundation, will oversee the subcontract with SMCOE, and will work collaboratively with SMCOE staff to meet the needs of the project. The project officer will also manage the subgrantee selection and monitoring process and be the primary point of contact for the Social Innovation Fund staff and the project officer will provide technical assistance to Big Lift SIF communities to convene key stakeholders, including school districts, preschool, family engagement and summer providers and community-based organizations to build a coordinated, collective impact-like approach within each community.

The project officer will be supported by a full-time finance coordinator who will assist with grant-award preparation and monitoring and ensure compliance with all fiscal and programmatic requirements as outlined in the CNCS funding announcement.

SMCOE will be a lead subcontractor under the proposed project and will provide the primary technical assistance and quality supports to subgrantees. The subcontract will be housed within SMCOE's Early Learning Support Services (ELSS) unit, which is led by Director Jeanie McLoughlin and staffed by a team of 16 full-time employees. Ms. McLoughlin has 15 years of experience at SMCOE and almost 30 years in the early childhood education field. She oversaw the highly successfully Preschool For All pilot

Narratives

project and recently led a team of experts to craft the State of California's Comprehensive Early Learning Plan. A full-time project manager will be hired to support Big Lift SIF's professional development and technical assistance activities. Additional staff will include a full-time data and evaluation analyst who will serve as the liaison between evaluators and the preschool program providers to provide on-the-ground training and technical support. The project will be supported by a half-time fiscal analyst and a half-time administrative assistant. Additional ELSS staff that will play a supporting role in the project, with the support of leveraged funds, include the following:

Nirmala Dillman will work with a team of technical assistance providers and coaches to support subgrantees in the QRIS. She has 30+ years in ECE in San Mateo County, as executive director of community-based non-profit early learning programs, adjunct faculty at the community college in ECE, and ten years at SMCOE as coordinator of the local child care policy and planning council.

Diana Harlick is a full-time project specialist whose role involves overseeing evaluation design and implementation, data collection and analysis, program monitoring, and using research and evaluation for program improvement. She holds an undergraduate degree from the University of California at Davis and a Master's in Public Administration from San Francisco State University

Soodie Ansari has been the Coordinator for the Early Childhood Language Development Institute at SMCOE for the past 10 years, where she has led trainings and technical assistance for providers and families from diverse backgrounds. Soodie will work with a countywide team of consultants and coaches to support subgrantees in integrating effective systems for authentic family engagement and meaningful services for Dual Language Learners. Soodie holds a master's degree in child development from the University of California at Davis.

SVCF has considerable experience operating and overseeing programs similar to the proposed project. Since its founding in 2007, the community foundation has played a managing partner role in several multi-year, multi-site initiatives addressing kindergarten readiness, family book sharing and community/school capacity building. For example, SVCF has received close to \$9 million in funding from First 5 San Mateo County and worked within eight school-district communities to implement a highly successful four-week summer transitional program for close to 6,000 aspiring kindergarteners. The program has been rigorously evaluated and showed statistically significant gains across all school

Narratives

readiness domains measured: self-care and motor skills, academics, self-regulation, and social expression.

SVCF developed a 22-item Kindergarten Observation Form to assess the cognitive, language and social/emotional skills of representative samples of entering kindergarteners in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. This work has informed policy discussions in the California Legislature on the importance of school readiness assessment and has led to the development of the Desired Results Development Profile-School Readiness instrument that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction has recommended to all school districts statewide.

Since 2010 SVCF, in partnership with SMCOE, has lead the Ready Schools Teams Initiative, designed to create greater collaboration and alignment between preschool and elementary systems in the seven highest need school districts in the county. Each of the participating districts has adopted a PreK-3 alignment policy and the initiative has created a model for the 11 Big Lift target communities to expand alignment and collaboration across grades.

Monitoring subgrantees' compliance with programmatic requirements is at the heart of the work of SVCF's program staff. Each grant agreement spells out expected outcomes over the life of the grant. Progress toward meeting those outcomes is assessed at subgrantee learning cohort meetings, through regular site visits and conversations, as well as through interim and final written reports. As a result of the effective coaching and support provided by SVCF, only a few of the 850 subgrantees the institution has worked with over the past four years have forfeited the right to continue as subgrantees due to their inability to comply with programmatic goals.

The Big Lift SIF grantees will be held to the same rigorous standards with goals and objectives jointly developed between the community foundation and the subgrantees. In addition, the evaluation plan developed for each subgrantee will outline performance measures and the means by which the data will be gathered and analyzed.

2E) ABILITY TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND OVERSIGHT

SVCF is confident that it is well positioned to manage the proposed project from a fiscal perspective at both the intermediary and subgrantee level. It adheres to the highest fiscal controls that provide for

Narratives

prudent asset management. SVCF prides itself on our ability to steward \$4.7 billion in total assets, most of which are in donor-advised funds demanding rigorous diligence and oversight. In 2012, SVCF's subgrants from all funds, including those established by individuals, families and corporations, totaled \$294 million to nonprofits in the Bay Area, the nation and around the world. The community foundation has well-established internal controls, policies and procedures; since 2007, SVCF has passed annual independent audits with flying colors, without so much as a management letter over the past three audits. SVCF has successfully managed a number of large, federal grants in the past and passed all required audits of these grants, including A-133 program audits.

SVCF has a 12-person accounting team with senior staff that has considerable experience overseeing federal grants, including the controller who is a certified public accountant and has a master's degree in business administration. The community foundation uses Financial Edge, a nonprofit fund accounting system that comes with unparalleled expertise in grant management, reporting, budgeting and managing expenses. Through this system, reports can be executed to provide monthly, quarterly and annual financial information, as well as special reports as needed for grantors. The system tracks budgeted versus actual expenses, year-to-date expenses and variances. SVCF also uses ADP to manage its payroll function; that system can be used to track time and effort specifically for this project. SVCF has strong existing internal controls, including checks and balances to ensure that only authorized payments are issued, cash receipts are deposited in a timely way and applied to the appropriate program, all balance sheet accounts are reconciled monthly, revenue and expense reports are prepared in a timely way, and variances reviewed and explained.

SVCF plans to hire and train a highly-qualified financial coordinator for the project, whose responsibility will be to monitor compliance for subgrantees and manage the day-to-day financial grant management operations, including internal and external reporting. Under the direction of the controller, this individual will establish the accounting system, policies and procedures to ensure full compliance with a Social Innovation Fund grant and the federal Office of Management and Budget guidelines. The financial coordinator will have at least a four-year degree in accounting from an accredited institution and three to five years of experience, including experience with nonprofit organizations and federal grants management.

2F) STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Narratives

The proposed project is supported by a collective impact structure with the involvement of over 100 organizations and partners. In 2012, San Mateo County voters passed Measure A, a ten-year, one half-cent sales tax increase, estimated to generate \$60 million a year in new revenue. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors has approved \$10 million of Measure A funding for The Big Lift and has expressed full commitment of using that investment to meet both the intermediary and subgrantee match requirements as set forth in the letter sent to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

To support the vision of the Big Lift and the ambitious goals it has set to achieve by 2020, SVCF and Big Lift collaborative partners are in the process of developing both a short-term and long-term financing strategy. In the short-term (6-12 months), SVCF is leading efforts to raise money from individuals, corporations and other philanthropic institutions to support match requirements. To date, SVCF and Big Lift collaborative partners have received over \$600,000 in new money from the United Way of the Bay Area and the Kellogg Foundation through a highly competitive grant process. The proposed project will also leverage \$200,000 from First 5 San Mateo County in financial support through federal Race to the Top funds that will be used to support in the proposed project. In addition, the Big Lift recently received a grant of \$120,000 from the Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2) which comes with expert consultation from SV2's member partners, 175 of the most successful entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, who will bring their considerable experience and connections to the Big Lift SIF. SV2 set out to fund a collective impact project in 2014, and The Big Lift was selected over dozens of other qualified groups. SVCF has also applied for up to \$500,000 in funding through Google's Community Impact grant process.

Over the longer-term (one-five years), SVCF and Big Lift collaborative partners realize it will be necessary to create a dedicated, sustainable source of funding. This is because when the Big Lift vision is fully implemented, there is an estimated cost of \$30-\$40 million annually. A finance committee has been established to develop this long-term public financing strategy. County Manager John Maltbie and Family Services Agency Executive Director Arne Croce chair the committee. Both of these individuals have decades of experience in the public sector overseeing county and city budgets. The committee will be comprised of some of the region's leading financial minds and will explore a variety of public financing options, including a Pay For Success, social impact investing model, dedicating a portion of the County's property tax revenue to the creation of a children's fund, as has been done in

Narratives

other cities, or a ballot measure to increase taxes.

In addition to these efforts, SVCF and Big Lift collaborative partners are actively lobbying in support of Kindergarten Readiness Act legislation, authored by California Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, which would create a voluntary transitional kindergarten program and funding for all four-year-olds in California by 2019-20.

The Big Lift is a collective impact collaborative that has set aggressive goals for child outcomes and student achievement for 2020 that will go beyond the life of a SIF grant. The collaborative consists of 100 organizations representing nonprofits, communities, business, academia, education, government and philanthropy that are committed to ensuring all of San Mateo County's youth are successful in school and life, regardless of whether or not SVCF receives a grant through the Social Innovation Fund.

SVCF believes that it is important to build the capacity, not the dependency, of subgrantees. It is SVCF's intent to bolster the evaluation and strategic capacity of subgrantees to learn from information on an ongoing basis. All of the technical assistance, coaching and learning cohort meetings described earlier in this application will be provided with this philosophy in mind.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

3A) BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Silicon Valley Community Foundation will match the Corporation for National and Community Service funding at or above the required ratio of 1:1. As part of this grant proposal, SVCF has included a letter verifying cash match on-hand covering 100% of the requested amount.

The total budget for Year One of the Big Lift SIF is \$4,170,000, of which \$2,000,000 is requested from CNCS and the remainder is provided in matching funds, and is designed to fully support the capacity needed to achieve the intended project outcomes. An additional \$1,600,000 in subgrantee match will be part of the overall budget, but is not reflected in this proposal.

The largest single expenditure of CNCS funds will be in subgrants, which comprise \$1.6 million, or 80% of the requested \$2 million. SVCF will invest the remaining 20% of CNCS funds in a combination of SVCF staff capacity to meet the requirements of the grant, support for a rigorous external

Narratives

evaluation, and indirect costs, as follows: \$229,488 for salaries and benefits of 2.2 full time employees at SVCF; \$92,628 for the CNCS share of the evaluation; and \$77,884 for a combination of travel, equipment and supplies, A133 audits, criminal background checks and indirect costs.

Below is a description of how the \$2,170,000 in matching funds will be invested to support Year One of the Big Lift SIF.

A total of \$405,375 in matching funds is budgeted for evaluation activities, including database development and hosting, classroom assessments, an external evaluator, and a dedicated data and evaluation staff member at the SMCOE to provide data support and technical assistance to subgrantees.

San Mateo County Office of Education will serve as the primary subcontractor for the Big Lift preschool initiative, providing training and technical assistance, family engagement programs, database and evaluation support to subgrantees, monitoring of program requirements, supports to pipeline programs and more. \$300,000 is budgeted in Year One for SMCOE staff, including 25% of the project director, one full-time project manager, one half-time administrative assistant and one half-time fiscal analyst. These funds are leveraged in Year One with over \$300,000 from First 5 San Mateo County through a grant that is scheduled to sunset at the end of FY2015 and would therefore need to be increased if the program grows as expected in Years Two-Five.

Given the critical role families play in supporting their children's success, the Big Lift SIF will invest \$432,000 in family-engagement strategies, including support for families of dual language learners, primarily through the Early Childhood Language Development Institute; bridging the gap between school and home learning environments, with a particular focus on mathematics, through Virtual PreK; encouraging shared book experiences with Raising A Reader; and other evidence-based family engagement supports to meet the unique needs identified in each community.

In order to deliver the high-quality programs the Big Lift SIF is founded on, subgrantees will be provided with professional development, coaching, technical assistance, and support to pursue higher education. The Big Lift SIF has budgeted a total of \$407,000 for these activities. Professional development and coaching topics will include: early math and literacy instruction; meeting the needs

Narratives

of dual language learners and children with special needs; administering developmental assessments such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and the Desired Results Developmental Profile; culturally competent and responsive family engagement practices; understanding and improving CLASS and ECERS classroom assessments; and appropriate uses of technology in the classroom. Coaching and technical assistance will reinforce the professional development teachers and support staff have received in meeting quality targets and evaluation requirements. Funds are also set aside to support a targeted group of subgrantees to advance towards higher education degrees.

The amount of \$525,000 is budgeted for renovation and improvement of existing classrooms and for start-up funds to furnish new classrooms. The facility and environment of a preschool setting greatly influence the quality of early care and education services that are provided there. A well-maintained and well-designed facility acts as a platform to support high-quality programming and children's health. By supporting new facility planning, as well as quality enhancement of current environments, The Big Lift SIF can dramatically improve children's school readiness.

Recognizing that Tier 3 on the QRIS will be out of reach for many programs at the time of the original application, \$75,000 is budgeted to assess classrooms and provide supports to "pipeline programs" to prepare them to provide high-quality care as The Big Lift expands.

Given that The Big Lift is a multi-faceted collective impact model, the preschool investment is paired with other powerful strategies to ensure the long-term success of its participants. One of the key elements of this model is providing inspiring summer experiences for children in the 11 target communities. SVCF has budgeted \$25,000 for planning activities to determine how to most effectively expand access and ensure quality summer programming in the target communities, with the goal that all Year One preschool participants will have access to inspiring summer programs by 2016, the summer following their kindergarten year.

While SVCF is only submitting a budget for the first year of this proposal, the community's collective impact plan calls for an ambitious expansion of The Big Lift Preschool Program in coming years. In order to meet the desired outcome of 80% of children in the 11 target communities reading proficiently by third grade, SVCF is projecting that it will serve 8,600 students by 2020. The projected budget to meet that goal is \$30 to \$40 million per year. SVCF is planning to ramp up gradually to build capacity

Narratives

in the target communities to provide the high-quality programs required and to make time to build out and develop the facilities needed to accommodate the expansion. SVCF's projections for CNCS funds requested to support program expansion in years Two-Five are as follows: Year Two: \$2.5 million; Year Three: \$3 million; Year Four: \$4 million; and Year Five: \$5 million.

3B) DESCRIPTION OF MATCH SOURCES AND CAPACITY

In November of 2012, San Mateo County voters passed Measure A, a ten-year half-cent sales tax to support critical services to county residents. In April 2013, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors earmarked \$10 million in Measure A funds to support The Big Lift 2014-2016 and has indicated a serious interest in continuing to support Big Lift beyond the initial two-year investment, assuming preliminary targets are met. SVCF intends to utilize Measure A funds as intermediary and subgrantee matching dollars for the federal SIF grant.

While the Big Lift SIF is very fortunate to be launching this initiative with such a large up-front investment, SVCF and its partners are actively fundraising because the plan, when fully implemented in all eleven school districts, is estimated to cost \$30 to \$40 million per year. In addition to direct fund development, innovative financing models such as Pay for Success and other social impact investing strategies are being explored, as explained earlier in this application. The Big Lift has also leveraged approximately \$750,000 of existing First 5 San Mateo County investments to support Year One implementation.

Clarification Summary

Programmatic Issues for Clarification

1: Please provide further discussion of how the subgrant selection process in Years 2 through 5 would work. Do you anticipate that the same organizations would apply for additional or continuation funding in the second through fifth year to add supplemental programs addressing the additional outcomes? If completely new organizations are added, please provide a discussion of how these new additions to the portfolio will be successfully integrated into ongoing technical assistance and monitoring activities.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) intends to provide continuation funding to Year 1 subgrantees to expand their capacity to serve more children and families. While subgrants will be made for a period of 3-5 years, a review process will occur at the end of each year to assess each

Narratives

subgrantee's progress in meeting their goals. If goals are being achieved, subgrantees will have the opportunity to apply to expand their capacity to serve more children and families. The Big Lift SIF will award larger programmatic and scaling dollars to programs that show higher levels of evidence and have higher capacity.

SVCF also anticipates that new subgrantees will be added in Years 2-5 of the proposed project to provide the additional evidenced-based interventions consistent with the other critical elements of the Big Lift SIF. These interventions include a focus on reducing chronic absence and summer learning loss, and engaging parents and the broader community to support learning in the school and at home. Each new subgrantee will need to demonstrate commitment and capacity to meet the rigorous fiscal, program, and evaluation requirements of the Big Lift SIF.

An orientation will be provided to all subgrantees to deepen their understanding of the requirements of the Big Lift SIF and to introduce them to the technical assistance and support that will be made available to them. These organizations will be integrated into the ongoing technical assistance and monitoring activities of SVCF, the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) and other technical assistance providers focused on summer learning loss, attendance, and family engagement. Each new subgrantee will be assigned a lead coach to coordinate support to help the subgrantees meet their goals, as well as their Big Lift SIF fiscal, data and evaluation requirements.

2: Please confirm the anticipated budget needs for Years 2 and 3, accommodating the anticipated increase in subgrantees. Please confirm that the amounts listed on page 38 of your application are for total federal share amounts and not just subgrant expansion.

The anticipated budget need for Year 2 is \$2.5 million of which \$2.0 million will be available for at least 12 subgrantees. The Year 2 subgrantee amount will allow for continuation funding of Year 1 subgrantees, and funding for an additional four new subgrantees. The anticipated budget need for Year 3 is \$3 million of which \$2.4 million will be available for continuation funding for at least 16 subgrantees. These budget amounts will enable subgrantees to grow the impact of their program model so that more high-need children in the Big Lift SIF communities derive substantial, measurable benefits.

Narratives

The amounts listed on page 38 represent the total federal share requested, and not just the subgrantee expansion. If awarded a SIF grant, SVCF looks forward to discussing these budget estimates and modifying as appropriate, in consultation with Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS).

3: Please describe any involvement you have had (or intend to have) with the Annie E. Casey foundation regarding their model which you propose advancing through the Big Lift program.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) has enjoyed a strong relationship with the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Casey Foundation) over the years and intends to strategically engage with this institution throughout the Big Lift SIF.

Ralph Smith, Senior Vice President of the Casey Foundation and Managing Director of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading attended a "CF Leads" Community Foundation Network meeting in 2012 to discuss the challenge of chronic absence, the Campaign for Grade Level Reading (Campaign), and how community foundations can be engaged in this work. SVCF, along with three other community foundations, was invited to attend. Mr. Smith is also quoted as saying, "The Annie E. Casey Foundation is working closely with community foundations across the country on the Campaign for Grade Level Reading. We have found them to be perfectly positioned to help shepherd needed changes to education policy and practice."

SVCF's Big Lift SIF is significantly informed by the Casey Foundation's seminal research on why reading by the end of third grade matters and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading. Many cities and communities across the country have joined the Campaign, including San Jose, California. SVCF has been a partner in the San Jose effort and will ensure San Mateo County and the Big Lift SIF joins the Campaign network. Joining the network requires submitting a letter of intent and a Community Solutions Action Plan.

As a member of this network, the Big Lift SIF will have access to: (1) The nation's leading experts in school readiness, attendance and summer learning; (2) Key policymakers at the federal and state levels in Campaign gatherings; (3) Information about proven and promising models, programs and strategies; (4) Peer learning opportunities with other public officials, educators and civic leaders from around the nation; (5) Media products that can be localized to help spread the word about successes in

Narratives

San Mateo County; and (6) Funders looking to invest in promising local efforts to achieve impact and scale.

SVCF intends to share the Big Lift SIF model and evaluation results with the Casey Foundation, and continue to engage Mr. Smith and other staff in potential partnerships that further the work of the Big Lift SIF and the Campaign.

4: The SIF evaluation requirements are a key element of the program. Please confirm the intervention which you intend to assess as part of the impact evaluation outlined on pages 19 and 21 of your application. For example, will you be assessing the community-wide implementation of the Annie E. Casey model or the collective impact approach to raising third grade academic proficiency? Please provide documentation for the intervention you will be evaluating to ensure it meets the criteria of preliminary evidence.

SVCF intends to assess the community-wide implementation of the evidence-based interventions described in the application -- high-quality learning experiences from preschool to third grade, reducing chronic absence and summer learning loss, and engaging parents and the broader community to support learning in school and at home -- and the resulting outcome of increased third grade reading proficiency. The evaluation will be staged to coincide with the implementation of each intervention.

In Year 1, the Big Lift SIF evaluation will focus on investigating the impact of the preschool intervention, for which there is strong evidence nationally and at least preliminary evidence at the local level as described below. As children transition to elementary school, summer learning, attendance, and family engagement strategies will play a critical role in the ability of the Big Lift SIF to sustain the benefits of preschool and achieve its goal of 80% of children reading proficiently by third grade. Therefore, it will be essential to determine how summer learning, attendance and family engagement, in addition to high-quality preschool, will help the Big Lift SIF achieve its goal.

Previous efforts to address third grade reading have failed because they have been siloed and isolated. The Big Lift SIF's collective impact model is a cornerstone of the approach to addressing this challenging issue. SVCF intends to assess the Big Lift SIF collective impact approach by working with

Narratives

our evaluation partner to help us determine the best ways to do so, ensuring that the outcome of the evaluation will inform future collective impact efforts focused on persistent and challenging social issues in our region and beyond.

Preschool (National Evidence):

Decades of rigorous research have demonstrated that enriched preschool environments help to reduce the achievement gap and make a long-term difference in children's academic performance and lifelong success. Longitudinal experimental and quasi-experimental studies show that preschool confers numerous benefits not only on children's academic and school experiences, but also on the areas of health, career, and public benefit usage.

The literature shows preschool benefits all children, but that gains are most substantial for disadvantaged children (Karoly and Bigelow, 2005; Barnett, 2013; Yoshikawa, 2013). Moreover, large effect sizes have been noted in studies of early childhood education programs (Karoly et al, 1998), meaning that the positive differences resulting from preschool are not only statistically significant but can be expected to make a meaningful difference in children's lives. One meta-analysis of 84 diverse early education programs found the average post-program impact to represent about a third of a year of additional learning (Yoshikawa, 2013). Many important effects such as school attainment, career earnings and reduced criminal behavior persist and are long-lasting into adulthood for participants (Yoshikawa, 2013).

References:

Barnett, S., Policy Report: Getting the Facts Right on Pre-K and the President's Pre-K Proposal. National Institute for Early Education Research. New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2013.

Karoly, L., Bigelow, J., The Economics of Investing in Universal Preschool Education in California. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005.

Karoly, L., Greenwood, P., Everingham, S., Hoube, M., Kilburn, R., Rydell, P., Sanders, M., Chiesa, J., Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. MR-898, 1998.

Narratives

Lynch, R.G., *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal, and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2004.

Preschool (Local Evidence):

The Big Lift SIF's preschool intervention is modeled after San Mateo County's highly successful Preschool for All (PFA) initiative and has at least a preliminary level of evidence as defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service. PFA was a five-year demonstration project (2004-2009) aimed at reducing the achievement gap by supporting high-quality preschool programs for three- and four-year old children in Redwood City (one of the eleven targeted Big Lift communities). Similar to the proposed Big Lift SIF design, PFA contracted with a mixed delivery system of providers to offer preschool services, setting quality standards and supporting partners in meeting these standards with funding for professional development, program assessment and quality improvement.

A rigorous evaluation of the pilot conducted by the American Institutes of Research over a four-year period showed that classrooms scored very high in a research-based measure of classroom quality as a result of the training and technical assistance provided through the pilot. PFA classrooms scored higher on independently administered assessments in comparison to a representative sample of California classrooms and as compared to a well-known, highly successful and well-researched universal preschool initiative in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A subsequent longitudinal analysis of children who had experienced two full years of high-quality preschool through PFA, carried out by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University, obtained the following second-grade report card proficiency rates for PFA participants compared to a demographically similar group of non-PFA counterparts: reading proficiency (64% versus 56%); writing proficiency (55% versus 42%); mathematics proficiency (56% versus 49%); and work study skills (78% versus 70%).

The Gardner Center also conducted several analyses examining school-based outcomes for PFA participants who went on to attend elementary school in Redwood City School District (RCSD). Using longitudinal data from the Youth Data Archive to link individual PFA student records to their elementary school records, Gardner Center researchers found that children from the highest-risk groups who participated in PFA matched or outperformed their peers in five subjects--math,

Narratives

listening/speaking, reading, writing and work study skills. Academic gains were also greater for those who participated in the program for two years versus one year.

References:

Sanchez, M., A Longitudinal View of Educational Outcomes for Preschool for All Participants in Redwood City School District. The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, 2013. Issue Brief available at http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/our_work/pfa.html.

American Institutes for Research, Evaluation of Preschool for All (PFA) Implementation in San Mateo and San Francisco Counties, San Mateo County Year 4 Report. Palo Alto, CA, 2009.

Family Engagement, Summer Learning Loss and Chronic Absence:

Considerable research points to the importance of reducing chronic absence and summer learning loss while engaging families in children's learning. Considerable research also identifies several interventions within each of these areas with at least preliminary or moderate levels of evidence. SVCF will work with the CNCS evaluation team, the Big Lift SIF evaluation partner, and subgrantees, to determine which interventions best meet community needs, while ensuring alignment with SIF evaluation requirements.

Family Engagement

Research shows that family engagement directly affects children's success in school. The Big Lift SIF intends to implement Raising A Reader in its target communities. Raising A Reader is an early literacy and family engagement program for children birth to eight years old. The program received recognition from the U.S. Department of Education as an evidence-based, innovative approach to literacy. In addition, in 2010, a partnership between the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the University of Texas Health Sciences Center completed a four-year, randomly controlled evaluation of the effectiveness of the three-part Raising A Reader program model. Results indicate that this model has statistically significant effects on five key drivers of student lifetime achievement: vocabulary, grammar, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and memory for language skills of pre-kindergartners.

Narratives

The Big Lift SIF intends to incorporate other evidence-based family engagement interventions that have been rigorously evaluated through experimental and quasi-experimental studies referenced in "Lessons From Family-Strengthening Interventions: Learning From Evidence-Based Practice," a brief from Harvard Family Research Project.

References:

Promoting School Readiness and Literacy-rich Home Environments through the Texas Early Education Model and Raising A Reader, Anthony, J., University of Texas Health Sciences Center, Children's Learning Institute, 2010.

Caspe, M., & Lopez, M. E., "Lessons from family-strengthening interventions: Learning from evidence-based practice," Harvard Family Research Project, 2006.

"Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature," Halgunseth, L. and Peterson, A., National Association for the Education of Young Children and Stark, D. and Moodie, S., Pre-K Now, 2009.

Summer Learning:

The research regarding the negative impact of summer learning loss is extensive, and equally voluminous are the studies showing the positive benefits conferred by high quality summer programs, particularly for low-income children.

In 2011, the RAND Corporation published an extensive literature and program review of summer programs entitled "Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning." RAND researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review, site visits and interviews and concluded that students who attend summer programs have better outcomes than similar peers who do not. They write "Rigorous studies of voluntary summer programs, mandatory summer programs, and programs that encourage students to read at home in the summer have all found positive effects on student achievement. The combined evidence from these studies suggests that all of these types of summer learning programs can mitigate summer learning losses and even lead to achievement gains. Moreover, longitudinal studies conclude that the effects of summer learning programs endure for at least two years after the student has engaged in the summer program."

Narratives

However, they found that not all summer learning programs resulted in positive outcomes for enrollees and that in order to attain positive results, programs needed to be high-quality, and students needed to enroll and attend regularly. In addition, the research they reviewed indicated several practices that were associated with program quality, including individualized instruction, parental involvement, and small class sizes.

The Big Lift SIF intends to select subgrantees with summer learning programs that demonstrate these evidence-based characteristics and practices.

References:

RAND Corporation, "Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning" McCombs, J., Augustine, C. et al, 2011.

Donohue, N.C. and Miller, B.M., Stemming Summer Learning Loss. The New England Journal of Higher Education. Summer Issue, 2008.

"Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap," American Sociological Review, Vol. 72, No. 2, April 2007.

Allington, Richard L., Anne McGill-Franzen, Gregory Camilli, Lunetta Williams, Jennifer Graff, Jacqueline Zeig, Courtney Zmach, and Rhonda Nowak, "Addressing Summer Reading Setback Among Economically Disadvantaged Elementary Students," Reading Psychology, Vol. 31, No. 5, October 2010.

Chronic Absence

Several national studies and one local study have shown a clear correlation between chronic absence in the early years and challenges to later school success.

"Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades," a 2008 seminal report documented the consequences, prevalence, potential causes and possible solutions to children missing extended periods of school in grades K-3. It found that

Narratives

nationally, an estimated one in ten kindergarten and first grade students are chronically absent and showed that chronic early absence can be significantly reduced when schools, communities and families join together to monitor and promote attendance, as well as to identify and address the factors that prevent young students from attending school every day.

In addition, a local report from San Mateo and Santa Clara counties entitled "Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes" suggested that attendance in the early grades is critical to sustaining the school readiness skills that preschool programs can help children to develop. The study examined the progress of 640 children in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties where research has consistently shown a strong correlation between a high score on their local school readiness assessment measure and third grade reading proficiency. Students who arrived at school academically ready to learn, but then missed 10 percent of their kindergarten and first grade years, scored on average 60 points below similar students with good attendance on third-grade reading tests. In math, the gap was nearly 100 points.

The Big Lift SIF intends to partner with Attendance Works and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading to implement evidence-based chronic absence interventions.

References:

Chang, Hedy and Romero, Mariajose, Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty: NY: NY, September 2008.

"Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes, Applied Survey Research, May 2011.

Ehrlich, Stacy B. et al, Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences, University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research, May 2014.

Connolly, Faith and Olson, Linda S., Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools' Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, Baltimore Education Research Consortium,

Narratives

Baltimore, MD., March 2012.

Romero, Mariajose and Young-Sun Lee, A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, October 2007.

5: Based on past experience, the SIF expects subgrantee selection processes to take about six months from time of project start to subgrantee selection. Please confirm that 3 weeks will be sufficient to complete expert reviews and decision making in accordance with the detailed level of review described in your narrative.

SVCF believes that three weeks will be sufficient time for the expert review within the context of our six-month subgrantee selection process. As described in the Description of Activities: Subgrantee Selection section of the application (page 16), SVCF's proposed timeline for a competitive selection process is 24 weeks. The proposed expert review process would take place in Weeks 16-19, and would include dissemination of the proposals to external reviewers, giving them at least 10 days to review and score the proposals, a day-long working session to discuss their reviews and one week for staff to analyze the results of that review. SVCF is willing and able to extend the expert review timeline if CNCS recommends we do so in order to achieve the best results from our subgrantee selection process.

Budget Issues for Clarification

6: You have budgeted for renovation and capital improvements of pre-school classrooms. Please clarify if this budget line item is in addition to subgrant awards to implement pre-school programming. If so, please explain how this money will be effectively allocated. Please note that construction and capital equipment costs are not allowable unless pre-approved by federal grants officers and justification of these expenses is required, should you be awarded a SIF grant.

The \$525,000 originally budgeted for renovation and capital improvements of pre-school classrooms has been reallocated to allowable expenses including:

\$225,000 for supplies including classroom furnishings for child-size furniture and a variety of developmentally appropriate furnishings and learning materials (e.g., blocks, art supplies, puzzles,

Narratives

books, dramatic play materials, early math and literacy materials, a variety of fine and gross motor manipulatives, etc.), books, and art supplies at an average cost of \$6,618 per classroom x 34 classrooms;

\$100,000 for Pipeline Programs for quality improvement funds for programs not yet at Tier 3 quality in target communities for a total of \$175,000 in Pipeline Programs;

\$100,000 for coordination funds for lead agencies to support staffing, data collection, and reporting of subgrantee activities at \$25,000 x 4 communities; and

\$100,000 Technology for classrooms to support instruction, evaluation, attendance tracking, data and administrative tasks at \$2,941 per classroom x 34 classrooms.

7: You have budgeted for Professional Development and Family Engagement support. Please provide clarity on how you anticipate these funds being allocated to your subgrantee programs and/or their beneficiaries.

Funds for professional development and family engagement will not be awarded directly to subgrantees, but will be provided as resources to these organizations, in coordination with the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE). For example, resources will be allocated to preschool programs based on the independently validated Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). As described in the Big Lift SIF application, each preschool classroom will be rated with the QRIS. After the independent ratings are completed and it is determined classrooms meet the required minimum quality level of Tier 3 for the Big Lift SIF participation, the SMCOE will work with each classroom to develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP will outline priority areas for improvement for each classroom. Based on the QIPs, SVCF and the SMCOE will identify the professional development and family engagement resources classrooms will be provided.

Budget Narrative

8: Please provide calculations to justify the expenses listed for the \$525,000 for facilities renovation, \$407,000 for professional development and \$432,000 for family development.

Narratives

Please see the response to Question 6 for a detailed justification of the \$525,000 originally proposed for facilities renovations.

The \$407,000 allocated for professional development is comprised of the following expenses:

- 1) \$115,800 for Professional Development which includes \$75,000 for 10 days of high quality workshops on QRIS-related topics for participating Big Lift SIF teachers (budgeted at \$7,500 per training x 10 trainings, which includes funds to pay expert trainers, and funds to cover refreshments, supplies and learning materials needed for each training) and \$40,800 in stipends to support and incentivize teacher participation in professional development (budgeted at 68 teachers x \$100 per teacher x 6 days of training);
- 2) \$191,250 for Teacher Coaching which includes \$178,500 for onsite teacher coaching to help each classroom make progress on goals identified in their QIPs (budgeted at \$75/hour x 70 hours/year x 34 classrooms) and \$12,750 for coach training (budgeted at 5 coaches x 75/hour x 34 hours);
- 3) \$10,000 for Special Needs Training which includes \$1,500 for special needs intervention consultant to help develop training and supports for the Big Lift SIF classrooms in effectively serving children with special needs (budgeted at \$75 an hour x 20 hours) and \$8,500 for teacher training on developmental screening, prevention, and inclusion practices (budgeted at 85 teachers and administrators x \$100 per person)
- 4) \$90,000 for implementation of Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning (SEQUAL) assessment to enable teachers to improve their education levels and early childhood expertise and meet higher tier levels on the QRIS (budgeted at 68 teachers x \$1,323 per teacher).

The \$432,200 allocated for family engagement is comprised of the following expenses:

- 1) \$10,200 for Virtual Pre-K implementation (budgeted at \$300 per family engagement kit x 34 classrooms). Virtual Pre-K provides easy-to-use take-home activities for parents and children to

Narratives

engage in at home that build upon and extend learning that is occurring in the preschool setting;

2) \$222,000 for Raising a Reader (RAR) early literacy program which is an evidence-based rotating book bag and parent education program that will allow all families in participating programs to have access to new books for home reading on a weekly basis

(budgeted at (300 new RAR sets at \$150 per new child space = \$45,000) + (50 refresher kits at \$72 each per enhanced spaces = \$3,600) + (10 new RAR Kindergarten - 1st grade kits at 25 children per classroom x \$150 per kit= \$37,500) + (\$139,900 for staff positions to support expanded program implementation);

3) \$200,000 for other evidence-based family engagement and support strategies. Some of these strategies are still in the planning phase and yet to be determined by the Big Lift Family Engagement Workgroup. Programs may include assessments of preschool programs' family engagement practices using an evidence-based assessment tool, coaching and technical assistance in strengthening family engagement strategies based on assessment results, and possibly helping a small number of preschool programs support family advocate positions as part of their on-site staffing.

9: Per the application instructions, if you do not have a federally approved indirect cost-rate you must include these costs as direct costs and provide explanation for your calculations. Please explain how you identified \$45,898 in overhead costs.

SVCF does not currently have a federally approved indirect cost rate, but intends to apply for one. The costs for overhead in the application represent a percentage of the total personnel and fringe benefits expenses and include the following: \$24,381 for support services including accounting, information technology, and administrative support; \$18,020 for occupancy including rent, utilities, office equipment and office supplies; \$1,983 for personnel-related costs including human resources and payroll processing; and \$1,514 for insurance costs; for a total of \$45,898.

10: Please budget travel for 3 staff members to attend the national SIF convening.

Narratives

An additional \$3,000 has been added to the Grantee share of the budget to enable 3 staff members to attend the national SIF convening for a total of \$4,500. These funds will augment the \$1,500 originally requested in the CNCS share of the budget.

Continuation Changes

N/A