

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Youth Organizations Umbrella, Inc. (Y.O.U.) proposes to have eight full-time and eight one-year half-time AmeriCorps members who will deliver high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs in 11 locations (five elementary schools, five middle schools, and one high school) in Evanston, Morton Grove, and Skokie, Illinois. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for providing 800 youth with tutoring and enrichment activities that improve their academic, social, and emotional skills. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 300 volunteers who will be engaged in mentorship, community greening, and teaching youth workshops in areas such as architecture and entrepreneurship.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of Education and the Serve Illinois Commission focus areas of Violence Prevention and Volunteer Connectors. The CNCS investment of \$134,116 will be matched with \$299,932, \$150,000 in public funding and \$149,932 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

I. PROBLEM/NEED: Our Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps Program addresses the urgent, unmet, and growing needs of low-income, at-risk youth and families in three inner-ring suburbs of Chicago: Evanston, Morton Grove, and Skokie. From 2001 to 2011, these communities have witnessed a more than 90% increase in poverty rates as urban gentrification has pushed over 200,000 families in poverty out of the City of Chicago and into the suburbs (Heartland Alliance 2013 "Suburbs Have As Much..."). Indeed, Evanston's poverty rate increased from 9% to 17% from 2010 to 2014, while median household incomes dropped by 18% over the last decade (Heartland Alliance 2011 "Evanston: Snapshot of Poverty"). Similarly, in Skokie, the poverty rate increased from 5% to 9% in the last decade (Heartland Alliance 2011 "Skokie: Snapshot of Poverty"). In our Evanston service area, nearly 6 in 10 youth are now considered low-income (i.e., eligible for free or reduced lunch) and nearly 3 in 10 youth reside in a federally designated Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (Evanston City Council 2010 "City of Evanston Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan"). In our Skokie and Morton Grove service area, approximately 54% of youth are low-income and over 30% of youth live under the federal poverty line (Census 2010); meanwhile, over 180 families are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness (L.T. Thompson et al. 2010 "Village of Skokie: Consolidated Plan..."). Based on such socio-economic factors, the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago (UWMC) recently identified both Evanston and our Skokie/Morton Grove service area as "high need communities" (UWMC 2011 "Education Investment Plan: Spring 2011").

Narratives

Growing poverty in Evanston, Morton Grove, and Skokie is undermining the educational attainment and safety of youth. Only 4 in 10 low-income students in our service area now meet or exceed grade-level standards in math and reading (2014 Illinois State Report Card). Mirroring this academic underperformance, upticks in gang activity are evident in these communities. In 2012, there were 445 documented gang members in Evanston, a 26% increase from 2008 (Evanston Police Department 2013). There were also more than 300 juvenile arrests in Evanston, Morton Grove, and Skokie in 2012 (Evanston Police Department 2013; 2013 "Skokie Police Department Annual Report"). Currently, it's estimated there are over 700 active gang members in our proposed service area, with children as young as 12 or 13 involved (Evanston Police Department 2013; Chicago Crime Commission 2006 "The Gang Book").

Youth growing up in high-poverty, high-gang activity neighborhoods are at significantly greater risk for academic failure, delinquency, gang involvement, and crime, especially during the afterschool hours (Afterschool Alliance 2013 "Facts and Research"). Meanwhile, recent reports indicate that Chicago suburbs are not equipped to engage with these new realities due to their lack of social service infrastructure (Heartland Alliance 2013 "Suburbs Have As Much..."). In Evanston, Morton Grove, and Skokie, Y.O.U. is answering that call by providing daily academic, social, and emotional support (described below).

II. THEORY OF CHANGE: This section describes our proposed intervention and how this intervention is likely to lead to our proposed outcomes; it is structured to complement our Logic Model.

II A. Locations: AmeriCorps members will provide services at 11 school-based sites in Evanston, Morton Grove, and Skokie: five middle schools, five elementary schools, and one high school. All sites will be Title I schools selected for their disproportionately high percentage of youth living in high-poverty, high-violence neighborhoods.

II B. Number of Members: We seek eight full-time AmeriCorps members and eight one-year half-time members. We will place one full-time AmeriCorps member at each of our seven School District 65 sites, two half-time members at each of our three School District 68 and 69 sites, and one full-time and two half-time members at our School District 202 site. These AmeriCorps assignments are based on the unique partnerships we have with each District; for example, we plan to serve more youth at our District 202 (high school) site and thus need more AmeriCorps members.

II C. AmeriCorps Member Core Activities: AmeriCorps members will deliver a broad range of high-quality activities to empower youth academically, socially, and emotionally and to help youth avoid

Narratives

gangs. As described below, AmeriCorps members have two core roles in the implementation of these activities: 1) serving as tutors and activity coordinators in our afterschool and summer programs and 2) serving as connectors that actively link youth to volunteers.

IIC1. AmeriCorps Members Serve as Tutors and Activity Coordinators: Our daily (M-F) afterschool programs operate from the end of the school day at 3:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m., and our daily (M-F) summer learning programs run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. AmeriCorps members will play four vital roles in implementing these programs:

- 1) Providing academic assistance: Our afterschool program begins daily with a 75-minute period devoted to academic assistance. During this time, AmeriCorps members will deliver small group instruction and homework help in a safe and structured environment. To align content with school curricula, we sub-contract with school teachers who support AmeriCorps members in tutoring.
- 2) Facilitating enrichment activities: Enrichment activities take place for up to 90 minutes each day after school and for up to four hours each day during our summer programs. AmeriCorps members will plan and implement enrichment activities, including science clubs and theater and book discussion groups. These activities will align with the Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning.
- 3) Supporting parental engagement: AmeriCorps members will support parents by organizing monthly family learning nights and ongoing peer learning exchanges where parents learn from one another how to create safe, healthy, and nurturing homes that promote child development.
- 4) Organizing service learning: AmeriCorps members will engage youth in up to four hours of service learning each week during our summer programs. This past year, members engaged youth in recycling promotion, community greening, and developing an anti-violence awareness campaign.

IIC2. AmeriCorps Members Serve as Volunteer Connectors: AmeriCorps members will build our program's capacity by generating volunteers and then connecting our youth with these volunteers. Last year, AmeriCorps members coordinated the participation of over 250 volunteers in our work. For example, an AmeriCorps member engaged more than 15 high school students as volunteer tutors in our afterschool programs, while another member engaged a professional actress in a theater group. These volunteers spark an intergenerational learning community that benefits our youth and the volunteers alike. Meanwhile, AmeriCorps members will also help match our youth with caring adults who provide weekly mentorship; in 2014, members helped connect over 35 of our youth to mentors. Building upon these successes, we expect our AmeriCorps members will engage at least 300 volunteers (about 19 per member) in the upcoming year. These volunteers will develop and lead

Narratives

enrichment groups and workshops; serve as mentors and tutors to our youth; and connect youth to resources in the community.

I I D. Duration and Dosage of Program: Our afterschool program meets daily for three hours for 35 weeks; our summer learning program meets daily for five to seven hours for 9 weeks. Our eight full-time AmeriCorps members will spend approximately 3.5 hours each day preparing for programming and 4.5 hours each day delivering programs and engaging with parents, while our eight half-time members will spend approximately 1 hour each day preparing for programming and 3 hours each day delivering programs and engaging with parents (as they will work half-days during the summer).

I I E. Target Population: We serve at-risk youth (ages 8 to 18) with one or more of the following characteristics: baseline gaps in math, English, or science; disconnection from school; social and emotional challenges that disrupt learning; failing grades in one or more classes; and/or at risk for gang involvement. Ninety percent of our youth are low-income (i.e., eligible for free or reduced lunch) and 93% are minorities.

I I F. Measurable Outputs and Outcomes: We expect at least 800 youth will enroll in our program, and at least 700 youth will complete participation in the program (as measured by those who attend the program for at least 30 full days). We will also serve 1,200 parents/caregivers (including older siblings and relatives with caretaking roles) and leverage 300 volunteers as a result of this program. We have specific outcome goals for the next three years in five performance areas: academic achievement, social and emotional development, violence prevention, parental engagement, and volunteer generation. These outcomes are aligned with CNCS's National Performance Measures (see Logic Model Chart). We will specifically meet five priority Education performance measures: ED1, ED2, ED5, ED27A, and ED27B. Our third-party evaluator will utilize three sets of data to measure our progress against these indicators: customized surveys from all of our stakeholders, including youth, teachers, parents, and volunteers; assessment data (e.g., grades and test scores); and individualized youth assessments based on the nationally recognized Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths. We will utilize the standardized MAP assessment to measure the number of youth who improve their academic performance in literacy and/or math (ED5). The assessment includes a pre-test in the fall and a post-test in the spring. To be counted as improving, youth must improve their reading score by 6 or more points and their math score by 11 or more points. Similar to our curricula, the content of the MAP assessment is aligned with Common Core State Standards. Moreover, the school districts we serve utilize this assessment, and, as our Program is tailored to build upon school-day instruction in these districts, our use of the MAP is appropriate and valid.

Narratives

III. EVIDENCE-BASE: Our program model is based on an extensive array of experimental studies of afterschool programs that demonstrate programs with intentional programming, quality staffing, and strong partnerships have positive impacts on youth academic, social, and emotional outcomes (Little, Wimer, and Weiss 2008 "Afterschool Programs in the 21st Century"). The interventions above are also all evidence-based, i.e., based on strong evidence supporting causal conclusions. Specifically, the interventions are modeled on experimental studies demonstrating effectiveness for our target population:

- 1) Our academic assistance model includes regular communication with teachers and a focus on student-tutor relationships because of an experimental study showing these practices have an enhanced impact on reading and math achievement for low-income, underperforming students (Rothman and Henderson 2011 "Do School-Based Tutoring..."). Rothman and Henderson's study found that a group of eighth grade students in a low-income, urban district who received tutoring significantly outperformed a control group on standardized test scores in reading and math.
- 2) Our enrichment programs are based on the Second Step curriculum because strong evidence indicates that this curriculum leads to reduced violence, increased confidence, and curbed gang affiliation among low-income youth (Holsen, Smith, and Frey 2008 "Outcomes of the Social Competence Program Second Step..."). A 2013 experimental study followed low-income sixth grade students utilizing the curriculum in Chicago and Wichita, as compared to a control group, and found that youth participating in the Second Step program were 42 percent less likely than control group youth to report physical aggression (Espelage et al. 2013 "Impact of a Middle School Program...").
- 3) Our parental engagement strategies have been proven by experimental studies to improve academic achievement and graduation rates (Patall et al. 2008 "Parent Involvement in Homework"). A 2014 experimental study found that children of low-income, minority parents who were involved in a parent engagement group had significantly higher standardized test scores than children of parents in the control group (Alameda-Lawson 2014 "A Pilot Study...").
- 4) Our service learning model, which is based on the "Service as a Strategy in Out-of-School Time" model championed by CNCS, has been shown to increase youth commitment to civic engagement, self-efficacy, and interest in school (Billig et al. 2008 "Promoting Secondary Students' Character Development in Schools Through Service Learning"). Billig et al.'s 2008 experimental study followed a group of middle and high school students in Philadelphia who were engaged in service learning and found that participating students increased their social and emotional skills at higher rates than their peers and were significantly less likely to be suspended.

Narratives

5) Our mentoring program is based on a model that has been experimentally tested through a random assignment impact study in which over 1,000 youth (ages 9 to 16) were randomly assigned to receive mentoring or to a control group. This study found strong evidence that participating youth performed better academically and had more positive perceptions of their abilities than control group youth (Herrera et al. 2011 "Mentoring in Schools").

Beyond these studies, we have our own internal evaluation data demonstrating the positive impact of our programs. In 2013, among youth who participated in our out-of-school time programs, 69% improved their GPAs; 88% improved their social competence; 92% improved their coping skills; and 92% improved their family relationships. These outcomes are based on student report card data and youth clinical evaluations using the nationally renowned Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument.

IV. NOTICE PRIORITY: Our program aligns with CNCS's funding priority of Education as our AmeriCorps members will provide daily academic assistance based on practices shown to improve student academic achievement (see above). Our program also aligns with Serve Illinois Commission's priorities of Violence Prevention and Volunteer Connectors. Members will engage youth in enrichment activities designed to prevent youth violence and will actively engage volunteers in our programs. Furthermore, as stipulated on page 3 of the national RFP, our program will meet five priority Education national performance measures: ED1, ED2, ED5, ED27A, and ED27B (see Logic Model).

V. MEMBER TRAINING: We have a robust professional development infrastructure to orient and train AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members will first receive a comprehensive, multi-day orientation to AmeriCorps, which is based on the AmeriCorps member handbook and resources from the My AmeriCorps website. This orientation will include a review of the AmeriCorps program and policies, including a focus on prohibited activities, and will go over the financial arrangements of AmeriCorps, including the living allowance, healthcare, child care eligibility, and education award. At the end of this orientation, members will sign a form indicating their knowledge of all policies. We will then remind members of prohibited activities again at relevant points in time (e.g., around elections).

Members will then go through an orientation in August to all of the skills and procedures that are essential to their roles described above. This will include three trainings -- "Understanding Y.O.U.," "Foundations of Y.O.U.th Work," and "Generating and Coordinating Volunteers at Y.O.U." -- that focus on topics including relationship-building techniques, safety protocols, ethics and boundaries, crisis intervention, trauma-informed care, positive youth development, and managing volunteers. Members will also be oriented to issues pertinent to the population served (e.g., homelessness and

Narratives

poverty). We are confident this orientation will adequately prepare AmeriCorps members for their role as youth workers as we have delivered a similar orientation to over 200 new staff over the past three years with excellent training results.

After this opening training, we have a four-part training infrastructure (overseen by our Director of Professional Development) that will continue to support AmeriCorps members over the rest of the year. This includes: 1) ongoing internal trainings that are incorporated into weekly staff meetings and that respond to real-time events; 2) periodic off-site learning retreats on topics such as advanced advisory skills; 3) support for members to pursue external trainings on relevant topics; and 4) ongoing academic trainings in math and reading.

Volunteers will also receive training on Y.O.U. and related AmeriCorps regulations.

VI. MEMBER SUPERVISION: Each AmeriCorps member will be supervised by the Site Coordinator of his or her program site. Our Site Coordinators will directly observe AmeriCorps members performing their duties on a daily basis, and they will provide feedback and coaching through real-time feedback, daily program planning meetings, and weekly one-on-one supervisory meetings. In their weekly supervision, Site Coordinators will pro-actively work with AmeriCorps members to identify programmatic and personal barriers to success and discuss remedies. Our Site Coordinators are extensively trained in AmeriCorps program regulations; interpersonal skills; intercultural understanding; and the core skills of supervision -- e.g. delegating work, setting expectations, providing feedback, and managing performance over time.

VII. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

VIIA. Gaining Skills for Future Employment: We will utilize our professional development program to help members gain skills for future employment. Our ongoing trainings are focused on skill-building in a broad array of transferable topics, and our Director of Professional Development works with each member to create an individualized professional development plan to set and achieve personal objectives. In addition, each member receives feedback on their performance through a 360 degree review. We also provide the time, space, and technology for members to begin thinking about life after AmeriCorps, utilizing EnCorps' online guide, "What's Next: Life After Your Service Year."

VII B. Access to Service Experiences: AmeriCorps members will participate in at least three national days of service, including Martin Luther King Day, AmeriCorps Week, and 9/11 Day of Service; we have included costs associated with these activities in our budget to ensure the participation of our members. They will then have the opportunity to reflect on these experiences with fellow members at monthly AmeriCorps meetings. We will also encourage members to volunteer in the communities we

Narratives

serve.

VIIC. Establishing Connections with Other Members: Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps members will have the opportunity to build connections with each other through monthly AmeriCorps meetings, during which members will discuss training needs, problem-solve on issues in their work, and reflect on their experience. We will also set up gatherings between our members and other members in the Chicago area so our members can gain connections with the broader National Service network.

VIID. Commitment to Community Service: To ensure members develop an ethic of and the skills for productive citizenship, we will provide them with ongoing meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection (see section VII B); ensure they participate in relevant statewide conferences focused on service and volunteering; and provide them with resources on how to continue to engage in community service after their AmeriCorps term.

VIIE. Recruitment: Y.O.U. will utilize its network of more than 50 community partners and our connections to business, school district, and civic leaders and past and current clients to recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which our program operates. Currently, 67% of our AmeriCorps members are from our service area, and most graduated from schools at which we have programs. Across our recruitment efforts, we emphasize cross-cultural approaches, which have enabled us to develop and maintain a diverse direct service staff that is representative of the communities we serve. Indeed, a majority of our program staff members are African American and Latino.

VIII. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: We will take at least four steps to ensure that members build a strong sense of AmeriCorps identity and that the communities we serve are aware that we are an AmeriCorps-supported program. First, all members will be branded as AmeriCorps members on everything from their professional shirts and their name badges (worn daily) to their business cards and their email footers. Second, our programs will be branded as AmeriCorps-supported programs; we will put the AmeriCorps logo on our website and other key communications. Third, we will ensure members participate in all CNCS training and services days. Fourth, we will set up public opportunities for members to present on their experiences. We have also included the cost of AmeriCorps service gear for all members in our budget.

Organizational Capability

I. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: Y.O.U. provides services and leadership to meet the emerging needs of young people and their families in our communities. Since our founding in 1971, we have touched the lives of over 20,000 youth with an array of high-quality services,

Narratives

including afterschool and summer enrichment, mentorship, clinical counseling, and crisis intervention.

I.A. Staffing and Structure: Our AmeriCorps program will be planned, implemented, and overseen by seven staff. Seth Green, Y.O.U.'s Executive Director, will oversee strategy, program performance, and reporting; Mr. Green is a Yale Law School graduate with more than a decade of experience leading successful non-profits and extensive expertise overseeing federal grants. Laura Dell, Y.O.U.'s Chief Operations Officer (COO), will oversee our compliance and accountability (see details below); Ms. Dell has a master's degree in Organizational Development from Loyola University and more than 30 years of supervisory experience, including serving as Director of Learning for the YMCA of the USA. Maria Rassiwalla, Y.O.U.'s Director of Evanston Afterschool Programs, and Brian Williams, Director of Skokie/Morton Grove Afterschool Programs, will manage program design and implementation; Ms. Rassiwalla has over eight years of experience working with youth, including a year as an AmeriCorps member, and Mr. Williams has a master's degree in Nonprofit Management and more than a decade of progressive leadership in youth development. Budget oversight and financial reporting will be managed by Dave Studenmund, Y.O.U.'s Grant Accountant; Mr. Studenmund has an MBA from Northwestern University and more than three decades of experience in financial analysis. Staffing and training will be managed by Alvin Schexnider, Y.O.U.'s Director of Human Resources, and Ebele Onyema, Director of Professional Development; Mr. Schexnider has a master's degree in Human Resources and past HR experience at youth organizations across Chicago, while Ms. Onyema has her master's degree in Social Service Administration from the University of Chicago. All of these staff-led efforts will be overseen by an actively engaged, 25-member Board of Directors, which includes leaders from the areas served (e.g., former presidents of our partnering school districts) and programmatic experts (e.g., clinical therapists).

I.B. Prior Grant Administration: We have widespread experience managing federal funds, including current awards from AmeriCorps*State Program, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Justice (including a grant focused on violence prevention), Evanston School District 65 (which includes federal funds), and the Illinois State Board of Education (which includes federal funds). Regarding our AmeriCorps grant specifically, a snapshot of our successful implementation (see more below) includes: timely submission and approval of narrative, expenditure reports, and additional reports; filling of all awarded MSY slots; fulfilling match requirements; participation in all AmeriCorps trainings and conference calls; and 100% timely completion of all EnCorps information. Finally, we complete an A-133 audit each year,

Narratives

and all of our grants are actively monitored by our Board of Directors.

I.C. Community Involvement in Intervention: We will engage community members and organizations in the planning and implementation of our proposed intervention through: 1) a volunteer-led Community Advisory Council that serves as a sounding board for our key programmatic initiatives; 2) ongoing focus groups with youth and parents; 3) input from our Board's Program Committee; and 4) volunteers from the community who run workshops and connect youth and families with special services and opportunities.

II. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Y.O.U. has a 43-year history of ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations of public grantors. We will take the following actions to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps:

- 1) Our COO will continually monitor programs through regular supervisory meetings, reports, inspection of documents, and ongoing communication. Our COO will also ensure that our AmeriCorps members do not partake in prohibited activities (e.g. engaging in political activities).
- 2) Our Grants Manager will: a) maintain a calendar for all reporting deadlines; b) share CNCS policy and procedure updates with Y.O.U. personnel; and c) manage data collection, including maintaining MOUs with school districts and parent consent agreements authorizing us to collect student data.
- 3) Our Director of Human Resources will: a) coordinate mandatory orientation trainings that focus on AmeriCorps policies and procedures (including member grievance), roles and responsibilities, and prohibited activities; b) ensure that all required background checks are authorized and completed for members before the start of their service, including the three-part National Service Criminal History Check; c) ensure that all members are Mandated Reporters under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act; d) conduct End of Term Trainings and exit interviews for AmeriCorps members; e) maintain position descriptions for all members; f) ensure twice-yearly Member Performance Reviews by supervisors; g) ensure timely completion of member enrollment and exit forms; and h) ensure that nondiscrimination laws, whistleblower, drug-free workplace, and grievance policies are upheld.
- 4) Our Grants Accountant will: a) ensure compliance with financial codes; b) review documentation of member service hours; c) monitor member timesheets for appropriate allocation of service hours; and d) maintain documentation of AmeriCorps matching funds.

Y.O.U.'s Executive Director and Board of Directors will oversee these efforts to ensure compliance and will use several procedures to detect compliance issues:

- 1) External audit: Each year, the Board will lead a full audit of the organization in partnership with an independent auditor that is in accordance with U.S. Government Auditing Standards.

Narratives

- 2) Internal audit: Twice yearly, our Grants Manager will conduct audits with our Director of Human Resources to ensure that all member files are up to date and complete, including full documentation of member eligibility and background checks. The Executive Director will review this audit.
- 3) Board review: Y.O.U.'s Program Committee (a subcommittee of Y.O.U.'s Board) will meet monthly to monitor and evaluate all programming for quality and compliance.
- 4) Supervisory review: Site Coordinators will be trained to identify prohibited activities and will review members' time study reports every two weeks. If they see a prohibited activity, they will be required to report it. The Executive Director and CFO will review timesheets to further detect issues.

If a situation involving non-compliance occurs, our COO will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate corrective action is taken immediately; as outlined in the AmeriCorps Regulations section 2543.51, our COO will immediately notify AmeriCorps, providing a statement of the action taken or contemplated, and outlining any assistance needed in resolving the situation. (Note: We do not have sub-grantees, and all service locations are under the supervisory authority of our COO, Executive Director, and Board as described above.)

III. PAST PERFORMANCE: During our first two years as an AmeriCorps site, we exceeded our set targets for all relevant education priority measures, including ED2, ED6, ED23, and ED27. (Note: Due to the implementation of new ISAT standards in 2013, our original targets for education priority measures ED5, ED24, and ED25 were no longer relevant in our second program year.) In both the first and second year, we enrolled nearly twice as many students as projected, and these students showed vast improvements in school attendance and social and emotional development. In our second year as a site, 94% of youth improved or maintained school attendance (our target was 75%); 81% of youth had teacher-reported improved behavior (our target was 75%); and 82% of youth demonstrated gains in social and emotional development (our target was 60%). Meanwhile, to ensure we meet our updated target for ED5 (ED24 and ED25 are no longer priority measures), we put an action plan in place that includes working with district administration and teachers to align our academic assistance model with the new ISAT standards and providing academic trainings for AmeriCorps members and staff to ensure they are effective tutors.

Meanwhile, Y.O.U. had no major compliance issues or risk areas. With an enrollment rate of 100%, we filled all AmeriCorps slots both years of our program. Our retention rate last year was 88%; the one member who left early cited complete satisfaction with the program but left near his term's end to pursue an external opportunity. Y.O.U. has and will continue to provide professional support and an empathic ear to ensure that our retention rate remains strong. We will also continue to utilize

Narratives

our training models to help members successfully navigate any professional and personal challenges. If retention does drop in the future, we have designed and are prepared to implement a corrective action plan with three steps: 1) exit interviews to understand retention issues; 2) AmeriCorps supervisor interviews to gather feedback; and 3) workplace enhancement measures based on this feedback.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

I. COST EFFECTIVENESS

IA. Sufficiency of Budget to Carry Out Program: The eight resources below are necessary to carry out our program effectively and are included in the budget at adequate levels to do so:

- 1) Site Coordinators are included at 10 hours (25% FTE) per week per site. This allocation is based on an analysis of this role, assessing the time spent on program design and AmeriCorps supervision.
- 2) Administrative staff are included at an indirect cost rate of 10%. Based on historical cost analysis, this allocation is sufficient to support the marginal cost of administrative staff for AmeriCorps recruitment, orientation, training, and reporting.
- 3) Program supplies are budgeted at \$250 per site. This enables the purchase of additional curriculum and materials (to supplement in-house stock) for enrichment activities led by AmeriCorps members.
- 4) \$2,760 is budgeted for staff and AmeriCorps members to travel to CNCS-sponsored meetings, including National Service Recognition Day and other days of service.
- 5) \$1,600 is budgeted for member background checks and \$3,000 is budgeted for member training.
- 6) \$3,000 is budgeted for our evaluator to provide an impact assessment of our AmeriCorps-supported program and feedback to support improvement of program design.
- 7) Facilities are being provided in-kind by partnering schools, churches, and libraries.
- 8) Volunteers are being recruited through partnering businesses and churches at no cost.

We have also included in our budget a \$20,000 living allowance for each full-time AmeriCorps member, as well as all required fringe benefits, and a \$10,000 living allowance for each half-time AmeriCorps member. We have located these living allowances toward the higher end of the AmeriCorps member compensation spectrum because we seek to hire candidates from our service area, where the cost of living is high. Our fringe benefits include health care benefits for each full-time AmeriCorps member, in accordance with AmeriCorps requirements. Based on historical data -- including both the per staff member cost of health care and the enrollment rate among AmeriCorps members -- we have estimated this cost at \$900 per full-time member per year. If insurance or enrollment rates rise, we have cash on hand to cover any added costs through our grantee share.

Narratives

IB. Cost Effectiveness: Our CNCS cost per MSY will be \$11,176. This cost is \$2,554 below the maximum allowable cost of \$13,730; this cost is also 5% lower than our previously funded CNCS cost per MSY. We have lowered our CNCS cost by raising additional private resources to support the program (see below). Our AmeriCorps members will serve 800 youth with high-quality, year-round afterschool and summer learning programs. At a total contribution of \$134,116 CNCS is thus contributing just \$168 per youth served. We are able to offer this cost-effective impact thanks to the following efficient program design features:

- 1) Our program has no occupancy costs. In contrast, the average youth-serving agency spends 13% of its budget on occupancy (Public/Private Ventures 2009 "The Cost of Quality Out-of-School Time Programs"). We realize this lower cost by sharing space with partner agencies during their low-utilization hours.
- 2) Thanks to partnerships with Northwestern and Loyola Universities, over 100 university students serve as no- or low-cost interns in our program each year, enabling us to maintain low youth-to-staff ratios in a cost-effective manner.
- 3) Thanks to our partnerships with business associations, religious institutions, and community organizations, our AmeriCorps members are able to recruit over 300 additional volunteers to our program each year. These volunteers allow us to serve more youth more effectively with no added staffing costs.

Y.O.U. has been recognized for its cost-effective program model. In 2013 alone, Y.O.U. was awarded the Education Impact Award by United Way of Metropolitan Chicago and was competitively selected by Invest for Kids for its efficiency and impact.

IC. Plan to Raise Non-CNCS Resources: We will provide \$299,932 or 69% of the total project costs as our grantee share, far exceeding the 26% minimum requirement for Year 4. We have already secured 83% of this grantee share and are fully confident in securing the remaining 17% of the share.

Specifically:

- 1) 50% (\$150,000) will be provided by the U.S. Department of Education (through the Illinois State Board of Education) based on multi-year grant commitments that continue through FY2019. The Department of Education has authorized the use of these funds as matching funds for AmeriCorps.
- 2) 33% (\$98,450) of our grantee share has been collected from private donors and foundations. This money is in our bank account and has been put aside for this purpose, starting in August of 2015.
- 3) 10% (\$30,889) will be provided by the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago; these funds are expected as part of a grant renewal in June 2014.

Narratives

4) 7% (\$20,593) will be provided by the McCormick Foundation; these funds are similarly expected as part of a grant renewal in June 2014.

Finally, the in-kind commitment of facilities described above has also been secured through multi-year Memorandums of Understanding with partnering schools and churches.

On a broader level, we are fortunate to be in extremely strong financial health with more than 1,000 private donors and the vast majority of our government revenue coming from multi-year commitments. While recent cutbacks have endangered many of our peers, Y.O.U. has grown its budget more than 50% in the last three years thanks to proactive financial planning. Every year, our Executive Director, Development Director, and Board draft a Development Plan that identifies financial risks and creates a fundraising plan to address those risks and ensure we sustain our high-impact programs.

II. BUDGET ADEQUACY

II A. Non-CNCS Funding and Resources Necessary to Support Project: There are eight core non-CNCS resources needed to support our AmeriCorps program: 1) site coordinators; 2) administrative and management staff; 3) program supplies; 4) resources to support AmeriCorps identification; 5) resources for background checks and external training; 6) third-party evaluation to assess impact and ensure improvement; 7) program facilities; and 8) skilled volunteers (see "Sufficiency of Budget to Carry Out Program"). We will provide \$299,932 or 69% of the total project costs (including the costs of the above resources) and have already secured 83% of this total cost (see above).

Evaluation Summary or Plan

As outlined in the Evaluation Plan submitted in our FY15 AmeriCorps*State application, Y.O.U. will complete a two-part evaluation of our Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps Program at the end of our 2014-2015 program year in June 2015. While the full results of this evaluation will not be available until August 2015, an initial survey of the youth in our 2014-2015 afterschool and summer learning programs and our evaluations from the first two years of our AmeriCorps program (2012-2014) demonstrate the dramatic and positive impact of our Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps Program. Therefore, as an interim report, we are providing: 1) an overview of the results of our initial evaluation of our 2014-2015 program year and 2) a summary of the impact of our Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps Program during its first two program years (2012-2014). In addition, we have submitted our comprehensive evaluation plan for the next three years (which is similar to the evaluation we will conduct this program year) via e-mail to Serve Illinois, as requested on the "Documents" tab in eGrants.

Narratives

I. INITIAL EVALUATION REPORT FOR 2014-2015 PROGRAM YEAR

As of December 2014, we have served 764 youth in our 2014-2015 Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps Program, and, based on an initial survey of these youth, know that our programs have already had a deeply positive impact on these youth in in the following areas:

*Confidence: 78% of youth reported having greater confidence in themselves as a result of the Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps program.

*Relationships: 87% of youth reported having an additional adult they trust in their life, thanks to Y.O.U.'s AmeriCorps and staff members.

*Self-awareness: 72% of youth reported increased awareness of their core skills because of their participation in the program.

*Interests: 64% of youth reported they deepened and expanded their interests, thanks to Y.O.U.'s program.

*Social awareness: 72% of youth reported an improved ability to navigate community resources.

II. PAST PERFORMANCE

The evaluation data from the first two years of our AmeriCorps program (2012-2014) also powerfully demonstrates the transformative impact of our program on youth academic and social and emotional development and parental engagement. Indeed, during our first two program years, we exceeded our set targets for all relevant education priority measures, including ED2, ED6, ED23, and ED27. Below, we summarize our impact in each core area.

II A. Academic Achievement

*Grades: Middle school participants made significant improvement in their core subject grades in the 2013-2014 academic year: 84% of youth improved or maintained their math grade from the fall semester to the spring semester, while 82% of youth improved or maintained their English grade. These are higher rates of improvement than the benchmarks for similar programs statewide (21st CCLC 2013 "Reports Performance Indicators..."). Similarly, in the 2012-2013 academic year, 69% of youth across all sites improved their GPAs (according to school report cards). Teacher surveys further validate this progress. During the 2013-2014 academic year, approximately 7 in 10 youth improved their overall academic performance or maintained excellent overall performance (according to teacher surveys).

*Attendance: During the 2013-2014 program year, 94% of youth across all sites improved or

Narratives

maintained their school attendance (based on teacher surveys).

*Homework completion: 85% of youth improved or maintained timely homework completion during the 2013-2014 program year (based on teacher surveys).

I I B. Social and Emotional Development: The following are outcomes for youth who participated in our program in 2013-2014 and are based on results from our youth surveys:

*Confidence: 93% of youth reported strong self-confidence, a key factor for positive emotional development.

*Relationships: 94% of youth reported having an additional adult they trust in their life, thanks to Y.O.U.'s AmeriCorps and staff members.

*Participation in extracurricular activities: 85% of youth reported they like to join sports teams and/or clubs at school.

*Leadership: 77% of youth reported improved leadership skills, thanks to the Y.O.U.th Serve AmeriCorps Program.

I I C. Parental Engagement: The following outcomes are from the 2013-2014 program year and are based on results from parent surveys:

*Confidence in parenting skills: 96% of parents reported confidence in supporting their children at home.

*Involvement in child's education: 86% of parents reported they regularly check their child's homework, while 96% reported they regularly discuss school with their child.

*Participation in school activities: 96% of parents reported engagement with school committees, groups, or activities.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Response to Clarification Item A1: Our Summer Learning Program helps youth improve academic skills, develop new interests, and build trusting relationships with peers and caring adults. Our Program is based on a program model that research shows helps youth gain three to five months of learning (Williams 2014 "Girls prep and boys prep students work against summer learning loss").

During the Program, AmeriCorps members will engage youth in academic-based, experiential learning enrichment in the areas of arts and culture, literature, and science and technology:

Narratives

*Arts and culture: AmeriCorps members engage youth in poetry groups that enhance youths' writing skills and allow them to explore personal identity and sense of self. Youth also participate in therapeutic theater programming in which they explore rituals and methods of group processing, theatrical vocabulary, and social justice issues to select a theme for a series of skits they then write, rehearse, and perform.

*Literature: Through a partnership with the McGaw YMCA and Evanston Public Library, youth participate in book discussion groups and utilize digital media tools to individually respond to the text.

*Science and technology: Alongside school teachers, AmeriCorps members engage elementary-age youth in Engineering is Elementary, a program built around an engineering design process that teaches children how to solve problems. Meanwhile, middle and high school students participate in FUSE, an innovative new STEM model being pioneered by researchers at Northwestern University and that engages youth in hands-on STEM challenges (e.g., robotics and Android app development).

Moreover, to further promote academic achievement, we contract with teachers who support AmeriCorps members and other Y.O.U. staff in the design and implementation of these workshops. Our Program is also aligned to the District's summer school such that students can participate in both.

Alongside this academic-based experiential learning, youth are immersed in life skills workshops in the areas of healthy relationships, civic leadership, independent living, and health and nutrition. Each week, youth also participate in up to four hours of service learning activities coordinated by AmeriCorps members, such as recycling promotion and community greening.

Our Summer Learning Program runs daily (M-F) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for nine weeks. To support working parents, we also offer "before care" for elementary school youth from 9 to 11 a.m. and structured recreation for middle school youth from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Our summer schedule is based on age-appropriate research on the number of enrichment hours needed both to reverse summer learning loss - which is believed to account for more than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth - and to promote acquisition of three to five months of additional knowledge (Alexander and Entwisle 2007 "Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap"; Williams 2014 "Girls prep and boys prep students work against summer learning loss").

The program schedule is as follows:

Narratives

9 to 11 a.m.: Before care for elementary school youth; youth receive a free, nutritious breakfast and participate in evidence-based recreational and fitness programs and electives in the areas of arts and culture, science and technology, and literature.

11 to 11:30 a.m.: Youth participate in an opening circle activity, and staff make important announcements and set expectations for the day.

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Academic and socio-emotional enrichment activities; youth choose between science, arts and culture, and literature electives. All are based on best-practice summer learning curriculum (see above).

1 to 2 p.m.: Lunch and recreational activities.

2 to 3:30 p.m.: Life skills enrichment, including evidence-based activities that promote healthy relationships, responsible decision-making, and substance abuse prevention, and service learning activities based on the "Service as a Strategy in Out-of-School-Time" model championed by CNCS.

3:30 to 4 p.m.: Closing circle, reflection, and dismissal.

4 to 6:30 p.m.: Structured recreation for middle schools students.

The schedule above is for Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, youth attend learning field trips to sites across the Chicago region, such as the Museum of Science and Industry, the Shedd Aquarium, and the Field Museum.

Response to Clarification Item B3: We confirm that \$150,000 of our match funds are federally sourced from the Department of Education (see Budget Section 3); the Department of Education has ruled it allowable to use their funds to meet AmeriCorps's cost sharing requirements.

Response to Clarification C1: As detailed below, our Program and process for selecting and qualifying tutors meets all requirements outlined in the Federal Code of Regulations Sections 2522.910 and 2522.940.

Selecting and Qualifying Tutors: Our AmeriCorps members will serve as tutors in our afterschool program; all of these members will meet the appropriate criteria outlined in Section 2522.910. Indeed, we require all members to have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent; based on our past experience, we anticipate most of our members will have a bachelor's degree. Members will also

Narratives

participate in pre-service and ongoing in-service evidence-based academic trainings in core subject areas (see "Tutoring Curriculum and Training Content" below). We also subcontract with teachers who support and help oversee AmeriCorps members' tutoring; these teachers all meet paraprofessional qualifications.

Strategies and Tools to Assess Student Progress: We utilize a number of tools to assess student progress and measure student outcomes, including: student grades, assessment scores, and attendance records collected through our data-sharing partnerships with the four districts our Program serves and teacher surveys on each individual youth's academic performance, homework completion, motivation, and classroom behaviors. Our third-party evaluator uses these tools to frequently analyze the academic progress of participating youth; this evaluation addresses the following questions: Are youth interested in learning? Are they actively participating in school? Are their attendance records and homework completion records improving? Are youths' GPAs improving and are they demonstrating gains in literary and math skills? This evaluation separates youth by their days of participation to analyze the impact of duration on academic progress.

Moreover, our Site Coordinators have regular communication with teachers about individual youth progress and goals. Site Coordinators also participate in school Academic Intervention Team meetings, during which various teachers and school staff, the Site Coordinator, and, when appropriate, parents initially discuss students who are struggling academically and recommend academic strategies to improve student performance, and subsequently, monitor and discuss the student's progress.

Tutoring Curriculum and Training Content: Our tutoring curricula and the content of our pre-service and in-service academic trainings are high-quality, research-based, and consistent with school curricula and instruction and the Common Core State Standards utilized in Illinois. Indeed, our tutoring model includes regular communication with teachers and a focus on student-tutor relationships because of an experimental study showing these practices have an enhanced impact on reading and math achievement for low-income, underperforming students (Rothman and Henderson 2011 "Do School-Based Tutoring..."). Moreover, we devote at least 160 program hours annually to tutoring based on evidence that this duration has an enhanced impact in reading and math achievement (Rothman and Henderson 2011 "Do School-Based Tutoring..."). Additionally, our program uses homework logs and contracts with teachers to ensure alignment to the school day and

Narratives

Common Core State Standards and to incorporate curricula that build on school-day learning in English, reading, and STEM.

Our pre-service and ongoing in-service academic trainings are overseen by our Director of Professional Development, who ensures the trainings are high-quality and research-based, and, by working with District teachers and administration, that their content is consistent with school instruction and the Common Core State Standards. Our trainings draw significantly on the "You for Youth Afterschool Toolkit," incorporating the Toolkit's approach to aligning with the school day and utilizing the Toolkit's suggested activities in subjects such as literacy, math, science, and the arts. These trainings build core competencies in AmeriCorps members around delivering academic assistance that have been proven to increase student achievement (Holland 2005 "Teaching Teachers..."). These trainings are consistent with the activities members will perform.

Member supervision: Each AmeriCorps member will be supervised by the Site Coordinator of his or her program site, all whom have extensive training and expertise in tutoring practices and academic assistance. Additionally, we subcontract with teachers who help oversee AmeriCorps members during the tutoring portion of our Program.

Response to Clarification Item C2: We will utilize the standardized MAP assessment to measure the number of youth who improve their academic performance in literacy and/or math (ED5); the assessment includes a pre-test in the fall and a post-test in the spring. Youth must improve their reading score by at least 6 points and their math score by at least 11 points in order to be counted as improving. Similar to our curricula and activities, the content of the MAP assessment is strongly aligned with Common Core State Standards. Additionally, all four of the school districts we serve utilize the MAP assessment, and, as our Program is tailored to build upon school-day instruction in these districts, our use of the MAP is appropriate and valid. See Performance Measures for more information.

Response to Clarification Items C3-8: See Performance Measures section. All issues have been addressed within the measures.

Response to Clarification Items D1-2: N/A; we will not target slots to recruit members with

Narratives

disabilities. Our program is non-discriminatory. Y.O.U. is committed to providing all youth and staff with a safe, inclusive, and non-traumatizing environment in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We therefore have a strict prohibition on bullying, harassment, or any other victimization of youth, families, or staff, based on any of the following actual or perceived traits or characteristics: age, race, national origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity (or expression), physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.

Response to Clarification Items E1-4: N/A; we do not wish to request No-Cost MSYs.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics