

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jennings School, through the Lead to Read (L2R) AmeriCorps Program, proposes to have thirty six HT AmeriCorps members who will provide evidence based one-on-one and small group literacy instruction and reading strategies to underachieving students in poverty, grades kindergarten through 4th in 19 elementary schools in 19 school districts located in eight rural and remote counties of Oklahoma. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for helping 75% of students reach grade level literacy benchmarks. In addition, the AmeriCorps members at each site will leverage a minimum of 10 volunteers (including students and community residents) to participate in school-based service projects.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education and CNCS Funding Priority Area of Education - Improving Student Academic Performance. The CNCS investment of \$239,367 will be matched with \$176,719.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

### I. RATIONALE AND APPROACH/PROGRAM DESIGN

#### A. NEED

#### A. PROBLEM/NEED

Districts where Lead to Read (L2R) members will serve are from a wide-spread region in rural Northeastern Oklahoma that is sparsely populated and has very limited resources. This region consists of eight counties: Lincoln, Creek, Osage, Payne, Logan, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Pawnee. Within these eight counties, there are 19 distinct school districts, each of which includes only 1 elementary school: Agra, Allen Bowden, Anderson, Barnsdall, Crescent, Depew, Glencoe, Gypsy, Hominy, Jennings, Keystone, Mannford, Mason, Oak Grove, Olive, Prettywater, Wilson, Wynona and Yale. A majority of the students that attend these 19 school districts are Caucasian or Native American. The average breakdown includes 72% Caucasian, 1.3% Black, .42% Asian, 3.0% Hispanic, and 23.2% Native American. Specifically, the Native American population ranges from 4% to 48% of the student population. The district and school numbers will serve as an increase from previous years due to the high demand and interest in using AmeriCorps members to support struggling students and our proven success.

A majority of the schools where members will serve are located in communities rather than towns and as such have very few resources. To paint a picture, most have only small convenience stores

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where the community may purchase fuel and limited grocery items such as milk and bread and several do not have a post office or small business. People in these communities drive a minimum of 30 minutes to purchase basic staples, receive medical care, and access basic services such as a library. According to the 2013 School District Report Card, all of the 19 member districts with the exception of one are below the state average in population. The largest population is 7,335 and the smallest population is 727.

In these resource-limited towns, these communities and people are strong but their past and current ability to secure employment and education has been limited. With regards to education in the 19 districts/8 counties, 73.1% of adults 25 years of age and older have less than a college degree. With regards to employment, the community sizes and scarce resources and assets of these particular counties result in little opportunity for gainful employment unless one travels 30-45 minutes to Tulsa or Stillwater to work. Oklahoma's state unemployment rate is 4.7. For the counties this program will serve, the average is 5.35.

As a result of education levels and employment rates, the poverty levels in the counties served are high. Oklahoma's state average for students on free and reduced lunch is 62%. In comparison to the state average, the counties proposed to be served in this program have a much higher average.

According to the 2013 socioeconomic data from each district, 13 of the schools at which members will serve have a higher percentage of students on free/reduced lunch than the state average of 62%. Of those 13 districts, the percentage ranges from 63% to 90% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch (2013 School Report Cards). The remaining 4 districts have a percentage of 46, 53, 57, and 58. And looking at poverty level data, the Oklahoma State Department of Education cites the following percentage levels for each of the schools served: Agra (90), Allen Bowden (78), Anderson (59), Barnsdall (65), Crescent (52), Depew (67), Glencoe (76), Gypsy (72), Hominy (76), Jennings (78), Keystone (90), Mannford (72), Mason (87), Oak Grove (47), Olive (70), Prettywater (53), Wilson (50), Wynona (74), and Yale (86).

The ability to be literate and on grade level by third grade is a crucial factor for student's long term success both in school and beyond. Reading proficiently by the end of third grade (as measured by National Assessment of Educational Progress at the beginning of fourth grade) can be a make-or break benchmark in a child's educational development. Low achievement in reading has important long--term consequences in terms of individual earning potential, global competitiveness, and general productivity (Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters,2010) Children who have not developed fast, fluent reading skills begin to fall

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behind, and for most of them, the gap will continue to grow. So third grade constitutes a critical transition--a "pivot point," says Donald J. Hernandez, a professor of sociology at Hunter College. Hernandez conducted and released a study last year called "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation." This study found that third graders who lack proficiency in reading are four times more likely to become high school dropouts.

In the schools we propose to serve, the data demonstrates literacy as an issue. Statewide, 78% of students in grades 3rd through 6th score satisfactory and above on school reading assessments. In the schools this program targets, the picture in grades 3rd through 6th is much different. For most of the schools, the trend appears to be that the percentage of students who score satisfactory and above on their reading assessments goes down after 3rd grade. On average, 69.5% of 3rd grade students, 61% of 4th grade students, 64.4% of 5th grade students, and 69.4% of 6th grade students score satisfactory and above on their reading assessments. And many of our schools have a percentage of 60% or below for students who score satisfactory and above: 4 have a 3rd grade percentage of 60% or below; 8 have a 4th grade percentage of 60% or below; and 6 of them have a 5th grade percentage of 60% or below. Additionally, all Oklahoma elementary schools are assessed on specific benchmarks for reading and math. For our 19 schools, 7 did not meet their benchmarks in any of the grades 3rd through 6th, 5 did not meet their benchmarks in 3 of the grades 3rd through 6th, and 7 did not meet their benchmarks in 1 of the grades 3rd through 6th.

At the same time that benchmarks are not being met and reading assessment scores are low, the districts have faced budget shortfalls that have led to smaller staff, impacts on classroom size, and fewer resources including dollars for technology and additional support programming for struggling students. Current school funding formulas are below 2008 funding levels. Schools are allowed \$900 for textbooks that cost \$25,000 and student testing burden fell upon the schools to purchase computers to fulfill mandatory testing requirements. Nationally, the average per pupil expenditure is above \$12,000. In Oklahoma, the average per pupil expenditure is under \$9,000 (Federal Education Budget Project).

To address the unemployment, low education attainment levels, and poverty rates our counties face, our program is a critical step to supporting the resources our students and community require. While literacy alone will not address the issues we face, it will serve as an important piece of support that can give our students the foundational tools for school success.

### B1. THEORY OF CHANGE

Within the small rural areas, our schools lack the resources they need to support students and families

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with meeting the education milestones they can and must achieve in order to be successful in school and beyond. Our students come willing and able to learn, but enter school with deficits in literacy that put them behind at the beginning of their school experience. For the towns we serve, the schools are the focal point for all services to the child and are beacons of hope where change can be initiated. Based on the data shared in the previous section and research that demonstrates the importance of early literacy intervention (before grade 3), our long term theory of change outcomes are to have our students graduate high school at or above grade level with the intent of and access to either secondary education, military service, or livable wage employment. Our medium term theory of change outcome is to have our students served be at or above reading level in 3rd -- 6th grade. Our short term theory of change outcomes are to have our students meet critical reading benchmarks that will support their reading level success while at the same time increasing their interest in and excitement about reading and school. To make this change possible, the Lead to Read AmeriCorps program believes that students who are assessed as being behind grade level in reading must be provided a literacy tutor that can support their individual needs and also provide opportunities for targeted work outside of the classroom environment, beyond what the classroom teachers can provide. With large classroom sizes and limited teacher time, students who struggle are not provided the individual and targeted instruction that will help them catch up.

### **B2. NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF LOGIC MODEL**

Thirty six half-time (HT) members will be placed in 19 elementary schools/school districts located in 8 counties. These Lead 2 Read members will provide one-on-one and small group literacy interventions during school hours for students in kindergarten through 4th grade who have been identified as below grade level in reading. Members will serve from August 3 through May 31, serving each day from 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM.

At the beginning of the year, teachers will assess students using DIBELS, Literacy First, or STAR dependent upon the district they are in and the approved district assessment. Members, in collaboration with teachers and principals, will review the scores and group students according to assessment results. Based upon the results, the members will be assigned a core focus group of students for which they will provide one-on-one and small group intervention. Each member will work with a core group of focus students from 3 -- 4 different grade levels, meaning that each member will have 3 -- 4 focus groups that they work with on a daily basis, with an average of 4 - 5 students per group. On average, members will maintain a caseload of 15 -- 20 students. Just as each district uses its own assessment tool, each district also uses its own core curriculum which each set of

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members will be trained on and use in their interventions.

Each member will support his or her students in small group or one-on-one intervention, which will typically last for 45 minutes at a time. The member will collaborate with their assigned teacher on each grade level for which they have an assigned focus group of students to both plan the daily and weekly schedule and evidence based activities for the core group using the district adopted core curriculum (i.e. Scott Foresman) and strategies learned in member orientation and training.

As a result of the member individual and small group instruction, 500 economically disadvantaged students will start the targeted literacy instruction and support and 375 students will complete the full school year of instruction and support. For those students who complete the year of instruction and support, 75% will reach grade level literacy benchmarks.

### C. EVIDENCE BASE: MODERATE

The Jennings School District has adopted instruction methods that are steeped in evidence and based on national research. The main curriculum that members use with their assigned students is through Scott Foresman. This curriculum has as its foundation the five critical elements in reading that have been identified by the National Reading Panel as essential to literacy success: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Additionally, the Scott Foresman curriculum has been rigorously tested through a 4-stage process that meets the What Works Clearinghouse standards.

In phase one, previous editions of the curriculum were evaluated to determine best instruction practices as demonstrated by scientific evidence. In phase two, extensive literature reviews on content, instructional practices, and education standards were completed and information from these reviews were embedded into the curriculum. In phase three, formative research was conducted that included teacher and student feedback and assessments that looked at preliminary curricula effectiveness. In phase four, the final curriculum was evaluated for effectiveness. Independent, randomized-control-trial studies were conducted at several different times to provide scientific evidence of student achievement on standardized assessments. First, a quasi-experimental study was done (Newman and Jaciw, 2005), called the Effectiveness of Scott Foresman's Links to Reading First as an Intervention for Struggling Readers. This study collected DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency achievement data for matched users and nonusers of Scott Foresman Reading. The researchers compared DIBELS scores for eighty-eight students in Grades 1--3. The Scott Foresman Reading users saw a gain of 9.48 beyond the nonusers across all grade levels. The results indicate that students using Scott Foresman Reading are likely to see greater gains in reading achievement than nonusers. A second quasi-experimental

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study (Gatti, 2003), called the Scott Foresman Reading Effect Size Study, collected reading achievement data from the National Center for Educational Statistics for users and demographically matched nonusers of the Scott Foresman program. The researchers compared district-level, pre-Scott Foresman adoption reading scores in Grades K--6 to post-adoption year scores. The results indicated that 88 percent of the districts and grades saw a gain in state scaled reading achievement scores (Gatti, 2003). During the first full school year that the product was in print (2005--2006), independent research company Magnolia Consulting conducted a randomized-control-trial study to examine product effectiveness. Again, the study was designed to meet the rigorous standards of the What Works Clearinghouse. Magnolia determined that students who used Reading Street demonstrated statistically significant gains in reading achievement during the one-year study period. The gains were large, were documented by multiple measures, and were evident by the middle of the school year. A second year evaluation was then conducted with the same group who used again a randomized-control-trial design. The results from the second year data collection statistically confirmed that students using Reading Street significantly increase their reading achievement. Across grades, students demonstrated an average gain of 32 percentile points and often surpassed the end-of-year benchmarks on all fluency measures.

The rigorous evaluation of the curriculum we use in combination with the positive results we see programmatically year after year, meeting and exceeding our performance measurement targets as discussed in the Organizational Capability section, provides us with reasonable evidence that our program is making an impact on the students we serve. With current and future evaluation work that we plan this year and in the next two years of this upcoming grant cycle, we hope to provide increased evidence that our program works.

### **D. AMERICORPS FUNDING PRIORITY: EDUCATION -- IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

The L2R AmeriCorps Program addresses both the Education Focus Area and 2015 AmeriCorps Funding Priority of Education -- Improving Student Academic Performance. We serve students in grades kindergarten through 4th who are in poverty and enter school below grade level in reading that attend small rural schools who have limited resources to provide additional, targeted instruction. Through 1-1 and small group literacy interventions, L2R contributes to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children that will support at grade level attainment in grades 3rd through 6th.

### **E. MEMBER TRAINING**

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Within our small rural areas, schools lack the ability to provide certain resources for student success including high quality tutors that can provide one-on-one and small group instruction. The L2R program recruits members from our communities that have the potential to be great tutors, but lack the training to do the specific literacy instruction. We have a rich pool of potential candidates from our communities, many of which have the abilities, but lack opportunity to demonstrate their abilities because of the limited employment opportunities in our town and the major distance to other opportunities because of our rural locations. Through the training and support our program and schools provide, our members not only have the increased ability to support our young students in literacy attainment, but also enhance their education and skills for future employment opportunities. The L2R orientation lasts four days and happens the first week of August. Our Orientation includes topics such as AmeriCorps 101, Understanding Our Communities and Schools, basic rules and regulations members must adhere to, and other program required information. Members are also given the opportunity to become familiar with their site and meet the faculty and staff and get a feel for how their individual sites operate. A bulk of the 4 days, however, is spent on position specific training. The literacy curriculum we use covers Evidence Based Strategies from: 5 Big Ideas in Reading, Battling Boredom Strategies, Considering Reluctant Readers, Strategies to Engage Reluctant Readers, and Super Speed Strategies. Additionally, members will receive 6 hours of literacy instruction presented by an area Literacy Coach through a recent literacy grant that our district level reading specialists received. The coach will use the book *Para Reading: A Training Guide for Tutors*. Specifically, members are given a 6-element model of a literacy tutoring session from the book "Training the Reading Team: A Guide for Supervisors of a Volunteer Tutoring Program" in which they are to adapt all of their tutoring sessions. The six elements are: 1) Read Old Favorites (familiar text) -- for 5 minutes - begin each session with books we call "old favorites" which are books the child is familiar with and has read before. We recommend rereading at least two old favorites at the beginning of the session; 2) Read together -- for 5-10 minutes, the tutor and child read a new book. They select something new to read, and discuss what might happen by looking at the pictures and thinking about what they already know. As the child reads the book aloud, the member stops to discuss what is happening and what might happen next; 3) Write together -- For 5 minutes, the child and member write together. By doing this, the member can demonstrate how students can put their ideas in writing. Both the member and student can write in their journals or can write to each other to create a written dialog; 4) Read for enjoyment -- For 5 minutes, members have the child choose his or her own book for silent reading; 5) Talk about words -- For 5 minutes, the members discuss words

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that help the child to notice characteristics or patterns in words when reading. Members talk about beginning letters, rhyming words, and introduce a strategy for struggling readers such as Super Speed Reading, Story Mapping, or Fluency; 6) Summarize Success -- For 5 minutes, members summarize student success by helping children talk about what they did well during the tutoring session.

Ongoing training happens in both formal, large group in-person settings and school based opportunities through Program Director visits and assigned teacher support. The main purpose of each training strategy is to increase member comprehension of effective and age appropriate literacy interventions and ultimately to improve the reading rate and level of their core group of students. Each school is required to train and support their assigned members on the school approved literacy curriculum. At the beginning of each year, members work with their assigned teachers and the superintendent to familiarize themselves with the curriculum and its activities and to use the individual student assessments as a starting point from which they provide specific intervention. The training conducted during formal, monthly site visits addresses concerns that members have for the struggling readers they tutor. After each site visit, the Program Director, who is also a reading specialist, writes an individual literacy "prescription" that suggests strategies members can implement to help readers she observed during a tutoring session. Throughout the year, the Program Director also spends time identifying individual member skill sets, great ideas, and talents and allows them the opportunity throughout the year to showcase that to their fellow members. This is one example of many in which the program provides its members an opportunity to serve in leadership roles. Finally, prohibited activities are discussed and trained on in a few ways. First, the member contracts are read through, discussed, and each page initialed by each member during orientation. Additionally, we have a specific training on prohibited activities where members look at activities for which they have to determine if it is allowable, unallowable, or prohibited to reinforce what they have read and signed in their member contract. And through site visits, we regularly monitor member activities to ensure members are doing what was agreed on in their approved and collaboratively developed (between school and program) position descriptions. Finally, the Program Director is in constant contact with the site supervisor and superintendent to continually monitor the program and members.

### **F. MEMBER SUPERVISION**

Our AmeriCorps members are supervised in 2 main ways. First, our members are supervised daily by the site supervisor, one of their assigned teachers. The site supervisors are appointed yearly by the school superintendent and are typically the teacher who works most closely with the member.

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However, some superintendents choose to be the site supervisor. The daily supervision they receive from their site supervisor includes a daily check-in and formal, weekly meetings to discuss student progress and any changes needed that would benefit the student or member. And mid and end of term, each member is provided a formal evaluation to assess their performance and progress to date. In addition, each member is provided with an assigned teacher for each grade focus group they have. This teacher provides ongoing training and support as the member carries out the school-approved literacy curriculum. Members are also under the general supervision of the superintendent or principal who checks in weekly to ensure member and teacher satisfaction. Second, members are supervised by the L2R Program Director. The Program Director goes out to each elementary school to conduct a formal site visit, assess member progress and growth, determine areas for future training and supervision, and make sure activities are being carried out as detailed in position descriptions, contracts, and Memorandums of Agreements. A formal site visit form is completed that details member progress, observations, and growth areas. Each member is observed doing at least one tutoring session. And immediately after, a follow up meeting happens with each member to discuss concerns or growth areas. Every other week, the Program Director distributes a newsletter that provides basic updates, due dates, and information about what is happening in the program at the different school sites. The newsletter also has space where a new activity is shared that members can incorporate into their daily lesson plans. And ongoing communication is maintained through continued correspondence via email, text, and phone.

In August, the beginning of each year, the Program Director meets individually with each site supervisor. This meeting serves as a review of the program along with opportunities to discuss concerns, program updates and changes, performance measures, past performance, characteristics of a successful service site, prohibited activities, and other pre-determined topics. A few of our site supervisors are also former AmeriCorps members who continued their experience by becoming teachers and have a strong understanding of the support their members need.

### **G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE**

The Lead to Read (L2R) AmeriCorps program places a great emphasis on the member service experience. We provide intentional opportunities throughout the year for reflection, community and civic involvement opportunities, and activities that connect members to the bigger world of AmeriCorps and National Service.

Reflection happens throughout the year in a few different ways. Members are required to write 4 reflections a year in their OnCorps reflection log. To support these reflections, questions are posed that

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allow members to think about topics of importance as it relates to education, service, or leadership. First, we typically ask members to think about what has and has not happened in their last service quarter as it relates to their students and their families, their schools, and themselves. Second, we ask members to explore the implications of what has and has not happened. Third, we ask members to think about next steps they can take in this year and beyond to make even greater change in themselves, their students, schools and communities. The L2R Program Director reads these reflections and responds individually and as a group with further supervision and training. Throughout the year, we also encourage members to play a role in their community, typically through avenues that have some relationship to their school service. For example, we ask members to attend and write a reflection about one school board or civic meeting. Members have learned a great deal about the board and/or council process, for many of which this was their first experience participating in such an activity. Members also set up information booths during parent/teacher conferences, which allow them to talk with school staff and family members about the AmeriCorps program, what they are doing in their service year and connect with student families so they can speak specifically about individual progress and future support areas.

Additionally, we connect members to AmeriCorps and national service through varied strategies. First, we attempt to "brand" the program in ways mentioned in the next narrative section. Second, we begin the year with annual Swearing in Ceremony with all stakeholders participating. Melinda Points, Executive Director of Oklahoma Community Service Commission, administers the AmeriCorps Pledge, talks to the members about their role in the state and the nation, and provides details about the other Oklahoma programs.

Our specific AmeriCorps program is in a very remote and rural region of the state with no other area AmeriCorps programs nearby. However, we continue to work on ways we can connect our members to one another and other programs. At orientation, we provide opportunities for members to get to know one another and build relationships that will support future interest in staying in touch. We also share contact information and set up a network where members can regularly communicate. Towards the end of the year, we encourage all members to join AmeriCorps alums and identify ways in which they can continue their service in their community and beyond.

Most of our AmeriCorps members come from the communities we serve. We believe that not only does this program impact the students we serve, but also impacts our members with regards to future professional opportunities and economic sustainability. For this reason, we believe in recruiting from our own communities that are rich with caring and dedicated people who simply lack in opportunities

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to develop themselves and secure opportunities to thrive professionally. Prior to the start-up of our program, we advertise the member opportunities using social media and in literature distributed to parents and within the community by each individual school. L2R also contacts area Universities and Colleges, posts program materials, and works with the Dean of Education at each level to distribute Lead to Read opportunities on their student notification system. The primary universities and colleges we work with are Oklahoma State University, Tulsa Community College, and Northeastern Oklahoma State University Broken Arrow. And because of our strong program and ways that we showcase the AmeriCorps program, the L2R program is contacted weekly by people who are interested in serving their community. Once this happens, we try to engage these interested individuals early on and allow our members to showcase their service year to those who are interested in being future members. People interested in the AmeriCorps program will meet with an AmeriCorps member, while the member shares their AmeriCorps experience. This allows our members the opportunity to practice talking about AmeriCorps, their year, and the effect it has had on themselves, their students and the larger community. Members are also required to complete a "Spread the Word" form to send a message to at least 5 people about what they are doing and their impact. This message can be sent to family members, friends, area stakeholders, or families of the students they serve. Through varied member activities such as school and community event booths, shadow opportunities with interested individuals, and an emphasis to spread the word about their service, our members are constantly visible in the communities in which they serve which provides constant outreach and awareness in our community. In addition, our sites are big champions of our program and are constantly connecting people to our program who would benefit from earning an education award while serving the community and would be a good match for our AmeriCorps program. As stated previously, as a result of the community outreach and awareness activities we do and the limited job opportunities in our areas, a majority of our applicants come directly from our community.

### **H. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION**

As introduced earlier, we connect members to AmeriCorps and national service through varied strategies and work throughout the year to ensure members and site partners remember the AmeriCorps program in which they are a part. First, members are required to wear an AmeriCorps name badge every day while on site. This daily awareness creates a reminder for members that they are AmeriCorps members and educates school staff and families about the role AmeriCorps plays in school and student success. Second, members are provided AmeriCorps gear to wear while serving, encouraging them to wear their shirts at least one time per week. Third, each site is also provided

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AmeriCorps posters and emblems to hang throughout the school that promote AmeriCorps presence and agree to do so through their Memorandum of Understanding. Fourth, schools add the AmeriCorps logo to their website. This educates the users of the service of the AmeriCorps program.

### Organizational Capability

#### II. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

##### A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

##### A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

Jennings School is the legal applicant of this AmeriCorps grant and has been the legal applicant for the last 6 years. Jennings is a rural school in Pawnee County with a population of 956 and has served the community for generations. Jennings operates a yearly budget of \$1.8 million and receives various federal funding such as Title I, Indian Ed Part A, Special Ed, and Preschool Ages 4-5. The Jennings School mission as a progressive caring community is to maintain educational excellence and optimal learning experiences for children of all abilities and backgrounds. Our school is continually striving to promote lifelong learners and responsible, caring, young people who prepare for the ever-increasing demands of a changing and dynamic society. We believe that an effective school program provides a safe, positive, and nurturing environment that fosters the character as well as the mind. We believe that learning is facilitated rather than imposed. Therefore, we are committed to teamwork, open communication, and shared decision making with our parent-school community. With our AmeriCorps program, we play out these values by meeting yearly with all of our program schools to assess the program and consider changes for following years. Our schools play a crucial part in the development and implementation of this program and commit through their time and dollars to support the program's continued success.

The staff that supports the L2R AmeriCorps program has a great deal of experience in literacy, education, and grant management. The primary contact for this grant is Susan Cargill, Program Director. Susan has a master's degree in education, is a Reading Specialist, and Certified in Elementary Administration and Education, with 23 Years Teaching Experience including 3rd grade, kindergarten and preschool. Susan has worked with the program since its inception and has worked closely each year with each of the site superintendents to ensure a successful program. Johnetta Gipe will serve as the Assistant Director. Johnetta has 8 years of classroom experience. Johnetta is an academic team leader in the lower elementary building and has worked extensively with the reading curriculum for beginning readers. Johnetta serves as the building coordinator and liaison between the principal and teachers. Johnetta aggregates test data, plans and carries out professional development,

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and serves as a mentor teacher ensuring a strong foundation for first year teachers who work with developing readers. Michelle Francies, Encumbrance Clerk, will provide administrative and grant support through living allowance preparation, budget management, expenditure tracking, and grant compliance monitoring. Michelle has six years of experience with the AmeriCorps program. Michelle is also the eighth grade class sponsor and volunteers at many of the after school events that directly benefit the students. Chris Ballenger, Superintendent of Jennings Public School, will serve as the Secondary Contact to Susan Cargill and provide overall responsibility for the grant. Chris has a MS, ED. and Superintendent Certification, with 13 years' experience. Chris is seen as a leader among our 19 school district group. Chris is regularly in our various communities serving as a leader, as a coach for several little league teams in adjoining areas and as a volunteer firefighter on the Jennings Volunteer Fire Department. And the Jennings Board of Education will be the governing body for the L2R program.

In addition to working closely with site supervisors, as a culmination to the service year, L2R director meets individually with each site supervisor and presents data gathered from individual site.

Discussion about the progress of the students, member value added, and critiquing the program for improved service the following year.

### **B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Jennings School and the L2R AmeriCorps program will prevent and detect compliance issues by first ensuring knowledge of the grant regulations. All sites are trained on site expectations, prohibited activities, and program requirements prior to the start of each program year. Sites are also provided with handbooks that put all training details in writing.

Susan Cargill, Program Director, will work closely with the Oklahoma Commission and attend all required meetings at dates and locations specified in the future. Each of these meetings provides training and information on AmeriCorps, grants and fiscal management, and effective practices on program management.

The Program Director will also keep member files and reports up to date and do ongoing desk audits to ensure regular compliance. Susan will review and approve only activities that are allowable and outlined in the position description, member service agreement and memorandums of understanding. If instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the program director will meet with the service site to rectify the noncompliance issue. Site compliance forms are filled out during each site visit. If the sites are not in compliance after assistance from L2R, they will no longer be a partner.

### **C. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT AND FORMER GRANTEES**

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In the past two years, L2R has met and exceeded its performance measurement targets. During the 2011-12 program year, we served 833 students, with 737 (88.5%) reaching benchmarks (exceeds 75% target). During the 2012-13 program year, we served 480 students, with 414 (78.2%) reaching benchmark (exceeds 75% target). The target number of students decreased in our last grant year due to a lower number of students enrolled at two sites. And in this next 3-year grant cycle, we have recruited two new schools (Keystone and Woodland) that will help to increase the number of students we serve.

In the last full year of program operation, our member enrollment was 100% and our member retention was 85%. Our members who exited early were for varied reasons many of which were not preventable such as unexpected health problems, hospitalization of a child, death of a member, relocation due to unresolved marriage problems, care for aging parents, and unforeseen difficulties with child care. We continue to implement a thorough recruitment and selection process that provides detailed information about the program requirements and service term and screen individuals who may not have the capacity to complete their full term. We will continue to emphasize the importance of a full-year term and do so in the outreach, interview, welcome packet, and orientation phases. L2R has had no compliance or risk issues identified in the last 2 years of operation. Our monitoring visits and audits are free of issues and document a compliant program. We are in the process of completing our evaluation plan as outlined in the last grant cycle, and will provide those results once the data has been analyzed. Our plan for this current grant year can be found in the evaluation section of this narrative that follows.

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

#### III. COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY

##### A. COST EFFECTIVENESS

The funding to support the AmeriCorps program represents about 9.8% of the overall Jennings School budget. And to support the program, 57% of the funding comes from the Corporation with a match rate of 43%. L2R has a total budget of \$418,465, with \$179,098 as grantee share and \$239,367 as CNCS share. With the proposed budget, our cost per member service year will be \$13,298.

Jennings School is in the third year of their second 3-year AmeriCorps grant. To support this grant, each school site provides \$4,500 per half time member as a part of their signed Memorandum of Understanding. This amount represents an increase from previous years of \$1,500 per member and demonstrates the commitment our schools have to the program. In addition, we have raised other financial and in-kind resources from site supervisor time from our school teachers; Central

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Technology Center who donated meeting space; Cleveland Fire Department for CPR & First Aid training; other community groups who provide in-kind training to our members; DAVCO who donated equipment; Highway 99 Quik Stop who donated advertising space; and Cimarron Telephone Company who donated advertising space and held the Cimtel 5K Race to promote recognition of AmeriCorps.

### B. BUDGET ADEQUACY

As stated previously, L2R has a total budget request for \$418,365 with \$179,098 as grantee share and \$239,367 as CNCS share. With the proposed budget, we will have a match of \$13,298 per MSY. Costs that are associated with our budget include 1 FT program director; 1 full time assistant program director; staff travel to CNCS sponsored meetings; member training supplies; 1 evaluation of program by Dr. Evie Muilenburg-Trevino, Research Specialist, University of Oklahoma; criminal background checks; and 36 HT members living allowance and associated costs, as detailed in the budget. Our budget breakdown for this proposal is 43% grantee and 57% CNCS.

Background checks will be conducted on all L2R members and staff. This includes FBI fingerprint checks, state registry checks and a national sex offender registry since all serve vulnerable populations.

Each check is \$59 for a total of 36 members and 7 additional applicants with a grand total of \$2537.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

Lead to Read

Evaluation Plan

Introduction

In this current 3-year grant cycle, we were required to conduct an evaluation for the under \$500,000 threshold requirements. In the 2013-2014 school year, 33 members served in the program and worked with 551 students. Of all students, 88.5% reached grade level benchmarks in reading at the end of the year. In the 2012-2013 school year, 39 members served in the program and worked with 414 students. Of all students, 78.2% were tutored a minimum of 35 sessions and reached grade-level benchmarks in reading at the end of the year. In the 2011-2012 school year, 36 members served in the program. Of all students, 88.5% reached grade-level benchmarks in reading at the end of the year. L2R will work closely with Dr. Evie Muilenburg-Trevino, Research Specialist, to evaluate the program. L2R is moving forward with an innovative evaluation plan to fully evaluate the program in the fall of 2015. Data will be collected from the standardized test such as STAR Reading, DIBELS, and Literacy First. Teachers will collect pre-test

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data at the beginning of the year, midterm data in November, and post-test data again at the end of the year 2014-15. AmeriCorps members will record the data and report the data to the L2R directors. An assistant program director is being added to assist with gathering data and program evaluation. Low academic performance is a reality in many schools across the US (Nelson-Royes & Reglin, 2011). For a variety of reasons, some students have difficulty engaging in school and achieving academic competencies. Because of the long-term impact of underperformance (e.g. Peterson, 2000), educators have looked for ways to change academic outcomes in low performing students, for which tutoring programs have been seen as a significant approach.

Lead to Read is a tutoring program that works with underperforming students to enable them to improve academic performance. Our Theory of Change asserts that students are more likely to have success in school and lead productive lives if they are educated and empowered to do so. By utilizing the activities at Lead to Read to tutor students in small group and one-on-one sessions, students will be more engaged in school which will lead to reading proficiency and increased academic performance.

Research indicates that an effective tutoring program centers around consistency, collaboration, individualization, and structure (i.e. SPPS Foundation, 2011; Wasik, 1998). In order to be successful, a tutoring program must be frequent and consistent. Wasik (1998) posits that students should receive tutoring for 1 ½ to 2 hours per week. In addition, tutoring should be coordinated with classroom teachers (Wasik, 1998). Collaborating with teachers will ensure student learning in the classroom is being enforced in the tutoring program. Individualizing tutoring to student needs is also necessary (SPPS Foundation, 2011). Tailoring the program to student needs ensure they are learning in areas that directly apply to them. Along with the individualization, it is important to assess student progress. When students are assessed throughout the year, their instructional lessons can be tailored to their needs (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2001). Finally, tutoring should be structured and well-planned. Research confirms that tutoring programs that are structured lead to higher gains in academic performance than their counterparts (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982). Lead to Read has endeavored to meet all the best practices as presented in the literature. Their program is consistent as evidenced by tutors meeting with students 3 or more days per week for around 30-45 minutes each day. In addition, tutors work with classroom teachers and reading specialists to ensure they have coordinated lessons and individualize the session to best meet the child's needs. Students are assessed at the beginning of the year, at midterm, and at the end of the year to better understand student progress and achievement. Finally, tutoring by Lead to Read is well-

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structured and planned to ensure students are working in areas that are most needed.

The Lead to Read program will have 36 half-time (HT) AmeriCorps members who will provide one-on-one and small group literacy instruction in 19 elementary schools in 19 school districts located in 8 rural and remote counties. Members will use evidence based reading strategies to improve academic performance in literacy to underachieving students in poverty, grades kindergarten through 4th. Each member will also leverage a minimum of 10 volunteers, including their students and community residents, to participate in school-based service projects. At the end of each year, 75% of students who completed the program will have reached grade level benchmarks.

The program's planned work is comprised of resources that include 36 AmeriCorps members serving in 17 schools in 8 counties. Their core project components are comprised of AmeriCorps members in collaboration with classroom teachers and reading specialists will tutor kindergarten-4th grade students in small group and one-on-one sessions during the school day and afterschool for approximately 30-45 minutes per day, 3+ times a week. Evidence of project implementation and participation includes two outputs: (1) Members will use tutor logs to track the number of tutor sessions. Student will be counted as part of the program when they have received a minimum of 5 sessions and (2) Members will record and update sessions regularly. Identified students will complete at least 35 tutor sessions from AmeriCorps members in reading. Short-term outcomes include 500 students beginning the program and 500 of those students completing at least 35 one-to-one and small group sessions. Medium-term outcomes include 75% of students who are consistently tutored will have improved academic performance.

This project will focus on CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$241,744 will be matched with \$176,648.

Dr. Evie Muilenburg-Trevino, a research specialist at the University of Oklahoma, will provide Lead to Read and its stakeholders with an evaluation that demonstrates the effectiveness of the Lead to Read program and outlines important improvement areas.

Data will be collected from the standardized test such as STAR Reading, DIBELS, and Literacy First. Teachers will collect pre-test data at the beginning of the year, midterm data in November, and post test data again at the end of the year. AmeriCorps members will record the data and report the data to the program director. Data will be analyzed by the L2R program director to examine the three research questions 1) Is there an adequate number of students enrolled in the program 2) Are students engaged in L2R program 3) Did L2R improve academic performance. Numerical values will be

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tabulated to understand the first and second research questions about enrollment and the number of students engaged,. The third research question will be analyzed by computing the number of students who reached grade-level benchmarks in reading. Quantitative data analysis techniques will be utilized. Findings will be presented in a technical report by the program director.

The 3-year timeframe for the project spans from 2015 to 2018. Data will be collected all three years. The technical report will be completed in Fall 2016.

The program logic model is presented in an attachment.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

Clarification Items:

Grant consideration amount \$239367

36 MSYs

13,298 per MSY

A. Programmatic clarification items:

1. AmeriCorps members meet the basic qualifications outlined in 45 CFR 2522.910. Members attend 4 days of intense literacy training in September with a follow up training day in January. Literacy strategies are taught by Melody Aufil, a Reading Specialist who is highly trained in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, LETRS and by Susan Cargill, the Lead to Read Reading Specialist. Members have a high school diploma, GED or higher, and are not employees of the school.

B. Budget Clarification

1. Lead to Read staff will consist of 1 Full time Program Director and 1 Full time Assistant Program Director, totaling \$98,675 grantee share.
2. The Program Director and the Assistant Program Director are 100% time and have no responsibilities other than the management of the AmeriCorps program.
3. The members are reimbursed for travel to orientation and other ongoing training opportunities by

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their site as agreed upon in the MOU.

### 4. Source of Funds: Partner Schools

Agra 9000; Allen Bowden 9000; Anderson 9000; Barnsdall 9000; Crescent 4500; Depew 13500; Glencoe 4500; Gypsy 4500; Hominy 13500; Jennings 13500; Keystone 4500; Mannford 22500; Mason 9000; Oak Grove 4500; Olive 4500; Prettywater 9000; Wilson 4500; Wynona 4500; Yale  
Total Match \$162,000

5. Jennings is a rural school with limited resources partnering with Title 1 schools. The cost per MSY was submitted at a minimum to operate the program. There has been no increase over the past six years.

### C. Performance Measure Clarification

1. Completion of the program is met when students attend a minimum of 35 tutoring sessions.
2. DIBELS, Literacy First, and STAR all measure reading grade levels and align with state and national standards as well as the Common Core Standards. Site administrators implement the assessment that they feel best meets their students' needs. Some other considerations are ease of use, time needed in one period, and research base. They may also consider technology needed to implement the assessment.
3. Members collect data from teachers who have administered a pre test establishing a base line in which to monitor progress. After identifying focus students who are below grade level, members record focus students and their score on Progress Monitoring forms. Focus students are progress monitored periodically and Progress Forms are updated and submitted to program director Susan Cargill three times per year. Progress Monitoring forms are reviewed by the program director and submitted in the Progress Report.

### D. Strategic Engagement Slots

1. Lead to Read practices the American with Disabilities Act and does not discriminate. Lead to Read is located in a rural with limited resources and a shallow recruitment pool. Therefore, the program does not specifically recruit a certain percentage of the slots for members with disabilities.
2. Lead to Read does not wish to apply for any Strategic Engagement Slots for 2015-16.

### E. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification

Lead to Read does not wish to apply for any NO-COST MSYs for 2015-16

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## Continuation Changes

n/a

## Grant Characteristics