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Executive Summary

The Promise Neighborhood program (PNP) will have 38 AmeriCorps members who will provide interventions intended to improve the literacy proficiency of children in preschool to grade 3, and the math proficiency of students in grades 4-8 who attend 16 school sites within the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), a federally-funded Promise Neighborhood in North Minneapolis. At the end of the one program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for helping 829 students to become proficient readers by 3rd grade, and 100 students to advance toward achieving algebra proficiency by 8th grade. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 20 volunteers to educate students in mathematical fact fluency interventions that have been correlated to improved academic performance. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$359,385 will be matched with \$335,592 including \$235,592 in state and local funding and \$100,000 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

B. Program Design. Problem/Need. Lack of literacy and math proficiency is a critical roadblock to high school graduation and future economic success. Children who can read proficiently by 3rd grade are four times more likely to graduate high school than those who do not (Hernandez, 2011). Only 11% of students who failed 6th grade math then go on to earn high school diplomas (Balfanz, 2007). Minnesota residents without high school diplomas have an unemployment rate nearly six times the rate of those with bachelor's degrees or better (Carnevale, et, al., 2010).

The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) was formed in 2008 as a solution to persistent poverty, violence, crime, unemployment and educational failure concentrated in Minneapolis' Northside community. A federally-funded Promise Neighborhood, NAZ (both a geographic region and the agency that manages services within this zone) coordinates integrated, cross-sector interventions focused on employment, health, housing stability, income stability, food security, mental health, education, and parenting skills.

Local schools post some of the lowest rates of student reading and math proficiency in the state. Students here average 35.5% reading proficiency at 3rd grade; only 25% of students are proficient in 8th grade math and only 35% of kindergartners living in and near the zone are considered kindergarten-ready (Wilder Research, 2014), vs. 60% of Minnesota kindergarteners overall (MDE, 2014).

NAZ reached out to ServeMinnesota, Minnesota's State Service Commission, to ask for an "army of

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AmeriCorps members" to assist them in replicating the intensity of a Harlem Children's Zone approach in providing "whatever it takes" to ensure the academic success of children living in the zone. Consistent with ServeMinnesota's mission of aligning AmeriCorps resources with local priorities, ServeMinnesota responded with a commitment to align and enhance the existing Reading Corps and Math Corps program models and to partner with NAZ to implement collective impact strategies. What resulted from collaborative planning facilitated by the Target Corporation is a Promise Neighborhood AmeriCorps program that is now completing its pilot year as a combination of these models focused on the 100-block NAZ. The Promise Neighborhood program uniquely extends the proven Reading Corps and Math Corps models in three ways: (1) extending tutoring services to afterschool settings in collaboration with community partners, and (2) embedding additional master coaching from an education expert skilled in coaching reading, math, and behavior interventions; and (3) piloting an enhancement of the model that includes embedding AmeriCorps members to not only provide direct tutoring but also to assist teachers in providing interventions for an entire classroom.

By working with students in after-school settings, members increase the number of children served, extend the learning time for those children who receive in-school services, support the ability of partners to use data-informed, evidence-based academic interventions, and contribute to a "collective impact" approach across the NAZ.

As an integrated part of the NAZ solution, the PNP focuses on extending the instructional capacity of schools to meet the needs of students who must overcome multiple academic impacts of limited English, cultural transition, and high poverty rates. Research supports that the Reading Corps, a key component of the PNP, has the ability to accelerate student reading levels and reading proficiency by 3rd grade (Markovitz, et. al., 2014; Heistad, 2013). Further, these positive effects are multiplied for low-income students, students of color, and English Learners (Markovitz, et. al., 2014). As such, the PNP presents a remarkably positive potential to narrow the achievement gap for at-risk populations in NAZ, and to support nationwide initiatives such as My Brother's Keeper that help students of color to succeed in reading at grade level by 3rd grade and graduate from high school ready for college and career.

The Promise Neighborhood program is requesting 38 members (34 literacy tutors and 4 math tutors) to be placed in 16 partner sites including elementary schools, Head Start programs and community preschools in the NAZ. Each year, PNP members will provide intensive, research-based tutoring, literacy and math support to 325 preschool students, 504 grade K-3 students, and 100 grade 4-8 students. At the end of three years, these members will have helped 2,787 students age 3 to grade 8 to

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advance toward reading or math proficiency that is key to their future outcomes.

The Promise Neighborhood program works in this way:

1. The PNP partners with schools and PreK providers in the zone to place trained and supported AmeriCorps members in Pre-K, K-3 and grade 4-8 classrooms where each member provides intensive, research-based tutoring to 17-30 children. The model is built upon the innovative concept of bringing Master Coach expertise directly to the site (school) level to ensure fidelity of the model and build site and staff capacity to use data effectively to maximize the benefits of the interventions to the targeted children.
 2. PNP members and their on-site supervisors or "Internal Coaches" participate in a pre-service training Institute where they receive intensive training on collecting benchmark data, monitoring student progress, and implementing research-based literacy interventions. Internal Coaches are school employees who are trained and supported in implementing and integrating the PNP model at their school.
 3. PNP members and Internal Coaches receive monthly on-site coaching from literacy and math experts or "Master Coaches" to tailor interventions for each child based on the data collected on key measures.
 4. Children who learn literacy and math skills at a rate to "catch-up" with their peers graduate from the programs and are monitored to ensure that they stay on track to become successful readers by 3rd grade and proficient in algebra by 8th grade. If their gains do not hold, they are given further supports.
 5. PNP will pilot embedding AmeriCorps members in the classrooms of one high need NAZ school. We will test the effectiveness of members to implement reading and math interventions and assist teachers with a teaching strategy, "Innocent Classroom", designed to close the achievement gap. The model helps teachers (and all adults in the classroom) to see all children (especially black boys) as innocent, vulnerable children who we need to teach and treat gently. This is in contrast to expecting black boys to fail, be violent, commit crimes, etc.
2. Theory of Change and Logic Model. With an unacceptable number of children on a path to reading and math failure, the PNP mobilizes AmeriCorps members to implement evidence-based interventions in-school and after-school that build students' literacy and math skills at strategic points in the educational continuum. Research indicates that students who acquire proficiency in reading by 3rd grade and algebra by 8th grade are significantly more likely to graduate high school than those who do not (Hernandez, 2011; Balfanz, 2007). Members are a highly effective means to help children at

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these strategic points because they are able to provide something schools and after-school providers cannot -- individualized, research-based, high-quality tutoring focused on specific academic skills for at-risk students. Member interventions produce significant and unique contributions by ensuring that a student's teacher has both the data they need to direct instruction, as well as the supportive human touch for a child's individualized tutoring.

The PNP program theory of change is that providing schools with the staffing and support to deliver a proven model (i.e., benchmark assessments, evidence-based interventions, data-driven decision making and ongoing coaching for those delivering the interventions) will result in increased rates of reading and math proficiency for these struggling students. This model was based on the work of Vaughn et. al. (2007), who found that effective supplemental instruction programs have three essential elements: (a) valid and reliable measures for assessing student growth, (b) evidenced-based instructional interventions, (c) and a framework for educators to utilize the data for improved instructional decision-making. The PNP also builds on research about the importance of coaching. Joyce & Showers (2002) found that only 5% of professionals implement new practices they learn in a training session, but 95% adopt the practice when they work with a coach who continues to provide instruction and feedback. All these elements are present in the PNP program model, as detailed below:

ASSESSMENTS: The PNP identifies the children most likely to benefit from among those that educators and policy analysts describe as falling between the cracks: They do not meet state standards for reading proficiency, but their scores are not low enough to make them eligible for mandatory assistance through Title I or special education. Members screen students each fall, winter, and spring using validated grade and content-specific assessments that predict 3rd grade reading and 8th grade algebra state proficiency performance. Program staff use these scores to identify students for program placement and set clear literacy or math targets for each participating student. Members test students repeatedly during the intervention and use this data to modify instruction and ensure progress toward targets.

INTERVENTIONS: To promote literacy at the PreK level, the PNP program integrates recommendations in the Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Reading Panel (2010) that outlined 11 variables that consistently predicted later literacy achievements for preschool students: alphabet knowledge; phonological awareness; rapid automatic naming of letters; and of objects or colors; writing; phonological memory; concepts about print; print knowledge; reading readiness; oral language; and visual processing. Members work alongside teachers to create a literacy-rich

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environment using practices assessed in the Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool. Some 13 PreK members work 1:1 and in small groups to provide 17-30 students ages 3-5 with scripted, supplemental interventions daily.

In K-3, literacy interventions align with National Reading Panel (2000) recommendations that target phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. Interventions are research-based, field-tested and supported in numerous, rigorous evaluations. Some 21 members individually tutor 25-30 K-3 students each school year using scripted interventions for 20 minutes daily. Members collect weekly progress data on children in their caseload and use this data to modify instruction to accelerate growth in literacy skills.

In grades 4-8, members will deliver scripted Math Corps interventions that align to educational standards (e.g., state and Common Core), and complement the schools' existing math curricula to help students acquire the foundational math skills that experts know students need to be ready for algebra by 8th grade. Evidence-based math interventions focus on (1) conceptual understanding, or the ability to understand what math numbers and symbols mean and how to work with them; (2) computational proficiency, or adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing; and (3) word problem-solving, which integrates math, reading, comprehension and critical-thinking skills and is widely used in tests of college-readiness and for college entry, among other applications (Gersten et al., 2009; NMAP, 2008). Each week, the member and Internal Coach will use assessment data to identify which intervention strategies are most likely to help each individual child advance to grade-level targets. Four members will work 1:2 to provide 17-25 students ages 10-13 with scripted interventions in 30-minute sessions three times a week. Students receive interventions for at least 20 weeks or until progress monitoring data indicate they are on track for grade-level targets.

DATA: The PNP maintains a secure, web-based reporting system that tracks the number of students tutored, tutoring dosage, and student assessment data. With this rich data, members provide a valuable service to their school's data review teams, which are comprised of teachers who meet in grade-level teams to discuss the academic progress of and appropriate interventions for struggling students. PNP members present their students' results to those teams and offer additional insights into the students' academic progress and behavior. Further, the PNP is part of a data-sharing program in the zone, NAZ-Connect, that promotes a more integrated approach to NAZ outcomes across schools and program sites in the zone.

COACHING: The PNP multi-layered delivery of coaching through Internal Coaches and Master Coaches at each school site reflects state-of-the-art practices for implementation science (Fixsen et.

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al., 2005), and has been recognized as a key strategy that allows literacy interventions to be consistently and effectively implemented across multiple sites (Markovitz et al., 2014). Internal Coaches, school employees who supervise and coach members day-to-day at each site, and Master Coaches, literacy experts who support effective implementation across sites, use data collected by members to monitor student progress, modify interventions to advance students toward literacy goals, and plan coaching and professional development activities. PNP design is aligned with a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach which is a framework to support educators in using data for instructional decision making.

VOLUNTEERS: Each of four Math Corps members will recruit and manage five volunteers (20 total) who will provide targeted literacy and fact-fluency interventions to support students' achievement toward personal targets set by the coaches.

3. Evidence Base. The Promise Neighborhood program combines two signature initiatives of the ServeMinnesota Action Network -- Minnesota Reading Corps (89% of staff and resources), and Minnesota Math Corps (11%). Both employ the same processes, which have been evaluated as effective (Hafford, et al., 2013). Studies performed in 2013 and 2014 provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of the Minnesota Reading Corps' K-3 program and Moderate Evidence for its Preschool program.

K-3 READING CORPS EFFECTIVENESS. A randomized controlled trial performed by NORC at the University of Chicago found that Minnesota Reading Corps participants significantly outperformed students who were not in the program (Markovitz, et. al., 2014). There was a large effect on younger students' literacy skills and a meaningful impact on older students' literacy skills. Importantly, these results were observed regardless of the students' eligibility for free and reduced price lunch (an indicator of poverty), ethnicity, lower reading scores at initial assessment, school setting (e.g., urban, suburban, or rural) or status as an English Learner.

PRESCHOOL READING CORPS EFFECTIVENESS. A Quasi-Experimental Design evaluation of the Pre-K model performed by NORC at the University of Chicago (2013-2014) found that 4- and 5-year-old students at Minnesota Reading Corps sites outperformed students at matched comparison sites on all five emergent literacy outcomes assessed (rhyming, alliteration, picture naming, letter names, letter sounds). The effect sizes associated with these differences were not only significant but substantial in magnitude. Additionally, the program was equally effective for all students, regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, English Learners, or type of preschool. In instances where differences were found, they actually favored at-risk students and there were greater effects in oral language for EL

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students (Markovitz, et. al, in press).

MATH CORPS EFFECTIVENESS. Math interventions are based on research by math experts (Gersten et. al., 2009) who recommend that: (1) Instruction during the intervention should be explicit and systematic, including models of problem solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice in computation, corrective feedback, and frequent cumulative review; (2) Intervention materials should include opportunities for students to work with visual representations of mathematical ideas (i.e., manipulatives); and (3) Interventions should devote about 10 minutes in each session to building fluent retrieval of basic arithmetic facts (i.e., fact fluency) through review. To improve conceptual understanding, the PNP will use the Concrete-Representational-Abstract (CRA) approach (e.g., Butler, Miller, Crehan, Babbit, & Pierce, 2003; Witzel, Mercer, & Miller, 2003). This approach uses concrete manipulatives (e.g., base 10 blocks and number lines) and pictorial representations (e.g., pictures with cubes) to illustrate fundamental math concepts. This CRA approach has broad empirical support, including evidence of effectiveness for teaching middle-school students fractions (Butler et al., 2003), and evidence in support of teaching early algebra concepts (Witzel et al., 2003).

4. Notice Priority. The PNP operates within the notice priority area of Education in that it provides support and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children as more fully detailed in the evidence base section. In addition, these programs contribute to My Brother's Keeper's goals of helping students of color enter school ready to learn and succeed in reading at grade level by 3rd grade and high school graduation.

5. Member Training. Markovitz, et.al. (2013) found that the training offered to Reading Corps tutors is high-quality, and effective in ensuring that even members with no background in education can successfully implement interventions that improve student academic outcomes. Members engage in a comprehensive, four-day, pre-service training Institute. The Institute is lead by Master Coaches and program staff who instruct members in: (1) AmeriCorps 101, (2) program requirements and expectations (including prohibited activities), (3) service sites and the NAZ community and mission, (4) their role in addressing the literacy and math proficiency gaps in Minnesota, (5) the fundamentals of evidence-based reading instruction, (6) student confidentiality processes, and (7) the operational details of the tutoring models they will perform (i.e., assessments, interventions, and progress monitoring). Members meet their Internal Coach, tour their school site and complete a comprehensive site orientation checklist that includes daily schedules, key staff contacts, and expectations for staff meetings. The checklist also contains open-ended questions that promote a

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dialogue between the member and the Internal Coach to promote deeper understanding of the community and the issues members will help to address.

At the Institute, members receive their handbook, which clearly defines prohibited activities, monitoring mechanisms, and consequences. Internal Coaches are trained in AmeriCorps regulations and prohibited activities at their annual pre-service training to enable them to provide effective daily supervision. Volunteers are trained by program staff during their orientation. During site visits, program staff monitors operations, review the list of prohibited activities with members, volunteers, and coaches, and confirm that requirements are being met.

During the year, all members receive on-site coaching as well as monthly professional development delivered by the Program Director, zone community partners or NAZ staff. All members attend additional trainings on topics including effective use of student data, classroom behavior management techniques, cultural competency, and "Life After AmeriCorps." Pre-K members receive additional training on assessment and data management practices, as well as training in SEEDS of Emergent Literacy. In addition, all members receive training to understand the impact of the zone's concentrated disadvantage on students and family.

Also, members in the designated pilot site will go through "Innocent Classroom" training, to build school-wide culture. For example, a child who talks constantly, aggressively touches other students and grabs their toys, is often considered irritating and inappropriate and at risk for discipline (perhaps even suspension). In the context of Innocent Classroom, this same child would be viewed as attempting to connect to the teacher and peers, but lacks social skills in this area. Members and teachers will be trained to provide social skills instruction. The PNP Master Coach will codify the specific interventions that members deliver in this context and the coaching skills required, so that this model can be replicated in other high need schools.

6. Member Supervision. The PNP provides multiple layers of guidance and support to ensure members have a successful service year. In an independent evaluation, the University of Chicago concluded that this multi-layered supervisory structure is critical to the success of the Minnesota Reading Corps, a critical component of the PNP (Markovitz, et. al., 2013). Each member is assigned an Internal Coach, a Master Coach, and a program staff member. Internal Coaches provide members with day-to-day instruction, observation, and feedback. As school employees trained in the PNP model, Internal Coaches help members work effectively within their school. The external or Master Coach has extensive subject (math or reading) expertise and training in the program model, and supports both the AmeriCorps members and the Internal Coach. The Master Coach ensures that assessments are

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conducted accurately, data is used effectively to select the intervention with the best chance of advancing students toward proficiency, and interventions are implemented with fidelity. The Program Pilots Manager manages administration, logistics, and relationships at school sites to free coaches to focus on program delivery. He helps members to integrate service experience with career plans. The Program Pilots Manager trains Internal and Master coaches on AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities and expectations at the annual Institute.

7. Member Experience. PNP ensures a powerful service experience through:

Training & Coaching: Members receive intensive training in evidence-based supplemental literacy and math interventions and coaching by literacy and math experts (Master Coaches) and day-to-day support from trained practitioners (Internal Coach). In the words of a Minnesota Reading Corps member who lives in the NAZ: "I'm grateful to serve as a Reading Corps tutor in this Promise Neighborhood. Personally, I see the impact I'm having on my students. They're learning and happy and it makes me want to do even more for each child so that school is a positive experience. And professionally, I'm learning skills that would transfer to working for a business -- record keeping, time management and data-based decision making."

Career Building: Members with teaching ambitions gain invaluable classroom experience and build skills in instructional practice. Participation in PNP also builds essential employment skills such as professional communication, goal-setting, and cultural competency, while adding the impressive AmeriCorps name to their resumes.

Structured Opportunities for Reflection: Staff supervise a cohort of members, helping them increase their connectivity to other members, and reflect on their service through Professional Learning Groups (PLGs). PLGs provide structured opportunities to build camaraderie within a smaller group and share best practices to enhance each member's personal reflection. Members also create an individual professional development plan that includes personal goals for the upcoming year.

Members also have opportunities to reflect on their experience beyond formal groups. For example, during orientation they're asked to share about their decision to dedicate a year of their life to service and what this means to them. Throughout the year, the Program Pilots Manager engages members in discussions about their service experiences and help make connections for career exploration.

Members also complete a self-evaluation prior to their Internal Coach evaluation at mid-year and yearend, which allows them to assess their own growth throughout the year. At the completion of the year, they're asked to express their thoughts about their service year through writing.

PNP is well-connected to other AmeriCorps and national service programs. Members engage in

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training, community service, and networking with members from SMAN's other AmeriCorps program; Minnesota Opportunity Corps. Members build an esprit de corps with other members in the Twin Cities during the AmeriCorps Pledge Ceremony and National Days of Service. PNP members network with other national service participants through the InterCorps Council (ICC) of MN. This peer-led group is comprised of AmeriCorps members, representing State, National, and VISTA programs, and promotes engagement, communication, collaboration, and education to empower AmeriCorps Members and communities. The ICC organizes civic engagement activities and professional development opportunities, including service projects on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and throughout the year.

Growth in Citizenship and Community Service: By committing to a year of service, members build a deeper connection and dedication to their community. PNP allows members to participate in civic engagement activities and community service projects throughout the year, and further their impact beyond their tutoring service.

Recruitment: Following the Harlem Children's Zone philosophy to recruit members from the community, PNP also partnered closely with NAZ and their staff to target recruitment efforts and leverage knowledge and relationships. To recruit a high-quality, diverse corps, PNP implements a comprehensive year-round member campaign. Recruitment efforts are focused on a variety of population groups including: recent college grads, career changers, veterans, retirees, stay-at-home parents, people with disabilities, and communities of color. Recruitment materials include animated videos to highlight AmeriCorps benefits, targeted messages to college graduates via email, targeted online ads, posters and mobile app ads, and college recruiters on key campuses who create AmeriCorps student groups and hold recruitment events. These efforts are supplemented by community-specific public relations and advertising, plus outreach within NAZ to community organizations, faith communities, libraries, local fairs and festivals, education associations and schools. The PNP trains members as program 'ambassadors' to build grass roots promotional efforts. Members are compelling when they speak from experience about their passion for making a measurable impact on students' literacy and math skills. These efforts are supported by a centralized web-based system that tracks and communicates with prospective members from the moment they express interest, through the application and screening process, until they are placed at a site.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps. The PNP ensures that members understand and share their AmeriCorps identity. At the Institute members receive service gear emblazoned with the AmeriCorps and Reading Corps or Math Corps logos (which they are required to wear to their service site each

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day), attend AmeriCorps 101 training, and practice talking to the public about their AmeriCorps year of service. The annual pledge of service is a defining moment for most members, and an emotional reminder of the commitment they have made. The PNP provides materials to identify the program site with AmeriCorps branding including site signage, recruitment brochures, and press releases. Orientation materials, member curriculum, and position descriptions also are provided by the PNP and have been branded with the AmeriCorps logo. During site monitoring visits, program staff ensures that service locations prominently display AmeriCorps signage.

Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staffing. The ServeMinnesota Action Network (SMAN) was launched in 2010 by ServeMinnesota, Minnesota's State Commission on National and Community Service. The rationale was to create one intermediary organization that would have the infrastructure necessary to rapidly incubate, replicate, and scale evidence-based AmeriCorps program models that address critical state priorities.

SMAN has an AmeriCorps infrastructure that is cost-effective, efficient, and able to quickly respond to our goal of aligning AmeriCorps resources to bring evidence-based solutions to address community problems. We operate three AmeriCorps programs that are addressing critical state priorities: Minnesota Reading Corps, Minnesota Math Corps and Minnesota Opportunity Corps. We continue to build capacity and expertise: Since our inception in 2010, we have nearly doubled the number of MSY's (650 to 1258) deployed to address these critical issues across Minnesota and have effectively managed the corresponding growth in our budget of \$14 million to over \$22 million.

SMAN's management team includes the Executive Director, Finance Director, Operations Manager, Human Resources Director, Talent Acquisition Director, and Reading Corps Senior Program Director. This group meets weekly to ensure operational excellence by monitoring performance data and taking action to improve program operations.

Executive Director Sheila Piippo (BA-Psychology, M.Ed) provides strategic direction and overall management. In 19 years of experience, she helped to create the SMAN and led significant expansions for both programs. Finance Director Susan Saunders (BS-Accounting) provides fiscal oversight and compliance. She has 27 years of nonprofit finance and accounting experience and four years of fiscal management experience with AmeriCorps. Human Resources Director, Sandy Theisen (BA-Human Resources) has 20 years of Human Resources experience and has supported SMAN's growth for more than two years. These three positions are covered in the Administrative section of the budget. Operations Manager Chandra Conway (BA-Hospitality and Tourism) has 5 years of

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management experience. She provides logistical support for talent management and professional development, and manages the organization's effective use of technology, data, materials, facilities, and administrative systems.

Minnesota Reading Corps Senior Program Director Christine Fankhanel (BA-English) manages program implementation and staff in the Greater Twin Cities Metro area. She has over 9 years of experience managing Reading Corps and Math Corps completed two terms of service through AmeriCorps VISTA. In addition, Program Pilots Manager Andrew Mueller (BA in Music and Latin American Studies) oversees member experience, provides training, coordinates with NAZ and community partners in the zone, and is part of the zone's continuous improvement process. He has over 2 years with the Reading Corps and Math Corps and served as a VISTA and AmeriCorps state member. A Talent Acquisition (TA) Director, to be hired this year, will lead the new TA department, develop and implement a comprehensive year-round recruitment plan, and use innovative outreach strategies to greatly expand our brand awareness across all potential pools of high quality members. The TA Director will have proven experience leading large TA campaigns and will optimize digital properties including the MRC website, video, and social media; build the capacity of a centralized web-based system that tracks and communicates with prospective members from the moment they express interest, through the application and screening process, until they are selected for a site; partner with college service clubs and other student groups that can reach diverse populations; expand marketing, advertising and promotional efforts; and create a work plan with specific targets along an annual timeline.

Day-to-day operations are supported by 70 staff across Minneapolis headquarters and 7 regional offices. More than half of our staff has served as AmeriCorps members themselves. All staff is trained in AmeriCorps rules and regulations and on the requirements of the Federal Office of Management and Budget. Staff has the proven experience, capacity and tools to administer multi-million-dollar government grants. SMAN staff dedicated to the Promise Neighborhood program include a percentage of time for the following positions: Program operations, talent acquisition, recruitment/outreach, member placement, program coordination/management, member benefits/compliance, social media, IT, payroll, fellows, interns and special projects.

Community members are engaged in an advisory capacity through SMAN's seven-person Board of Directors. Board members have expertise in education, finance and public relations. The board meets quarterly to review program performance, financial statements, community feedback, and strategic direction. The Minnesota Reading Corps Literacy Team is a committee of local academics, evaluators,

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and teachers who meet biweekly to review literacy research with the potential to inform and improve Reading Corps interventions, implementation and performance. Similarly, the Math Corps Task Force unites local practitioners and stakeholders in determining the direction of the Math Corps program. The Promise Neighborhood Program Pilots Manager coordinates with NAZ and community partners to gather input and align services. The PNP also issues surveys each year that elicit teacher, parent and member feedback that are used for program improvement. Community members are also involved as follows:

Community Stakeholders and Partners - School Leaders: The PNP exemplifies the power of engaging with community partners to design an innovative approach to solving what otherwise feels like an unsolvable problem. The planning unfolded over a year long process that was initiated with NAZ arranging for ServeMinnesota's CEO to observe the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) implementation of using AmeriCorps members as a whole school reform strategy. After that visit, NAZ and ServeMinnesota invited a HCZ school principal, HCZ AmeriCorps program director, and an HCZ executive to spend a day with community partners in Minnesota that included SMAN, principals and administrators from Minneapolis School District, Target and leaders from Generation Next (Minneapolis' STRIVE initiative-a broad-based coalition of civic, business and education leaders focused on closing the achievement and opportunity gaps for students of color in Minneapolis and St. Paul and dramatically accelerating the educational achievement of all children.). This two day visioning session was followed up with a day-long design session facilitated by four representatives from Target's corporate community relations team and culminated into what is now this PNP program.

As a whole school reform model, we believe the PNP pilot school will provide Generation Next with a promising practice that they can help replicate across Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The Business Community: The Minnesota business community has been particularly concerned about its future workforce and economy in a rapidly diversifying state that persistently has among the worst academic achievement gaps in the nation. Consequently, state business leaders have become catalysts in igniting a statewide public-private movement focused on the urgent need to invest in early education. This effort has been largely inspired by the MN Federal Reserve Bank's former lead economist, Art Rolnick, whose research has illustrated a substantial economic payback of an \$8 return for every \$1 invested for effective early childhood education. This sense of urgency has led to the inclusion of Minnesota Reading Corps in statewide efforts to collaborate and strive for cost-effective, replicable, and proven interventions to reverse the trend of increasing failure.

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2. Compliance and Accountability. The SMAN infrastructure ensures accountability and effective compliance with a proven monitoring and technical assistance system. SMAN implements a risk mitigation plan that includes written agreements with sites and members, two site visits, review of required documentation, financial reviews, and an ongoing review of Program Operating Procedures to ensure continuous improvement and compliance with federal regulations.

The PNP executes an agreement annually with every site prior to a member beginning service. In that site agreement, program expectations, prohibited activities, and AmeriCorps regulations are clearly outlined. Similarly, all members are required to sign a contract before they can begin their year of service. Their contract outlines the term of service, responsibilities of the position, prohibited activities, grievance procedures, non-displacement policy, equal opportunity employment and non-discrimination statements, inclusive environment statement, and drug-free workplace requirements. Compliance is monitored through site visits, ongoing Master Coaching, and regular staff meetings at which member specialists review Program Operating Procedures with members, introduce any new AmeriCorps regulations, and address any issues.

The member compliance specialist prevents and detects compliance issues by reviewing 100% of the member files. The Finance Director prevents and detects compliance issues regarding expenditures through regular monitoring of budgets, and Program Directors, supported by the Program Pilots Manager, ensure accountability and compliance through on-going monitoring and training. If instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the issue is immediately addressed by the appropriate staff. If an issue is severe, a plan of corrective action is implemented and the member and/or site monitored for improvement.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost Effectiveness. The Promise Neighborhood Program is budgeted at \$695,200 in total, of which CNCS is asked to invest \$370,500. This will be matched with \$324,700 in public funding. Although this is a new request to CNCS, the match provided equals 47% of the total budget.

The cost per MSY is \$12,350 which is \$1380/MSY below the allowable federal cost of \$13,730, and just \$584 per student served (but offered free to families). This is a remarkable return on investment considering that this intervention has the potential to launch a child on a trajectory of educational success that may extend through high school graduation, and that Minnesota spends, on average, \$10,796 to educate a child (Census, 2012). This also cost compares favorably to other options, including private tutoring services, which can run \$50 per hour or more. In addition, a matched sample analysis (Heistad, 2012) found that at-risk students who did not receive Reading Corps

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tutoring were referred to special education at three times the rate of Reading Corps participants by the end of one school year. It is estimated that in Minnesota alone, this diversion of children from special education results in a cost-savings to the educational system of \$9 million per year.

The budget supports the proposed program design and is cost effective in that it ensures an appropriate mix of senior leadership and direct program staff for program implementation. It also includes carefully crafted estimates of the amount of training and master coaching time, program supply expenses, and evaluation costs that are required to achieve stated performance measures.

SMAN is supported by a diverse portfolio of non-federal funds. The Promise Neighborhood program requires a total of \$324,700 (cash) from non-CNCS sources, for which we have already secured \$224,700 in state funds and we expect an annual renewable grant from Target for \$100,000.

2. Budget Adequacy. The budget of \$695,200 ensures the appropriate mix of leadership and direct program staff to ensure effective program implementation. It also includes carefully crafted estimates of member and internal coach training and Master Coach time, curriculum expenses, and evaluation costs that are required to fully implement Reading Corps so as to achieve the desired outcomes for students. The cost of criminal history and FBI checks also are included in the budget.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Award Clarification:

- Please confirm that AmeriCorps members serving in PreK classrooms are not acting as the classroom teacher of record for the PreK students (in other words, confirm that the members are serving alongside an existing PreK teacher).

AmeriCorps members serving in PreK classrooms are not acting as the classroom teacher of record for the PreK students. All AmeriCorps members serving in PreK classrooms are serving alongside an existing PreK teacher.

A. General Clarification items:

2. Funding is extremely competitive and limited this year. Having a low Cost Per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. Applicants submitting with a low cost per MSY will receive higher

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priority for funding. Please consider decreasing the application's proposed cost per MSY by revising the CNCS share of the program budget, or provide a compelling explanation for why the cost/MSY cannot be decreased. CNCS will review both the individual program cost per MSY and the aggregate cost per MSY after the clarification period and may elect to make further decreases in cost per MSY and/or may be only able to partially fund applicants.

We are staying at the requested funding level of \$12,350.00 cost per MSY as it would be prohibitive to decrease the cost per MSY given the high level programmatic and content support necessary to implement this initiative. Recruiting and retaining high quality and committed individuals to serve in this high need community requires additional resources.

B. Programmatic Clarification items: Please respond in the eGrants narrative field labeled 'Clarification Summary.'

1. Please explain whether member positions (slots) being requested as part of this application are also duplicated in any other application currently under review by the Corporation (new, re-competing, or continuation). If applicable, indicate how many slots are duplicated and the application(s) in which duplicated slots are requested.

The slots currently being requested are not duplicated in any other application currently under review by the Corporation.

2. Please explain how many members will be engaged in the pilot initiative to embed members in classrooms, and provide a more detailed explanation of their daily activities and how the activities will connect to the program's Theory of Change and desired outcomes.

We anticipate embedding 6 members in K-3 classrooms as part of the pilot initiative. These tutors will provide the standard Reading Corps model in the classroom setting in order to improve student outcomes by allowing for closer alignment with the teacher implemented interventions. Additionally the tutor will support the literacy rich environment of the classroom during non tutoring times.

3. Please describe how the program will meet the requirements for a tutoring program in terms of member qualifications, training, and supervision as specified in 45 CFR §2522.910-.940.

Tutors serving with Reading Corps must have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED prior to serving with the program. Additionally all tutors must complete the required research based Reading Corps training prior to tutoring students with the program. All Reading Corps tutors receive immediate supervision from an Internal Coach, a staff person of the site who is trained in the Reading Corps model, and this person receives literacy model support through a Master Coach provided through Reading Corps.

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C. Budget Clarification items: Please respond to the clarification items in the 'Budget Narrative' section of the application unless otherwise indicated.

1. Please explain why the program has 16 school sites but only references 14 Internal Coaches in the budget.

Internal Coaches may serve at more than one school site, which is why we have 16 school sites but only 14 Internal Coaches in the budget.

D. Performance Measure Clarification items: Please make the following changes in the Performance Measures screens in eGrants or in the 'Clarification Summary' field, as appropriate.

1. The performance measures indicate that 100% of the program's MSY will be devoted to 1:1 and small-group tutoring interventions and the associated outputs and outcomes; however, the application narrative states that some members will be engaged in a pilot initiative where they are embedded in classrooms. Please indicate the number of MSY and members connected to this pilot, and explain whether these activities are captured under the existing performance measures. If not, please remove these MSY from the National Performance Measures currently selected. If desired, an additional performance measure can be added to capture the impacts from this pilot.

We anticipate that 6 members will participate in the pilot being embedded in a classroom for their tutoring. Members engaged in the pilot will be responsible for tutoring a caseload of students throughout the majority of their day and will be contributing towards the performance measures.

2. Please describe how the children counted under the PreK Literacy, K3 Literacy, and 4-8 Math Proficiency measures will meet the definition of "economically disadvantaged" as specified in the performance measure instructions for ED20 and ED1, respectively.

Measures ED20 and ED21 ask for the "number of economically disadvantaged children or children with special or exceptional needs." The children counted in the PreK Literacy and the K3 Literacy measures meet the definition of "children with special or exceptional needs" as they have been assessed as "having literacy needs" as outlined in the CNCS definitions.

3. The 4-8 Math Proficiency intervention is listed as Tutoring - One on One; however, the Describe Interventions narrative indicates a 1:2 small group ratio. Please resolve this apparent discrepancy. The narrative is correct. Intervention sessions occur in a small group setting; one tutor and two students. This has been updated in the Describe Intervention section under "selected interventions."

4. In the 4-8 Math Proficiency performance measure, please indicate in the Describe Intervention or Described Instrument section how program completion will be defined under ED2, including the specific nature of the exit criteria used. Under ED5, please specify in the Described Instrument section

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which assessment tool(s) will be used to measure math growth rates, and confirm that the instrument(s) meet all of the requirements detailed in the performance measure instructions for ED5. These sections have been updated in the performance measure section.

5. For the PreK Literacy, K3 Literacy, and 4-8 Math Proficiency performance measures, program completion is defined as meeting achievement-based exit criteria. Please explain how the definitions of improved academic performance in ED5 and gains in literacy skills under ED24 differ from the definitions of program completion under ED2 and ED21, respectively, and explain why the targets for ED5 and ED24 are significantly lower than the targets for ED2 and ED21.

K-3 Literacy: The definition of improved academic performance in ED5 differs from the definition of program completion in ED2 in that a student may be counted in ED2 as "completed participation" if the student has met the defined exit criteria (3-5 data points above the aimline) or has participated in at least 12 weeks of tutoring. A student may be counted in ED5 as having attained "improved academic performance" if he/she has an established growth above the established grade level target growth, or in other words -- has achieved more than a year's worth of growth in a year's time. The target for ED5 is lower than ED2 because historical data shows that within Minnesota Reading Corps approximately 80% of students who meet the definition for completion achieve more than a year's worth of growth in a year's time.

PreK Literacy: The definition of gain in literacy skills in ED24 differs from the definition of program completion in ED21 in that a student may be counted in ED21 as "completed participation" if the student participated in a full year of Reading Corps programming. A student may be counted in ED24 as having attained a "gain in literacy skills" if he/she shows growth on 3 of the 5 PreK assessments. The target for ED24 is lower than ED21 because the historical data shows that within Minnesota Reading Corps approximately 83% of students who meet the definition for completion show growth.

4-8 Math Proficiency: The targets for ED5 are lower than the targets of ED2 because students may be counted in ED5 as having attained improved academic performance in math, as defined as math growth rates that exceed targeted grade-level growth. A student may be counted in ED2 as "completed participation" if the student has demonstrated of improved academic performance in math, as defined as math growth rates that exceed targeted grade-level growth, or has participated in at least 20 weeks of tutoring.

6. Please clarify whether the number of children counted under ED20, 21, and 24 includes only children who specifically receive small-group or one-on-one tutoring, or whether the counts include all children in the PreK classrooms where the members serve. If the latter, please provide a

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justification for how all students counted under the measures are at risk of reading failure and receive intervention dosages consistent with the program's Theory of Change.

The students counted in ED20, 21 and 24 include all children in the PreK classrooms where the members serve. In accordance with a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, the Reading Corps PreK model is a three tier model of instructional and intervention support (Tier 1 = whole classroom support, Tier 2 = small group support, Tier 3 = one-on-one support). Tutors are trained to support students across all tiers, and use assessment data to determine the intensity and duration of the dosage needed for each student. Historically, at least 95% of students have a demonstrated literacy need according to the fall assessment data collected by Reading Corps.

7. In the Describe Interventions section of the PreK Literacy measure, please specify how the program defines "eligible students" to receive supplemental tutoring.

Students are determined to be eligible for supplemental tutoring based on the five early literacy assessments (picture naming, alliteration, rhyming, letter name fluency, letter sound fluency) administered to all students three times per year. Reading Corps has defined target scores for each of these five assessments that are correlated to Kindergarten readiness. There are defined ranges for 'on target', 'close to target' and 'far from target.' A student is eligible for supplemental tutoring if he/she scores in the range of being 'far from target,' with priority to skills given in this order -- picture naming, letter naming, rhyming, alliteration, and letter sound. This has been updated in the Performance Measure section.

8. Please indicate in the Describe Intervention or Described Instrument section how program completion will be defined under ED21, including the specific nature of the exit criteria used.

The number of PreK students who complete Reading Corps, as measured in ED21, are students who are assessed in both the fall and spring benchmark windows. This is an indication that the student benefited from a complete year of Reading Corps support. This has been updated in the Performance Measure section.

E. Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification items:

Please respond in the eGrants narrative field labeled 'Clarification Summary' unless otherwise indicated.

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

Although we are not requesting additional slots for members with disabilities we do intend to target 10% of our slots in the Promise Neighborhood Program for individuals with disabilities. Targeted

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outreach will be conducted using media outlets and social media outreach towards disability groups. Outreach is also being conducted through the Department of Employment and Economic Development job fairs and workforce centers. Our Community Engagement Recruiter will focus on a variety of local diverse organizations. These members will also be engaged by the Program Pilots Manager to ensure that they have the level of support and any necessary reasonable accommodations in order to serve and complete the essential functions of their positions.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics