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Executive Summary

Northeastern University's Massachusetts Promise Fellowship will have 40 AmeriCorps members lead out-of-school time programs in communities across the Commonwealth. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing academic engagement for 525 young people in grades 6-12 by delivering 200 hours of Out of School Time (OST) programming per member. In addition, members will leverage 700 volunteers that will engage in direct service activities that allow the organization and subgrantees to serve more youth. This program will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Education and My Brother's Keeper. The CNCS investment of \$528,745 will be matched with \$801,645 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Program Design

Problem/Need

The AmeriCorps Massachusetts Promise Fellowship (MPF) grew from the America's Promise Alliance, a collaborative network based on "5 Promises" that form the conditions youth need to succeed: Caring Adults, Safe Spaces, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Serve (www.americaspromise.org). America's Promise is a thought leader in dropout prevention, disseminating research on the 5 Promises as effective interventions to curb America's dropout crisis. MPF believes all young people in Massachusetts (MA) have a right to these Promises and implements these interventions during the Out of School Time (OST) setting to increase youth academic engagement -- a key factor in dropout prevention -- as defined by an increase in youth-reported school attachment attitudes and behaviors. Aligning with President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative, MPF uses the Promises and research-based academic engagement interventions to support schools, city agencies and community-based organizations in the effort to help youth reach their full potential by graduating from high school and moving on to college and careers. MPF primarily serves youth from families living at or below the poverty line (75%) and attending underachieving schools, as reported by current subgrantees. These students are also disproportionately youth of color (83%). Since youth spend more than 80% of their time "out of school," MPF delivers high quality academic engagement interventions to low income, underachieving youth, who otherwise, struggle to access the extra support required to successfully transition into adulthood (Advances in Child Behavior, Vol. 41, Lerner, Li, et. al, 2011). In MA, 94% percent of middle- and high-income students are graduating in four years -- likely close to the maximum -- but the state's overall graduation rates are at 85%, which

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highlight that in order to make further gains, low-income students, graduating at a lower rate (73%) than their peers (mass.gov / Grad Nation Report, 2014), need additional support. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Communities in Schools (CIS) and the National Network of Drop-out Prevention, it was illustrated that the three main risk factors linked to drop-out include family socioeconomic status, low achievement, and absenteeism (Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs, CIS, 2007).

MPF mobilizes members to serve youth across the Commonwealth in grades 6 -12 living or attending school in communities with high rates of poverty, unemployment, and violence, which research tells us, contributes to high school dropout rates (Lerner, Li, et al, 2011). In particular, Boston and Springfield experience poverty rates above the state average of 11.6%, at 20.8% and 16.2% respectively (<http://opportunityindex.org>, 2014), with 77.7% and 87.3% of those students relying on free or reduced lunch (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2014). Worcester also has an unemployment rate above the state average and, like Fall River, experiences approximately 200 (per 100,000 populations) more violent crimes annually than the average MA city (Office of Worcester County, DA, 2014). Given these trends, MPF can conclude that students are at a higher risk of dropping out when their home and/or community environment is compounded by trauma, abuse, or other factors impacting their health and well-being (Grad Nation Report, 2014). In MA, students most affected by these non-academic barriers reside disproportionately in the communities listed above and attend level 4 schools (Reducing High School Dropout through Student Supports, Walsh, 2014). During the past sixteen years, MPF has placed members in every community that currently houses a level 4 school, largely within Boston, Fall River, Worcester and Springfield, in order to combat drop-out trends. Given the scope of these multiple risk factors, research demonstrates that drop-out prevention is most successful when it uses interventions that reach youth along all domains: individual, family, school, and community (CIS Annual Report, 2013). Leveraging subgrantee knowledge of these communities, member-led interventions will utilize a positive youth development approach to harness youth resiliency and interrupt the cycle of academic disengagement (Lerner, Li, et. al, 2011).

Theory of Change and Logic Model

MPF's Promise focus in OST settings concentrates on three interventions identified as most needed and effective for high school graduation: mentoring (Caring Adults), academic enrichment (Effective Education & Safe Space), and college and career readiness (Effective Education), guided by My Brother's Keeper Initiative (MA Report on Dropout Prevention, OST Programs for Older Youth, 2011).

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Subgrantees may also utilize other Promises as vehicles for engaging youth in skills needed for school and life, such as community service-learning (Opportunities to Serve) or sports-based academic engagement (Healthy Start), yet these Promise focus areas must also demonstrate a strong linkage to academic engagement. MPF's theory of change is rooted in research that proves targeted OST programs reduce the drop-out rate among youth in grades 6-12 by improving their academic engagement and confidence in their ability to graduate high school, with the option of post-secondary education or job training. Academic engagement is defined by three components: behavioral (attendance, attitudes/behavior in school), emotional (feelings of belonging, safety, happiness at school), and cognitive attachments (understanding school as a vehicle to success) (Li, Lerner, et. al). Using evidence supplied by the Tufts University Center for Promise, MPF has structured its theory of change around the proven idea that behavioral and emotional engagement in school has a causal effect, positive or negative, on academic competence (Li, Lerner, et. al). For this purpose, academic competence is defined as the skills and capabilities needed for youth to succeed in school.

Mentoring, both one-to-one and team, continually demonstrates a positive impact on youth social and emotional behaviors and academic performance (Mass Mentoring Counts, 2013). In this focus area, members create and sustain mentor-mentee matches through programs where they're placed across the state, utilizing both site-based and community-based models, to ensure youth have a positive adult influence in their lives.

Interventions focused primarily on academic support make up approximately 65% of the projects of MPF's competitively selected subgrantees. Within this focus, programs largely implement OST curriculum focused on: STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Math), MCAS Math/English Language Arts support groups, SAT prep, and/or a one-to-one instruction tailored to the student needs and grade level. In this area, MPF prioritizes projects that incorporate partnerships with school districts, engage teachers and parents, or are hosted in a school setting to ensure academic instruction is meeting student needs and consistent dosage of 200 hours is received.

In alignment with My Brother's Keeper Initiative, MPF views college and career readiness as an effective intervention to improve academic competence and help youth graduate high school college and career ready. Intensive college and career counseling has been shown to raise student awareness of school as a vehicle to success and, therefore, has a positive impact on youth cognitive engagement (GradNation Report, 2014). In this focus area, MPF realizes the landscape of OST programs must do more than just prepare youth to be successful in their academic achievements. Research shows that OST programs that use scaffolding to build a "coherent set of learning experiences, across time and

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place, in job readiness and college completion" will support youth development and expose them to post-secondary opportunities (Halpern, 2012).

MPF will train 40 full-time AmeriCorps members to deliver OST academic engagement programs in the above three research-based interventions for 700 youth in grades 6-12 living or attending school in high-need communities. AmeriCorps members are uniquely suited to carry out these interventions because they inspire an ethic of service and enhance the educational supports students need to be successful. This legacy of service ensures MPF's ability to recruit high-quality members motivated to intervene in the cycle of academic disengagement. Members bring both new energy and connections to a wealth of resources through the MPF network that benefits the youth and the communities they serve. On an annual basis average, 80% of members collaborate with each other, sharing resources and building bridges between the communities they serve.

Members will provide 5-7 hours of direct programming to youth weekly and recruit more than 700 adult volunteers who will act as mentors, academic coaches, and college/career advisors to increase subgrantee capacity in delivering programs to youth at risk of dropping out. Members will spend their mornings planning curriculum, recruiting and managing volunteers, meeting and building relationships with community partners, and engaging with teachers and families of their youth participants. In the afternoons and evenings, members deliver their direct service programming that will connect youth to opportunities for mentoring, academic support and college and career exploration, with complimentary programming in civic and leadership skill building. Upon participating in a minimum of 200 hours of programming, 75% of youth served by members and adult volunteers, 75% of these youth will demonstrate an increase in their confidence to graduate.

Evidence Base

MPF's evidence based model utilizes two non-experimental studies (pre-and-post surveys and focus groups) as well as research released in the April 2014 Building a Grad Nation Report conducted by the America's Promise Alliance and other thought leaders in the field of drop-out prevention. In the current three-year grant cycle, MPF piloted the use of pre-and-post surveys to measure changes in youth-reported academic engagement. This was a significant program model shift toward a more academically focused goal. In 2012-2013, MPF served 950 youth and was able to gather pre-and-post surveys for 525 young people, of which 60% showed an increase in academic engagement. The following year, MPF served 1,015 young people and procured surveys for 585 youth, of which 65% demonstrated an increase in academic engagement.

Though youth self-reported an overall increase of 60-65% in academic engagement from 2012-2013,

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we did not meet our program goal of 80%. In order to ensure youth self-report an 80% increase in academic engagement in the next grant cycle, MPF has increased the consistent dosage requirement, streamlined the focus of our interventions, and will select partners with a proven track record of youth retention. We feel confident in reaching this benchmark as recent trends show youth becoming more academically focused, illustrated by the fact that 72% of youth reported last spring that they felt more equipped to complete homework assignments on-time after a year of member-led programming, compared to the 62% reported in the fall.

Academic engagement is measured by a pre-and-post survey questionnaire, entitled the Behavioral-Emotional-Cognitive School Engagement Scale (BEC-SES) from the Institute of Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, which is designed to assess academic engagement in youth grades 4-12. The BEC-SES captures a student's increase in academic engagement using a tripartite conceptualization of engagement, with 15 questions drawing from the categories of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attachment to school. Using this theoretical model, members administer pre-surveys in October and post-surveys in May. Pre-and-post survey data is collected using an online survey tool and analyzed in Excel and Stata to ensure results are statistically valid. The survey design uses a Likert scale based on the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, which has been proven as a successful tool in measuring academic engagement.

MPF's current evaluation efforts are implemented internally and utilize a quantitative research methodology with mixed methods to measure impact among youth in MPF-led OST programs. This triangulation of data seeks to explain quantitative pre-and-post survey results by exploring youth attitudes toward academic engagement in a focus group setting led by members. We rely on the BEC-SES questionnaire for statistical data and compliment this strategy with a more in-depth focus group with youth from our questionnaire sample. Focus group data is collected each March and coded using an MPF-developed code book to inform our end of year statistics. Surveys and focus group data are then used to inform what interventions have the most impact on youth academic engagement.

Through monthly reports, members submit data on hours of programming delivered, volunteer recruitment, mentor-mentee matches, college counseling, targeted academic instruction sessions, and service-learning projects. These measures guide our sequential explanatory strategy and provide a greater control for dosage in order to confirm survey reliability. Pre-and-Post survey data, as well as testimonials from youth focus groups, yielded positive findings in the intended outcome of academic engagement and drop-out prevention.

MPF's evaluation design and theory of change rely heavily on the research conducted in The Building

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a Grad Nation report, which discusses current progress and challenges within the Civic Marshall Plan to address the dropout crisis and ensure the class of 2020 reaches a goal of a 90 percent graduation rate. The report highlights 4 major strategies to achieving its goal: correcting chronic absenteeism, focusing on middle grades, adult and peer supports, and re-engaging dropouts. MPF's interventions seek to address all four trends in the OST setting, yet, all member-led interventions rely heavily on providing underserved communities with additional adult and peer supports. Through the analysis of this report, MPF was able to employ similar strategies in order to confirm that the proposed interventions do indeed, on the whole, have a positive effect on the academic engagement of youth served by their AmeriCorps member. Given the internal research conducted over the last three years and the comparable data provided by the Grad Nation report, MPF is in the moderate evidence category.

MPF has employed an external evaluator to benchmark program data by assessing our impact in a qualitative comparison case study that will take place January 2015-July 2015. This will be phase 1 of our full evaluation study, with phase 2 including a qualitative and quantitative assessment of youth academic engagement across three years using longitudinal pre-and-post survey data and focus groups. This will take place August 2015 through July 2017.

Notice Priority

As mentioned above, MPF's proposed program falls primarily within President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative, which seeks to engage low income young people of color in mentoring, academic support, and provide college and/or career skills necessary for youth to enter the workforce.

While MPF's program design touches upon multiple milestones, it specifically aligns with the third, 'Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career.' College and career readiness is one of three primary interventions members will implement in order to reduce the drop-out rate in under resourced communities in MA, particularly Worcester, Springfield, Fall River, and Boston.

Simultaneously, members will implement interventions focused on mentoring and academic support, in order to address the early signs of drop-out, such as low-achievement and absenteeism.

Member Training

MPF's training program introduces skills that will transform members into high impact facilitators of research-based youth engagement interventions and community leaders. Each year, the program begins with a 3-day residential orientation, which serves as an introduction to the 170 hours of MPF led member training. Orientation topics connect members to the AmeriCorps service movement, lay

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the foundation for meeting service expectations, avoiding prohibited activities and developing a network of support. After orientation, members receive project and community specific training from subgrantees relevant to their project focus.

Members convene 1 to 2 full days per month for training and the curriculum covers 6 target areas.

The first target area is "Success in MPF and Becoming a Proud AmeriCorps Alum," where members learn the skills necessary to succeed in MPF, meet expectations, avoid prohibited activities and transition into a civically engaged career post-service. The remaining 5 target areas utilize the vision of America's Promise Alliance to train members on best practices for facilitating programs focused on mentoring, academic support, college and career exploration, and complementary workshops on civic and leadership skill building. Foundational workshops are presented on these areas at the start of the program, and members convene regularly in working groups based on these areas to share resources and troubleshoot challenges. Teambuilding workshops focus on corps identity exploration and how members can learn from their diverse corps and apply these lessons to their service. Trainings are delivered by local experts and specialists including, Mass Mentoring Partnership, uAspire, and Health Resources in Action. AmeriCorps policy reminders and small and large group reflections are also incorporated into all trainings. MPF's Senior Fellow program provides five second-year members with a leadership opportunity to serve as advisors to their peers and facilitate workshops and activities during training sessions. These members are managed by MPF staff who ensure that they are serving in a mentor role and are not supervising their peers. At each training, members meet in small groups facilitated by a Senior Fellow to reflect on their service and troubleshoot day to day challenges.

Through the program's partnership with Northeastern University (NU), members have the opportunity to pursue free courses while in service. Each year, many members will take advantage of the opportunity to begin coursework in education or non-profit management, enhancing their ability to deliver high quality services to their youth. Since 2007, 50% of members have taken courses at NU and 60 members have completed a graduate certificate or master's degree in these areas. Additional training is also available through MPF's Nonprofit Leadership Institute, a 30-hour leadership development course with graduate level accreditation at NU. On average, 10 members take advantage of this program annually during their service year.

Member Supervision

As a scattered site model, MPF uses an extensive training and monitoring plan to ensure members are engaged in appropriate service and subgrantees provide high quality supervision. When selecting subgrantees each year, MPF requests that each applicant provide an overview of the selected

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supervisor's background and their capacity to oversee a member. Upon selection, MPF staff engages with supervisors quarterly and through monthly emails to ensure they are meeting MPF expectations. At the start of the year, supervisors receive training on AmeriCorps compliance, regulations and prohibited activities before receiving their member. MPF staff conducts a mid-year site visit with each subgrantee, with a follow-up visit in the spring if needed, hosts a member-supervisor meeting to communicate policy reminders and share best practices, and engages in monthly virtual check-ins to review member performance and offer resources on member management. In 2013, MPF began to offer all supervisors a 25% discount at Northeastern's College of Professional Studies as an opportunity to enhance their own professional development and management skills.

MPF requires all supervisors to meet with their member on a weekly basis to provide project support and guidance. MPF initiates the supervisor/member relationship building process by facilitating a training on working styles with both groups during their respective orientations and this serves as the topic for their first supervision meeting. Feedback is solicited from members by MPF staff on a monthly basis through an online report to ensure they are receiving adequate support, while also providing an avenue to voice concerns they may have about supervision at their host site.

Member Experience

"The Fellows that mentored me instilled values about the importance of volunteering and supported me academically. Because of the incredible impact they made in my life, I knew after graduating college that I wanted to serve in AmeriCorps and inspire other youth to make a difference in their community."-Stephenie Hou, 2014-2015 Fellow & 2006-2010 youth recipient of MPF service

MPF fosters an ethic of giving back, within both the members and the young people they serve. This year, 38% of our members are serving in their home neighborhoods. Over the course of our 16 year history, 6 members have served in MPF after being mentored by an MPF member when they were in high school.

MPF is committed to preparing members for success during their term of service and beyond. In 2013-2014, 97% of members reported that their MPF experience prepared them for full-time employment or furthering their education. Each year, an average of 10 members commit to a second year of service and 25% of members are hired for full-time employment by an MPF subgrantee following their service year. 90% of all members secure full-time employment or move on to graduate school within three months of completing the program. Members also have the opportunity to participate in our Fellow Alumni Mentoring program (FAM) which matches members with program alumni who are currently in careers that are of interest to the member. The mentoring

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relationships are focused on 'Life After AmeriCorps' and mentors provide career advice and coaching. MPF's subgrantee selection process guarantees that service projects provide members with opportunities to make a meaningful impact and have a high quality experience that includes strong levels of project ownership. Members are trained and coached as they design curriculum, recruit young people, and lead OST programs. Members reflect on their service experience in group activities at trainings, in writing in monthly reports, newsletters, and our member blog, and in a legacy project, which documents their accomplishments throughout their year of service to ensure project sustainability.

Members connect with each other on a daily basis through an online portal, which provides them with the opportunity to share documents and engage in virtual chats. MPF also participates annually in "Promise Fellow Week," a celebration of the accomplishments of AmeriCorps Promise Fellows in Massachusetts and Minnesota. Members exchange video messages with each other to share information about their projects and also engage in a week long social media campaign centered on promoting AmeriCorps, Promise Fellows, and their collective impact on young people.

The theme of civic engagement is woven throughout all member activities, and in our 2014 alumni survey, 95% of respondents reported still being engaged in their communities. MPF provides alumni with opportunities to continue their service to the program, including attending days of service, participating in FAM, serving on our advisory board, participating in our subgrantee selection process, attending a program event, or making an in-kind or fiscal donation. On average, over 100 of our alumni community will engage with MPF in one of these ways each year.

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

Members are introduced to the national service movement at orientation through trainings on the AmeriCorps program, developing and delivering their AmeriCorps "elevator pitch," and understanding the service landscape in MA. Members are provided with an AmeriCorps lanyard and nametag and branded apparel. They wear their AmeriCorps nametag and their branded gear daily. Subgrantees are mandated to utilize AmeriCorps signage in their space, provide members with AmeriCorps branded business cards, and include the AmeriCorps logo on all publications related to member-led activities. MPF also requests that members are given the opportunity to introduce themselves to the communities they serve and explain their connection to national service through a press release, event, or public introduction. Staff monitors these policies through site-visits and quarterly check-ins with supervisors.

Organizational Capability

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Organizational Capability

Organizational background and Staffing

Housed in the Center of Community Service at Northeastern, MPF is managed by three full-time staff members who, collectively, have over 12 years of experience managing this program, not including the 3 years of experience two managers have as former MPF members.

Director Colleen Holohan has been with MPF since 2006, starting as the Member and Program Manager and promoted to Director in 2012. Colleen has 8 years of AmeriCorps fiscal and programmatic oversight, not including her 3 years of service as an AmeriCorps VISTA, and has a Masters in Leadership and Non-profit Management. In her role, Colleen oversees the MPF budget, manages community partnerships, supports the advisory board, administers the member course benefit, and supervises MPF staff and AmeriCorps members. Colleen is advised by Northeastern's Vice President of City & Community Affairs.

Member and Program Manager (MPM) Kathryn Allen is an MPF alum, joined as a staff member in 2012 and holds a Masters in Non-Profit Management. Kathryn is responsible for planning MPF's training curriculum, facilitating the Non-Profit Leadership Institute, and overseeing the alumni program. Evaluation and Volunteer Manager (EVM) Cecelia Auditore served two years as an MPF AmeriCorps member and holds a Masters in Global Studies and International Affairs. Cecelia joined the staff in 2012 and manages MPF's evaluation curriculum, coordinates youth and member service events, facilitates the program's second year member Senior Fellow program, and oversees MPF's recruitment efforts.

All staff share responsibilities related to member support, marketing and communications, ensuring member compliance with AmeriCorps provisions, as well as member hiring and onboarding. Each staff member is a Northeastern employee trained by Human Resources, is eligible for free coursework at the university, and receives access to a professional development fund to pursue training related to their job areas. The MPM and EVM are both supported and supervised by the MPF Director.

MPF was founded as a 15-member AmeriCorps program following the America's Promise Summit in 1998. Since that time, MPF has been a successful AmeriCorps program and maintained a high level of quality during times of expansion. In 2008-2009, MPF increased from a 30 to 39 member corps and, given the success of that expansion, was granted 40 members in the 2010-2011 federal continuation application. At this size, the program is well equipped to build strong community within the corps and deliver high quality services to our subgrantees. To aid in this effort, Northeastern provides grant support from the Research Administration and Finance Department, which has a long history of

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federal grant oversight and has successfully administered grants from the National Science Foundation, NASA, and the National Institute of Health.

Local research, youth internal data and ongoing feedback from subgrantees inform the program model to ensure MPF's research-based interventions are meeting the community's most pressing needs. MPF's annual request for proposals allows subgrantees to design projects that both meet the needs of their communities and young people while aligning with MPF's model. Proposals include information on community and organizational need, project objectives and outcomes, and connection to MPF's goal of increasing youth academic engagement. The subgrantee selection process includes a three-tiered proposal review, incorporating feedback from community members and youth constituents, current MPF corps members, advisory board members and staff. The advisory board is comprised of program alumni and local community members in the business and education fields. Feedback from these stakeholder groups informs the selection process.

MPF has been recognized for its successes on a national scale in 2014 by being featured in the America's Service Commission's publication of "Transforming Communities through Service: A Collection of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps State and Volunteer Generation Fund Programs in the United States" and MPF Alumni, Roger Wong, received the AmeriCorps National Leadership Award.

Compliance and Accountability

MPF maintains compliance procedures through education and monitoring. Staff is trained on AmeriCorps rules and regulations and communicates provisions to subgrantees and members regularly.

Subgrantees sign a cooperative agreement acknowledging prohibited activities and MPF expectations. They attend an information session, where MPF staff review compliance standards related to member recruitment and hiring. Weekly communication with subgrantees during recruitment ensures compliance with hiring procedures and background checks. Subgrantee supervisors and members attend separate pre-service orientations, where they are trained on AmeriCorps compliance, with emphasis on prohibited activities and service hour tracking. Member orientation includes detailed review and signing of a contract outlining prohibited activities and requirements of full-time service. Compliance is monitored through MPF review of time logs, a fall site visit, a December supervisor and member meeting, and two spring check-ins. MPF also conducts an internal member file audit on a biannual basis to ensure compliance.

In instances where a subgrantee or member has not honored the cooperative agreement/contract or posed a noncompliance risk, MPF will first address the issue through a written warning that reiterates

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program policies and references the signed agreements. In a second instance, the MPF Director will meet with the subgrantee. If the issue reoccurs after the meeting, the partnership will be terminated.

Past Performance

At the beginning of this current three-year cycle MPF began using pre-and-post surveys to assess academic engagement, which was a significant program model shift. Through this process, we learned significant lessons on service delivery and although we did not meet our performance measure targets, we were able to increase our overall gains each year. We can assert that 525 (2012-2013) and 585 (2013-2014) youth received 160 hours of OST programming through attendance logs and monthly reports, while demonstrating that 315 (2012-2013) and 381 (2013-2014) showed gains in their score, evidenced by their post-survey administered in the spring. Our overall targets were that 800 youth would receive 160 hours of OST programming and 640 would show gains in academic engagement. An obstacle to success was attaining pre-and-post surveys for 800 youth and tracking dosage requirements. A major lesson learned was that our program will make a larger impact on young people if interventions are more targeted and the amount of time members spend with the young people is increased. We have already initiated this approach in the current grant cycle by soliciting explicit information on the OST programming schedule and recruitment and retention plans during our subgrantee selection process. We have also been closely monitoring member service activities and holding subgrantees accountable to the commitments they made (target number of youth served and hours of programming) in their project proposals, which will continue in the new grant cycle. Tracking dosage will also be communicated as a top priority in the subgrantee selection process, ensuring that all of our subgrantees solidify plans for the program before the member begins service.

We have identified two additional strategies to meet our target numbers in the next grant cycle. The first is to streamline the interventions that have proven most successful, which are mentoring, academic enrichment, and college and career readiness. Subgrantees focused on these activities have a better record of meeting youth target numbers and providing consistent support to a cohort of youth throughout the year. The second is to decrease our target number, while increasing our dosage to improve overall gains in the academic engagement score weighted in the pre-and-post survey. Members will serve 15-20 youth, while delivering at least 200 hours of programming. This is an increase from members currently serving a minimum of 10 youth for 160 hours of programming. Staff will train members to report dosage and the program will rely on pre-and-post surveys and focus groups to measure success.

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Throughout the past eight years of operation, we have consistently achieved 100% member enrollment. We achieve this through a competitive subgrantee selection process, comprehensive training for all subgrantees, and a collaborative recruitment process between the subgrantee and MPF. In 2013-2014, our member retention rate was 93%. Each time a member exits the program early, MPF meets with the member, subgrantee, and staff team to reflect on the situation and identify plans for continuous improvement. As a result of these exits, MPF has increased communications with subgrantees to monitor member performance on a more regular basis and has incorporated consistent training for members on program expectations.

Although we have not encountered any compliance issues in this current grant cycle, MPF conducts regular compliance assessments to identify areas for improvement. The 2014 CNCS National Service Criminal History Check audit provided us with the opportunity to strengthen our existing systems and reiterate our policies to subgrantees.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

MPF is requesting \$13,585 per member which is an increase from our current member funding of \$13,262 per member. MPF has not increased the stipend since 2009 and this additional request of funds of \$323 per member will allow us to raise the member stipend to \$15,000 (\$16,500 for 5 Senior Fellows)-an increase of \$1,000 from the current stipend. This increase is a necessity to accommodate member cost of living. MPF has learned from member feedback that a stipend increase would support the program in both recruiting and retaining members from low-income backgrounds, a key priority for program recruitment. MPF raises matching funds through a variety of avenues annually. Subgrantees each contribute a cash match which is determined by a sliding scale based on the organization's budget from \$9,800 to \$14,750. The sliding scale allows MPF to partner with organizations of various sizes in both urban and rural areas. MPF is able to leverage a wealth of in-kind resources from Northeastern University, including in-kind office space and utilities, office supplies, student volunteers for administrative support, access to faculty and research software, and an annual scholarship contribution of \$200,000 for members. The scholarship contribution has increased by 25% over the past three years. MPF continues to build relationships with departments across the University to leverage additional in-kind resources. MPF also hosts an annual fundraising event and giving campaign, each of which leverages donations from both individuals and corporations. MPF's strong culture of alumni engagement has led to an average of 30% of our alumni contributing to our annual giving campaign. MPF has established partnerships with local vendors to receive discounted rates on meals for members at trainings and is working to leverage these

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partnerships into full sponsorships. MPF also continues to work with stakeholders at the University to identify additional funding opportunities.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Theory of Change

MPF's focus in Out of School Time is grounded in research conducted by the America's Promise Alliance and was recently streamlined to prioritize three interventions identified as most needed and effective for increasing academic engagement in youth: mentoring (Caring Adults), academic enrichment (Effective Education & Safe Space), and college and career readiness (Effective Education) (MA Report on Dropout Prevention, OST Programs for Older Youth, 2011). Based on data self-reported by over 1,115 youth in our programs over a two year period, 62% demonstrated an overall increase in academic engagement. In order to reach our goal of 80%, MPF will allocate more time and resources toward funding programs with a proven history of success and increase dosage to 200 hours (5 hours a week minimum) for the program year. In addition, members will be tasked with engaging a cohort of 15-20 youth to guarantee a lower member to youth ratio, which will foster more meaningful relationship-building. Therefore, based on current program trends as well as research conducted by America's Promise, MPF is committed to increasing dosage and ensuring consistency, which research tells us, are key components to fostering academic engagement (Grad Nation Report, 2013).

Measurable Outcomes

Outputs

- * 700 youth will enroll in out-of-school time programs
- * From those 700, 595 will complete 200 hours of out-of-school time programming
- * 700 volunteers will be recruited to engage in direct service activities that will enhance the organizations capacity to serve more youth

Outcomes

Short-Term: 595 youth will express an increase in their emotional attachment and cognitive understanding of school and academics as a vehicle to success

Medium-Term: 525 youth participants will attend and complete 200 hours of out-of-school time programming and will demonstrate an increase in academic engagement

Long-Term: 525 youth participants that attend and complete 200 hours of out-of-school time programming will demonstrate an increase in their confidence to graduate high school

Research Design

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MPF's evaluation design will administer a mixed methods research methodology to better understand program impact. In the first year of the grant cycle, the quantitative design will task an external evaluator to use a quasi-experimental strategy to survey a control group of youth not served by members and compare those trends with pre-and-post results from youth in member led programs. In the second year of the grant cycle, the same external evaluator will conduct a qualitative comparison case study among six subgrantees to better understand the quantitative results. This triangulation of data seeks to explain quantitative results by exploring youth attitudes toward academic engagement in a focus group setting. Surveys and focus group data will then be used to inform what interventions are having the most impact on youth success, which in turn, will better support member training on these best practices.

MPF will continue to use the Behavioral-Emotional-Cognitive School Engagement Scale (BEC-SES) from the Institute of Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University and pre-and-post survey data will be collected using an online survey tool and analyzed in Excel and Stata to ensure results are statistically valid. In addition, a series of three focus groups will be administered in the second year to benchmark common trends in order to assess whether they complement quantitative data.

Research Questions & Hypothesis

Hypothesis: After 200 hours of targeted academic programming, 525 young people will demonstrate an increase in academic engagement.

Overarching Research Question: How do MPF corps members increase academic engagement in the youth they serve?

Focus Group sub-questions for this study include:

- * How would you define "youth success" at your organization and how does your MPF corps member contribute to that goal?
- * How often does your MPF corps member meet with youth? How many hours of direct service are youth in this program receiving in one year?
- * What factors do you believe inhibit youth success at your organization?
- * How does your organization mitigate factors that inhibit youth success?
- * Do you believe your organization is effective in helping youth graduate high school prepared for college and/or career(s)? If so, why?

Internal Systems of Evaluation

Through monthly reports, members will submit data on hours of programming delivered, volunteer

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recruitment, mentor-mentee matches, college counseling, targeted academic instruction sessions, and service-learning projects. These measures guide our sequential explanatory strategy and provide a greater control for dosage in order to confirm survey reliability.

External Evaluator

Using an external evaluator, MPF will benchmark program data by assessing our impact across stakeholders in a plan that will take place from August 2015- July 2017. This full evaluation study will be informed by our current evaluation plan and build upon longitudinal data collected as early as 2012.

MPF is currently recruiting an external evaluator from Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy and faculty from the Education department at the College of Professional Studies. The evaluator will have experience in both quantitative and qualitative research and software as well as expertise in the field of youth development.

Evaluation Timeline

Year 1

August 2015- July 2016

The external evaluator will develop a quasi-experimental study drawing from our pool of youth using a control group and our pre-and-post academic engagement surveys. Surveys will be administered in October and May and analysis will continue through June and July. The goal of this first phase is to test whether MPF led interventions are having the intended effect (increase in academic engagement) on new and returning subgrantees.

Year 2

August 2016-July 2017

An external evaluator will administer a qualitative comparison case study to better understand the 'how' and 'why' questions related to the data reported by the quasi-experimental study. The study will purposively sample six subgrantees along two dimensions: (a) the main activities/ intervention used by the program (b) data from the pre-and-post survey control group.

Year 3

August 2017- January 2018

All data received from the quasi-experimental study and comparison case study among subgrantees will be compiled into a single report. This report will also build upon longitudinal survey data, collected as early as 2012. MPF staff will work with the external evaluator to compile this report, which will speak to MPF's ability to help youth become more academically engaged and graduate from high

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school ready for post-secondary education or the work force.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

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

1. Please clarify how the leveraged volunteers (700) will be recruited, trained, supervised and will be aware of, and will adhere to, the rules including prohibited activities.

Members will be provided with a comprehensive training at the start of the year on volunteer recruitment and management facilitated by staff at Northeastern University's Center of Community Service. This training will include AmeriCorps prohibited activities for recruited volunteers. Subgrantees, who will be trained on prohibited activities by MPF staff, will provide site-specific support for volunteer recruitment and management. During monthly meetings, members will have the opportunity to share best practices on volunteer recruitment and management and consult with staff at Northeastern University for technical assistance. Members serving in the Greater Boston area will have access to a volunteer pipeline from Northeastern University. Through a partnership with Massachusetts Campus Compact (MACC), MPF will connect members serving in other areas of the state with MACC member campuses to support college volunteer recruitment. Volunteer activities will be monitored through MPF's monthly reporting system.

2. Please clarify strategies to ensure compliance with 30-day exit.

This year, MPF is piloting an additional training for members, "Best Practices for a Strong Service Year Closeout" which will focus on properly completing all required exit paperwork and smoothly transitioning out of the service year. MPF will also be moving deadlines up to ensure that all member paperwork requirements are turned in well in advance of the member end date. Staff have set a 15-day internal deadline to ensure that all members are exited within the 30-day required timeframe.

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

1. If the application is being considered for an amount less than the request (funding, MSY, and/or slots), please revise the Executive Summary, budget, and performance measures as necessary to reflect the amount for which the application is under consideration.

The budget has been adjusted to reflect CNCS request. MPF will be requesting \$528,745 (slightly

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below the CNCS amount approved for consideration) and matching with \$801,645.

Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy

MPF is requesting \$13,219 per member which is a slight decrease from our current member funding of \$13,263 per member. MPF has not increased the stipend since 2009 and will be utilizing matching funds to increase the stipend by \$500 per to \$14,500 (\$16,500 for 5 Senior Fellows). This increase is a necessity to accommodate member cost of living. MPF has learned from member feedback that a stipend increase would support the program in both recruiting and retaining members from low-income backgrounds, a key priority for program recruitment. MPF raises matching funds through a variety of avenues annually. Subgrantees each contribute a cash match which is determined by a sliding scale based on the organization's budget from \$9,800 to \$14,750. The sliding scale allows MPF to partner with organizations of various sizes in both urban and rural areas. MPF is able to leverage a wealth of in-kind resources from Northeastern University, including in-kind office space and utilities, office supplies, student volunteers for administrative support, access to faculty and research software, and an annual scholarship contribution of \$200,000 for members. The scholarship contribution has increased by 25% over the past three years and on average, 75% of members will utilize this benefit. MPF continues to build relationships with departments across the University to leverage additional in-kind resources. MPF also hosts an annual fundraising event and giving campaign, each of which leverages donations from both individuals and corporations. MPF's strong culture of alumni engagement has led to an average of 30% of our alumni contributing to our annual giving campaign. MPF has established partnerships with local vendors to receive discounted rates on meals for members at trainings and is working to leverage these partnerships into full sponsorships. MPF also continues to work with stakeholders at the University to identify additional funding opportunities.

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 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.

MPF is requesting \$13,219 per MSY which is less than our initial request and less than our MSY rate for the current program year (\$13,263). The budget narrative has been updated to reflect this change.

C. Performance Measure Clarification Please make the following changes in the Performance

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Measures screens in eGrants or in the 'Clarification Summary' field, as appropriate.

1. Please revise the performance measure so that it conforms to the selection rules outlined in the performance measure instructions. Outputs ED1 and ED2 cannot be in the same performance measure as ED3A and ED4A. Mentoring activities may only be counted in a performance measure with ED3A and ED4A and all mentoring activities must meet the dosage requirements specified in the performance measure instructions.

After referring to the selection rules, MPF will separate outputs ED3A & ED4A from ED1 & ED2 into two separate measures. Though the outcome for each remains as ED27A, this will be reflected by two separate output strategies (Measures have been updated in appropriate section).

2. Please clarify if the beneficiaries are economically disadvantaged, or students with special exceptional needs who start in a CNCS-supported education program.

On the whole, student beneficiaries are economically disadvantaged, evidenced by the number of students relying on free and reduced lunch (90%), living at or below the poverty line (75%), and attending Level 4 underachieving schools (100%). These students are also disproportionately youth of color (83%). Over 80% of student beneficiaries live in communities that experience poverty rates well above the state average (20.8% compared to 11.6%).

3. Please clarify how the program will capture unduplicated counts of students in ED1, ED2, ED27A. Overall, the number of students enrolled in member-led programming (or, ED1), is captured by the amount of pre-survey tests submitted between October-November. Once these students have completed this pre-test, their name is catalogued and given an ID number in the survey database where their dosage is tracked on a monthly basis. Using this database as a guide, the number of students who complete a CNCS- sponsored member-led program (or, ED2) is determined by the amount of post- survey tests completed and submitted with the same name and ID number. This system ensures students are not counted twice. In addition, MPF's scattered site model does not run the risk of AmeriCorps members serving the same students as each program is distinct and many of these students attend schools and participate in out-of-school programming in different communities. Once pre-and-post survey tests are completed and analyzed, the number of students who demonstrate an increase in academic engagement is determined by the amount of students who show at least a 2pt increase from their pre-to-posttest (or, ED27A). Grade level is also taken into consideration as well as environmental/demographic factors, which is captured through a statistical validity test (or T-test) for reliability scores.

4. Please revise ED27A to include the dimension(s) of academic engagement that will be measured:

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increased student interest in school, improved perspective on school climate, increased attachment to school and increased educational aspirations. Describe how the proposed instrument will measure these dimensions of academic engagement and specify how much improvement from pre-test to posttest is necessary to be counted as improved for ED27A.

The dimensions of academic engagement specified, i.e., "increased student interest in school, improved perspective on school climate, increased attachment to school and increased educational aspirations" have been added to the measures in the portal.

Using previous research as a foundation and benchmarking current data collected in this current three year grant cycle, the average academic engagement survey score for youth in grades 4-12 ranges from 34.5- 35.2. Therefore, in order for a young person to demonstrate an overall gain in academic engagement, they will need to demonstrate an increase in at least 2 points from their pre-to the-post survey test.

The dimensions of academic engagement that are captured in the pre-and-post survey tool include a student's interest in school (or behavioral & emotional attachment), perspective on school climate (or behavioral & emotional attachment), and increased attachment and view of school as a vehicle to success/educational aspirations (or cognitive attachment). This is done using the BEC-SES, which is a 15 question survey separated into three categories in order to assess a student's behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attachment to school.

In the first category of behavioral school engagement, students are assessed using questions derived from the Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (PSL-AB), created by the Search Institute (Leffert et al., 1998). From this scale, five questions are used to assess students' behaviors regarding school involvement. For example, students are asked how frequently they went to school without their homework completed, how often they skipped classes without permission, or how often they participated in class discussions. Students rated their answers on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Responses were coded such that higher scores indicated higher levels of behavioral school engagement. From previous research conducted with this tool, the internal reliability test, or Cronbach's alphas for Grades 5 to 11 ranged from .63 to .79.

In terms of emotional school engagement, these questions were also derived from the PSL-AB (Leffert et al., 1998) and assessed students' affects toward school. Five questions were used for this measure, such as "I care about the school I go to," "I enjoy the classes I'm taking," and "I feel a part of my school." The response options ranged from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree, with higher scores indicating higher levels of emotional school engagement. From previous research with this tool,

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the internal reliability for Grades 5 to 11 ranged from .63 to .73.

Cognitive attachment is captured using questions that measure school as a vehicle to success, such as "I think it is important to make good grades," or "School is very important for later success." The response options ranged from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree, with higher scores indicating higher levels of cognitive engagement, indicating a greater desire to do well in school.

5. Please revise the Performance Measures to include narrative (where applicable) of the My Brother's Keeper initiative.

MPF's academic enrichment and college and career readiness focus aligns primarily with the third milestone of My Brother's Keeper Initiative.

(Measures have been updated in portal to include My Brother's Keeper)

D. Strategic Engagement Slots

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?

MPF has not designated a target percentage for recruiting individuals with disabilities, however we do incorporate specialized outreach during recruitment to this population through our partnerships with the Disability Resource Center at Northeastern University and EPIC Leaders, a service and leadership development program for youth with disabilities.

2. In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

MPF will not be requesting specific MSYs for individuals with disabilities.

E. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification: Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs.

These additional No-Cost MSYs are national service positions in which no grant funds will be awarded

MPF will not be requesting any No-Cost MSYs

Additional Programmatic Clarification:

In the event of natural disaster or emergency situation, members may be called upon to assist with the response. If disaster response is required, the hours contributed by the members would count toward their service commitment.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics