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Executive Summary

Playworks California proposes to have 73 AmeriCorps members who will provide a school-wide evidence-based program designed to utilize play to create supportive environments with reduced bullying where all students feel safe, supported and fully engaged in school in low-income schools in the greater Los Angeles, San Francisco, Silicon Valley and East Bay areas of California. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for positively impacting the entire school environment and, thereby, creating a safe space for students to increase their overall academic engagement. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 607 volunteers who will be engaged in supporting Playworks California program components as well as projects and events. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$939,125 will be matched with \$2,444,038, \$1,980,000 in public funding and \$464,038 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED: Bullying is a growing concern in California, where 42% of youth say they were victims of bullying in the past year (California Healthy Kids Survey, 2010). According to parents, 17% of California children bullied others sometimes, usually or always (National Survey of Children's Health, 2012). For the California Department of Education, efforts to create safe and supportive schools are a top priority. "Seth's law" took effect in 2012, which mandated anti-bullying policies for all California schools. California's Local Control and Accountability Plan enacted in 2013-14 named school climate and student engagement as two of eight priority areas for school districts (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2013).

Bullying has negative impacts on everyone in school--the bullying victim, the one who bullies and those who are bystanders. Research compiled by www.stopbullying.gov, cited that involvement in bullying, as victim or the one who bullies, creates barriers to learning for all students and is associated with a host of negative outcomes including increased risk of poor academic performance, truancy, delinquency, physical injury and suicide. In elementary school students, the link between being a victim of bullying, being a bully and lower academic achievement is substantial (Glew et al, 2005; Schwartz, 2003). Victims of bullying are less likely to participate in school, raise their hand in class, complete their homework and show a general disinterest in school (Wolpert, 2011). Those who bully others are also at risk of getting into fights, being suspended and receiving poor grades (violencepreventionworks.org).

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The Playworks California program utilizes play to create supportive environments with reduced bullying where students feel safe, supported and fully engaged in school. Playworks provides a school-wide intervention based on a caring adult Corps Member who models positive behavior to create a safe and inclusive school climate. At Playworks' schools, it becomes socially unpopular to exclude or bully others, as respect and inclusion become the social norm. In the schools where we plan to place members, bullying and harassment are a documented problem. Across these school districts, at least two in five students (40%) report that other kids spread mean rumors about them at school (Oakland Unified 50%, West Contra Costa 49%, Los Angeles 46%, Santa Ana 48%, Norwalk-La Mirada 41%, San Francisco 48%, San Jose 44%, Sunnyvale 47%, Alum Rock 42%). Likewise, at least two in five students report that they have been hit or pushed on school property (Oakland Unified 47%, West Contra Costa 44%, Los Angeles 45%, Santa Ana 47%, Norwalk-La Mirada 43%, San Francisco 51%, San Jose 46%, Sunnyvale 46%, Alum Rock 41%) (California Healthy Kids Survey, 2008-13, most recent available data provided).

Playworks California works with local school communities that have reached out to us and expressed a need for help to create positive school environments that reduce bullying behaviors. Playworks targets high-poverty elementary schools that face enormous barriers to student success, are especially vulnerable to unsafe school environments and are at risk for bullying which can lead to decreased academic engagement. When developing new school partners, Playworks first ensures that at least 50% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. These schools not only experience bullying but, more importantly, lack the necessary resources to fully address the problem. We anticipate that Playworks California will serve schools where an average of 80% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch in the coming year. Second, eligible schools complete a needs assessment of their overall school environment, safety, and bullying. Third, Playworks program staff conduct an on-site visit to meet with school administration and directly observe recess. Based on this assessment process, Playworks then prioritizes the highest need schools -- ones that have the fewest resources for creating a safe recess and are at higher risk for unsafe environments. Once a school partnership is formed, Playworks California asks teachers to identify their least engaged students early in the school year to identify the high need group within the school. High need students are defined as struggling in one or more of the following areas: regaining focus in the classroom after returning from recess, getting along with peers during recess and/or in class, feeling safe during recess and/or at school, actively participating in classroom activities.

B. THEORY OF CHANGE: Each Playworks California Corps Member will utilize play at their

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assigned, low-income elementary school to create a safe and inclusive environment where students can become academically engaged by delivering six key program components. RECESS: Members will serve as caring adults, maintaining a constant presence on the playground during recess, promoting and modeling pro-social skills such as respect, positive language, and problem solving for students. Members map out game-areas, facilitate games and actively play with students, rotating from game to game to ensure a positive and inclusive recess environment where all students are encouraged to participate and engage positively. Whereas members gradually transform recess culture by influencing the way kids engage with each other, adult monitors' role at recess is to ensure supervision without facilitating or actively engaging students. To reinforce the behaviors and positive culture being developed during recess, members will implement key supplemental program components throughout the school day emphasizing respectful social behavior. CLASS GAME TIME: Members will spend time with individual classes to teach the games offered at recess and introduce the tenets of respect and inclusion, allowing students to become comfortable actively participating in games with their peers. JUNIOR COACHES: Members will facilitate a leadership development program with a group of upper elementary students, providing at least 15 hours of training in the after school-hours and ongoing support as they become "Junior Coach" leaders who model positive behavior, lead games, and assist with conflict resolution at recess for younger students. LEAGUES: Members will facilitate non-competitive, developmental sports leagues each school semester, encouraging participation from students who have not previously felt comfortable playing sports. BEFORE SCHOOL RECESS: In schools where there is a need, members will implement a before-school recess that reinforces our positive-play model. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Members will work with their school administration to develop one to two school community events aimed at engaging families within the school community. Finally, members will participate in service projects on national days of service, and may participate in various weekend service projects throughout the larger community.

Through this proposal, seven AmeriCorps members will serve as "peer support" members. We have found that a ratio of approximately one peer support member for every ten school sites is the most effective model for our program. Peer support members will serve alongside other members at their school sites on a rotating basis and are critical to program continuity. Having a trained member ready to step into a school setting allows us to have our members visit neighboring programs for peer-learning and share best practices without creating a gap in services at their assigned school. Our peer support members will be prepared to assume full-time duties at a school site if another member has

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an extended illness or exits early.

Playworks California focuses on recess because it is the time when bullying is most likely to occur. Research shows that bullying occurs two to three times more often at school than any other location and tends to thrive where there is the largest amount of students and the least amount of supervision (Smith, 2010) with over 70% of incidents happening on the playground (Glew, et al, 2005). To prevent bullying, studies show that the most effective interventions are those that improve overall school climate (Masiello and Schroeder, 2014). Research from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students demonstrates that schools with strong school climates allow students to increase their academic engagement, therefore, boosting student achievement.

AmeriCorps members are ideally suited to provide this intervention. Appropriate adult supervision is crucial to the reduction of bullying and the creation of a positive school climate, but increased pressure on schools to deliver annual improvement in standardized test scores has created a concentration of financial resources on classroom staffing and instructional strategies. As a result, schools lack the capacity and staff to devote adequate resources to the development of a positive school climate. We have found in our very successful ten-year partnership with AmeriCorps that Corps Members are ideally suited to provide this intervention. As dedicated, enthusiastic individuals who are recruited to serve in the communities where they are from, members are the perfect ambassadors to impact schools. Playworks AmeriCorps members will spend each school day focused on creating a positive school climate and reducing bullying, as well as deepening the impact through community engagement. To be physically and emotionally present to hundreds of students on a daily basis for an entire school year can be a daunting task; it requires an individual committed to creating change even when challenges seem insurmountable. The passion and spirit that AmeriCorps members bring to their service provides perspective and resilience for implementing the Playworks California program. The Playworks intervention follows a theory of change, detailed in our logic model, that outlines the steps needed to utilize play as a means to increase academic engagement. By developing students' prosocial skills during recess, the recess environment shifts from chaotic to positive, thereby reducing bullying and allowing students to feel physically and emotionally safe. Once a positive recess climate is created, there is a spillover into the classroom and the larger school environment that supports students' overall academic engagement. Evaluations indicate that this change begins within the school year, enabling us to measure changes in students' academic engagement. Once a student is academically engaged, research demonstrates that students will gradually increase their academic performance over a longer period of time.

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Playworks will measure the outcome of increased academic engagement through a modified version of the Social and Character Development Survey. This survey is validated to measure key indicators of engagement as described by CNCS, such as increased interest in school, improved perspective of school climate and increased attachment to school. Playworks considers students to have increased engagement when they show increases in multiple areas of need by improving their score on at least two indicators where they scored low at baseline. Playworks will implement the teacher-reported survey on high need students twice a year, utilizing Education Measures ED1, ED2 and ED27A to measure outputs and outcomes.

C. EVIDENCE BASE: STRONG EVIDENCE: Playworks uses an evidence-based approach backed by an experimental study that resulted in several statistically significant findings. These findings provide strong evidence that support causal relationships between Playworks and the intended outcomes.

In May 2013, Mathematica Policy Research in conjunction with Stanford University released the results of a randomized controlled study which is currently in review at the Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR) and publication is expected. Twenty-nine schools from six different cities were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Random assignment of schools helped to eliminate systematic differences between the treatment and control groups' observed and unobserved characteristics, so that the differences in the two groups' outcomes could be attributed solely to the effect of Playworks. To improve the statistical precision of impact estimates and reduce the chance of differences between the treatment and control groups in the characteristics of schools, random assignment was conducted within matched groups (pairs, trios or foursomes) of schools that were similar in terms of observable characteristics. The impacts on students, teachers and schools were determined by comparing the average outcomes in treatment and control school using regression models that were customized to the unit of analysis. All statistically significant impacts are based on the MHT adjusted p-values. The overall design and methodology (strong internal/external validity) of this study allows the results to be generalized to schools with similar characteristics (urban, diverse, high poverty) implementing the full Playworks program.

Key statistically significant findings from the study include: (1) Teachers in Playworks schools reported significantly LESS BULLYING and exclusionary behavior, a 43% difference in average rating scores; (2) Playworks teachers rated FEELINGS OF SAFETY at school 20% higher than teachers in control schools; and (3) Teachers in Playworks schools reported spending significantly less time to transition from recess to learning activities--34% fewer minutes--showing an INCREASED READINESS TO LEARN.

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"Physical Activity and Positive Youth Development: Impact of a School-Based Program" (Journal of School Health, 2011) used a quasi-experimental design that analyzed data from 159 low-income schools from 2001-2007. Outcomes were 5th grade student scores (n=13,109) on the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) which was administered state-wide. Scores from students attending schools with Playworks program were compared to scores from students attending schools without Playworks program. In all schools included in the study, at least 50% of students qualified for free or reduced meals. After one year of exposure to Playworks, students showed statistically significant increases in four protective factors compared to students with no exposure to Playworks: problem-solving skills, meaningful participation in school, goals and aspirations, and physical activity. All four protective factors are associated with positive social and academic outcomes.

Stanford University completed a quasi-experimental study of Playworks, "Playing Fair: The Contribution of High-Functioning Recess to Overall School Climate in Low-Income Elementary Schools" (Journal of School Health, forthcoming January 2015), in six newly implementing schools all sharing similar characteristics including high-poverty, high percentage of racial diversity and academic challenges. Qualitative (structured interviews and observations) and quantitative (teacher and student written surveys) data were collected in the fall and again in the spring to create a pre/post analysis. The study concluded that students felt more included, more connected to the school and their coach, had a higher sense of belonging at school and felt more physically and emotionally safe. All evaluations included schools implementing the full Playworks California model with the exception of the Community Engagement Initiative which was developed after the evaluation. To support the classification as "strong evidence" Playworks is submitting two of the three studies. The third article is pending publication and will be publicly available in January.

D. NOTICE PRIORITY: Research has identified that school engagement is an indicator of long-term academic and social outcomes. Engagement is shown to include a student's physical and emotional safety at school as well as their overall feelings of connectedness to the school community (www.chks.wested.org). A safe school environment fosters the intellectual and social interactions that academic achievement requires. A student who feels connected to their school community reports higher levels of interest and engagement in their academic work (www.schoolclimate.org). Students who feel they have opportunities for meaningful participation are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and motivation that helps them succeed academically and socially. In January 2014, the Department of Education (DOE) issued a guide to all schools emphasizing that "developing positive school climates and improving school discipline policies are critical steps to raising academic

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achievement."

The Playworks theory of change posits that creating a positive recess climate shifts overall school climate thereby allowing students to feel safe, more fully engaged and, ultimately, improving students' academic performance. Members serve throughout the school day and in the after school hours modeling and promoting pro-social skills, maintaining a constant positive presence during recess, and mentoring small groups of school leaders to create this climate. Improving student academic performance falls into the AmeriCorps Education funding priority.

E. MEMBER TRAINING: Based on our current training calendar, Corps Members will receive over 100 hours of professional development training to enhance their term of service. The term will kick off in August with an intensive week long pre-service training (8.5 hrs. per day). Pre-service begins with a day of orientation including an introduction to AmeriCorps, discussion about what it means to serve, a review of the member contract, prohibited activities, and an AmeriCorps swearing-in ceremony. The remaining week of training focuses on skill development (e.g. group management, inclusive play, conflict resolution among students, communication with diverse populations, Playworks curriculum, and CPR/First Aid).

Member trainings continue throughout the rest of the service year. In the four weeks following pre-service, members participate in trainings three afternoons per week, including program components, data collection, mandated reporting, and professionalism. From October to June, monthly training topics include bullying prevention, coping with violence, and service event planning. Members also attend "Life after AmeriCorps" and "Education Award" trainings, as well as an AmeriCorps graduation ceremony. Our program staff will ensure all members and volunteers are trained on and adhere to the prohibited activities. The prohibited activities are included in pre-service training, in the member contract that each individual is required to sign, and in continuous follow up conversations during service site visits. For volunteers, the prohibited activities are included in orientation training.

F. MEMBER SUPERVISION: AmeriCorps members are directly supervised by a Playworks Program Manager. The role of the "Program Manager" will be to train, support, and guide the member through their term, and serve as the direct liaison between members and their service sites. Program Managers plan and facilitate over 100 hours of training as well as reflection and community building opportunities to ensure members are well-supported. Program Managers typically have at least two years of Playworks experience at a school site or equivalent experience in youth development. To adequately train supervisors, Playworks requires Program Managers to participate in required trainings set by the national office including AmeriCorps program management (approved activities,

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prohibited activities, and timekeeping), communication strategies, training facilitation, and supervisory techniques.

Although the Playworks Program Manager serves as the member supervisor, the school principal or another lead administrator is also a direct contact on site for the member throughout the day. The designated administrator will work with the Playworks Program Manager and member to support program implementation at their school site. In addition, at least one school staff member is expected to be present with members during service delivery throughout the school day (i.e. recess monitors during recess and the classroom teacher during Class Game Time), and members can reach their Program Manager immediately by phone or email in the event they need support. The Program Manager and member also provide a "teacher training" to orientate school staff on Playworks, allowable AmeriCorps activities, and prohibited activities

Managers will conduct regular performance evaluations, meet with school administration and provide ongoing mentorship and regular site visits. During site visits, managers observe the member's skills, give feedback, and discuss challenges at the site. One-on-one meetings with members occur bi-monthly to record goals and objectives for the coming months. In total, members will receive five "goals and objectives" reviews and two performance evaluations to assess the members' growth and skills in areas essential to a successful service year.

G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: Playworks California members will walk away from service with a variety of beneficial skills and experiences gained during their term. Specific skills that members will develop include proactive group management, youth development and mentoring, relationship building, lesson planning and facilitation -- all skills that are particularly valuable in the education field. Currently, 67% of our own California grant-funded staff are former Playworks AmeriCorps members. To equip members with strategies to communicate the value of their service experience, Life After AmeriCorps training is tailored to the specific professional interests and goals of the local corps each school-year.

Playworks California will strive to create a member experience that not only provides professional development but also opportunities for reflection to promote a lifelong ethic of service. Throughout the term of service, group and individual reflection times will be provided as a means to connect with other members and to discuss the role members play in society. Members will also participate in two "Service and Motivation" workshops that utilize interactive activities to focus on their service experience and inspirations. To connect Playworks California to the larger AmeriCorps service movement, members will participate in national days of service and have the opportunity to serve

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alongside AmeriCorps members. For example, when possible we will coordinate site visits for City Year and Playworks members to spend the day together at one of their respective school sites and experience a day in the life of another member.

To recruit a corps that is representative of the communities Playworks California will serve, our local city staff conduct outreach with organizations in the neighborhoods surrounding our service sites, including nearby universities, community colleges, after-school programs, and summer camps. Local staff also table at community events and notify our volunteer base about AmeriCorps openings as well as posting on local job boards.

H. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: Playworks California strives to develop a strong AmeriCorps identity and pride amongst members. Members learn about AmeriCorps during the interview process, trainings and reflections, and practice explaining AmeriCorps to others. The AmeriCorps logo is proudly displayed on our website and on the member's bulletin board at each site. Members are provided AmeriCorps gear packs containing Playworks AmeriCorps shirts and sweatshirts and are required to wear the logo while serving.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: Playworks is a \$31 million organization with an 18-year track record of successfully implementing programs. Playworks has a multi-tiered management structure in place to provide strong support to Playworks California. A National Board of Directors provides fiscal oversight and support to our national leadership team, and our national team provides support and guidance to each local office. Regional Executive Officers, David Dial and Eunice Dunham, directly supervise four Executive Directors (ED) located in San Francisco, the East Bay, Silicon Valley and Los Angeles.

Each of the four California Playworks city offices is led by an ED who is responsible for program oversight, fiscal management, day to day operations, leadership and supervision of staff. Robert Sindelar (San Francisco) has over 25 years of nonprofit experience, most recently as district vice president of the YMCA of San Francisco; LaVal Brewer (Los Angeles) has been ED of several YMCAs and is a current trainer for CaliforniaVolunteers; Patricia O'Brien (Silicon Valley) was previously ED of the San Mateo County Health Foundation and CEO of Lifelong Fitness Alliance; Nathaniel Foster (East Bay) was the Director of Development & Marketing at the Lincoln Child Center.

A team of experienced program staff in each city are trained to manage AmeriCorps members, including: one Program Director, three to six Program Managers, and one Program Associate. Program Directors will be responsible for general program management; overseeing member

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recruitment and trainings; and directly supervising and supporting Program Managers. Program Managers will supervise, train, and guide the member through their term of service ensuring AmeriCorps compliance. Program Associates will be responsible for the paperwork and administrative requirements associated with the grant, including but not limited to timesheets, member enrollment and exit, and sign-in sheets.

We have extensive experience managing AmeriCorps grants. Over the last eleven years, Playworks has effectively managed an AmeriCorps program through our partnership with CaliforniaVolunteers. This year, we began our third three-year AmeriCorps funding cycle with National Direct, and we have state grants in Washington DC, Utah, North Carolina, Louisiana, Massachusetts and Maryland. From the beginning, the Playworks California program has evolved and improved with direct input from school staff, families, and local communities. The Playworks program was developed in direct response to a need identified by school principals who were troubled by chaos and disruptive behaviors on the playground that created an environment where students did not participate in healthy play; conflicts often spilled over into the classrooms, disrupting the learning process. In 1996, Playworks founder, Jill Vialet, launched a play-based program to specifically address this situation. Since then, Playworks has worked closely with students, parents, teachers, and principals to tailor and coordinate programming at each school site. Playworks solicits input at the end of each year, asking school staff, children and families to identify the strengths and challenges of the program. Aspects of the program that have evolved, such as the Junior Coach program, have been modified based on the needs of the schools and communities we serve.

Each Playworks city also has a local Board of Directors who provide leadership and counsel to the regional ED. Local Boards are made up of school administrators, business professionals, education and health policy experts and other community leaders. The Partnership Committee consists of community members who provide support to manage the grant as well as access to outside resources as needed. The Partnership will be kept informed of programmatic and fiscal grant management and serve as a sounding board for operations matters that arise.

B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Playworks is dedicated to ensuring compliance with all AmeriCorps rules and regulations. In the national office, our California AmeriCorps Program Manager (ACPM) oversees grant implementation and supports local offices on grant compliance. Support includes monthly meetings with program staff in each city dedicated to the specifics of our AmeriCorps program, including member hours, member activities, and volunteer recruitment. The California ACPM will also conduct timesheet audits and two member file audits each year to ensure

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complete and accurate onboarding and exit. In addition, the ACPM will conduct a compliance review twice per year, requiring the ED to meet with city staff to certify whether specific items are in compliance (e.g. member timesheets). If instances of risk are found, the local team will submit a plan to the ACPM for approval and follow up.

Playworks' national team will train staff in each city on compliance, including prohibited and unallowable activities. Program Managers in each city will then train members and school administrators to ensure compliance at each service site. To safeguard against risk, Program Managers will conduct bi-weekly site visits to assess program quality, as well as school site and member compliance. If an instance of risk is identified, Program Managers will address the issue with members and the service site staff directly, following up with documentation and additional training. To manage compliance across sites, Program Directors will hold regular program team meetings throughout the year to discuss service activities, AmeriCorps member support and development, and any challenges. If compliance issues are detected, Program Directors will be required to document, report, and re-train all parties involved as needed.

C. PAST PERFORMANCE: Playworks successfully collected data and met most performance measure targets for many years as a grantee in the Healthy Futures focus area. In the past three-year grant cycle, external and internal research revealed that Playworks' greatest impact was on school climate and engagement, and Playworks entered a new priority area (Education), aligned with performance measures ED1, ED2 and ED27. Under Education, Playworks showed considerable change in academic engagement of students measured. However, the screening methodology used to identify high need students did not allow us to reach our target number for output and outcome. To screen students and measure change in engagement, we utilized a modified version of the Social and Character Development (SACD) survey. Due to the length of time needed to complete the SACD, teachers cannot complete the full survey for every student. Instead, we ask teachers to complete the screening tool for a relatively small number of randomly selected students. By using only a sample of students, a large number of high need students were not identified and we were unable to meet our target numbers. However, SACD did indicate a strong percent of students increasing their overall engagement, allowing Playworks to exceed the outcome for percentage of students impacted.

Based on the success of the SACD in measuring student engagement outcomes associated with ED27, we will continue to use it going forward. Our corrective action is focused on how we identify high need students to ensure all high need students are tracked. The past methodology of using a small, random sample of students did not accurately reflect the total number of high need students in each

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class. Therefore, Playworks developed a practical method to identify all the high need students in a class without placing an unnecessary burden on the teacher. Through research, we identified the behaviors associated with low student engagement and developed a screening criteria for teachers to identify students considered "at risk" for disengagement or already disengaged. Teachers will utilize the screening criteria in order to screen their entire class and identify students who meet the consistent criteria of high need. These students will then be assessed at baseline and endpoint using the SACD to measure change in engagement levels.

In the most recent full year of program operation (2013-14), our Playworks California enrollment rate was 100%, and our retention rate was 94%. We are working to improve our retention rate by continuing to target recruitment efforts on community resources and engaging applicants specifically looking to complete a year of service. We will also focus on increasing member support, including enhanced reflection and recognition opportunities. We are pleased to report that we were not under corrective action at any time during the last grant cycle.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS: For the proposed request of \$13,263 per MSY, Playworks California will provide daily programming for approximately 31,944 students, resulting in a cost-effective program of \$.59/child/day (of which we request \$.17/child/day from AmeriCorps). This investment, less than a quarter per day per child, will provide significant school-wide impact, reduce bullying and exclusionary behavior and improve attention in class. While many education programs focus exclusively on small, designated groups of students through classroom teaching, tutoring or mentorship, Playworks provides a unique model that serves the entire school population in both large and small group settings. This comprehensive approach increases the number of students directly impacted by members, achieving a very cost effective program.

Reclaimed teaching time is a cost-benefit for our service sites. Data from a randomized control study shows that classroom teachers at Playworks' schools saved an average of 10.5 hrs./year transitioning from recess to learning activities. Teachers at Playworks' schools reported that they spend 9.37 fewer hrs./year addressing behavioral and disciplinary issues, allowing for teachers to focus their time on teaching -- adding to the overall program's cost efficiency.

Of the total program budget, \$3,384,614, we propose \$2,416,416 in non-CNCS funding to successfully implement our AmeriCorps program. To raise the additional funds, Playworks California will require a financial investment from our school service sites of \$30,000 per year. School fees totaling \$1,980,000 in non-CNCS resources will support the cost of our program. Our second source of match

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will come from foundation and corporate support. We have commitments for \$200,000 from the Lurie and Lesher foundations, and we anticipate renewing current grants to raise the remaining \$236,416. For the last ten years as a California AmeriCorps grantee, we have raised the matching funds necessary to cover all our program expenses.

The proposed request of \$13,263 per MSY is the same as our current cost per MSY for the 2014-15 program year. We plan to raise member living allowance to the new maximum amount of \$25,060. Throughout the years, we have consistently paid the maximum living allowance and have found that it helps us attract a more diverse pool of high quality applicants that are reflective of the communities we serve. We believe this is particularly important for next year due to the recruitment challenges we faced during our current program year. The cost associated with this increase will be absorbed into our match, raising our match amount to 71% and is the reason we are maintaining the same cost per MSY.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY: Playworks California is confident that the proposed budget presented is adequate to fund the program, based on our national organization's prior experience managing the CaliforniaVolunteers grant and National Direct funding. The budget is based on efficient operating budgets currently used in other Playworks AmeriCorps state programs, as well as the current California fiscal budget. The submitted budget was carefully reviewed by our National Finance Director and will be sufficient to allow us to meet our desired program elements, outputs, and outcomes for our AmeriCorps program.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

To build on the Playworks randomized control trial evaluation results, Playworks is pursuing several additional research questions to learn more about the impact of our program. We will be finalizing our evaluation plan over the next year. There are multiple areas of interest that we are pursuing including (1) further investigation of our impact on attendance and chronic absenteeism, (2) looking at how Playworks Junior Coach Program impacts youth development both during programming and in subsequent years, and (3) better understanding the impact on school referrals and discipline procedures at schools.

In addition to building on the randomized control trial results, we are exploring other questions related to: (1) modification of program services to serve wider populations, (2) impact on AmeriCorps members both during service as well as after service ends, (3) partnering with other service providers to bring more comprehensive school services, and (4) determining strategies that allow the deepest level of sustainability within the school.

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Our top priority is to investigate the association Playworks has with increased attendance and reduced chronic absenteeism. We are currently working with Stanford University John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities and the project is funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Evaluation Design:

The proposed study examines absenteeism, including chronic absenteeism, among a set of schools implementing Playworks over time. Using data from districts implementing Playworks for a long duration, the study concentrates on the following research questions: (1) Do students at Playworks schools miss fewer days, on average, compared to students at similar schools that do not have Playworks? (2) Are there different effects of Playworks on school attendance for different subgroups of students, such as ethnic groups, genders, grade levels, or prior chronic absence status? and (3) Is there a difference in the effect of Playworks on absence for students in schools that have had the program for longer time?

Data Collection Procedures:

These analyses rely on individual-level administrative data from participating school districts. Two types of comparisons would be completed: (1) comparing Playworks schools to other schools within the same districts and (2) comparing over time student absenteeism within Playworks schools as they implement Playworks.

Using individual-level data, we will construct individual growth models that track improvements over time in student-level absenteeism at different levels, up to and including chronic absenteeism. These models will allow us to measure differences in both baseline absenteeism as well as changes in absenteeism over time that is attributable to Playworks. We will also be able to control for student background characteristics and prior absenteeism in these analyses. Although it will not be possible to show causal impacts with this analysis, we will be able to show patterns of relationship between Playworks implementation and student absenteeism.

Evaluation Results:

The results of this proposed evaluation would allow Playworks to understand the impact our program has on attendance and chronic absenteeism within our schools. Increased attendance is a long-term

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outcome identified by Playworks on our Theory of Change. Positive results would allow Playworks to validate our TOC with our own data and leverage additional funding opportunities.

Researchers:

John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University is fully qualified to conduct the proposed research. Since 2000, the Gardner Center has helped create knowledge in communities that drive change and improve the lives of youth. They are a center devoted to rigorous research rooted in principles of community and youth development. The Gardner Center supported the randomized controlled trial conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and is familiar with Playworks programming. In addition, the Gardner Center has completed similar studies on chronic absenteeism in the California bay area and is strongly positioned to gather, analyze and report of the data.

Cost:

\$50,000. Funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATION ITEMS

This application is under consideration for a grant in the amount of \$968,171, 73.00 Member Service Years (MSYs), 73 slots, at \$13,262.62 cost per MSY.

ITEM: 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.

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

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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.

RESPONSE: The Executive Summary and Budget have been updated to reflect the funding levels indicated above. As instructed in this Clarification letter, we have adjusted the cost per MSY in our budget down to \$13,262.62. As discussed in our application, we plan to raise our member living allowance to the new maximum amount of \$25,060. For over ten years, we have consistently paid the maximum living allowance to our members in California and we have found that it helps us attract a more diverse pool of high quality applicants that are reflective of the communities we serve. In the past program year, we faced an unusually challenging recruitment season, and we believe continuing to increase our member living allowance to the maximum level will be particularly important for next year to ensure strong member recruitment. With the cost per MSY currently under consideration, we will absorb the cost associated with the increased living allowance into our match of over 71% and is the reason we are not able to further reduce the cost per MSY.

A. PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATION ITEMS:

Please respond in the eGrants narrative field labeled 'Clarification Summary'

1. ITEM: Please revise the number of members included in the logic model to match the number included in the narrative.

RESPONSE: The number of members included on the logic model has been updated to 73 to match the number included in the narrative. The service hours and training hours on the logic model were also changed accordingly.

2. ITEM: Please revise the number of schools included in the logic model to match the number included in the budget.

RESPONSE: The number of schools included on the logic model has been updated to 66 to match the number included in the budget.

3. ITEM: Please explain whether member positions (slots) being requested as part of this application are also duplicated in any other application currently under review by CNCS. If applicable, indicate how many slots are duplicated and the application(s) in which duplicated slots are requested.

RESPONSE: No member positions (slots) requested in this application are duplicated in any other

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application currently under review by CNCS.

B. PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATION

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

1. ITEM: Please define "completion" under performance measure ED2.

RESPONSE: Completion is defined as students who have a pre/post survey completed by their teachers five months apart and are identified by the teachers as participating in the Playworks programming.

2. ITEM: Under performance measure ED27A, please specify how much improvement on the teacher survey is necessary to be counted as "improved."

RESPONSE: Students will be counted as "improved" if they increase by at least one point on at least 2 indicators where they scored low at baseline.

3. ITEM: Please clarify whether sampling will be proposed.

RESPONSE: Sampling is not proposed in this application.

4. If sampling is proposed, in order for us to properly assess whether the sampling plan you propose is appropriate, please provide the following information:

a. ITEM: Provide demographic information on the population at the site level and discuss whether there are any variations across the sites. At a minimum, provide data on the number of students eligible for FRP lunches.

RESPONSE: Not Applicable

b. ITEM: Clarify the sample size (including sample size per site), the process/method you will use to calculate it and the selected level of precision (99%, 95%, 90% confidence interval). In your process of selecting the sample size, please also address attrition.

RESPONSE: Not Applicable

c. ITEM: Describe the process you will use for selecting participants as part of your sampling.

RESPONSE: Not Applicable

d. ITEM: Confirm that generalizations of findings from these data will be restricted to the population receiving the specified dosage of the intervention.

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RESPONSE: Not Applicable

C. STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS

1. ITEM: 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?

RESPONSE: We do not have a designated percentage of slots targeted for recruiting members with disabilities. Our recruitment plan includes reaching out to diverse groups and encouraging applications from people who are from the communities we serve and who have the skills and desire to impact their community through our program. We openly welcome people of all abilities to apply to serve as an AmeriCorps member through Playworks.

2. ITEM: Request for Strategic Engagement Slots

RESPONSE: We are not requesting Strategic Engagement slots at this time.

D. MSY WITH NO PROGRAM FUNDS ATTACHED CLARIFICATION:

ITEMS 1 - 4: Request for No-Cost MSYs

RESPONSE: We are not requesting No-Cost MSY slots at this time.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics