

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Napa County Office of Education proposes having 38 Full Time AmeriCorps members provide comprehensive tutoring, mentoring and school climate improvement interventions to 1,140 high need students in California's North Bay. At the end of the first program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving the academic performance of 60% of participating students by 1 grade level in Literacy and/or Math. AmeriCorps members will also leverage 115 volunteers and engage them in creating a positive climate for learning. This intermediary program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$489,850 will be matched with \$528,249 in public funding and \$125,000 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1.a. PROBLEM/NEED.

Community problem/need: CalSERVES targets 1,740 high need students in 5 school districts in the North Bay Area. Napa County Office of Education (NCOE) will partner with 20 schools serving >8,500 under-performing, low-income students who exhibit symptoms associated with poverty, including poor academic performance, disciplinary problems, and lack of school engagement, as indicated in data from CA Dept. of Ed, Dataquest (2014). The participating schools far exceed State averages with 57% of students classified as English Learners, 54% not proficient in Language Arts, and 72% eligible for Free/Reduced Price Meals as opposed to CA averages of 23% English Learners, 45% not proficient in Language Arts, and 59% eligible for Free/Reduced Price Meals.

Additionally, among CalSERVES students, 25% report feeling unsafe at school (CHKS, 2013), and disciplinary referrals are the highest in their respective counties: 187 referrals per year versus an average of 95 for other Sonoma and Napa County schools. A needs assessment conducted among stakeholders at proposed partner sites resulted in 85% of respondents identifying academic tutoring as a pressing, unmet need and 74% indicating that enhanced emotional supports are required (CalSERVES Stakeholder Needs Assessment, 2014).

Program to address need: Using a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach, CalSERVES will focus on providing the right support to students in need through three tiers of services: 1) positive school climate activities for all students; 2) targeted tutoring for students struggling academically; and 3) additional emotional support through mentoring for the highest-need students. Serving both during

Narratives

and after school, each full-time AmeriCorps member will lead school climate enhancement activities during recess/lunch times; provide intensive literacy or science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) tutoring; AND foster resiliency through individual mentoring for students facing severe challenges. This approach directly addresses major barriers to learning so all students can successfully participate in the academic curriculum.

Documented, severe need in target communities: Seventy-two percent of students in the target schools are eligible for free or reduced meals, reflecting a high level of challenge due to poverty. The attendant familial stress is often evidenced in parental absence/disengagement, frequent moves, substance abuse, low education levels, and high exposure to crime (Wilson, 2012). In the neighborhoods surrounding participating schools in Santa Rosa, for example, there are now 31 identified gangs, and gang-related incidents were up 17% for 2014 (Press Democrat, 10/12/14). To break the cycles of poverty and violence, it is critical to raise achievement, but for students of color in poverty, low proficiency levels and high dropout rates have proven intractable (Moore, et al., 2009). This is evidenced by a mere 29% of EL students in participating schools earning diplomas (CDE Dataquest, 2014).

Selection of target population: The program has a well-established policy in place for selecting the highest-need students at each participating site, using state and district test scores, discipline data, and referrals from staff, teachers, and parents. Students are referred to the tutoring program based on academic need and then are further screened and placed into mentoring, if warranted.

1.b. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL.

Proposed intervention and roles of AmeriCorps members & leveraged volunteers: While many programs focus exclusively on one service to address students' needs, these isolated approaches are often not enough to overcome the issues that significantly block learning (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The CaISERVES theory of change was initially inspired by the work on collective impact done by Stanford's Kania & Kramer and augmented by the RtI approach outlined by Sprague, Cook, Sadler, & Browning-Wright, 2008 and verified by the Collective Impacts Evaluation Report (2015) supporting the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach over traditional tutoring. The program will address multiple issues impacting learning in a comprehensive, 3-tiered format to advance the progress of students. All students receive Tier 1 (universal) services. Students needing additional supports are

Narratives

assessed and assigned an individualized program of Tier 2 (targeted) or Tier 3 (intensive) services. The assessment process analyzes student needs holistically using multiple data points: test scores, behavior data, and teacher/parent input.

Highly-trained, full-time AmeriCorps members will implement the following interventions:

Tier 1: Transforming the school climate to support school connectedness, collaboration, and problem solving abilities (8,500 students). CalSERVES uses the BEST curriculum strategies to reduce behavior problems and create/sustain safe, positive learning environments for students. AmeriCorps members and volunteers will bring BEST to the playground during the regular and after school day. Members facilitate activities designed to engage students in organized, inclusive games that develop leadership, problem solving, and collaboration skills, while reducing bullying and other undesirable behavior (RW Johnson Foundation, 2007).

Tier 2: Literacy/STEM tutoring to close the achievement gap (1740 students): Members will specialize in either STEM or Literacy tutoring according to site needs. They will work with pairs of students during and after school in 30-minute blocks, 4 times weekly, for at least 24 sessions, following Common Core-aligned curricula. Students will practice skills in a safe and individualized setting with the guidance of a trained adult. The program has selected and field-tested research-based curricula that are well suited for implementation by AmeriCorps tutors. Literacy tutors use Triumphs (grades K-6, McGraw-Hill) & Step Up To Writing (grades 3-8 Voyager Sopris). STEM tutors use My Math (grades K-8, McGraw-Hill) & FOSS Science Kits (grades K-8, Delta Education).

Tier 3: Mentoring to develop resiliency and coping skills (580 students): Members will mentor pairs of students to build developmental assets, problem solving skills, and tenacity. Mentoring is provided in addition to the tutoring students receive from the same member. Sessions take place during and after school for one hour per week and use the Second Step SEL curriculum (grades K-8, Committee for Children), and adhere to best practices in mentoring programs, as defined by "Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring" (Mentor, 2009).

AmeriCorps members will have a full, structured day so they can really make a difference for the students they serve: 9:00 arrive at school, check in with Site Supervisor and team and ready lesson plans/materials for the day; 9:30-11:30 facilitate BEST Recess and prepare tutoring and mentoring materials; 11:30-12:30 two mentoring sessions; 12:30 mentoring session at lunch; 1:00 lunch break; 1:30-3:30 four consecutive 30-minute paired tutoring sessions; 3:30-4:00 facilitate BEST recess

Narratives

during the after school program; 4:00-4:45 support students in homework; 4:45-5:15 tutoring session; 5:15-5:45 mentoring session; 5:45-6:00 prepare for the next day.

The CalSERVES design reflects a successful model that includes 2 Regional Leaders who are responsible for recruiting, screening, training, and placing 75 long-term and 150 short-term volunteers each. Volunteers will support school climate activities at each site, help with homework, and serve at parent nights and service days. Regional Leaders also develop the National Service Day events in which all members serve. The design also includes 4 Content Leaders; AmeriCorps members who, in addition to tutoring and mentoring students, will provide peer support in effective implementation of the Literacy or STEM program by visiting sites weekly to observe and coach the members. These key positions will be filled by returning AmeriCorps members.

Intervention leading to the identified outcomes: The proposed approach is a coordinated effort to improve academic/behavioral outcomes through targeted, research-based interventions. Tier 1 addresses School Climate using the BEST curriculum at lunch/recess, leading to a target of a 20% decline in discipline referrals. Tier 2 incorporates Literacy Tutoring through Reading Triumphs & Step Up to Writing and STEM Tutoring through My Math & FOSS Science Kits, leading to a target of 60% of students improving one grade level in reading or math as measured by the Woodcock Johnson assessment and CA state tests. Tier 3 engages students in Mentoring using the Second Step curriculum, leading to an anticipated increase of 10% in emotional competence and problem-solving skills as measured by the Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence & School Adjustment.

Academic tutoring: Students will be tutored in research-based curricula to meet their specific academic needs. Reading Triumphs has been proven to help struggling readers access prior knowledge and apply it to new skills development (Frechtling, et al, 2008). Step Up to Writing increases writing proficiency through explicit, hands-on strategies to support idea development, sentence structure, and word choice in narrative and expository text (Smith, 2008). My Math focuses on proficiency and fluency for computational skills while emphasizing mathematical connections leading to an increased understanding of concepts and skills (Flaum-Horvath, 2012). FOSS Next Generation supports students in achieving the new science standards by engaging students in scientific practices in research, experimentation, and data analysis (Cook, 2008).

Narratives

School Climate & Mentoring: Research indicates that SEL makes a significant difference in academic performance, including higher standardized test scores (Payton, et al., 2008), fewer suspensions and expulsions, and better student attendance (Dymnicki, 2007). The school climate and mentoring curricula utilized during mentoring sessions and recess are the research-based BEST and Second Step programs. BEST Positive Behavior Support is nationally recognized as a behavior intervention system that is successful in developing clear expectations, reinforcing positive behaviors, and addressing behavioral errors (Sprague & Golly, 2013). Second Step teaches skills that strengthen students' ability to learn, have empathy, manage emotions, and solve problems (Committee for Children, 2011). See Budget Narrative, I.E.

AmeriCorps members' significant and unique contributions to existing efforts: Teachers and staff at the collaborating schools frequently express frustration with the time constraints that make it impossible to meet the complex needs of their students. AmeriCorps members are well positioned to address this need. By offering layers of support to students throughout the school day and after school, members will be a stable and significant presence in these students' lives. No other members of the school community are able to provide this array of services at a ratio of 1:2.

All elements of the logic model logically aligned: The CalSERVES logic model is based on foundational resources, including experienced and skilled staff; a highly functioning collaborative of 20 school and after school partners; effective recruitment, retention and training practices; evidenced-based curriculum; internal and external evaluators; and 60 full-time members. This powerful foundation supports the activities, including intensive member training, coaching and supervision; recruitment and development of volunteers; identification of high-need students; academic tutoring; intensive mentoring; and school-climate activities. These research based activities will generate the projected outputs: 60 members, trained through 170 hours of professional development, will serve 8,500 students in Tier 1 (school climate), 1,740 students in Tier 2 (tutoring), and 580 students in Tier 3 (mentoring); and 450 volunteers will provide support for school climate activities. The resulting outcomes will include improved behavior/social skills and academic performance. The impact of the program will be documented in improved behavior, emotional well-being, and academic performance.

1. c. EVIDENCE BASE. The CalSERVES design is research-based at every level. The program conducted its own quasi-experimental design study, which, combined with the experimental studies

Narratives

underpinning the program foundations, currently place it at a Moderate level of evidence --a high rating on the U.S. Department of Education scale.

The program's quasi-experimental design study compared students from two schools participating in a Collective Impacts pilot program that includes tutoring, school climate, and mentoring to students from six schools participating in regular after school tutoring. Results show significantly greater improvement in literacy or math skills for Collective Impacts students compared with students receiving after school tutoring alone.

Several studies utilizing experimental design support different components of the proposed CalSERVES design. A randomized control trial assessing the impact of Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) K-3 Program -- an AmeriCorps-based academic tutoring program with a tiered design -- demonstrated statistically significant improvement on assessment scores across multiple racial groups in grades K-3 (Markovitz, Hernandez, Hedberg, & Silbergliitt, 2014). This study demonstrated that structured and rigorous tutoring was effective despite important risk factors, including Dual Language Learner status and Free and Reduced Price Lunch eligibility. Components of the MRC are mirrored in the CalSERVES design. Another randomized control trial indicated that implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Schools (PBIS-BEST) program led to (a) reduction in office discipline referrals, (b) reduction in suspensions, and (c) improved fifth grade academic performance (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). PBIS-BEST is implemented by CalSERVES to positively impact school climate and student outcomes. A large scale, quasi-experimental design study conducted in 5-7th grade classrooms in 11 schools found that low-SES students receiving Second Step reported disproportionate improvements in social competence, school performance, and satisfaction with life compared to their peers (Holsen, Iversen, & Smith, 2009). Targeted mentoring (Second Step) is a component of the CalSERVES design. Additional studies supporting the CalSERVES design and more about the studies mentioned above can be found in Attachment A of the evaluation report.

1.d. NOTICE PRIORITY. The CalSERVES program is directly aligned with CNCS priority areas Education and Intermediaries. CalSERVES 1) utilizes National Performance Measures 1, 2, 3A, 4A, 5, 27A, & 27B under the Education rubric, directly addressing the academic achievement of high need students; 2) is an intermediary with 15+ years' experience operating statewide/regional programs with measurable impacts on communities with limited resources and infrastructure, specifically addressing

Narratives

compelling community needs; and 3) has substantial financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortia outlined in the Organizational Capacity section below.

1.e. MEMBER TRAINING.

Comprehensive training plan: The training plan provides all members with 1) a clear understanding of AmeriCorps' mission & goals and 2) the skills needed to effectively engage with youth, deliver specialized content, and work effectively in a school environment. Trainings end with time to reflect, ask questions, and implement new learning. Members participate in a 2-week pre-service training period to orient them to AmeriCorps, their school site, and the local community; build esprit de corps; and set personal and professional goals for their year of service. Initial training also includes a solid grounding in their academic area of specialty (Literacy or STEM), and the mentoring and school climate curricula. On-going training is held monthly, supporting program implementation. Coupled with this are individual weekly observation and feedback sessions conducted by Content Leaders to support members. Two regional conferences will bring together all 60 Members. The 1-day Fall Conference will build on the foundational training once members have experience with students. The 3-day Spring Conference will infuse the last half of the service year with a fresh dose of energy, focus, and professional skill development through cross-program learning, esprit de corps activities, workshops in Life After AmeriCorps, and seminars in leaving a legacy. All training is followed by on-site coaching. See Budget Narrative, I.C.2.& G.2. Members and volunteers adhere to rules regarding prohibited activities. All program staff and partners are trained on the prohibited activities and are given frequent refreshers. Prohibited activities are detailed in all orientation trainings and in member contracts. Site Supervisors monitor members at all times and give reminders as needed. Volunteers are also oriented to the rules and closely monitored.

1.f. MEMBER SUPERVISION. Systems to provide high quality on-going member guidance/support for effective service: CalSERVES has a well-honed supervisory system that has been in operation for over a decade. At each school site, the Site Supervisor provides daily member supervision and support. The Program Coordinator and Program Manager provide additional guidance through site visits and regular phone and email contact with members and supervisors. See Budget Narrative, I.A. These multiple layers of support ensure that members are given the structure and guidance they need to be effective. Clear policies and codes of conduct are strictly adhered to at all sites. Members are formally observed at least 3X/year, followed by next steps that may include additional training and access to

Narratives

new resources. See Budget Narrative, I.A. & G.1.

Well trained/prepared supervisors: Site Supervisors meet regularly during the year and attend an intensive Summer Institute covering all AmeriCorps program regulations, priorities and expectations. Sites have experienced supervisors who have effectively overseen an AmeriCorps team (often an alum!) in place and any new supervisors are matched with a mentor. The Program Coordinator will orient and train any new staff, ensuring continuity of services.

1.g. MEMBER EXPERIENCE. AmeriCorps members gain skills and experience valued by future employers: Through excellent training and coaching, members gain valuable skills: role specific skills, supporting future employment in a related field (effective teaching strategies, understanding how children learn, reading processes); and universal skills (professional conduct, communication, collaboration, conflict resolution), which are highly valued in all fields.

Meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection: Service experiences are carefully designed. The program vision is shared with members and all activities are linked back to the vision. Working intensively with pairs of students gives members the opportunity to see student progress toward goals, and data collected is shared with members so they can see the impact. Reflection is a key component of every meeting, training and Service Day.

Opportunities to establish connections and build esprit de corps: Site Supervisors and school staff see CaSERVES members as part of a vibrant team, and they devote time to nurturing connections by working collaboratively, both at each service site and across the program as a whole. Trainings and social events are scheduled throughout the year to offer opportunities for members to connect with each other, foster esprit de corps and recognize members for their contributions and accomplishments. Appreciation is a standing item on team meeting agendas and outstanding members are recognized with awards at program events. The program uses on-line and social media resources to generate program affiliation, engagement with the cadre and feature member service activities in the field.

Ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and life-long service: When service is completed, members are encouraged to join the alumni network, stay involved through continued service and volunteerism, and help with recruitment and program activities. Alumni involvement in

Narratives

member activities promotes this level of engagement through example.

Plan to recruit AmeriCorps members from the local communities: NCOE has long-standing relationships with the target communities. Members are primarily recruited from universities, community colleges, and school communities--and via targeted emails to graduating students. NCOE has been highly successful in recruiting traditionally underserved populations reflective of the community through multi-lingual outreach to key stakeholders.

1.h. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. How members know they are AmeriCorps members: AmeriCorps is key to the CalSERVES program identity. Nearly 90% of the program staff are alumni and are stewards of the Service experience. Members understand what AmeriCorps service means because staff share and reinforce this deep-rooted vision from their first moment of contact with members, carrying it throughout recruitment and enrollment. This message is also embedded in orientation, on-going training and a swearing in ceremony.

How the staff and community members where members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members: All members wear AmeriCorps uniforms (shirts and a name tag with the AmeriCorps logo) at all times while serving. Service sites display banners and signs identifying them as AmeriCorps sites. Members are trained in sharing the vision of AmeriCorps with others.

Plan to provide members with service gear: Members are issued a set of uniform shirts as part of their initial orientation, and they are required to wear the shirts at all times while serving. The uniform includes the grey AmeriCorps t-shirt and several program-designed shirts that prominently feature the AmeriCorps logo. See Budget Narrative, I. E.

Organizational Capability

2.a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING.

Experience, staffing, and management structure: The AmeriCorps programs are housed within NOCE's well-regarded Community Programs Division, a thriving unit responsible for implementing grant-funded projects in after school, prevention, mental health, tutoring, and volunteer programming regionally and statewide. The department is directed by Julie McClure, who has managed NCOE's AmeriCorps program since its inception in 1998. Ms. McClure reports directly to the Asst. Superintendent, who also directs the business office. All activities are tracked and monitored

Narratives

using the effective protocols in place for the office's multiple state and federal grant programs. The program also benefits from NCOE's full-time evaluator, Cate Samuelson, Ph.D., who has an extensive background in school-community engagement and community-based programs. See Budget Narrative, III.A.

Key roles of program staff and administrators: CalSERVES is overseen by Program Director Julie McClure, Senior Program Manager Briana Downey, and Program Coordinator Melissa Moore. Collectively, these three leaders have more than 30 years of experience in AmeriCorps programming! Julie McClure is a highly-experienced and visionary director, who has been involved in the successful service of over 2,500 AmeriCorps members. She will provide budgeting, program design & development guidance. Briana Downey is an experienced professional, with 2 years of AmeriCorps service, 8 years on the CalSERVES team. She currently manages the CalSERVES program and is responsible for program oversight and grant management, including compliance with CNCS and state commission guidelines, supervision of staff and members, and regular collaboration with school administrators and other collaborative partners to monitor progress and assess program needs. Program Coordinator Melissa Moore draws on her 8 years of AmeriCorps experience to provide day to day operational support, including monitoring service sites for compliance, developing and leading trainings, and maintaining strong relationships with teachers/ administrators at each school site. This experienced team is well positioned to train new staff members in the event of any turnover, although the staff is historically very stable. The Site Supervisors, one at each placement site, are responsible for providing daily guidance to their AmeriCorps team. See Budget Narrative, I.A.

Experience administering AmeriCorps & other federal grants: The project staff has 15+ years of successful experience operating both local and state-wide AmeriCorps programs, with annual budgets for these programs now exceeding \$2.5 million--6% of NCOE's total budget. NCOE has managed more than 50 federal grants in the last decade from funders including the U.S. Departments of Education, Health & Human Services, and the Corporation for National & Community Service. These grants totaled \$20 million in federal funding in the 13-14 fiscal year.

Community members and partner organizations engaged in planning & implementing intervention: NCOE conducted a needs assessment and collaborative planning process in Fall 2014 as part of the program design phase. Program staff met with key stakeholders including principals, superintendents,

Narratives

program directors, teachers, families, and internal staff to craft a program to effectively meet pressing community needs. In addition to in-person meetings, a written survey was sent out to a wide group of teachers, partner staff, and other community members, and results were incorporated into the program design. Partners have an active role in implementing the intervention, including training and mentoring AmeriCorps members, working with program staff to develop and refine curriculum/assessments, identifying students, and participating in on-going evaluation, program review, and refinement. Partners include Bellevue Union, Wright, and Old Adobe School Districts in Sonoma County; Napa County's Calistoga and Napa Valley Unified School Districts; and private partners, Extended Child Care in Sonoma County and Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa & Calistoga in Napa County. See Budget Narrative, I.C.1.

2.b. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Prevention and detection of compliance issues: NCOE will draw on its extensive experience supporting multi-site regional and state-wide AmeriCorps programs to provide the structures necessary for compliance and accountability, including providing training for partner site staff and materials useful in member management, and keeping a full copy of each member file to ensure compliance in eligibility and service hour completion. The protocols, systems, and tools are in place to ensure sites receive the oversight necessary to ensure high-quality programs.

NCOE also uses a monitoring tool to assess site compliance in terms of adherence to the program design, member management, and fiscal directives. This regular monitoring process is designed to discover any areas of weakness and provide concrete steps for improvement. Official site visits are followed by a report, and the monitoring process includes working with sites to create a specific course of action. Additionally, staff regularly "drop in" on sites to provide informal observation and coaching. See Budget Narrative, I.A.

System of accountability if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified: If an issue of non-compliance is identified, the program will follow the standing protocol: 1. Document the issue through a detailed report, provided to the Site Supervisor; 2. Create a corrective action plan to address the issue immediately; 3. Provide the report and action plan to CaliforniaVolunteers (CV).

Compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations: The CalSERVES staff has 15+ years' experience

Narratives

running high quality AmeriCorps programs that adhere to all relevant regulations. Conference calls with CV are attended regularly, and information from those calls is disseminated to the team. Staff meet quarterly to review the regulations and update internal policies and procedures to ensure compliance. Program staff regularly attend all CV trainings and seek out additional CNCS trainings to keep up to date on relevant regulations.

2.c. PAST PERFORMANCE.

In the past two years, CalSERVES has met all achievement targets for students. In 2012-13, the CalSERVES tutoring program had a target of 40% of students improving by one grade level in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Students exceeded these goals with 42% of students in ELA and 47% of students in Math increasing a grade level or more. In January 2014, the Collective Impacts pilot was introduced, positing that removing barriers to learning would help students succeed even more academically than tutoring alone. The program anticipated greater gains in student performance and increased the targeted gains to 50% of students improving by one grade level. In 13-14, 55% of students increased by one grade level in English Language Arts (ELA) and 68% increased by one grade level in Math. The pilot expanded again in the current 2014-15 school year and this year to date has seen greater gains still with 73% improving in ELA and 82% in Math. These results led directly to the current design, which provides the most challenged students with the support they need to succeed.

Member Enrollment: Historically, NCOE's AmeriCorps programs have been at 100% enrollment. The Collective Impacts Pilot was at 100% enrollment in 2013-14 and is on track for 100% enrollment in the current year. Member Retention: The Collective Impacts Pilot, upon which this proposed program is based, had a 95% retention rate in 2013-14. NCOE is confident that the proposed project will demonstrate its success with similarly high levels of retention.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

3.a. COST EFFECTIVENESS.

Budget sufficient to carry out the program effectively: NCOE developed the budget for CalSERVES based on 15+ years of experience operating AmeriCorps programs and a deep understanding of what it really takes to fund a successful project. The sufficiency is based on significant partner contributions to augment CV funding.

Budget aligned with the applicant's narrative: Each budget line item references a section of the

Narratives

narrative, and the narrative, in turn, references budget line items.

The program design is cost effective and the benefits justify the cost: The CalSERVES program design is ambitious in both breadth and depth, justifying the budgeted costs. Fifty-eight full time AmeriCorps members will tutor 30 students over the course of the year, enabling the program to serve 1,740 students. Additionally, 2 full time regional leaders will engage 450 volunteers. This reach is made more impressive by the intensity of services provided. Students are seen one on one, in pairs, and in small groups, allowing for targeted instruction and meaningful relationship building. The highest need students receive multiple interventions, benefiting from a coordinated level of wrap-around support that is otherwise unavailable.

The cost-effectiveness of the design is enhanced by the project's access to the existing infrastructure of NCOE. Many systems, staff, and materials are already in place and will not need to be paid for out of CNCS funds. For example, the project benefits from the oversight and services of the business office; evaluation for reporting and continuous improvement that is supported by the two staff evaluators; and the IT department for NCOE which supports technology needs for staff and partner sites. All of these components allow grant funds to be focused on supporting members in their service, rather than paying for expensive infrastructure.

By utilizing a Program Coordinator to provide day-to-day operational support with 100% of her time spent on the program, the program is able to save on personnel expenses (See Budget Narrative, I.A.). Personnel fringe benefits are based on the lowest possible rates for the county office (Budget Narrative, I.B.). Staff and member travel (CV sponsored meetings, Fall/Spring conferences, and other meetings) and lodging costs have been extensively researched to find the most reasonable rates (Budget Narrative, I.C.1 & C.2.). The equipment used was previously purchased (Budget Narrative, I.D.). Only the most essential member supplies are provided, and these are sourced at the lowest costs (Budget Narrative, I.E.). Staff and member trainings are important, and costs are kept down by taking advantage of less expensive online training options (Budget Narrative, I.G.1 & G.2.). Evaluation services provide needed data so members can provide the most efficient and cost-effective services (Budget Narrative, I.H.). Program operating costs (background checks, service awards, recruitment postings, etc.) include essential elements to ensure the program is operating effectively and legally (Budget Narrative, I.I.). Member costs, such as Living Allowance, FICA, Worker's Comp

Narratives

are based on projections and health care costs have been researched thoroughly to ensure the best member coverage at an affordable rate (Budget Narrative, II.A.-E.).

The program benefits more than justify costs by providing low-achieving, underserved children opportunities to overcome barriers to learning and achieve success in school, with the ultimate goal of completing post-secondary education to become productive members of society. AmeriCorps members build student perseverance and foster academic successes, which can help prevent substance abuse, incarcerations, and other social ills. Cost-benefit analysis show that school-based programs which improve academic success save \$18 for every \$1 spent on treatment programs (SAMHSA, 2008).

Non-CNCS resources to fully support the program: Overall, CalSERVES program match is 55%, exceeding the requirement of 50% for an experienced program. In-kind match comes from NCOE and its partners and includes a portion of administrative costs, as well as time for Site Supervisors to oversee and support the program. Partner sites provide in-kind match in the form of salaries/benefits for supervision and costs for member training. They also provide a cash match of \$5,622 of each member's living allowance. NCOE has a history of successfully generating and expanding match and has demonstrated an ability to lower the project's reliance on federal resources substantially over time. In keeping with NCOE policy, match commitments are documented by a letter of intent during the application process followed by a formalized MOU. Partner sites provide the in-kind match through a variety of non-federal sources. In-kind match also comes from NCOE in the form of indirect cost.

Cost per Member Service Year (MSY) is less than previous years. CalSERVES cost/MSY for the Collective Impacts program in 14-15 was \$13,289. In this proposal, the cost per MSY is \$13,280. The program was able to lower the cost/MSY despite increasing the member living allowance from \$14,000 to \$16,000. The current \$14,000 allowance, even under the most frugal and carefully managed conditions, is insufficient to cover the cost of living in our extremely expensive area. When members aren't able to make ends meet on their stipend, they are unable to focus on their service. The quality of their effort can falter, and both enrollment and retention rates suffer. The program was able to cover the increase with grantee share and cost effective practices honed from experience.

3.b. BUDGET ADEQUACY.

The budget is free of mathematical errors, provides adequate information to assess how each line item

Narratives

is calculated, and is in compliance.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

THEORY OF CHANGE. While many programs focus exclusively on one service in order to address students' needs, these isolated-impact approaches are often not enough to address the issues that significantly block learning. The CalSERVES theory of change utilizes an assessment/triage process to address specific student needs utilizing 3 tiers: Tier 1 is whole school activities to positively impact school climate, developing school connectedness, collaboration and problem solving abilities. Tier 2 is Literacy/STEM tutoring to close the achievement gap following Common Core-aligned curricula. Tier 3 is mentoring to develop resiliency and coping skills in the highest need students to build developmental assets, problem solving skills and tenacity.

The proposed approach is a coordinated effort to improve academic outcomes through carefully selected, research based interventions, including random assignment experimental studies. Students will be tutored in research-based curricula to meet their academic needs. Literacy: Reading Triumphs has been proven to impact struggling readers by helping them access prior knowledge and applying it to new skills development (Frechtling, Bozeman, Hoover and Zhang 2008). Step Up to Writing increases writing proficiency through explicit, hands-on strategies to support idea development, sentence structure and word choice in narrative and expository text (Smith, 2008). STEM: My Math focuses on supporting students' proficiency and fluency for computational skills while emphasizing real world mathematical connections (Flaum-Horvath, 2012). FOSS Next Generation incorporates the Next Generation Science Standards engaging students in scientific practices through research, experiments and analyzing and interpreting data (Cook, 2008).

School Climate/Mentoring: BEST Positive Behavior Support is a nationally recognized behavior intervention system to develop clear expectations, reinforce positive behaviors with rewards/praise, and consistently address behavioral errors (Sprague & Golly, 2013). Second Step teaches skills that strengthen students' ability to learn, have empathy, manage emotions, and solve problems (Committee for Children, 2011).

OUTCOMES. Program Activity 1: A) 40 FT Literacy tutors offer tutoring for students struggling in reading. B) 20 FT STEM tutors take an inquiry-based, multi-disciplinary approach to guide small groups of students through math and science curriculum.

Output: 1740 high-need students will receive academic support in Literacy or STEM

Outcome: A) 60% (684 of 1140) high need students who receive literacy/ELD tutoring sessions will gain at least one grade level in reading. B) 60% (360 of 600) high need students who receive STEM

Narratives

tutoring sessions will gain at least one grade level in math.

Measures: Monthly Tutoring Log. Woodcock-Johnson Assessments (WJ III) to collect data on student progress in reading and math skills will be completed by members and collected by site coordinators 3 times per year

Program Activity 2: 60 FT Members will provide an additional layer of support for the most at need tutoring students by offering 1-1 and small group mentoring to at least 580 students.

Output: 580 Students will begin the mentoring program and 522 will receive 24 sessions of mentoring to build developmental assets.

Outcome: 50% (261 of 522) high need students who receive mentoring services will show an increase on the social competency scale.

Measures: Monthly Mentor Log. Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment to collect data on social behavior will be completed by Supervisors and/or Counselors 3 times per year.

Program Activity 3: 60 members will implement school-wide initiatives to support a positive climate.

Output: 8500 students at 20 high-need elementary and middle schools

Outcome: 60% (12 of 20) of schools served will show decreased discipline referrals.

Measure: Annual school discipline referral reports.

Program Activity 4: 150 volunteers will be recruited for on-going activities. 300 volunteers will be recruited for one-time activities.

Output: 450 volunteers will collectively serve 1800 hours across 20 high-need school sites.

Outcome: Volunteers will commit to additional hours of volunteer service

Measure: Monthly Volunteer Log.

Program Activity 5: 60 members receive training from program staff and school & community partners in skill development and preparation for working in school settings with high-need youth, leadership skills, and effective intervention strategies.

Output: 60 members will complete Core Training.

Outcome: 70% (42 of 60) of members will increase skills by 20%.

Measure: Pre/Mid/Post Member evaluation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS. 1. Do CaSERVES participants who receive tutoring services demonstrate improved academic performance when compared with a propensity score matched group of students who do not receive tutoring services?

Narratives

2. Do CalSERVES participants who receive mentoring services demonstrate improved social and behavioral skills when compared with a propensity score matched group of students who do not receive mentoring services?
3. Does the number of discipline referrals overall decrease over time when compared to other similar schools within the two districts?
4. What are the effects of numbers of tutoring sessions and on academic performance?
5. How many short-term volunteers transition to long-term volunteers?

RESEARCH DESIGN. The research questions will be answered using the following methods. RQ1 and RQ2: quasi-experimental design through propensity score matching. Given the data collected and access to school sites, a comparison group of non-tutored or non-mentored students will be identified, measured and matched within each school site. When program recipient and comparison student data have been collected, the external evaluator will conduct an impact analysis. Propensity score matching will be used for matching data from treated and untreated students within each school and multivariate regression will be applied, if needed, to allow for adjustment of pre-test characteristics of the recipients at post test. A power analysis will be conducted during the initial stages of the study; however it is anticipated that the 1740 academic support students and the 560 mentees within the 20 program sites will yield a sample of sufficient size to detect effects once matched with a comparison group.

RQ3: comparative interrupted time series evaluation to identify decreases in discipline referrals compared to similar school sites within the districts. RQ4: multivariate regression techniques to answer questions regarding the relationship between the number of tutoring sessions, participation in mentoring, and increased academic performance. RQ5 and RQ6: examine outcomes for Volunteer and AmeriCorps Members to determine the number and proportion of volunteers who transition from short term to long term volunteer status, and to assess the skill areas that show greatest improvement and those that require further improvement.

EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS

The external evaluator, JBS International, works with learning organizations across the country and around the world, from pre-K to ongoing adult education. They conduct rigorous research and evaluation to assess education program impacts using methods that are responsive to local, cultural, and linguistic contexts, including impoverished communities.

Dr. Nicole Vicinanza's expertise focuses on evaluation technical assistance, instrument development, and evaluation design. She has overseen several national evaluation studies and has extensive

Narratives

experience in research and evaluation with community, health, and education programs. She has overseen randomized control trial evaluations and quasi-experimental data analysis for CalSERVES over the past decade. She guided and participated in review of AmeriCorps programs' external evaluations through Project STAR and currently oversees JBS's work on the Evaluation Review and Monitoring process for the Social Innovation Fund. Her expertise in data collection and analysis includes the use of SAS, Excel, and database design in Access. She holds her PhD in Program Evaluation from University of Virginia.

Peter Lovegrove, PhD has over ten years of experience as an evaluator and researcher. He reviews evaluation plans for the CNCS Social Innovation Fund and provides guidance to ensure portfolio evaluation strategies that are technically rigorous, appropriate to the grantees' program design, and feasible. He develops strategies for clustered evaluations of AmeriCorps programs for the CNCS Evaluation Bundling project to increase their ability to provide evidence of impact. Dr. Lovegrove also develops sampling and surveying protocols, and conducts data analysis for the Senior Corps RSVP program implementation assessment. He leads the quantitative data analysis efforts for the CalSERVES impact assessment, overseeing development of a propensity score matched design. In addition, he is proficient in longitudinal data analysis, Latent Growth Modeling, Propensity Scores Matching, Structural Equation Modeling, and Latent Class/Transitions Analysis. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The internal evaluator, Cate Samuelson, PhD, has an extensive background in school-community engagement and community-based programs. She has five years of experience conducting evaluation projects and over eight years of research and evaluation experience overall within the education field. Dr. Samuelson holds a PhD in Education from University of Washington in Seattle.

ESTIMATED BUDGET. Evaluation Service to conduct external evaluation and provide ongoing program feedback, 204 hours x \$104/hr = \$25,000. Evaluation and data tracking system, \$250/site x 20 sites = \$5000. Administrative costs cover Internal Evaluator, .25 FTE x \$70,000 = \$17,500. Total cost = \$47,500.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

Programmatic Clarification Items

1. Revise the executive summary to reflect the scope of the project.

Narratives

We updated the Executive Summary narrative.

2. Please explain how your program will ensure that members will meet the tutor qualification requirements specified in 45SF 2522.910; specifically, that includes having a high school diploma or its equivalent or a higher degree.

Members will be required to meet the tutor qualification requirements specified in 45SF 2522.910. At a minimum, all tutors will have a high school diploma or its equivalent. The program will screen all applications to ensure members meet this requirement.

3. Please certify that your program will provide members with pre- and in-service training that is high quality and research-based, consistent with the instructional program of the local education agency and with State academic content standards, as required in 45 CFR 2522.940.

We certify that the program will provide members with pre-and in-service training that is high quality and research-based, consistent with the instructional program of the local education agency and with State academic content standards, as required in 45 CFR 2522.940.

4. Please provide additional information about the respective roles of the regional leaders and the content leaders: what are people in these roles responsible for? Will both roles be filled by AmeriCorps members? Please confirm that AmeriCorps members serving as either regional leaders or content leaders will not supervise other members.

The roles of Regional and Content Leaders will be filled by AmeriCorps Members. They will not supervise other members.

The Regional Leader will focus primarily on recruiting, screening, training and placing volunteers. The Regional Leader will be responsible for recruiting 40 long term and 75 short-term volunteers. The Regional Leader will also coordinate the National Days of Service Activities in which all Members and Volunteers will participate.

Narratives

There will be 1 Content Leader focused on Math and 1 on Literacy in each county, for a total of 4. These positions will be filled by returning AmeriCorps members who will serve as peer coaches to their fellow members. Under the supervision of program staff, they will offer this support through weekly site visits, where they will observe tutoring sessions, give feedback, suggest resources and model best practices. They will also tutor students in their content area of focus.

Budget Clarification Items

1. 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.

We have budgeted for a low cost per MSY of \$13,289 per member and are unable to reduce any further.

2. Budget Section III Please add source of funds to Section III of the budget narrative.

We have added the source of funds to the budget narrative.

Performance Measure Clarification Items

1. Please review the proposed performance measures and determine if any changes, including changes to targets, are needed to reflect the funding and MSY amount specified above.

We have made all needed changes directly in the performance measures section in eGrants.

2. Please specify in each measure that the target beneficiary is a disadvantaged or economically disadvantaged (ED3A) student. Address how the students meet the definition of economically disadvantaged in the Performance Measure instructions.

Narratives

We have made all needed changes directly in the performance measures section in eGrants.

3. The intervention narrative states that students will improve by one grade level. It is not clear whether only students improving at least one grade level will be counted in ED5. Please specify how much improvement from pre-test to post-test is necessary to be counted as "improved" in ED5 and explain why this gain is significant.

Only students who improve by at least 1 grade level from pre-test to post-test will be counted in ED5. 60% of students will improve by at least one grade level in either Literacy or Math. An increase of one functional grade level is a significant increase for struggling students who are performing far below their peers and who are experiencing an ever widening academic gap without targeted intervention.

4. Please specify whether students must improve in both reading and math in order to be counted in ED5, or whether improvement in one subject is sufficient.

Students will receive one intervention: either reading or math. In order to be counted in ED5, a student must improve 1 grade level in the subject in which they were tutored.

5. Explain how you will ensure that students who make gains in both subjects are only counted once in ED5. Please also explain how you will ensure that students receiving both interventions will not be double-counted in ED1 and ED2.

Students will receive one intervention: either reading or math. In order to be counted in ED5, a student must improve 1 grade level in the subject in which they were tutored.

6. In ED27A please indicate the specific attitudes for which you will be measuring change. Measures of student attitudes include: increased interest in school, improved perspective on school climate, increased attachment to school, and increased educational aspirations. Explain how the proposed instrument measures the attitudes you intend to measure.

We have changed the performance measure to ED27B. We will be using the WSI to measure student

Narratives

behaviors as indicated by increased teacher-reported participation.

The Walker McConnell Scales of Social Competence (WSI) measures the frequency with which social and school readiness skills are present in students. The instrument is divided into two components covering adaptive behaviors (skills needed to function independently in an instructional setting) and interpersonal social competence (skills needed to maintain social interactions with others). The instrument is comprised of 19 questions that are completed during observation. The instrument is administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure individual student improvement.

7. In ED27A please describe the instrument and explain why 10% is a meaningful change.

We have changed the performance measure to ED27B. We will be using the WSI to measure student behaviors as indicated by increased teacher-reported participation.

The Walker McConnell Scales of Social Competence (WSI) has been shown to be a reliable, stable and consistent assessment of student behavior that has been tested over time. The Survey Instrument uses 19 questions broken into two components covering skills needed to function independently in an instructional setting and skills needed to maintain social interactions with others. The assessment is completed through student observation; each question is measured on a Likert scale of 1-5, 1 being 'never occurs' and 5 being 'frequently occurs'. The instrument is administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure individual student improvement. A positive change indicates that the student has built important adaptive behaviors (study habits, responsiveness, quality of work, participation and listening skills) and interpersonal social competence (sensitivity, empathy, self-control, social maturity, and cooperation).

The expected increase for students with identified emotional or behavioral issues who receive an intervention is between 8 and 12 percentile points. As indicated in this and several other studies of the Walker McConnell tool, an increase of 10 percentile points would show a "dramatic improvement" in the students' abilities to function independently in an instructional setting and to maintain positive social interactions with others. (Early Mental Health Initiative, Statewide Evaluation Report, 2007/2008; Quinn, M.M., et al., "A Meta-Analysis of Social Skill Intervention for Students with Emotional or Behavior Disorders" Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Spring 1999: 7, 1.)

Narratives

9. For ED3A/ED4A, confirm that the mentoring duration is at least 6 months.

The duration of each mentoring relationship will be at least 6 months.

10. Please remove references to STEM activities other than math from the tutoring performance measure since science activities cannot be counted in ED5.

We have made all needed changes directly in the performance measures section in eGrants.

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?

It is essential to our programs to provide the students we serve with a diverse team of AmeriCorps members. We make every effort to be inclusive in our recruitment campaigns, which consist of newspaper articles, social media, employment websites, partner sites and community organizations. Currently 15 % of our members identify as having disabilities. We would anticipate a minimum of 6 of 38 members to identify as having a disability in this program.

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. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies.) In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If you would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs your program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to your budget. Also adjust your performance measure targets,

Narratives

MSY allocations, and executive summary to reflect these additional members.

We are not able to utilize the strategic engagement slots at this time.

MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification Items

Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs. These additional No-Cost MSYs are national service positions in which no grant funds will be awarded. In other words, grantees could receive additional AmeriCorps positions but no additional grant funds. Programs will be responsible for using their own or other resources to pay program costs, member support costs and other operating expenses. Keep in mind that full-time AmeriCorps program costs include expenditures for the AmeriCorps living allowance, health care and criminal history checks. Programs are not required to pay living allowances or cover health care for less-than-full-time members. If you wish to request no-cost MSYs, please respond to the following and add the additional slots to your budget and executive summary, and adjust your performance measure targets and MSY allocations:

1. The number and type of slots requested. Please confirm that for the MSYs requested, the additional members will only engage in activities aligned with the proposed member activities outlined in the application narrative.
2. A description of resources that will be provided to adequately support the additional members and how they are sufficient to; support the member support costs, management, oversight, program operations, and the program activities.
3. Source(s) of non-CNCS funds. Provide a brief description of the amount, classification (cash or in-kind), source(s) (State/Local, Federal, Private) for all resources secured to manage, monitor, and support these additional members.
4. The organization's capability and capacity to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the additional members.

We will not be able to utilize the No-Cost MSY slots at this time.

Continuation Changes

NA

Grant Characteristics