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Executive Summary

Reading Partners proposes to have 63 AmeriCorps members who will manage volunteer recruitment and day-to-day operations of our one-on-one literacy tutoring program for low-income students at 45 Title I elementary schools across California including Sacramento, San Francisco Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and Los Angeles areas. At the end of the first program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for enrolling at least 2,700 high-need target students to measurably increase their literacy skills. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 2,800 volunteers who will engage in individualized reading tutoring for low-income students struggling to maintain proficient, grade-level skills.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of education. An investment from CNCS of \$819,000 will be matched with \$2,052,419 made possible by \$810,000 in public funding and \$1,242,419 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1.a. PROBLEM/NEED

When starting school, students focus on learning the mechanics of reading and basic comprehension strategies. Starting in 3rd grade, reading is no longer the objective of learning but rather its primary vehicle; students are expected to read to learn. From then on, students' ability to stay on grade-level depends upon their ability to open a book and comprehend the content. Children who read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are more likely to graduate from high school and be economically successful in adulthood (The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2013).

85% of 4th graders from low-income homes in California fail to meet the standards for proficiency according to the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. Reading Partners (RP) believes that it is possible to change the trajectory for California's most disadvantaged students. By recruiting, training, and supporting community volunteers to provide students with 1:1 tutoring, we aim to close the achievement gap for low-income students. We focus our services on K-5 students at Title I schools who have fallen 6 months to 2.5 years below their proficient peers in reading. On average, 94% of students who participate in RP are eligible for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch, a standard proxy for poverty in education research. At the time of enrollment, the average RP student is reading 1.1 years below their actual grade-level.

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Through collaboration and community service, RP is able to get students back on track for success in the classroom, workplace, and civil society.

1.b. THEORY OF CHANGE & LOGIC MODEL

AmeriCorps (AC) members serve as Site Coordinators (SCs), Regional Site Coordinators (RSCs), or Volunteer Coordinators (VCs). Member daily responsibilities include: coordinating volunteer and student schedules; offering daily 1-on-1 coaching to tutors before, after and during each tutoring session; offering assistance to any tutors who are having difficulty working with their student at any given time; providing initial orientation and training, as well as monthly formal training sessions to volunteers. In addition to daily check-ins with each volunteer at the conclusion of their tutoring session, members also provide direct support during tutoring sessions to ensure high program quality. Members act as liaisons to facilitate communication with and gather feedback from parents, classroom teachers, literacy coaches and specialized educators. Through this collaborative process, members develop individualized tutoring plans for each student in the RP program, which are shared with volunteers and used for the basis of daily and weekly check-ins with volunteers. Members are on-site for 8 hours per day, overseeing 4-8 sessions that last 45 minutes each. Though students may be pulled from their after-school program to receive RP tutoring, the RP model and program remains the same. During each session, the member typically oversees 5 tutors working individually with 5 students, resulting in a total average of 20-40 tutors in the center per day. During the time before and after sessions, members have individual conversations with volunteers to offer feedback based on their own observations or those of teachers in order to monitor progress and maintain high program quality for each student. Each tutor records notes and progress at the conclusion of each tutoring session so that members (and tutors) can review them on a weekly basis and offer their own feedback in written form. While most centers require one on-site member, sites that have higher volunteer numbers require multiple member placements at a single school site. Members oversee a program that provides curriculum-based tutoring for 90 minutes per week to each student.

Volunteer Coordinators will develop and execute specific volunteer outreach plans for each school site, with seven categories of recruitment partnerships and activities: 1) high schools; 2) college/university; 3) business/corporate recruitment; 4) partnership with civic groups & faith-based organizations; 5) canvassing & neighborhood recruitment; 6) web-based recruitment; 7) public relations & media activity. Members will also be responsible for conducting grassroots community organizing efforts

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such as attending street fairs and volunteer recruitment fairs, identify matching opportunities for volunteer time and work to convey seriousness of commitment before potential volunteers become engaged as active tutors. Members will ensure a positive volunteer experience by consistently surveying volunteers and responding to feedback. At the conclusion of the school year, members are responsible for leading efforts to acknowledge and thank volunteers for their service and to determine who is likely to return for the following school year.

RP produces tangible improvements in student learning because of 3 key drivers. First, we intentionally developed the program to be 1:1 and target each student's unique learning needs. SCs and RSCs assess students 3 times a year using the STAR Early Literacy/Reading tests, a widely used evaluation tool (see Continuous Learning). We develop Individualized Reading Plans (IRPs) for students to create a roadmap to achievement goals. Moreover, 1:1 attention is important because it bolsters student confidence through encouragement from a caring adult. Secondly, we emphasize consistency and attendance. Learning to read takes ample practice, and so we require all students to maintain at least 90% attendance to regularly scheduled sessions. While the target is to enroll 3,000 students, the next target is to ensure that 2,100 of those students complete the program. A student has completed the program when they have received the full dosage of 16 hours of tutoring. When a student misses a session, we arrange for a 'make-up' session within one week of the missed date. Finally, we designed the RP curriculum to be skills-based and user-friendly. Tutors use a 148-level curriculum that teaches and reinforces discrete alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, phonics, and comprehension skills so that students can master what they struggled to understand the first time around. Every lesson comes complete with a lesson plan, books calibrated to the lesson's content and level of difficulty, worksheets, and games. In this way, no matter a volunteer's prior experience with education, s/he can reinforce a student's skill mastery. Additionally, tutors know they have the at-elbow support and guidance of their SC whenever they encounter a question or problem. We are proud that last year, 96% of tutors reported satisfaction with their experience at RP.

Over 14 years of operation, our data corroborates the power of this program model. Historical data indicates that year over year, nearly 9 in 10 students accelerate their rate of learning. To specify, the average student enters our program learning at a depressed rate of 0.6 month's worth of skill development for every month of instruction (proficiency = one month of skills per month of instruction). Once enrolled in RP, that same student nearly triples her rate of learning to an average

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of 1.6 months' worth of new skills for every month of tutoring. Last year, 89% of students in California accelerated their rate of learning. This boost in skill mastery helped 68% of students narrow their achievement gap to their peers. Teachers and school administrations notice the difference that RP makes: 100% of California principals reported school-wide improved reading progress thanks to our partnership. This is remarkable because it indicates that even though we serve a discrete population of the school, the positive impacts of the program extend well beyond the students who regularly visit the reading center.

1.c. EVIDENCE BASE

RP has transitioned from a research-validated program to an evidence-based program. In June 2014, the independent research group MDRC released the first of two studies of the RP program, based on data collected from more than 1,200 students at 19 sites in 3 states during the 2012-13 school year. 16 of the study sites were in California. Next year, MDRC will release a report on the cost and cost-effectiveness of the RP program model.

The MDRC study meets the requirements of the "strong evidence" level outlined in the NOFO as it provides a causal connection between participation in RP programming and positive student outcomes that directly support the model's theory of change. The rigorous, randomized control trial revealed that RP boosted 3 different measures of participating students' reading proficiency, including reading comprehension for 2nd to 5th grade students. Tutoring by volunteers twice a week resulted in an additional 1.5 to 2 months of growth in literacy for RP students over a control group of students (who also received a variety of supplemental reading services). Key findings include:

- a. Despite the challenges inherent in operating a program whose direct service providers are volunteers, RP was implemented in the schools with a high degree of fidelity.
- b. RP had a positive and statistically significant impact on all 3 measures of student reading proficiency examined -- reading comprehension, reading fluency, and sight-word reading -- that equaled 1.5 to 2 months of growth in literacy achievement. (This impact represents the value-added of RP, since 65% of the students in the control group also received other supplemental reading services.)
- c. The RP program was effective for a wide variety of students -- from different grades or baseline reading achievement levels, male and female students, and for those who are not native English speakers.

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1.d. NOTICE PRIORITY

RP falls within the Education funding priority for 2015 by providing support, services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children. Specifically, performance measures will include Measures ED1, ED2, and ED5. RP is eligible to apply under the RFA requirements and has all measurement systems in place to accurately measure the success of the performance measures under the funding priorities.

1.e. MEMBER TRAINING

The main objective of the training plan is that members thrive in their service experience. The plan spans the entirety of the service year, with emphasis on 3 major phases: (1) Initial introduction to their service commitment and environment, (2) Assumption of daily responsibilities as they transition into the service environment, and (3) Efficient and satisfactory completion of normal routines/tasks for the duration of their service commitment.

When members join in August, training begins with 3 weeks of pre-service orientation in each service region. Orientation serves 3 main goals: (1) To educate members on the history of national service, the conditions of their service and prohibited activities, and other CNCS-required subjects, as well as to sign their contracts. (2) To prepare members for their service at RP by introducing the program model and daily responsibilities. SCs and RSCs are trained on how to use the curriculum, coach tutors, and interact with school staff. VCs receive training in public speaking and professional communication, building relationships with diverse community partners, and assisting volunteers through the life cycle of a RP tutor. (3) To build team.

After orientation, SCs and RSCs are placed at their specific service sites and receive 2 weeks of reading center-based training. During this time, they learn about the community they will serve and begin to set up their reading center, applying knowledge from orientation on how to create a positive environment for learning. Program Managers (PMs) circulate between a portfolio of 5-6 schools to provide 1:1 coaching. Members also meet with school personnel to discuss program structure and to review the student enrollment process. Once school begins, members complete classroom observations, schedule volunteers for orientations, and conduct student assessments before regular tutoring begins in late September. Under supervision, VCs use this time to begin connecting with returning volunteers, make introductions to existing community partners, and begin canvassing for

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new recruitment.

At the completion of this second phase of training, SCs and RSCs will command an understanding of the 5 domains of literacy and possess the interpersonal and administrative skills necessary to manage a reading center. VCs will understand best practices for volunteer recruitment, demonstrate mastery of our database, and profess comfort with public speaking.

For the duration of the service term, SCs, RSCs and VCs receive weekly personalized coaching from their supervisor. Supervisors provide on-site support and rely on weekly check-ins to remind members of prohibited activities and to course-correct any aberrant behavior at its outset. 3 Fridays a month, all members come together for group trainings that reinforce the team dynamic, allow time to share experiences and problem-solve, and engage members in training topics, such as Life after AmeriCorps.

Over the last 3 years, we had an average of 40% of members return for another year of service. Thus, we designed the RP-Leaders in Training program (RP-LIT), a specialized training for members who serve 2+ years. RP-LIT is a platform for emerging professionals to develop leadership and professional development skills and be outstanding role models and champions of service, at RP and beyond. The outcome is that Senior AC members develop professional skills and receive career guidance so they are ready to transition into post-service opportunities, creating a pipeline of RP AmeriCorps alumni who will be life-long ambassadors for RP and AC.

Volunteers with RP also have a robust training phase including an online orientation and an in-person introduction to the program. All volunteers sign a Volunteer Code of Conduct that outlines allowable and unallowable activities as an RP tutor.

1.f. MEMBER SUPERVISION

RP integrates multiple levels of support for our AC members. VCs are supervised by Community Engagement Managers (CEMs) who have 3-6 years of volunteer management experience. SCs and RSCs are supervised by Program Managers (PMs), all of whom have extensive experience in the education field. Members receive excellent guidance and support throughout the year in a variety of ways. Members receive weekly one-on-one check-ins with their direct supervisor, Friday member

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development trainings, and access to our online resource database that houses all of our literacy, volunteer management, and leadership best practices. Members also receive support from their AC Program Manager (ACPM). The ACPM ensures that members understand the commitment to AC during Orientation, provides prohibited activities supervision, monitors member satisfaction, and collaborates with PMs in designing and delivering professional development and career path planning for members. The ACPM supports members through training sessions, surveys, and 1:1 meetings. Additionally, an approved RP manager always supervises members during National Days of Service and/or pre-approved community service opportunities. Members must also receive supervisor permission before fundraising for non-monetary materials for National Days of Service or leading a book drive.

All managers attend a comprehensive summer orientation and training, participate in weekly check-in meetings with their direct supervisors, and participate in bi-weekly team meetings. They also attend a training given by the AC Program Manager (ACPM) that outlines all rules and regulations pertaining to CNCS, AC, and specific CaliforniaVolunteers requirements. Training topics include: History of CNCS and National Service, Member Handbook and Contract, Prohibited Activities, Timesheets, National Days of Service, Emergency Preparedness, and AmeriCorps Branding & Identification.

CEMs and VCs work together at the regional office or at pre-determined and approved locations such as a school site or an off-site location. In addition to constant email or phone contact, PMs visit each SC and RSC at their school site at least once a week to provide in-person guidance, coaching, and problem-solving support.

1.g. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

AC members experience meaningful service in daily activities. VCs cultivate in-depth relationships with community partners and witness volunteers' impact on students. SCs and RSCs see firsthand the impact of the program as they assess student progress. Our commitment to close supervision and year-long training allows ongoing opportunities for reflection.

After their service, members join our alumni network, which connects them with other AC and national service participants. RP Alumni return to serve as panelists on various aspects of Life After

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AmeriCorps trainings such as: career and graduate school panels, best practices for interviewing, and resume workshops. Many alumni attend our National Days of Service events, including: 9/11 Day of Remembrance, MLK Jr. Day, and this year's CV AC20 event. Members partner with other AC programs for National Days of Service, further building their National Service network and esprit de corps. Current members benefit from accessing this network and are encouraged by alumni to continue to engage in public and community service after their term. Members gain the necessary skills and experience valued by future employers after their service term has ended as shown in our last end of year member satisfaction survey. 41% of members decided to return for a second year of service with RP, 25% of members are attending graduate school, 13% received a job in the non-profit or public sector, 8% are now teaching at a school, 5% are serving in another AmeriCorps program and 4% marked other -- stating that they were exploring ideas like starting their own business or joining the Peace Corps. 100% of RP members had career or education plans before ending their service term.

Members also receive a monthly RP AmeriCorps newsletter with articles highlighting events such as AC20, and alumni who now work at RP as staff. We use this tool to connect members to one another, and remind members of prohibited activities and service hour benchmarks.

We are committed to recruiting members from the communities we serve. 55 of 63 members are from CA; 78% of the CA members are from the neighborhoods we serve. We recruit locally by making AC recruitment materials available in sites, advertising open positions in the community, and partnering with organizations like Teach for America to recruit individuals who are passionate about service. Many tutors become members after having positive experiences with their SC or VC. Members have also been effective in recruiting among their friends, family, and network.

1.h. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

All AmeriCorps members wear an AmeriCorps-branded pin, polo, or jacket daily. RP also has an AmeriCorps Branding and Marketing policy, which requires members to always be identified as AmeriCorps members while serving. We train members on this policy during orientation. Every reading center clearly presents an "AmeriCorps Serving Here" sign.

Organizational Capability

2.a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

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RP's management structure has proven to be effective over the past 4.5 years as a nationally scaled AC program managing 6 AC grants and 2 Social Innovation Fund (SIF) sub-grants. RP is one 501(c)3 with 6 departments: Office of the CEO, Advancement (development and communications), Regional Operations (housing AC), Program and Research, Talent, and Business Operations. RP is able to limit overhead expenses in each service region by centralizing and sharing costs across the organization. The organizational structure encourages a culture of shared responsibility for the AC program because everyone interacts with members.

Each CA region is staffed with an Executive Director who is responsible for regional growth, financial sustainability, and managing the Program Director, Development Manager, and Community Engagement Manager. The Program Director ensures that PMs implement the program with fidelity, provides professional development to program staff, and builds positive relationships with schools and districts. The PMs manage SCs and RSCs, while the Community Engagement Managers manage VCs. RP works closely regional advisory boards and community partners such as principals, mayors, and other elected officials to ensure services are coordinated.

The direct administration of the AC program falls under the purview of RP's AmeriCorps department. RP created this department when it received its first AC grant in 2010 from CV for \$172,900 for 33 ACMs. This year, we are managing 5 AC state commission grants, one National Direct grant, one VISTA grant, and 2 SIF sub-grants. The AmeriCorps department enables us to coordinate efforts throughout the organization to train all managers and department leaders on AC and to familiarize them with compliance regulations. Leading the department is Director of AmeriCorps Programs, Kristarae Flynn. She oversees national grant management regulations, member support structures, and AC growth strategy. To assist Ms. Flynn with member support and grant compliance monitoring, we employ 3 AC Program Managers (ACPMs). The ACPM who oversees the CV grant is Brittany Prince, an RP AC alumnus who served in the 1st cohort of members in 2010 and has been with RP for 4.5 years.

2.b. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

RP holds itself accountable to compliance regulations on several different levels. To prevent and detect compliance issues in grants management, RP adheres to a Federal Grants Manual. This document outlines policies and procedures for all major federal grant regulations and deadlines, including CNCS

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and AC. We ensure accurate billing to grants by training staff on their time allocations on different federal grants prior to the start of the program year. This is also an occasion to train staff on prohibited versus acceptable activities under AC. All staff use the ADP time and attendance system throughout the year to record and monitor their actual time spent on each grant. The accounting, development, and AmeriCorps departments also meet on a monthly basis to discuss each grant's fiscal progress, to plan for upcoming program or fiscal deadlines for any grant, and to announce and review updates of new CNCS regulations.

In regard to ACM management, RP holds itself accountable to risk by conducting multiple internal audits each year of member files, hours, health benefits, and payroll. For instance, the AC Program Director conducts a quarterly audit of member files for all AC grants to ensure they are complete and updated. The ACPM and AC Director meet quarterly to analyze and audit member hours and timesheets for accuracy, and determine if ACMs are on track to meet their 1,700 hour commitment. If members are behind hours, they may support RP program or recruitment activities. Members may also attend the annual fundraising event in their local region, but may only manage the info booth and mock reading centers as these activities inform attendees about the RP and AC program. They may not seek donations per AC regulations.

To hold members accountable to compliance regulations, RP relies on ample training and signed contracts. For ACMs, RP outlines acceptable conduct and prohibited activities, as well as required reporting and consequences of violations, during the month-long pre-service orientation described in 1.e. ACMs sign their AC contracts at the end of training to indicate their understanding of allowable versus prohibited activities. We reiterate prohibited activities during timesheet training, and ACMs submit bi-monthly timesheets that require manager review and approval. Finally, we remind members and supervisors of prohibited activities by a revolving section highlighting different inadmissible activities in our monthly AC newsletter. If there is any uncertainty about an activity or RP's general compliance, the ACPM will immediately seek advice and guidance from our AC Program Officer.

RP also educates school and volunteer stakeholders about the importance of compliance with AC regulations. During the school selection and MOU-signing process, RP explicitly outlines to principals the expectations of having ACMs serve in their building, as well as expectations for immediate

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reporting of any suspected violations of acceptable ACM conduct. To confirm, our school partners are not sub-grantees; RP retains full authority over member activities and conduct. Tutors receive similar explication of AC-prohibited activities during their initial training, and when they sign our Tutor Code of Conduct, their signature indicates their understanding of allowable versus prohibited AC activities.

In the event of a violation, RP has a Prohibited Activities Policy that outlines the action steps needed if a prohibited activity has occurred. The Director of AC must be notified right away so that she may notify the appropriate state commission and/or CNCS Program Officer. The policy also describes the consequences of violations, thus ensuring our team and sites understand the seriousness of these activities.

2.c. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEEES ONLY

RP is currently completing the 3rd year of our 2nd grant cycle as a CV grantee. Our performance is outlined here:

2012-13 Goal: Enroll 2,600 students, with 1,502 students completing the program and 976 students increasing their literacy skills by at least one grade level.

2012-13 Actual: Enrolled 2,241 students, with 1,879 students completing the program and 935 students increasing their literacy skills by at least one grade level.

Being so close to the goal, we made improvements to the curriculum, tutor trainings, and Individualized Reading Plans for students, which proved successful in the next year of programming, as we exceeded our goals:

2013-14 Goal: Enroll 2,700 students, with 1,560 students completing the program and 1,014 students increasing their literacy skills by at least one grade level.

2013-14 Actual: Enrolled 2,865 students, with 1,904 students completing the program and 1,063 students increasing their literacy skills by at least one grade level.

In both years, 2012-2014, RP met 100% enrollment of 63 MSY. In 2012-2013, member retention rate

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was 98.4% due to one member exiting the program early for cause. In 2013-2014, the retention rate was 93.7% due to 5 members exiting the program for compelling personal circumstances (CPC) and for cause. After going through the disciplinary process with a few members after repeated instances of poor performance, we decided that in order to protect the quality of the program, the integrity of the relationship with the school, and student outcomes, we had to terminate the ACMs' service. The CPC case was properly documented and filed. In order to achieve a 100% retention rate, RP has added an extra level of support for member performance issues and hired a Human Resources staff person to specialize in member recruitment and management. RP did not have any compliance issues in the last 3 years of program operations.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

3.A. COST EFFECTIVENESS

RP's total budget for this program is \$4,836,893. RP is recompeting this year and is decreasing the cost per MSY to \$13,000 this grant cycle. In addition to CNCS funding of \$1,404,000, RP will raise \$3,432,893 to support this project. For this particular budget, RP budgeted for the following major expenses: 1: Personnel Salary and Benefits (\$1,379,400); 2: Staff Travel to required CaliforniaVolunteers and RP events and trainings (\$656); 3: Member Travel to required RP meetings and trainings (\$1,188); 4: Supplies, such as Member Gear (\$5,400); 5: Staff Training and Professional Development (\$650); 6: Member Training and Professional Development (\$800); 7: Fingerprinting Costs for all staff, members, and volunteers (\$2,648); 8: Member living allowance, FICA, Worker's Compensation, and Health, Vision and Dental coverage (\$2,297,160); 9: Rent for reading centers (\$640,000); 10: CNCS and RP Administrative Costs per CV's NOFO guidance (\$508,991). Together, these expenses total to \$4,836,893.

To support the match of a CaliforniaVolunteers cost-reimbursement grant, RP will raise additional revenue from earned income (\$1,100,000) through fee for service (FFS) contributions from our school partners and from private philanthropy coming from foundation, corporate, and individual donors (\$1,692,893 total). The remaining \$640K is in-kind as outlined in our partnership forms signed by each school/district. The donated values are based on fair-market estimates of the program's space.

FFS is an important and distinguishing element of RP. We believe that in order to create the quality of relationships between school staff and the program staff necessary to drive student achievement

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forward, schools must be invested financially in our partnership. We ask that all school partners contribute a FFS, which is negotiated in the MOU process.

Over the past 5 years, RP has grown the organization-wide philanthropic revenue by roughly 40% each year. To execute on the funding projections, an important strategy is that we continue to launch and/or expand advisory boards in each region. With their depth of knowledge and experience within specific communities, our regional board members provide crucial support in our efforts to increase the local brand awareness and to broaden our network of funding partners. Board members also support their local Executive Director with strategy and vision planning. Sacramento currently has 10 board members, San Francisco Bay Area has 14 board members, Silicon Valley has 9 board members, and Los Angeles has 5 board members.

3.b. BUDGET ADEQUACY

RP has a diversified revenue portfolio to ensure our current operational stability, as well long-term sustainability. The current fiscal year (FY15) runs from July 1, 2014 -- June 30, 2015. In addition to funding from CNCS this fiscal year (10%), our plan includes revenues from: in-kind sources (9%), earned income (14%), other government sources (7%), and private philanthropy (60%) to support national operations. RP receives in-kind support from our school partners in the way of classroom space that we transform into reading centers. In FY16 (Aug 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016), we expect \$640K for in-kind rent in California.

RP's earned income is Fee-for-service (FFS) contributions from our school partners. We ask our partners to contribute 20-25% of the cost of the program. In the California budget, we project that FFS contributions will be ~29% of total revenue in FY15.

This year, organization-wide private philanthropy is expected to be \$13.6M, or 60% of total revenue. RP has met its private philanthropy projections for the past 5 years. We solicit donations from foundations, corporations, and individuals, tailoring strategies to the unique philanthropic market of each region. We currently receive a statewide grant of \$200K from the Target Corporation. In Sacramento, the Arata Brothers Trust and Wells Fargo are lead investors at \$50K; and prospects include the Beneto Foundation. In the San Francisco Bay Area, we have commitments from the Tipping Point Foundation (\$500K), the Rogers Family Foundation (\$50K), and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation (\$50K); future prospects include the Quest Foundation (\$80K) and The Hellman Family Foundation (\$50K). In Silicon Valley, we secured a multi-year Sobrato Family Foundation grant

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(\$282K) and renewed the Tipping Point Foundation (\$320K); prospects include Michelle Cale (\$50K). In LA, our partners include: Focusing Philanthropy (\$110K) and the Louis L. Borick Foundation (\$20K), and our prospects include the Webster Foundation (\$50K) and Ralph M. Parsons Foundation (\$50K).

Given our past experience with designing AC program budgets, we are confident that the budget is fully adequate to support the program design and objectives. With so many stakeholders - schools, volunteers, and private philanthropists and institutions - involved in funding the program, we are confident in our ability to compensate for any unexpected fluctuations in funding.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Theory of Change

Reading Partners has developed an innovative, cost-effective approach to address the problem of low literacy skills. Reading Partners helps children become more proficient readers by creating opportunities each week for individualized instruction and focuses on measurable results. Reading Partners operates reading centers at high-poverty elementary schools where trained, supervised volunteers provide one-on-one literacy tutoring to struggling readers in grades K-5.

Reading Partners' highly structured, closely supervised, volunteer-delivered program is designed to produce a set of meaningful, measurable benefits for students who participate. Core elements of the Reading Partners program include:

* **Diagnosis of Need:** Reading Partners begins by recognizing that too many children in lower-income communities are reading below proficiency. It further recognizes that many teachers, schools and parents in those communities lack the resources and infrastructure to effectively address the problem.

* **Program Elements:** Reading Partners rests on the foundation of a cadre of caring adults who are recruited and trained to work one-on-one with students who struggle with reading. Tutoring can provide an opportunity for individualized systematic remedial instruction and for students to practice critical early learning literacy skills. Tutoring sessions utilize one of more than 120 easy to follow modules. Volunteers offer individualized support for students participating in the program. To gauge student progress, Reading Partners administers regular assessments and consults with students' tutors

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and classroom teachers.

* Program Participation: Students in need of intensive intervention are identified by teachers and principals and recruited to the program. They participate in twice-weekly tutoring sessions that offer opportunities for one-on-one relationships with caring adults.

* Outcomes for Participants: Reading Partners seeks to produce significant improvement in literacy skills, reading abilities, and academic self-confidence for all program participants in the short-term.

Since 2008, Reading Partners has used the Rigby PM Benchmark series to measure student literacy growth. As Reading Partners has expanded programming to serve a broader range of students, in response to the expressed needs of our school partners, the limitations of the Rigby assessment series have become increasingly apparent -- e.g. it cannot be used to test students who cannot yet read connected text, or students whose reading ability is above an early fifth grade level.

Not only has Reading Partners broadened the range of students we serve, we must also adapt to the shifts in education standards that affect all of the states, districts and schools in which we work. In the 2015-16 school year Reading Partners will shift to test student literacy skills with Renaissance Learning's computer adaptive literacy assessments, STAR Early Literacy (for kindergarten through 2nd grade) and STAR Reading (for grades 3 and up).

The evaluation plan described below will utilize STAR assessment data to examine student outcomes and will explore the impact of new assessment practices on those outcomes as well. The evaluation will also look at program fidelity and efforts to increase tutor retention.

Outcomes

Student Literacy Assessment Data

Entry and end of year STAR assessments administered to students when they enroll in Reading Partners and at the end of their participation in the program during the school year.

* Kindergarten -- 2nd Grade

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Reading Partners uses STAR Early Literacy to measure K-2 student growth in literacy skill subdomains including alphabetic principle, concept of word, phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension. During their time in Reading Partners we expect that in their end-of-year assessments our students will achieve mastery of grade-appropriate literacy skills that will put them on track to becoming independent readers:

- * Kindergarten: Concept of Word and Visual Discrimination
- * 1st Grade: Concept of Word, Visual Discrimination, and Alphabetic Principle
- * 2nd Grade: Concept of Word, Visual Discrimination, Alphabetic Principle, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, and Sentence-level Comprehension

* 3rd and 4th Grade

We measure the holistic reading growth of older students using STAR Reading, which provides normative grade equivalencies that correspond to students' reading ability. We expect students tested with STAR Reading to show growth in the following ways:

- * 3rd and 4th grade students will increase their monthly rate of skill gain while enrolled in Reading Partners.
- * 3rd and 4th grades students will narrow their grade equivalency gaps, coming closer to their grade level benchmarks.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do Reading Partners students receive at least 16 hours of tutoring during a single school year? Does tutoring dosage vary by grade-level or other key student characteristics?
2. To what extent do students enrolled in Reading Partners who receive at least 16 hours of tutoring achieve their grade-specific outcomes?
 - a. For K-2 grade students, what percentage of students achieve mastery in the STAR Early Literacy domains noted above?
 - b. For 3-4 grade students, what percentage meet grade-level literacy benchmarks? And, what is the average magnitude of gap narrowing achieved during the program?
3. To what degree do student outcomes vary by the amount of tutoring students receive? Are there different outcomes for students who have doses of:
 - a. 12-15 hours of tutoring?

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- b. 16-20 hours of tutoring?
 - c. 21-25 hours of tutoring?
 - d. 30+ hours of tutoring?
4. To what extent does the introduction of codified quality standards and quality monitoring tools lead to greater fidelity to the Reading Partners model, and ultimately to improved student outcomes? What factors limit the effectiveness of quality standards in leading to greater program fidelity?
5. What are the factors that lead Reading Partners tutors to continue or discontinue working with Reading Partners? What strategies could Reading Partners implement to increase the proportion of tutors who participate in our program for a full school year or more?

Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Design

The evaluation will utilize a mixed methods design, incorporating quantitative data about student literacy outcomes, program fidelity indicators and tutor feedback, along with qualitative information gathered through literature reviews, stakeholder interviews and surveys. Quantitative analyses will focus primarily on descriptive statistics pertaining to student characteristics and demonstrated performance on standardized assessments. Where appropriate, inferential statistics (t-tests, chi-square and ANOVA) will be used to examine differences in literacy outcomes among student sub-groups. Qualitative analyses will focus on identifying common and emerging themes using a standard coding structure. Specific analytic approaches will be selected in collaboration with our external evaluation partner, once hired.

Data Collection

- * Student literacy outcomes: Entry and end of year STAR assessments will be administered at the beginning and end of student participation in programming for each school year for all enrolled students.
- * Program fidelity: Information about program implementation at sites will be collected through the new quality assurance system.
- * Volunteer retention: Interviews with leading community-based organizations that depend heavily on volunteers; focus groups with regional tutor councils; data from annual tutor surveys

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Data Analysis

* Student assessment data, program implementation information, and interview and survey data will be analyzed by a qualified external evaluator, who may also collect other program information from staff members or volunteers for evaluation purposes.

Evaluator Qualifications

Reading Partners will conduct the proposed evaluation in partnership with an external evaluator. Such an evaluator will possess the following characteristics, at minimum:

- * Lead evaluator will possess a Master's degree or PhD in a social science-related field, such as education, sociology or psychology.
- * 5+ years of experience conducting applied research and evaluations with community-based organizations;
- * Experience designing and implementing evaluations of school-based programs and/or literacy interventions;
- * A working knowledge of early literacy, standardized literacy assessments, and school-based interventions;
- * Demonstrated proficiency with both qualitative and quantitative research methods;
- * Experience managing confidential data and information in compliance with federal and state privacy laws; and
- * Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with program staff to ensure alignment between program implementation and evaluation design.

Estimated Budget

Reading Partners plans to implement this plan in years 2 and 3 of this grant cycle. As such, the budget for the evaluation will be included in the continuation changes for 2016-17 program year. While we hope that CaliforniaVolunteers and CNCS will have the funds available for an increased grant award to cover these costs, we understand that these funds may need to come from private fundraising sources from Reading Partners and be reflected on the grantee/match side of the budget. For those reasons, we plan to estimate conservatively and expect the evaluation to be about 5-7% of the total AC project budget of \$2,871,418, equating to about \$172,285 over years 2 and 3 of this grant

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cycle.

This amount includes costs for:

- Evaluation staff salary and benefits
- External Evaluator
- Travel
- Communications
- Printing and duplication
- Supplies and equipment

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. General Clarification items:

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

RESPONSE:

Reading Partners has revised those sections as necessary to reflect 63 MSY.

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

RESPONSE:

Reading Partners is re-submitting the application for a lower cost per MSY. We are submitting at \$13,000 cost per MSY for 63 MSY (63 slots), for a total of \$819,000.

B. Programmatic Clarification items:

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1. Please describe the distinction between the Site Coordinator and Regional Site Coordinator roles, and explain which of the three position types mentioned in the narrative (SC, RSC, and/or VC) provide(s) coaching and support to volunteer tutors. Please also explain whether any of these positions overlap with staff roles.

RESPONSE: Site Coordinators (SC) and Regional Site Coordinators (RSC) have similar responsibilities, but the main difference is that SCs will serve at 1 site for the entire year, while RSCs will have a portfolio of 2-3 schools that they will serve at throughout the week. These sites are schools that need extra support because they have a large volume of volunteers and students. Both positions receive the same amount of support from their supervisor. The SC and RSC provide in person coaching to volunteers as well as develop tutor training sessions that give tutors best practices. The Volunteer Coordinators develop and execute specific volunteer outreach plans for each school site and recruit the volunteer tutors, helping tutors find the best match for a school site. None of these positions overlap with staff roles at Reading Partners.

2. Please confirm that all member fundraising activities will adhere to the requirements and limits set forth in AmeriCorps Regulations 45 CFR § 2520.40-.45 (i.e., directly in support of the program's service activities, and no more than 10% of the term of service)

RESPONSE: Reading Partners can confirm that all member fundraising activities will adhere to the requirements and limits set forth in AmeriCorps Regulations 45 CFR § 2520.40-.45.

3. As a re-competing competitive grantee, Reading Partners California is required to submit an evaluation plan for the upcoming three-year grant cycle. Please provide your evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field in eGrants. Refer to the NOFO for required components of an evaluation plan.

RESPONSE: This has been included in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants.

4. Please provide a more detailed description of how the Program Directors and Program Managers (both AmeriCorps and regular) will be allocated among the regions to be served. Please also explain if there is any overlap in responsibilities between the AmeriCorps Program Director/Program Manager

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and regular Program Directors/Program Managers.

RESPONSE: Regional Program Directors will be placed in the Bay Area and Silicon Valley regions. Sacramento and Los Angeles will not have program Directors due to their smaller size. Instead, Executive Directors in those regions will directly supervise the Program Managers. Regional Program Directors in the Bay Area and Silicon Valley will manage the regional Program Managers within their region who will have a portfolio of SCs and RSCs to directly supervise. Regional Program Directors are mainly responsible for programmatic decisions and principal meetings. Regional Program Managers are mainly responsible for coaching and training the AmeriCorps members directly.

The AmeriCorps Program Manager's time is allocated to the CV grant at 80% and will be responsible for creating and submitting all CV required paperwork for contracting, progress reports, and fiscal training to regional staff. They are in contact with regional Executive Directors, Program Directors, and Program Managers to ensure compliance, match and performance measures are being closely monitored and met. The AC Program Manager is also available to CV members to answer all AC related questions. The AmeriCorps Program Director is responsible for growth strategy planning with regional Executive Directors, writing the CV grant (using non-federally funded time) and managing the AC Program Manager. There is no major overlap in responsibilities for any of these positions as they all have distinct foci.

5. Please explain whether the schools to be served under the proposed national direct program will overlap with schools being served under the National Direct grant.

RESPONSE: All school sites in CA will be covered by the CV state commission grant. There will not be any National Direct members serving in CA.

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

RESPONSE: There are no slots that are being requested as part of this application that are being duplicated in any other applications currently under review by the Corporation.

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7. Please explain whether AmeriCorps members will be involved in recruiting other members, and, if so, how this activity does not displace or duplicate staff roles. C. Budget Clarification items: Please respond to the clarification items in the 'Budget Narrative' section of the application unless otherwise indicated.

RESPONSE: Reading Partners does not ask our members to actively recruit other AC members, but does provide social media language to them if they would like to share Reading Partners service and employment opportunities with their network.

C. Budget Clarification items:

1. Please confirm that the staff salary costs listed in the budget, both federal and matching share, will not duplicate costs requested on any other National Direct or state subapplication (new, recompeting, or continuation) or existing CNCS grant.

RESPONSE: Reading Partners can confirm that the staff salary costs listed in the budget, both federal and matching share, does not duplicate costs requested on any other National Direct or state subapplication (new, recompeting, or continuation) or existing CNCS grant. California will only be covered by the CaliforniaVolunteers grant. The only positions that are covered by other AC grants are the AmeriCorps Program Manager and our time keeping system allows for that manager to allocate and delineate their time between the two grants.

2. Please explain how the cost of the pre-service orientation for members will be covered in the program budget.

RESPONSE: AmeriCorps Pre-Service Orientation will begin in August. This training usually takes place in the regional offices and regional staff trains members. Thus, the costs of training are minimal. Most of the costs are for food and staff appreciation gifts which are not included in the AmeriCorps budget and are paid for by private funding.

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3. Section H -- Evaluation -- No rate or cost was provided on this budget line. Is this cost provided via inkind or cash?

RESPONSE: Reading Partners plans to implement this plan in years 2 and 3 of this grant cycle. As such, the budget for the evaluation will be included in the continuation changes for 2016-17 program year. While we hope that CaliforniaVolunteers and CNCS will have the funds available for an increased grant award to cover these costs, we understand that these funds may need to come from private fundraising sources from Reading Partners and be reflected on the grantee/match side of the budget. For those reasons, we plan to estimate conservatively and expect the evaluation to be about 5-7% of the total AC project budget of \$2,871,418, equating to about \$172,285 over years 2 and 3 of this grant cycle.

D. Performance Measure Clarification items:

1. The application narrative states that members typically oversee 20-40 tutors per day working with an equal number of students (20-40 per day); assuming that at least two different cohorts of students receive tutoring on different days of the week, this would result in as many as 80 students receiving tutoring each week. However, the target for the number of students who start the program is 3000, which equates to less than 30 students per member. Please explain this apparent discrepancy and/or increase your performance measure targets.

RESPONSE: Reading Partners takes attrition rates into account as well as a conservative approach to the number of students we count as enrolled for the CV grant. However, with 63 member slots under consideration, Reading Partners is revising our enrollment goal/performance measure under the CV grant. The number of students that will be enrolled is 2700 at 45 schools, which is an average of 60 students enrolled at each site.

2. The application narrative states that Reading Partners students achieve an average of 1.6 months of new skills for every month of tutoring. Given this substantial level of academic growth, please explain why your performance measure target is set at only 60% of students achieving at least 1 month of skills for every month enrolled.

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RESPONSE: Reading Partners can confirm that students achieve an average of 1.6 months of new skills for every month of tutoring. To clarify, our outcome states that 60% of students who meet our minimum dosage threshold (defined as 16 hours or 21 sessions) will increase their skills by at least one month for every month in the program. Because our program has rolling enrollment (and therefore, a wide variability in their start date), student literacy gains are also wide in variability. Reading Partners wants to capture and report all growth above 1 month for students who are increasing in literacy skills and report that to CV.

Both STAR assessments provide growth targets for students that correspond to grade level benchmarks (both criterion- and norm-referenced), and our program performance targets are also based on students reaching benchmarks tied to grade-level expectations. Also, because these tools test student knowledge and skills more comprehensively than Rigby (the previous assessment tool), we are adjusting our target to 60% (from 65%) of students will achieve at least 1 month of literacy skills or more for every month of instruction. This change does not represent a lower standard of performance, but rather a higher standard of test, which our kids will be expected to master.

Justification: As with recent experiences seen on state achievement tests in which students demonstrated lower performance on Common Core-aligned, computer-based tests, we anticipate a one-year adjustment period for our students as Reading Partners continues improving its curriculum, staff and volunteer training, and quality assurance system to ensure our students can attain greater gains. This one-year adjustment period in CA will allow us to look at 2015-16 baseline and interim data for CA students before establishing goals and making any performance measure adjustments for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 program years.

3. The information in the Described Instrument section for ED5 states that students will be assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, which suggests participation that lasts for the entire year. However, the total intervention dosage is set at 16 hours, which, given that each student participates in two 45-minute sessions per week, could mean that student participation is less than 11 weeks in duration. Please reconcile this information.

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RESPONSE: For further clarification, all students receive an initial assessment at enrollment. The entry assessment may not happen at the beginning of the school year since enrollment is on a rolling basis. However, all students who are enrolled before the 6th month of the school year will receive a middle and end of year assessment in addition to their entry assessment. In regards to the dosage amount, Reading Partners has a minimum dosage threshold of 16 hours or 21 sessions of tutoring, but students overall, particularly those enrolled at the start of the school year and winter break, typically receive more than the minimum dosage while in the program and therefore, participate in the program for longer than 11 weeks. In 2013-14, students received an average of 37 sessions. It may be important to note that Reading Partners does not exit students once they receive the minimum dosage.

E. Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification items:

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?

RESPONSE: Reading Partners will not be requesting any Strategic Engagement slots, however as part of our Diversity and Inclusion Recruitment Plan, we engage both disability centers and centers/groups that support students of color amongst the colleges where we recruit.

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.

RESPONSE: Reading Partners will not be requesting any Strategic Engagement slots

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics