

Narratives

Executive Summary

Super Stars Literacy, Inc proposes to have 29 AmeriCorps members who will provide literacy intervention and academic engagement programs for students in nine elementary schools serving high numbers of economically disadvantaged children in Alameda County. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for ensuring that at least 50% of the 380 disadvantaged children served will complete 180 hours (90 hours of literacy tutoring and 90 hours of academic engagement programming) of the program (attending an average of three times per week throughout the entire program) and 60% of these students will show growth in literacy skills and 80% show growth in academic engagement skills of empathy, impulse control, and conflict negotiation, as measured by two validated assessment tools. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 145 volunteers who will be engaged in providing one-to-one direct support to students in the SSL program.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$363,958 will be matched with \$1,102,451, \$413,000 in public funding and \$689,451 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED

For over 30 years, researchers and educators have known that children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are less likely to graduate from high school than children with higher reading scores.(3) In a recent study of almost 4,000 students conducted for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, researcher Donald Hernandez reported that this low academic achievement is compounded when considering income and minority status. Low-income students start Kindergarten already far behind, having heard 32 million fewer words and received, on average, more than 950 fewer hours of exposure to reading materials,(4) resulting in the probability that they are more than six times less likely to graduate from high school than their more affluent counterparts.(5) In addition, Hernandez discovered approximately 31% of low-income African American students and 33% of low-income Latino students who did not read at grade level by third grade failed to graduate from high school. Without intervention, there is a 90% chance that a first grader with weak reading skills will still be a poor reader in fourth grade;(6) will not be able to comprehend fourth grade curriculum materials;(7) will grow increasingly frustrated and disengaged with school; and will tend to have more behavioral and social problems.(8) Only 30% of students from low-income families in

Narratives

Alameda County achieve reading proficiency by the end of third graded(9) and the school districts that serve those low-income children lack the capacity to provide the interventions needed for those students to read at grade level by third grade.

As a way to improve Alameda County's most vulnerable children's chances of achieving academic success, Super Stars Literacy (SSL) provides intensive in-school and after-school early literacy and social/emotional development programming for high need, low-performing Kindergarten through second grade students who are enrolled in elementary schools where (1) over 60% of children qualify for the Free and Reduced Price School Meal Program(FRPM); (2) over 90% are from communities of color (CC); (3) over 50% are English Language Learners; and (4) over 35% have parents who did not graduate high school. SSL's program targets K-2 children in three school districts, Oakland Unified (OU), Hayward Unified (HU), and Newark Unified (NU), where over one-fourth of the students fail to graduate from high school.(10) These schools comprise the following demographics: (11)

Think College Now (OU): 81.6% FRPM; 98% CC; 16% 3rd graders read below grade level*

Reach Academy (OU): 88.2% FRPM; 99% CC; 80% third graders read below grade level

Garfield Elementary (OU): 85.8% FRMP; 98.2% CC; 32% third graders read below grade level

Vincent Academy (OU): 81.3% FRPM; 99.8% CC; No data reported on third grade reading

Park Elementary (HU): 72.5% FRPM; 96.7% CC; 58% third graders read below grade level

Harder Elementary (HU): 74% FRPM; 97.8% CC; 43% third graders read below grade level

Graham Elementary (NU): 62.1% FRPM; 92% CC; 36% third graders read below grade level

Milani Elementary (NU): 64.5% FRPM; 92.7% CC; 31% third graders read below grade level

Schilling Elementary (NU): 76.1% FRPM; 94% CC; 46% third graders read below grade level

* Low rate because SSL has provided intensive K-2 literacy programming for 6 years, with positive results

At each targeted elementary school, SSL serves K-2 children who are below functional grade level in literacy and/or they have low academic engagement skills. Classroom teachers from the elementary schools refer high need students to the SSL program based on beginning-of-year assessments and in-class observation.

To provide high need students from these nine targeted elementary schools with increased literacy skills, SSL will enroll 380 students in evidence-based in-school and after-school literacy and social/emotional skills programming that will involve small group coaching with on-going assessment. SSL will provide 112 days per year of in-school literacy/social skills programming and 150

Narratives

days per year of after-school literacy/social skills programming. The program incorporates all five critical areas of reading instruction: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) comprehension.

Difficulties in reading are extremely prevalent among children and youth who exhibit conduct disorder and delinquent behavior. As such, instruction intervention for at-risk students that combines literacy and social domains promotes their chances of greater academic competency.(12) To foster the development of social/emotional skills, critical to positive academic engagement, SSL incorporates developmentally based lessons and materials to teach children emotional literacy, self-control, positive peer relations, social competence and interpersonal problem solving.

Research conducted by Henderson and Mapp revealed that partnerships among schools, families, and communities, regardless of demographics or income level, contribute to improved student achievement and effectively engaging families and communities around student literacy leads to increased reading proficiency for children.(13) Knowing that family and community support is critical, SSL provides opportunities for the students' families as well as community members from the neighborhoods around the nine schools to become involved in the program. Each year, SSL provides four literacy-based programs per school designed to increase family engagement. In addition, SSL recruits 55 community volunteers for on-going service projects and 90 community volunteers for one-time service projects through 1,060 hours of participation.

B. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL

The design of SSL's programming is directly influenced by the growing body of research on the impact of early intervention and after-school programs on early literacy proficiency. When serving low-performing students, the challenge is not merely to help them maintain pace with the year-over-year literacy growth of their peers, but to accelerate growth through intensive intervention support so that students can catch up and read on grade level by the end of third grade, the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success. SSL's goal on accelerating growth is congruent with the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading goal to increase the number of students who are grade-level proficient readers by the end of third grade by 50%.(14)

SSL and its community partners are working together to address Alameda County's critical problem that only 30% of students from low-income families in the county achieve reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade,(15) resulting in lower graduation rates. To address this problem SSL utilizes (1) evidence-based, culturally competent, age-appropriate literacy and social/emotional skills curriculum; (2) partnerships with 9 economically disadvantaged elementary schools from the Oakland, Hayward,

Narratives

and Newark school districts of Alameda County; (3) 29 trained AmeriCorps members serving children in 24 classrooms; (4) quality, committed SSL staff and board leadership; (5) 145 community volunteers who conduct 1,060 hours of literacy-related service; and (6) adequate funding and in-kind support from public and private sources.

Of the 29 AmeriCorps members engaged to help Alameda County's low achieving students read on grade level by the end of third grade, 24 will serve in dedicated classrooms as Group Leaders, conducting SSL's literacy and youth development programming for the entire school year; four will serve as Group Leaders on Special Assignment, providing targeted assistance to highest need SSL students and supporting classroom Group Leaders; and one will serve as a Volunteer Coordinator, recruiting and managing community volunteers to support the program through one-time and on-going service.

Full-time AmeriCorps members allows SSL to implement a comprehensive, day-long program, assuring multiple touch points with targeted children throughout the day. The program runs Monday through Friday with 112 days of in-school and 150 days of after-school instruction. The in-school and after-school programs incorporate all five critical areas of reading instruction: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) comprehension by providing intensive literacy instruction combined with social/emotional skill development.

School-day assistance and instruction consists of small group and one-on-one instruction aligned with individualized reading assessment results. Members incorporate instructional activities that focus on three core skill sets (phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency), such as Elkonin sound boxes and decoding flashcards. The after-school programming begins with an opening circle that engages students in community-building activities that enhance oral language and phonemic awareness (e.g. student inquiry, modeled sentences, singing songs, and rhyming games). After opening circle, members lead a read aloud, building vocabulary and comprehension skills such as predicting, sequencing, and summarizing. Students are then grouped by skill level to focus on one or more of the five critical areas of reading instruction. The program ends with a closing circle to reinforce the concepts addressed that day, followed by kinesthetic learning and homework help. After-school programming incorporates activities to improve academic engagement in three key social/emotional areas: empathy, impulse control, and conflict negotiation. Each year, the program will enable 380 economically disadvantaged students who are below functional grade level in literacy and/or academic engagement skills to start the SSL program (ED1), resulting in 180 of these students completing 180 hours of literacy and academic engagement programming (ED2) by attending an

Narratives

average of three days per week throughout the entire school year. SSL has reduced the literacy intervention program dosage per student from 135 hours to 90 hours as both data collected and relevant research indicates that this is the adequate dosage of literacy programming required to attain the targeted improvement. In the first 3 year grant cycle, SSL incorporated social/emotional (academic engagement) programming and determine that 90 hours of social/emotional programming is the target dosage for growth. Each day of SSL programming includes 1 hour of literacy programming and 1 hour of social/emotional programming, thus 90 days of programming results in 90 hours of literacy programming and 90 hours of social/emotional programming. SSL anticipates this will increase the numbers of students reported as having made gains as more students are able to complete 90 days of programming than the previous 135 days (or 135 hours of literacy programming).

Another critical element of the SSL program is family engagement. Members plan and conduct four 2-hour family engagement events at each school each year, for a total of 72 hours. Family engagement events teach parents how to enhance vocabulary and reading comprehension when interacting with their children.

Each year, the member serving as the Volunteer Coordinator, in partnership with service organizations and corporations, will recruit, train and manage an additional 145 volunteers from local higher education institutions and in neighborhoods surrounding the targeted schools. Fifty-five volunteers provide ongoing reading support and 90 volunteers assist with family engagement events. The Volunteer Coordinator conducts an extensive orientation with each volunteer prior to placement and topics include literacy games, an introduction to responsive classroom best practices, and prohibited activities. To promote volunteer retention, the AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator will conduct the following volunteer management best practices (G3-3.3), as identified by the Urban Institute,(16) such as creating formal partnerships for volunteer recruitment, updating SSL's existing volunteer manual/training, and conducting recognition activities.

The service provided by AmeriCorps members and will lead to the following short-term outcomes for students who complete the program: 60% of students will show grow by one functional grade level in developmentally-appropriate literacy skills based on DIBELS (ED5); 50% will achieve accelerated growth towards literacy proficiency; 80% of students will grow one developmental level in academic engagement (empathy, impulse control, and conflict negotiation behaviors), based on SSL's adapted DRDP (ED27B); and 80% of students will demonstrate growth in two or more areas of academic engagement. In addition, 90% of recruited volunteers will honor their service commitment; 80% of

Narratives

parents/guardians whose children complete the program will attend at least one family engagement event; and 40% of the program completers' parents/guardians will attend two or more events.

SSL intervention will lead to the following medium-term results: (1) entering third grade reading proficiency for SSL students completing three years of the program will be 75% greater than the current rate for Alameda County third graders; (2) 75% of adults engaged in SSL service projects will volunteer for at least two years with SSL; and (3) annually, 80% of parents/guardians of SSL student participants will increase their awareness of literacy activities and ways to engage in school participation. Long-term outcomes of SSL intervention include: (1) all students who complete the SSL program graduate from high school; (2) 80% of students who complete the SSL program matriculate to a post-secondary educational program; (3) all students who complete the SSL program are economically self-sufficient adults who are civically engaged in their communities; (4) 50% of adults engaged in SSL service projects volunteer for at least ten years and are literacy advocates in the community; and (5) 50% of parents/guardians of all students who complete the SSL program are empowered to advocate for their child's education.

By providing the necessary training, supervision, and support described later in this document, 50% of members will increase their skills to impact student literacy by 50%, as measured by standardized weekly performance reviews. As a result of program participation, 50% of members will enter teacher preparation program; 10% will enter programs that support student learning; and 20% of members will enter careers in the non-profit or civic sectors or return to National Service. Ultimately, 35% of members will become educators in underserved communities.

C. EVIDENCE BASE

There is strong evidence through scores of studies that SSL's intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in its theory of change. SSL is presenting research reports published within the past six years on two programs that closely reflect SSL's implementation of providing literacy support outside of regular classroom hours for low-performing, socioeconomically disadvantaged, urban, elementary school students that produced positive outcomes: (1) Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL)⁽¹⁷⁾ and Kindergarten Early Literacy Tutoring (KELT).⁽¹⁸⁾ CORAL was an eight-year large-scale initiative targeting 5,321 elementary children from five California cities. Over 68% of participants were from communities of color, 89% were recipients of Free and Reduced Price School Meals, and only 16% of students read at grade-level proficiency standards. CORAL staff conducted after-school literacy instruction and coaching for students at over 30 school and community based sites. Programming took place three to four times a week for 60 to 90 minutes. CORAL program

Narratives

assessment comprised seven tools: 1) data from CORAL cities Management Information System; 2) program observation; 3) scores from the California Standards Test-English Language Arts, 2004-2006; 4) pre- and post-surveys for students and parents; 5) individual reading assessments; 6) interviews with staff; and 7) cost survey of CORAL cities. A mid-point correction occurred in year four, which led to increased participation rates and performance gains. CORAL students, including English learners, displayed greater gains in grade-level reading and performed better on standardized tests. Children also gained a stronger sense of belonging and over 90% had improved school performance.

KELT started in 2007 in four inner city schools in central-east Canada with fewer than 34% of students reading at the provincial standard for reading. KELT-paid tutors conducted classroom-based literacy instruction and coaching for kindergarteners three hours per day, Monday through Friday, over an entire school year. The KELT program assessment consisted of six pre- and post-assessments to measure student progress in oral language, concepts of print, phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, letter-sound correspondence, and word knowledge. The evaluation involved a quasi-experimental design in which 51 students in the KELT program and 45 not in the KELT program were longitudinally tracked over the kindergarten school year. The analysis found significant program improvements in four of the six assessments: concepts of print; phonemic awareness; letter-sound knowledge; and word knowledge. The KELT group's average rate of growth of the above concepts was faster than the comparison group's. KELT participants also met or surpassed end-of-kindergarten targets for all assessments. Majority of parents surveyed reported that after participating in the program their children had: 1) improved reading and writing skills; 2) wider vocabularies; 3) improved speech; and 4) stronger interest in reading and printing words either on their own or with their parents.

D. NOTICE PRIORITY

SSL's program fits within AmeriCorps' 2015 Education Priority. Specifically, SSL's program will provide support and facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children in 9 low-achieving elementary schools in Alameda County, California.

Members engaged in SSL's program have the opportunity to work together to solve a critical challenge facing California, specifically low academic achievement in one of the state's most economically disadvantaged communities of color. By using national service as an intervention strategy, members will be able to engage community members and parents/guardians to serve

Narratives

Alameda County's most vulnerable K-12 students through quality, evidence-based strategies.

E. MEMBER TRAINING

SSL AmeriCorps members engage in a comprehensive training program that prepares them for impactful service to their beneficiaries. Prior to serving, all members participate in a 65-hour (two-week) orientation, which includes an introduction to National Service in the United States and California; member roles, responsibilities, and prohibited activities; and the communities they will be serving. In addition, the orientation provides members with an introduction to the literacy pedagogy that will be the foundation of their service throughout the year, and the classroom management, social/emotional learning, and volunteer support skills.

Member training continues throughout the year with a weekly three-hour training session devoted to deepening members' literacy knowledge and applying that learning in their service with beneficiaries. Training topics include assessing students' literacy skills, aligning instruction with assessed needs, and using Guided Reading to support student growth. Members also receive two hours per week of individual coaching by their credentialed Program Manager. These coaching sessions support member development by ensuring that training content is directly aligned with each member's service needs. The 29 members who provide classroom support receive 150 hours of on-going training and the Volunteer Coordinator receives 71 hours of on-going training.

F. MEMBER SUPERVISION

SSL provides a robust system of supervision and support for each SSL AmeriCorps member. Group Leaders report to a SSL Program Manager while the member serving as the Volunteer Coordinator reports to the Program Director. Each Program Manager supervises/coaches six to ten assigned members throughout their entire service period. This staffing model allows the Program Manager adequate time and resources to support the member in his/her service, assisted by the classroom teachers the members support. Members receive the following three types of comprehensive support: Individual Support: Program Managers visit member service sites at least once a week to observe each member serving beneficiaries and provide feedback and engage in a dialogue to support members' effective service in a subsequent debrief meeting.

Group Support: Program Managers meet with all of their members once a week to lead guided discussions on service best practices, such as classroom management, lesson planning, and serving with school staff.

Training Support: Program Managers plan and lead the three-hour weekly training component of the program to ensure a close alignment between training and member service needs. Training topics are

Narratives

based in part by feedback provided by members.

Program Managers are credentialed, experienced teachers who have coaching and supervision expertise. Managers participate in professional development opportunities, regular staff meetings, and one-on-one meetings with the Program Director to support their own on-going development and implementation of best educational practices. Managers also meet monthly with the SSL Government Contracts Manager to receive information about AmeriCorps rules, expectations and priorities to ensure that member service is aligned with AmeriCorps philosophy.

G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

Since 2006-07, SSL has offered a rich and rewarding service experience for members. The urban education experience and early literacy training that AmeriCorps members receive through SSL have motivated many of them to pursue a teaching career after their service term.

SSL's Government Contract Manager will lead the recruitment, screening, and hiring process. SSL recruits members from diverse backgrounds reflecting the ethnicity, language, and culture of communities being served by posting to idealist.org and my.americorps.gov. SSL places priority on applicants from the local community or urban areas facing similar challenges. In addition, SSL attends job recruitment fairs at local colleges and universities to recruit recent college graduates who seek to make a positive, lasting impact in their communities. Recruitment will begin in February 2015, prior to AmeriCorps grant award notification. Applications will be submitted electronically, followed by one or two rounds of interviews. During the interview(s), staff complete a rubric to capture evidence of applicants' resilience, ability to learn and implement SSL programming, experience serving with diverse youth and/or underserved communities, commitment to service, effective communication skills, and ability to spark curiosity, creativity and confidence in young children.

Members' expected accomplishments include the following: (1) developing skills and knowledge required to conduct early literacy programming; (2) becoming a leader of a community of learners and a role model for youth in their social/emotional development; (3) developing first-hand knowledge of the issues impacting early literacy acquisition in an urban, underserved community; and 4) developing in-depth knowledge of an urban, underserved community's needs and resources. In an internal evaluation at the end of program year 2013-14, 83% of members indicated the training they received was effective; 86% reported they were likely or highly likely to continue with public service and/or teaching in the future; and 87% reported that their regular individual observation/coaching/debrief meetings with their Program Managers were effective.

Narratives

Members will participate as a group in regular service projects with local community-based organizations and on National Days of Service, including an annual SSL-organized MLK Day ON service project and post-service reflection. This, in addition to participation in SSL's civic reflection series, will allow members meaningful opportunities for reflection to increase their satisfaction with their year of service as well as promote esprit de corps. Additionally, all AmeriCorps Members are strongly encouraged to vote in all local, state, and national elections, and to discuss the importance of such (in a non-partisan manner) during their after-school programs on election days.

H. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

As a way to strengthen member identity, SSL implements a multi-week civic reflection series, developed using best practices from the Center for Civic Reflection, to engage members in thinking carefully about their civic choices. By discussing resonant readings as part of this personal reflective process, members explore the beliefs that underlie their public service and form a greater sense of civic identity and commitment to the AmeriCorps program.(19) In this current program year, members returning for a second or more year of service with SSL will have the opportunity to be trained to support the series as facilitators.

As part of their orientation, all members participate in a training module on AmeriCorps identity, including that public awareness of AmeriCorps can inspire others to serve, raise awareness of the issues members work to combat, and assist in the preservation of AmeriCorps programs and funding. Members wear AmeriCorps branded T-shirts while serving in daily public service. They are also required to wear AmeriCorps-branded identification badges at all times they are serving. The SSL website prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo on its homepage.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

SSL began in 2002 as a project of the Junior League of Oakland-East Bay in response to low academic performance and abysmal graduation rates among disadvantaged youth in Oakland, CA. SSL served as a placement site for AmeriCorps members in 2006-2007 and 2011-2012 through BAYAC AmeriCorps, and from 2007 to 2012 through Girls, Inc.. SSL is now completing the third year of the first three-year competitive AmeriCorps awarded directly to the organization. Six years of managing AmeriCorps programs has enabled SSL to integrate AmeriCorps practices, values, and administration principles into its organization's programming. Program staff meet annually to review results from the previous year in student achievement, member development, and feedback collected through surveys. In addition, staff receive regular training and updates on AmeriCorps policies,

Narratives

ensuring compliance, and prohibited activities.

Ten SSL staff members will be engaged in managing the 2015-2018 AmeriCorps program. The staffing structure and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) percentage each will contribute toward AmeriCorps project implementation include the following:

- * Executive Director, Artavia Berry, M.Div., AmeriCorps Alumna (.25 FTE) AmeriCorps primary contact; monitors revenue and expenses; supervises all staff, including Government Contracts Manager, Community Engagement Manager, and Community Engagement Associate; monitors partnerships and community collaborations; develops organizational level infrastructure; responsible for all compliance with state and federal regulations
- * Program Director, Nancy Baum, M.Ed. (1 FTE) Oversees day-to-day program implementation; supervises and supports Program Managers and Evaluation Manager, oversees partnerships with schools; oversees the program evaluation process; ensures compliance and quality of SSL programming; supervises AmeriCorps member serving as the Volunteer Coordinator
- * Government Contracts Manager, Katie Brym, AmeriCorps*VISTA Alumna. (.8 FTE) AmeriCorps secondary contact; Manages systems that ensure compliance; recruits members; tracks member hours; ensures trainings reflect all required AmeriCorps elements
- * Evaluation Manager, Rose Lynn Abesamis-Bell, M.Ed. (.5 FTE) Develops systems for data collection; works with staff on data-related concerns; assists third-party evaluator
- * Community Engagement Manager, Jennifer Graves. (.1 FTE) Responsible for ensuring that matching funds identified in the budget are obtained and tracked; works with community members involved in supporting the program
- * Community Engagement Associate, Daniel Lawlor (.1 FTE) Responsible for outreach to community partners and for obtaining in-kind community support for the program
- * Four Program Managers (1 FTE each). Each supervises 4-10 of the 29 AmeriCorps Group Leaders; liaise with school staff; collect and administer DIBELS assessment data; oversee collection of DRDP collection data; provide regular feedback on member performance; review timesheets and activities to ensure compliance; conduct performance reviews

SSL will partner with the Oakland, Hayward, and Newark Unified School Districts through Memoranda of Understanding to serve the children targeted for SSL literacy intervention. SSL's strategies are aligned with each school's priorities, needs, schedules, and resources. Additionally, SSL partners with the Oakland Literacy Coalition, Oakland Reads 2020, and the Hayward Promise Neighborhood Initiative. SSL has formed partnerships for volunteer resources with college service

Narratives

learning and work-study programs, such as those at CSU East Bay and UC Berkeley. CSU East Bay accepts all SSL alumni into their teacher credentialing program because they appreciate the quality of SSL member instructors.

The SSL part-time Finance Director is responsible for all SSL accounting and financial reporting. All expense requisitions require Executive Director or Program Director approval, depending on the amount. Only the Executive Director is authorized to sign checks. On a monthly basis, the prior month's financials are reviewed by the Board Finance Committee, headed by the Board Treasurer. The Finance Committee has approved financial control mechanisms and is responsible for retaining the outside tax accountant and auditor.

B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SSL employs a full-time Government Contracts Manager (GCM) who is responsible for ensuring compliance with CV and AmeriCorps rules and regulations, as well as providing training for staff and members on prohibited activities. Volunteers receive training on prohibited activities prior to placement. Any compliance issues identified are immediately addressed through a written plan for correction and reported to California Volunteers. Program Managers regularly monitor time sheets, conduct site visits, and meet with members to further ensure compliance.

C. PAST PERFORMANCE

Performance measurement targets: In year one of the current AmeriCorps grant, SSL met all performance measure targets. In year two, 188, as opposed to the predicted 240, children received 135 hours of instruction, and 59%, instead of SSL's anticipated 60%, of students increased one functional grade level. SSL has decreased the targeted dosage of instructional hours from 135 to 90 as data has suggested this is an adequate dosage to achieve the targeted gains, which will increase the number of students who receive the minimum dosage and subsequently make the targeted gains.

Member enrollment: In year one, SSL had 100% member enrollment and in year two, it was 86.2% due to a decrease number of service sites. SSL has developed partnerships to provide an adequate number of service sites.

Member retention: SSL had a member retention rate of 92% in year two, which was significantly higher than the year one rate of 75%. SSL attributes this retention improvement to implementing the Civic Reflection series to promote esprit de corps and improving member screening methods. In addition, Program Managers are now required to be credentialed and to serve in a mentoring role to members.

Compliance issues, weaknesses, risks: In the first year of the three-year grant cycle, SSL's compliance

Narratives

issues were primarily relating to enrollment and exit dates. That year, two members were enrolled after the 30-day period; however, SSL has improved its enrollment practices resulting in only one late enrollment in year two. During the first year, SSL mistakenly interpreted the 30-day enrollment requirement to mean 30 business days. SSL has implemented improved training on prohibited activities after one member independently raised funds to start a school garden, resulting in a compliance issue during the first year. SSL has added a Government Contracts Manager with AmeriCorps reporting experience to the staff and is well positioned to continue to implement the AmeriCorps program in alignment with all policies and procedures.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS

SSL's MSY request is \$12,998. Members will serve in an area with one of the highest costs of living in the US and SSL will offer a living allowance of \$17,000 per member, representing 95% of its request from CNCS. SSL will provide \$1,102,451 in cash and in-kind support to match the request of \$363,958. This match supports member supervision and training, data tracking, evaluation, reporting, supplies, travel, materials, curriculum, and 28% of member living allowances.

SSL has a strong and varied base of financial supporters. With a 2014-15 budget of \$1,462,704, SSL receives 46% of its income from government funding, 27% from foundation and corporate grants, and 27% from individual donations. The SSL board's Resource Development Committee oversees the implementation of the Fund Development Plan, prepared in alignment with best practices of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. SSL's two-person development team works closely with SSL's Executive Director and Board of Directors to implement this funding plan. They conduct individual and major donor fundraising campaigns, while increasing SSL's community visibility through special events, marketing, and collaborations with other community based organizations. The success of SSL's student outcomes has enabled SSL to increase its funding from very competitive private foundations over the past three years.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY

Based on experience with current AmeriCorps funding, SSL is confident that the budget presented is adequate and will fully fund the proposed program. SSL's current support from school districts, individuals and foundations covers the costs of curriculum materials, senior staff salaries, member training and development, student assessment, program evaluation, member health care and workers compensation. SSL is primarily seeking support for member living allowances.

Narratives

END NOTES

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Narratives

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Evaluation Summary or Plan

THEORY OF CHANGE: Research on providing early intervention and after-school programs to impact K-2 literacy proficiency and prevent low-performing children from falling behind in school directly influences SSL's programming design and implementation. SSL's goal on accelerating growth is congruent with the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading goal to increase by 50% the number and proportion of students who are grade-level proficient readers by the end of third grade.

LITERACY INSTRUCTION STRATEGY: SSL integrates current best practices by coupling direct instructional strategies, such as individualized and group coaching, with experiential and independent learning activities to facilitate the acquisition of core literacy skills. SSL's emphasis on the first three years of schooling (K-2) is based on overwhelming evidence that children who enter school without a foundation of emergent literacy skills need systematic support to meet grade level demands in early reading. The effect size for this age group was stronger than for any other age group--nearly double that found in intervention studies conducted with older children, with studies showing that the "very high-risk children benefited most from the intervention", Research also suggests that programs having the most impact on K-2 student academic achievement are those which children attend on a regular basis over time, sometimes even over a number of years.

FOSTERING ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Difficulties in reading are extremely prevalent among children and youth who exhibit conduct disorder and delinquent behavior. As such, instruction intervention for at-risk students that combines literacy and social domains can promote their chances of greater academic competency. To increase academic engagement in a school setting, children must acquire the social/emotional skills of empathy, impulse control, and conflict resolution. To foster the development of social/emotional skills, SSL incorporates developmentally based lessons and materials to teach children emotional literacy, self-control, positive peer relations, social competence and interpersonal problem solving.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT: SSL prioritizes providing an extensive member development program that prepares members for their responsibilities in supporting student growth and identifying with AmeriCorps service values. The SSL Group Leader Development Rubric and weekly observations

Narratives

inform which skill members are developing, such as lesson planning, effective instruction, and classroom management. The training program and member experience has become a productive training ground for those considering the teaching field, social service, or other civic professions. Research suggests the following combination of resources and programmatic strategies employed by SSL can positively impact a child's academic and social success: (1) a daily literacy enriched extended learning program; (2) school day support (one on one, small group, class support); (3) highly qualified and motivated AmeriCorps members and supervisory staff; (4) evidence-based, culturally competent literacy and social/emotional development curriculum; (5) intensive and ongoing training and member development; (6) strong school partnerships; and (7) community volunteers providing ongoing and one-time events.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES: SSL measures the following program outcomes:

Short Term Outcomes: (Annual)

1. ED5: 60% of students who complete the program will grow by one functional grade level in literacy skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension), based on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). 2. ED27B: 80% of students who complete the program will grow by one developmental level in one or more areas of academic engagement (empathy, impulse control, and conflict negotiation behaviors), based on SSL's adapted Desired Results Development Profile Assessment (DRDP). 3. 90% of all recruited volunteers honor their service commitment. 4. 80% of parents/guardians whose children complete the program attend at least one family engagement program; 40% attend two or more programs. 5. 50% of Members increase their skills by 50%.

Medium Term Outcomes: (two-seven years)

1. The rate of entering third grade reading proficiency for SSL students who participate in the program for three years will be at least 75% greater than the current rate for Alameda County third graders. 2. 75% of adults engaged in SSL service projects volunteer for at least two years with SSL 3. Annually, 80% of parents who participate in the program will indicate increased awareness of literacy activities and how to access and engage in school participation. 4. 50% of members enter teacher preparation programs at post-secondary institutions 5. 10% of members enter graduate programs that support student learning, including special education, social services, education policy and counseling 6. 20% of members enter careers in the non-profit or civic sectors or return to National Service

RESEARCH DESIGN: Annually, SSL engages in a qualitative and quantitative data collection cycle to gain information on progress towards outcomes. SSL provides extensive training of data collectors (program staff and AmeriCorps members) and establishes a clear data collection protocol to ensure

Narratives

standardization, accuracy, and completeness. Methods include individually administered literacy assessment probes, observation, internal recording tools of services offered and received, and surveys. The SSL Evaluation Manager is responsible for data gathering. SSL's external evaluator develops a mid-year report that includes data collected in the beginning and middle of the year. The resulting analysis provides formative information about student progress and guidance for internal planning for the remainder of the school year. SSL staff and AmeriCorps members collect year-end data in May and June. The external evaluator uses the data to measure progress toward achieving the short and medium term outcomes. The external evaluator completes the annual evaluation report each August. SSL also prepares year-end service site reports for partners and school leaders. At the end of year two and three, the evaluator completes the analysis and reporting for the medium term outcomes to assess longer-term program impact.

EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS: Gibson and Associates has served as the independent external evaluator commissioned to prepare the annual SSL evaluation report for over four years.

ESTIMATED BUDGET: SSL budgets \$28,638 per year for the evaluation of its AmeriCorps program.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

April 17, 2015 Clarification

Super Stars Literacy is submitting this application for consideration for a grant in the amount of \$363,958, 28.00 Member Service Years (MSYs), 29 slots, at \$12,998 cost per MSY.

1) Please revise the funding amount stated in the Executive Summary to match your submitted budget.

This statement has been revised.

2) Given that you were able to propose a decrease of \$300 in your cost/MSY in your original 2015 application with 30 MSY, please explain why you cannot match this decreased cost/MSY in your revised 2015 application with 28 MSY. Remember that funding is extremely competitive and limited this year, and that having a low cost per MSY is a competitive advantage. Please note that if you do not voluntarily decrease your cost per MSY, CNCS may make reductions after the clarification period

Narratives

ends.

SSL has returned the cost per MSY to the originally proposed \$12,998.

3) The definitions of program completion that were added to the Literacy Programming and Academic Engagement performance measures indicate that students will complete 90 hours in literacy tutoring and another 90 hours in social/emotional skills programming; however, the application narrative indicates that the entire program (inclusive of both the literacy and the social/emotional aspects) spans 90 hours. Please correct this discrepancy in the performance measure screens. If it is not possible to disaggregate the hours spent on literacy tutoring vs. the hours spent on social/emotional skills programming, please combine the Literacy Programming and Academic Engagement measures into a single aligned performance measure with a single set of outputs (ED1 and ED2 with a completion dosage of 90 hours) and two outcomes.

SSL has updated the definition of program completion to be 180 hours. Each day of SSL programming includes 1 hour of literacy programming and 1 hour of social/emotional (academic engagement) programming; therefore, students who attend 90 days of SSL programming will receive the target dosage of 180 hours (90 hours of literacy programming and the target dosage of 90 hours of social/emotional programming). These changes have been reflected in the Narratives and Performance Measurements.

April 14, 2015 Clarification

Super Stars Literacy is submitting this application for consideration for a grant in the amount of \$372,383, 28.00 Member Service Years (MSYs), 29 slots, at \$13,299.39 cost per MSY.

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.

The Executive Summary, Budget, and Performance Measures have been amended to reflect the reduced amount being consider. We are currently proposing 24 full-time members to serve as Group Leaders, 2 full-time members to serve as Group Leaders on Special Assignment, 1 full-time member to

Narratives

serve as the Volunteer Coordinator, and 2 half-time members to serve as Group Leaders on Special Assignment.

2. Funding is extremely competitive and limited this year. Having a low Cost Per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. Applicants submitting with a low cost per MSY will receive higher priority for funding. Please consider decreasing the application's proposed cost per MSY by revising the CNCS share of the program budget, or provide a compelling explanation for why the cost/MSY cannot be decreased. CNCS will review both the individual program cost per MSY and the aggregate cost per MSY after the clarification period and may elect to make further decreases in cost per MSY and/or may be only able to partially fund applicants.

Due to the high cost of living in the proposed service area (the Bay Area of California) and subsequent living allowance costs, Super Stars Literacy is unable to further reduce the proposed cost per MSY.

B. Programmatic Clarification Items

1. Please provide a more detailed explanation of the role of Group Leaders on Special Assignment, including the extent to which these members are providing direct service to student beneficiaries vs. supporting other AmeriCorps members. Please also confirm that the Group Leaders on Special Assignment are not supervising other members and are not duplicating, supplanting or displacing paid staff.

Group Leaders on Special Assignment (GLSAs) will be assigned to a district team comprised of one SSL Program Manager and (on average) nine traditional Group Leaders. District teams are assembled based on service site location and GLSAs will serve with these GLs while rotating between the three schools included in the district. GLSA's will primarily provide direct one-on-one and small group intervention support to the highest need SSL students in the SSL after school program by rotating between Group Leader classrooms and working with individual students and/or small groups of students. GLSA's will occasionally support GL's by leading an after school class when the class's assigned GL is absent due to approved days off or illness. SSL confirms that the Group Leaders on Special Assignment are not supervising other members and are not duplicating, supplanting or displacing.

2. Please revise the last sentence of your Executive Summary to conform with the template provided

Narratives

in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The Executive Summary has been updated to conform with the template provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

3. Please describe how the program meets all of the requirements of a tutoring program as identified in 45 CFR §2522.910-.940, which include specialized member qualifications and training.

(a) All members selected to serve in a tutoring capacity are required to demonstrate the receipt of a high school diploma or its equivalent, as well as the completion of a minimum of 48 college credits.

(b) SSL utilizes the standardized Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and an SSL adapted Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) to ensure student progress is properly assessed and student outcomes are measured. (c) Tutoring curriculum involves a balanced literacy approach to teaching foundational literacy skills and Responsive Classroom methodologies that are consistent with the instructional programs of SSL's partner schools and the Common Core standards.

(d) Members are supervised by Program Managers with direct teaching experience. (e) Members participate in a pre-service orientation and on-going training and receive training content including the balanced literacy environment, early literacy concepts and teaching strategies, and implications for child development in the classroom setting.

4. Please confirm that the portion of the Community Engagement personnel's time that is included in the application budget complies with the requirements of 45 CFR § 2520.60.

The portion of the Community Engagement personnel's time that is included in the application budget is spent supporting the Super Stars Literacy volunteer program and developing community partnerships that will provide additional support and training to SSL AmeriCorps members. These activities comply with the requirements of 45 CFR § 2520.60.

C. Budget Clarification Items: N/A

D. Performance Measure Clarification Items

1. For the Literacy Programming performance measure: in the Described Instrument section of measure ED2, please specify the minimum number of hours of literacy tutoring required for a student to complete the program. If it is not possible to disaggregate the hours spent on literacy tutoring vs.

Narratives

social/emotional skills programming, please combine the Literacy Programming and Academic Engagement measures into a single aligned performance measure with a single set of outputs (ED1 and ED2) and one or more outcomes.

The described instrument section of measure ED2 has been updated to include the minimum number of hours of literacy tutoring required for a student to complete the program.

2. Please specify in the Described Instrument section of measure ED5 the minimum level of improvement on the DIBELS assessment that will be required in order for a student to be counted under this measure.

The described instrument section of measure ED5 has been updated to include the minimum level of improvement on the DIBELS assessment that will be required in order for a student to be counted under the measure.

3. For the Academic Engagement performance measure: in the Described Instrument section of measure ED2, please specify the minimum number of hours of social/emotional skills programming required for a student to complete the program. If it is not possible to disaggregate the hours spent on literacy tutoring vs. social/emotional skills programming, please combine the Literacy Programming and Academic Engagement measures into a single aligned performance measure with a single set of outputs (ED1 and ED2) and one or more outcomes.

The described instrument section of measure ED2 has been updated to include the minimum number of hours of academic engagement programming required for a student to complete the program.

4. For ED27B, please describe how the social/emotional programming provided by members will be designed to result in positive and significant changes in one of the following student behaviors, as specified in the Performance Measure Instructions for ED27B: increased attendance, increased completion of assignments including homework, increased teacher-reported participation, decreased disciplinary referrals, decreased suspensions, decreased arrest and gang involvement, and decreased reports of substance abuse. Please also describe how the SSL adapted DRDP will accurately assess one or more of these dimensions of academic engagement and will conform with the assessment requirements spelled out in the Performance Measure Instructions. If ED27B is not a good fit for the member activities and desired outcome, please either eliminate the Academic Engagement performance measure or choose a different outcome measure (either a National measure or an

Narratives

applicant-determined measure).

Social/emotional programming provided by the members will include a healthy model of impulse control and conflict negotiation necessary for academic engagement. These skills are taught directly and practiced daily as students participate in the community. Group experiences such as opening and closing circles, read aloud, and organized community building activities support students practice and mastery of positive academic engagement. This programming will result in positive and significant changes in the student behavior of increased teacher-reported participation as shown by a growth in one developmental level on the Super Stars Literacy adapted-DRDP.

5. The Academic Engagement measure has no MSY or members associated with it. Please adjust the MSY and member figures to reflect the amount of member effort and number of members connected to this intervention.

The MSY and member figures have been updated to reflect the amount of member effort and number of members connected to the Academic Engagement intervention.

E. Strategic Engagement Slot 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?

Super Stars Literacy does not currently have a practice of targeted recruitment for members with disabilities or of reserving slots specifically for members with disabilities. Instead SSL follows the industry accepted best practices for recruitment and interviews and will make reasonable accommodations for members with disabilities to complete the assigned job functions.

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

Narratives

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

At this time Super Stars Literacy does not have the capacity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities and is not interested in pursuing this opportunity.

F. 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.

MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification Items -- At this time Super Stars Literacy is not interested in adding MSY's with no program funds attached.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics