

Narratives

Executive Summary

The East St. Louis Local School District 189, in collaboration with our partners, will support 20 full-time and 60 minimum time AmeriCorps members in providing direct service to children living in the East St. Louis School District during in and out of school hours (including summer). The work will be supplemented by 6 AmeriCorps*VISTA members who will provide capacity-building supports in a combined effort to implement a city-wide College and Career Pathways program by focusing on improved academic achievement and college/career planning for youth in the East St. Louis School District 189. At the end of the project period, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for implementing a comprehensive in and out-of-school pathways program, expanding youth access to after-school and summer pathways programming, and fostering youth volunteer civic participation. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 600 volunteers that will be engaged in career coaching, youth mentoring and neighborhood improvement projects.

Specifically, 40 AmeriCorps State and National members will provide academic support, including in and out-of-school and summer services to youth in 7th, 8th and 9th grades within the East St. Louis Schools District 189 from August 1, 2015 to July 31, 2017. Six AmeriCorps*VISTA members will provide capacity building activities including grant writing, and developing a pathways program that, when implemented will establish a pathway for students to build work-based learning opportunities, increase employer partnerships, and streamline data sharing between schools and out-of-school partner organizations from August 1, 2015 to July 31, 2017. Additionally, one team of 10 AmeriCorps NCCC members will participate in summer programming that will include academic, recreation and service learning projects for nine weeks, June through August. We have included Senior Corps programs, specifically local Foster Grandparents and RSVP volunteers, who will provide mentoring and coaching support with our out-of-school partners.

This program will focus on Operation AmeriCorps' first priority - improving post-secondary outcomes for students by achieving measurable outcomes in the education priority area. Additionally, we intend to work with "opportunity youth" and achieve measurable outcomes in the CNCS focus area of economic opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$448,197 (72%) will be matched with \$175,347 (28%).

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Narratives

NEED: Of the 27,000 East St. Louis residents, 46.7% live below the poverty level and only 1,365 individuals work full-time year-round (American Community Survey -- ACS, 2009-13). With double-digit unemployment for decades, the current unemployment rate is 16.7% (ACS, 2009-13).

Educational attainment has also been a struggle - approximately 22% of the population age 25+ did not finish high school (ACS, 2009-13). More than half of the adult population is not in the labor force, with only 13% of those over 25 years of age possessing an associate's or bachelor's degree (Pathways to Prosperity Network Report, 2014).

In this environment of concentrated poverty, 100% of the more than 6,100 students in the East St. Louis school district qualify for the free and reduced price lunch program. Across the district, more than 99% of students are low income and 98% are black (Illinois Report Card, 2014). According to the Illinois State Board of Education, only 69% of students graduated from high school within four years of beginning 9th grade (2014). More than 90% of all district students do not meet math or reading standards and only 6% of East St. Louis graduates are ready for college course work (Illinois Report Card, 2014). For those students who do enter college, only one out of three will complete a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census, 2010).

Using the power of collective impact, a broad coalition of community organizations have been working to comprehensively improve outcomes for the community's children and youth. This group, called East Side Aligned, includes District 189, a number of non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, government entities, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, funders and other community leaders.

East Side Aligned formed with the shared vision of ensuring that all children and youth within the Greater East St. Louis community are supported - physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally - and ready for success in school, work and life. To accomplish this vision, the group's efforts are focused on aligning and advancing policy, practice, and investment across sectors. Our collective impact efforts have already made improvements to strengthen early childhood and child care providers in the East St. Louis community.

With funding from the Race to the Top Innovation Zone, East Side Aligned representatives from Head Start, Home-based childcare providers, and other licensed day care facilities have accomplished the

Narratives

following: a) Early childhood partners representing the above constituencies have an agreed-upon mission, vision and guiding principles for serving children birth to age 5; b) Multiple trainings have been conducted for providers across the above sectors on topics such as transition strategies for children receiving IDEA Part C to Part B and parent leadership; and c) Multiple members have achieved an ExceleRate Gold Circle of Quality in the State of IL Quality Rating and Improvement System.

On the other end of the youth continuum, we are focused on ensuring youth are succeeding in school and have the proper supports to succeed with transitions to college and career.

East Side Aligned is also comprised of local employers and higher education partners that have been coalescing around the establishment of pathways in East St. Louis. District 189. We are part of the national Pathways to Prosperity Network - a collaboration of states, Jobs for the Future, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education - to ensure that many more youth successfully complete high school, attain a postsecondary credential with currency in the labor market and get launched into a career while leaving open the prospect of future education.

District 189 has received technical assistance from Jobs for the Future to help identify assets for our local pathways work and prioritize action steps for the development of grades 6-14 pathways. The localized Pathways Asset Mapping report, finalized in December 2014, supports that East St. Louis is well positioned for success in building grades 6-14 pathways linked to local labor market needs because of our Career and Technical Education Program, the development of Programs of Study in the identified career Pathways of Health Services and Information Technology, and strong community partnerships. Substantial work remains to develop greater alignment along the full length of the education and workforce pipeline, from middle grades and high school on through postsecondary education and into employment. Examples of progress in this area include the expansion of dual credit course offerings in partnership with SWIC (Southwestern Illinois College) and the expansion of work-based learning partnerships with local employers.

The preliminary work conducted and partnerships established through East Side Aligned and Pathways to Prosperity have created the blueprints necessary for executing the pathways model. Through these collective efforts we have identified the following three key challenges where all CNCS

Narratives

streams of service members can serve as the transformative catalyst for making rapid and dramatic change:

- 1) There is currently no aligned College and Career Pathways framework being implemented and coordinated across the middle schools, high schools, and out-of-school time service providers. While the Pathways to Prosperity work has laid a foundation for what the framework needs to include to ensure that every graduating senior is prepared to participate in college, military service, AmeriCorps, employment, or a job training program, the aligned Pathways framework has not yet been operationalized. AmeriCorps*VISTA members will be charged with helping to build this capacity.
- 2) Student achievement in District 189 lags behind statewide averages. More than 90% of all district students do not meet math or reading standards and only 6% of East St. Louis graduates are ready for college course work (Illinois Report Card, 2014). By targeting services to 7th, 8th and 9th grade students, and ensuring alignment between after-school and in-school curricula, and providing case management services we can ensure that students are achieving grade-level competency in reading and math, remaining in school and have a path established for graduation and entry into post-secondary education.
- 3) There is currently not enough out-of-school time access for students in 7th, 8th and 9th grades in the District. Through initial planning and assessments, East Side Aligned partnerships have concluded that current community capacity can only serve 379 students in the target grades with regular out-of-school programming and summer programming. With the support of AmeriCorps members, NCCC team, Foster Grandparents and RSVP volunteers we can expand services to reach an additional 120 youth at a minimum in 7th, 8th and 9th grades, providing them with an aligned curriculum, mentoring, tutoring, and recreational and community activities that build strength and resiliency across social, emotional and behavioral domains.

As strong community partnerships continue to be developed locally through East Side Aligned and state-wide and nationally through the Pathways to Prosperity Network, we know a comprehensive citywide postsecondary college and career pathway system is possible for all East St. Louis secondary students. Our biggest start-up barrier is capacity - particularly in the area of human resources. This proposal calls for six AmeriCorps*VISTA members to provide capacity-building support to the District

Narratives

with the research and planning necessary to implement the initiative while AmeriCorps, NCCC team, Foster Grandparents and RSVP volunteers provide the direct service that addresses student achievement. With this CNCS support, every student in East St. Louis will be prepared for a career or educational opportunity upon high school graduation and will be making appropriate academic progress toward that outcome.

AMERICORPS AS TRANSFORMATIVE CATALYST

THEORY of CHANGE and PROGRAM DESIGN: District 189 and East Side Aligned is poised to achieve transformational and measurable change for students over the next two years. Through this grant opportunity, CNCS members will be an essential part of preparing students for academic success while planning for the implementation of a pathways framework and student support system that will improve, in the short-term, academic success of students while, in the long-term, improving post-secondary outcomes for at-risk youth in East St. Louis. It should be noted that any AmeriCorps member that is serving in a tutoring capacity will: a) Use curriculum that is consistent with both state academic standards and the instruction program of District 189; b) Possess at least a high school diploma; and c) Successfully complete pre- and in-service specialized training. Please see our logic model for a summary.

OBJECTIVE 1 (Minor Revision): Support the Development and Alignment of city-wide Pathways Framework Across Schools and Partner Organizations.

In order to prepare youth in East St. Louis for employability and break the cycle of poverty, we will support young people's exploration of potential career options, offer work-based learning opportunities and provide rigorous, relevant and stackable instruction that prepares them for college and careers. The aligned pathways framework will: a) Support students in transitions from middle to high school and on to postsecondary institutions; b) Include a wide range of career exploration activities, sequenced curricular programs of study and development of soft skills; and c) Engage local employers and be relevant to local workforce and labor market demands. Our proposal will utilize the Jobs for the Future East St. Louis asset mapping report, finalized in December 2014, as the foundational workplan for the development of the pathways framework.

Narratives

STRATEGY 1.1: Engage two AmeriCorps*VISTA members to research and support the District to design the pathways framework to improve post-secondary outcomes for students (YRS 1-2; QTRS 1-4)

Under the guidance of an AmeriCorps*VISTA alum on staff at the East St. Louis School District, 2 VISTA members will engage in capacity-building efforts to establish a strong and cohesive city-wide pathways framework. The VISTA members will perform the following functions: 1) Using existing state and district curriculum requirements, map/sequence pathways by grade level timeline to include stackable career exploration activities, curricular programs of study, and soft skills development in school and in out-of-school settings; 2) Outline processes and procedures for ensuring students are building education, vocational and soft skills each year and utilizing their Career Cruising profile; 3) Research best practices and interview East St. Louis students about ways to best support youth in the transition from high school to postsecondary job or education; 4) Develop a "transitions program" for District 189 to then implement to support youth post graduation; 5) Help employers and career coaches create their Career Cruising Inspire (cclnspire) profiles; 6) Recruit and support local employers in providing work-based learning opportunities; 7) Coordinate communication between collaborating agencies and assist with planning meetings; and 8) Participate in weekly team meetings with other VISTAs in the program.

STRATEGY 1.2: Engage two AmeriCorps*VISTA members in pathways sustainability efforts (YRS 1-2; QTRS 1-4)

The VISTA members will perform the following functions: 1) Recruit employers and career coaches to expand participation in cclnspire platform; 2) Conduct outreach to recruit volunteer mentors to support students; 3) Draft, design and/or edit marketing and communication materials, including website; 4) Write and submit at least two grants per VISTA member on annual basis; and 5) Participate in weekly team meetings with other VISTAs in the program. These two AmeriCorps*VISTA members will be based and supervised at District 189.

OBJECTIVE 2 (REVISED): Support student academic achievement of students in 7th, 8th and 9th grades that ensure students are meeting grade-level expectations and are on-track to graduate on-time and prepared for post-secondary education or employment following graduation.

Narratives

STRATEGY 2.1: Engage 20 full-time AmeriCorps members to work with a caseload of students daily to ensure academic achievement during the school day as well as after-school and summer programming (YRS 1-2; QTRS 1-4). The work of the full-time AmeriCorps members will be supplemented by 15 minimum-time members who serve during the school year.

AmeriCorps members will be assigned to work in one of three schools under a City Year-like program design to provide personalized guidance and case management support to students, with priority on middle school and 9th grade high school students. AmeriCorps members will perform the following functions: 1) Develop relationships with assigned students to learn about their interests, hopes, talents, skills; 2) Provide personalized one-on-one sessions and group learning opportunities that support academic achievement; 3) Support students in setting and achieving college/career preparation goals); 4) Work in partnership with district and school staff as well as community partners and families to support and advocate for students; 5) Use the evidence-based Check and Connect model to check attendance and reach out to the family and student who is absent to determine the circumstances of the absence and what supports, if any, are needed; and 6) Collect data and report student accomplishments to the student's family as well as school staff and relevant community partners.

STRATEGY 2.2: Engage 45 minimum-time AmeriCorps members and 10 NCCC members (in 9-weeks) to provide support to summer programming, allowing expanded access to educational and recreational activities which support the academic, social, behavioral and emotional needs of students. Specifically, their engagement will support the non-profit summer camps and Summer Youth Project targeted at 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students. Activities may also include community service projects with community youth and community gardening (which supports nutritional development) (summer 2016 and 2017). Our partner, the Christian Activity Center, will provide lodging for the NCCC team. Of the 45 minimum-time members, we intend to recruit 20 high-performing junior and seniors (age 17+) to participate as AmeriCorps members. This will recognize their academic achievements and support them with their post-secondary education plans.

STRATEGY 2.3: Engage AmeriCorps members to support and encourage youth to participate in service and service learning activities in their local community (YRS 1-2; QTRS 1-4). This aspect of

Narratives

our program supports the project's goals of civic engagement and community improvement.

AmeriCorps members will promote an understanding of good citizenship and an ethic of service among the youth they serve. Youth will be encouraged to: a) Participate in organized service learning opportunities; b) Participate in volunteerism that benefits their community; and c) Participate in volunteerism that exposes them to career exploration.

Work within this strategy will address service learning that is an essential component of the evidence-based Teen Outreach Program, TM as well as foster a renewed sense of community pride.

OBJECTIVE 3 (REVISED): Expand Access to Aligned After-School and Summer Programming for Students.

In order to maximize the outcome that East St. Louis secondary school students will be effectively prepared for success in college and careers, we must expand access to high-quality out-of-school time supports that are aligned with District curriculum to support academic achievement. After-school and summer programs for grades 7-9 must be: a) Rigorous and targeted in the academic support provided; b) Engaging and dynamic in the type of projects, experiences, and academic support; c) Aligned with the curriculum being implemented during the school day; and d) Available to as many students as possible. Our proposal will utilize the intra-agency planning and coordination currently underway through East Side Aligned to harness AmeriCorps*VISTAs and AmeriCorps members' talent and energy to achieve results.

STRATEGY 3.1: Deploy AmeriCorps 32.7 MSY State and National members to serve as after-school and summer student support partners at participating sites (YRS 1-2; QTRS 1-4)

At the end of each school day, the AmeriCorps members will leave the school they are serving in and report to one of the five out-of-school time partnership sites. Once there, the AmeriCorps member will continue working directly with students through a set of programming that is aligned with the pathways framework and is consistent with the norms and program expectations of the host site.

Activities may include one of more of the following: 1) Provide tutorials to one student or a group of

Narratives

students in Common Core aligned content specific to high-need skill areas; 2) Lead educational workshops on specific areas related to college and career readiness (e.g., work etiquette, how to write a college essay, how to take notes, etc.); 3) Maintain accurate records of services provided; collect data and report accomplishments; 4) Conduct assessments of student learning; and 5) Provide other direct services to students as needed.

Efforts will be made to coordinate caseloads for each AmeriCorps member to maximize the number of students that will be served in-school and out-of-school by the same AmeriCorps member.

AmeriCorps members will be allocated based on organizational capacity to serve students. It is our intention to assign members as follows: a) Three full-time AmeriCorps members will be assigned to the East St. Louis District 189; b) Each of the out-of-school sites will received three to four members each (a total of 15), depending on enrollment. The 60 minimum-time members will be deployed as follows: a) 15 will serve during the school year at each of the out-of-school sites and in the classroom (depending on individual member's scheduling needs); and b) 45 will serve during the summer programming which allows East Side Aligned members to expand services to better meet community needs.

STRATEGY 3.2: Utilize two participating AmeriCorps*VISTAs to ensure program performance, alignment, and continuous improvement (YRS 1-2; QTRS 1-4)

AmeriCorps*VISTAs across the program will be responsible for ensuring that student performance is on track and consistent with the program's expectations. While each partner organization will have a unique focus (e.g., fitness and character education at the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center), program outcomes will be consistently measured. VISTAs will ensure the following, consistent with quality assurance: a) Data will be updated weekly for each student on in-school and out-of-school supports received and progress made; b) Organization-level data will be reviewed weekly to ensure that the shared measurement system is driving program priorities and the pathways scope and sequence is being followed with fidelity; c) VISTAs will meet regularly to develop a shared understanding of what a personalized learning plan looks like in action, analyze student-level data to determine successes and challenges, and continuously improve program outcomes; and d) VISTAs will generate program recommendations to leadership across the organizations about ways to improve processes and maximize program impact.

Narratives

ENGAGED LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS: District 189 and partners with East Side Aligned have collaboratively designed this program. The out-of-school provider partners are committed to providing extensive support to the program including: staff and volunteers (including site supervisors, member trainers, and those who provide programming guidance and technical assistance), material contributions (including art and paper supplies, computers), and in-kind support through programming facility space (including gymnasiums, meeting rooms, computer labs). Most of these partners are also United Way-certified volunteer agencies.

One partner, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, has supported an AmeriCorps program to serve local community needs for 15 years. This AmeriCorps Program as served more than 1,200 children and youth on an annual basis and more than 5,000 families in the community. AmeriCorps/East St. Louis has recruited and utilized many as 40 full- and part-time members and 150 minimum-time members on an annual basis. More than 98% of the AmeriCorps members were successful in completing their required hours. This partner will contribute expertise in recruitment and utilization of AmeriCorps members toward this project and will ensure alignment of this project with current AmeriCorps work.

East Side Aligned is the partnership name for all stakeholders engaged in a collective impact process that is focused on children and youth outcomes in East St. Louis, including District 189 and each of the partners involved in this application. We are developing a common agenda across a spectrum of youth outcomes, shared measurements, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and are using the United Way of Greater St. Louis as our backbone support organization.

District 189 and the out-of-school provider partners with East Side Aligned have been awarded a grant from the Boeing Company to develop and implement a shared measurement system for out-of-school providers serving students within District 189's footprint. By September 2015, we will have developed a shared measurement system that is ready for full implementation in the 2015-2016 school year. The work of the AmeriCorps and VISTA members will build from this foundation and all will receive training in the measurement system that will track a student's progress over time and across out-of-school providers.

Narratives

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE FOR PROPOSED INTERVENTION: The key elements of the proposed intervention include: improved academic engagement and achievement, soft skills training including character education activities, service learning and other college and career pathway support. Given the range of services being provided in both the in-school and out-of-school setting, there is not a comparable evidence-based model that fully encompasses our proposed intervention. We are working with experts from the Pathways to Prosperity Network to design the intervention consistent with national evidence-based best practice models (all of which meet the "strong" evidence qualifications in Attachment 3 of the NOFO).

Evidence-Based Practice #1: Soft skill training, character education, and service learning curriculum will be based on the curriculum used by the Wyman Teen Outreach Program which is endorsed by the Rand Corporation's Promising Practices Network for achieving a 60% lower risk of course failure (Philliber Research, 2001) and 60% lower risk of school dropout (Allen, 2009).

Evidence-Based Practice #2: Case management services will employ the evidence-based Check and Connect model which has been demonstrated to improve student engagement and academic outcomes (University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration). Check and Connect serves to build a trusting relationship between the student and their case manager or advocate with timely interventions that monitor and address student performance variables such as absences, tardies, behavioral referrals, and poor academic achievement. Measurable results include reduced absences (Sinclair & Kaibel, 2002), increased student and family engagement in school and improved rates of persistence and graduation, (Sinclair, 2005).

Promising Practice #3: While the target population is largely 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students, college planning begins well before a student's senior year. Educators for Social Responsibility, in their publication *Increasing College Access through School-Based Models of Postsecondary Preparation* (2009), details key activities that are essential to successful models. Following the recommendations of this publication, planning will begin during 7th and 8th grade, ensuring that students are prepared for high-school level work and make proper course selections that prepare them for college. Preparedness will include both cognitive and non-cognitive elements.

Evidence-Based Practice #4: Finally, we will integrate practices from two successful models: College

Narratives

Bound where in-school and after-school counseling and college prep programming yields a postsecondary completion rate 5 times the rate of their low-income, first generation peers (RAND Education, 2013); and the Year Up program where 85% of program graduates are either employed or attending college full-time within 4 months of program completion (Heinrich, 2012).

MEMBER TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

MEMBER TRAINING: AmeriCorps members will be provided with comprehensive orientation and training. Before participating in training and orientation, each member will be required to sign a member service agreement that provides a position description, minimum number of service hours required to complete the term of service and to be eligible for an education award, the amount of the education award, acknowledges the standards of conduct, indicates the list of federally-prohibited activities, timesheet requirements, prohibited activities, requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, suspension and termination from service, grievance procedures, sexual harassment, and other non-discrimination issues.

Although some members will be serving at partner after-school sites that are faith-based, no proselytization will occur in this program - by members or non-member volunteers. Site supervisors and staff will ensure that AmeriCorps members do not engage in any CNCS prohibited activities. If any member violates one of the rules of conduct or engages in a prohibited activity, staff will take appropriate action that is consistent with our service agreement.

To promote an understanding of good citizenship and an ethic of service, we will present AmeriCorps members with the Corporation's curricula, A Guide to Effective Citizenship through National Service. Staff will encourage each eligible member to register to vote. Members will develop, through their service experiences, the ethic and skills for effective service and productive, active citizenship. This includes skills in solving community problems and cultivating a lifelong ethic of personal, family and community responsibility. Members will also model citizenship to youth at the sites and lead summer youth through the Service-Learning: A Student's Guide and Journal. This is in effort to use citizen service as a strategy to foster an ethic of civic responsibility, meet critical community needs, and strengthen community ties.

Narratives

We anticipate that full-time VISTAs and AmeriCorps members will receive a minimum of 20 hours of training. Training will include first aid and CPR, pathways, character education, tutoring, communication and conflict resolution, cultural competency, data collection and evaluation, service learning, and case management in order to increase members' abilities to serve low-income, at-risk youth. During member orientation, AmeriCorps members will be given extensive background information on the East St. Louis community in which they will be serving. They will also receive project specific orientation regarding curriculum, the program evaluation plan including outcomes, and how each of the Pathways program components work together to achieve transformative change. Members will spend no more than 20% of their service hours in education and training activities (340 hours for full-time members, 60 hours for minimum-time members).

MEMBER EXPERIENCE - LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: AmeriCorps members will participate in monthly training sessions designed to build leadership and communication skills. Sessions will last one to four hours. Planned sessions include: 1) Child development (including youth and teen); 2) True Colors: A model of personality identification that distills the elaborate concepts of personality into a user friendly practical tool used to foster healthy productive relationships; 3) Emotional Intelligence 101: is designed to introduce participants to the basics of emotional intelligence. Participants will understand how emotions and emotional knowledge affects decision making; 4) Communication Styles: Participants will learn the art of effective communication and the important role communication plays in organizations; 5) School, Work, Life Balance: This workshop focuses on how leaders can avoid over commitment and burnout, by focusing on time management and scheduling; 6) Walking the Walk: Leadership With Integrity: A workshop designed to provide participants with insight into integrity: How to define it and how to demonstrate it through your decisions and actions. Participants will also understand the role of integrity in leadership and explore the connection between values and action; and, 7) The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: A workshop designed for current and future student leaders who are interested in developing their own leadership capacity. Dr. John Maxwell's 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership provides clear insight into timeless leadership principles and provides a process of continual growth. Finally, through a partnership with the YWCA and based on member-feedback, members will learn how to swim (traditionally not learned in African-American communities). Research indicates that more drownings occur in African-American communities. With the addition of the summer component, AmeriCorps members will need to accompany youth on outings including swimming. Lessons will enable them to do so with greater confidence.

Narratives

MEMBER SUPERVISION: AmeriCorps members will be supervised by the Project Management Team which includes the Program Manager, Project Coordinator, and Member Supervisor. The Project Management Team will work with each service site to ensure AmeriCorps members are providing services in accordance with the guidelines of each program and will work with members and other stakeholders to address challenges as they arise. Programmatic supervision will rest with District 189. Activity supervision will be a shared responsibility with District 189 and each service site. Each site location has a site supervisor that will provide site-specific direction and supervision to members. The Project Management Team will meet with all service site locations at least monthly to assure smooth operations and identify any challenges as quickly as possible. This information will be shared during East Side Aligned partner meetings to ensure on-going alignment.

Each AmeriCorps member will meet monthly with the Project Management Team to identify and address challenges with program implementation, difficulties meeting service hour requirements, training issues or other concerns. Any issues identified will be documented along with an action plan that addresses the identified issues. AmeriCorps members with corrective action plans will meet with the project management team bi-weekly until identified issues are fully addressed.

COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: The District has conferred with one of our partners with AmeriCorps experience, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House regarding how to best demonstrate our commitment to AmeriCorps identification. As an existing AmeriCorps grantee, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House has a documented history of supporting the AmeriCorps brand including raising awareness of AmeriCorps within both the Greater East St. Louis community and the State of Illinois. We intend to follow the model established by the Neighborhood House to support the AmeriCorps brand through several means including: 1) Providing AmeriCorps member gear, ensuring members are wearing the proper attire; 2) Prominently displaying the AmeriCorps logo on its buildings, website and in publications; 3) Ensuring members wear AmeriCorps in accordance with established guidelines; 4) Executing agreements with partners requiring them to display a sign indicating "AmeriCorps Helps Here;" 5) Indicating through publications and written materials the role AmeriCorps is playing in the community; and 6) Sharing the role AmeriCorps is playing in the community with leaders. Finally, AmeriCorps members will receive training on public speaking, ensuring that they develop the skills to speak from both a knowledge base and emotional base about

Narratives

the AmeriCorps program.

Organizational Capability

The East St. Louis School District 189 is a local education agency and the only public school district serving the greater East St. Louis community (which includes the City of East St. Louis and the Alorton, Centreville and Washington Park townships). The District currently operates one high school (grades 9-12), an alternative high school, two middle schools (grades 6-8), five elementary schools (grades 1-5), a Kindergarten Center and a Pre-K center.

District 189 began a major reform effort approximately four years ago. In a joint selection by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the East St. Louis School Board, experienced turnaround superintendent Arthur Culver began leading as the new district superintendent in fall 2011. Under Superintendent Culver, District 189 is committed to putting children first and to ensuring that all students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in post-secondary education and the modern workforce. Superintendent Culver communicates high expectations and commitment to excellence. He and his leadership team have spearheaded the fiscal regulation and restructuring of district resources, restructured human resources procedures and guidelines, and implemented sweeping curricular improvements.

The East St Louis School District now has high levels of transparency in fiscal processes, practices and expenditures. All contract approvals and personnel, financial or curriculum decisions must have approval from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). All financial and contract issues are reviewed for approval by an independent Financial Oversight Committee, as part of a signed Consent Decree that exists between ISBE and the East St. Louis Board of Education.

This new, multi-tiered accountability and intervention framework has been established to ensure that the schools of East St. Louis School District have the support they need to attain high student achievement. This is a seismic shift from a time when no one accepted responsibility to now, when the Illinois State Board of Education, the local Board of Education, the District Superintendent, the school principals and the teachers all accept shared accountability for student failure or success.

While these macro reform efforts are establishing the necessary framework and structure for a healthy and productive school system, the next step is to focus on promoting student educational

Narratives

achievement and college and career readiness. Most of the district's recent reforms efforts, professional development, and financial resources have focused on improving basic proficiencies in reading and math across K-12. The district is creating an organizational culture that supports success for all students and where teachers have high expectations for student learning and are held accountable for engaging students in effective learning.

The District currently manages several competitively awarded grants, including School Improvement Grants (to restructure the high school and two middle schools), multiple 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants (after-school programming), Illinois Race to the Top grant, Innovative Approaches to Literacy Grant, GEAR UP grant, Carol M. White Physical Education grant, as well as a number of Illinois competitive grants.

The District will hire three staff including: 1) 1.0 FTE Project Manager (CNCS funded); 2) 1.0 FTE Project Coordinator (grantee funded); and 3) 1.0 FTE Member Supervisor (90% CNCS funded) to manage the project implementation across the three schools and five partner sites. They will provide overall member supervision and ensure compliance and accountability for all activities and among all partners. Project staff will report to the District's Director of Curriculum and Grants, who oversees all federal and state grants and ensures compliance and timely reporting. Each site location also has a site supervisor (Project Coordinator) that will provide site-specific direction and supervision to members. If issues of prohibited activities or non-compliance occur at site locations, action will be taken to correct the issue or members will be reassigned to a compliant site.

East Side Aligned will work with Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville to conduct an evaluation that will use the Logic Model's indicators to compare the progress of those students receiving the proposed project interventions with students of the same age and academic peer group not participating in the program to assess the effectiveness of the proposed interventions. The findings from this evaluation will be made public and widely disseminate through the Institute for Urban Research and/or the Illinois Education Research Council.

Finally, a shared measurement system is being created that will track each student by the type and frequency of intervention they receive in-school and out-of-school. This system, supported by a grant from Boeing, will allow us to run various analyses to determine the impact of individual interventions

Narratives

as well as the collective effectiveness of combined efforts. For example, we will be able to identify which students were in the out-of-school time program but did not receive the direct benefits of the Operation AmeriCorps presence and track their progress separately from those with frequent connections to the AmeriCorps volunteers. Similarly, we will also be able to track the impact of program changes that VISTAs would be assisting with by assessing how students of a similar age, academic and behavioral profile, and frequency of program attendance did on our Logic Model indicators two years ago compared with the current cohort. Analyses through the shared measurement system will enable us to distinguish between which of the Operation AmeriCorps interventions and non-Operation AmeriCorps East Side Aligned interventions are most effective in allowing us to meet the proposed objectives.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

East St. Louis School District 189 is seeking \$448,197 (72% of total program cost) from the Corporation and is providing a match of \$175,347 (28% of total cost) at a cost of \$13,706 per MSY calculated (32.7 MSY total). Our requested cost per MSY is slightly less than the ceiling of \$13,730 due, in large part, to the cash and in-kind contributions of the District and East Side Aligned. Each of the East Side Aligned out-of-school partners is also contributing a Project Coordinator to the project at 20 to 25% FTE which will help to ensure both smooth operations and appropriate data collection at each program site.

Project staffing will include three new positions including a 1.0 FTE Program Manager (100% grant supported), a 1.0 FTE Project Coordinator (100% grantee share), and 1.0 FTE Member Supervisor (90% grant funded). Each of these positions is critical to the supervision of 20 FTE AmeriCorps members and 60 minimum-time members. The Program Manager will have overall responsibility for the implementation of the Operation AmeriCorps program including implementation, supervision, coordination and alignment with East Side Aligned. The Project Coordinator will be primarily responsible for the data collection and working with both the East Side Aligned partners and external evaluator to ensure the project is on-track to achieve the goals, objectives and measurable outcomes. The Member Supervisor will coordinate member service with the East Side Aligned partners ensuring that the AmeriCorps members are on-track to complete their service and meeting both their personal and programmatic expectations.

The 32.7 MSY AmeriCorps members, through Operation AmeriCorps will be supplemented by six

Narratives

VISTA members who will be supervised by a District employee at no cost to the program. We will also use one NCCC team for a period of nine weeks in the summer which will allow us to expand the capacity of our East Side Aligned out-of-school partners to provide summer programming in the community, in a cost-effective and coordinated manner. Additionally, the District will coordinate Operation AmeriCorps work with other existing programs in the community including AmeriCorps, Foster Grandparents and RSVP volunteers to create impact and lasting, meaningful change in the community in a coordinated and cost-effective manner.

The District is presently managing a number of competitively-awarded grant programs including: School Improvement Grants (to restructure the high school and two middle schools), multiple 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants (after-school programming), Illinois Race to the Top grant, Innovative Approaches to Literacy Grant, GEAR UP grant, Carol M. White Physical Education grant, as well as a number of Illinois competitive grants. While not counted toward the AmeriCorps match, District 189's administration will work diligently to ensure that federal and state-funded grant activities align to improve student outcomes and are leveraged to maximize the impact of federal funds. Further, District 189 has commitments from Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House (who operates existing AmeriCorps and RSVP programs) and SWIC (who operates AmeriCorps, Foster Grandparents and RSVP programs) to partner on Operation AmeriCorps.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Not applicable to first-time grantees.

Amendment Justification

Not applicable.

Clarification Summary

Not applicable.

Continuation Changes

Not applicable.