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Executive Summary

The Great Oaks Charter School in Newark proposes to have 20 AmeriCorps members who will provide tutoring support to students at Great Oaks Charter Middle School in Newark, NJ. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for providing about 16,000 additional hours of individualized instruction to at-risk youth in Newark, NJ. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 100 volunteers through the school community who will be engaged in three major community service activities each school year.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$234,740 will be matched by \$193,141 in public funding from the general fund of Great Oaks Charter School.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Theory of Change

To address the academic need of students in Newark who are behind grade level, Great Oaks will pair 20 AmeriCorps members with 120 students for tutoring Math and ELA during the school day. 108 students will complete the program with an average of 260 hours of added time on task and will demonstrate increased academic performance equivalent to greater than one year's worth of instruction, will be prepared to graduate high school on time, and will be ready to succeed in college upon graduation.

Need

The challenges currently facing Newark's students are sobering. Economic challenges are not just common for those growing up in Newark, they are expected. Most children in Newark (70%) live in a low-income household, defined as a family of four living on \$46,100 or less annually. 23% live in extreme poverty, in households making \$11,525 or less for a family of four, as of the 2012 US Census. Many of Newark's students also face the threat of extreme violence. Newark is just 3% of the state population, but according to State Police reports, accounted for 27% of all murders in the state of NJ last year.

At school, Newark's students' academic performance reflects the toll of the challenges of urban living. On the most recent state standardized exam, 35% of Newark's 6th graders scored on grade level in the subject of English Language Arts (ELA) and 53% in Math as compared to 66% in ELA and 79% in Math the state of New Jersey. This gap persists in high school, where 68% of Newark's students graduated on time in 2013, as compared to 88% statewide. However, even if students graduate on time, the number of Newark students meeting the College Board's standard for college readiness on

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the most recent SAT was just 12.8% as compared to 46% in the rest of New Jersey. We propose to address this devastating gap using AmeriCorps members as full-time tutors to increase instructional time for students who need it the most.

Evidence

There is a dearth of evidence supporting the theory that increasing time on task helps students who are falling behind make the academic gains necessary to graduate from high school on time and be ready for college-level material. The two studies presented in this section fall under the category of moderate evidence in that they are modeled on the same Theory of Change as is Great Oaks' program, are executed in similar if not identical ways, and intend to produce similar results.

The Match Corps program was established in 2004 at Match Public Charter High School in Boston, MA. Match Corps members are college graduates recruited to participate in a year of service tutoring in residence at the school. Match Corps members participate in three weeks of intensive, structured training before beginning the school year and receive support from staff throughout their service. Students are given two hours of tutoring daily from Match Corps members, one hour in ELA and one hour in Math, for each school day, Monday through Friday.

A quasi-experimental study conducted on the Match Corps program compares the academic achievement of students assigned to work with Match Corps members (the treatment group) to that of students who had applied to attend Match and work with Match Corps members but instead attended another similar high-performing, extended learning time charter school in Boston. The evaluator determined that no other significant changes were made to the regular program of the school after the founding of the Match Corps and controlled for the impact of classroom time and other factors on student achievement. Using these parameters, the study measured the net gain on state standardized exams made by students in the treatment group during the program's first year compared to students in the control group and compared to students' performance prior to entrance into the Match program. The results demonstrated that students made greater academic gains from one year to the next on the 10th grade ELA state exam than they had before the addition of the Match Corps program. The study also found that the lowest performing students in the treatment group made significant academic gains on the Math portion of the exam. There is a steady decline in the amount of gains made as higher quantiles of student performance on the exam are examined, suggesting that the lower-performing students have the most to benefit from participating in the program, but that students do benefit from program participation overall.

Data from an impact evaluation of the Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) published in March 2014

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supports these findings in that the experimental results and non-experimental analysis found improvement in student achievement to be a result of participation in the tutoring program, especially among lower performing students. In 2011, AmeriCorps' own funding body, the Corporation for National and Community Service, commissioned an impact evaluation of the MRC, an AmeriCorps program that deploys members to public elementary schools in Minnesota to provide individualized literacy tutoring to students in kindergarten through third grade. AmeriCorps members were matched with over 1,500 students who did not meet certain literacy benchmarks as identified by the program, and members tutored these students for twenty minutes per day for five days per week starting at the beginning of the school year in September.

To determine the impact, if any, of the program on student achievement in literacy, the evaluators used an experimental randomized controlled trial (RCT) design over the first sixteen weeks of the program with 1,500 students in 23 schools participating in the trial. Evaluators randomly placed students with identified need either in the treatment group, participating in the MRC program, or in a control group. At the end of the trial, students in the treatment group demonstrated significantly larger gains than students in the control group in grades K, 1, and 3. Results demonstrated a steady increase in the gains made by students in all grades in the program on average week after week. Through an additional non-experimental analysis, the evaluators of the MRC were able to determine that students who started in the program at the beginning of the year were able to make significant gains week over week over those of their peers who started in the program after the initial sixteen week period. In fact, the study found that "program group students who received tutoring early in the school year have more than twice the likelihood of both achieving and remaining above benchmark by the end of the school year compared to students assigned to the control group who received equal amounts of tutoring, but later in the school year." As a result of this information, the evaluators concluded that had the RCT been able to be conducted over the course of a full year, effects of the program "may have been more substantial." This evidence and the evaluators' findings speak to the value of well-designed tutoring programs in that they demonstrate that these programs cause student achievement outcomes to increase at a higher rate than classroom instruction alone and they can also lead to lasting impact on student achievement, addressing both short and long term outcomes. In addition to measuring program impact, evaluators of the Minnesota Reading Corps found no significant difference in student performance across AmeriCorps member characteristics (including gender, race, age, education level, or full/part-time status), suggesting that the program's model can be replicated successfully. The transferability of the program was also attributed to MRC's "high

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quality training regime, research-based scripted interventions, regular objective assessment, ongoing onsite coaching, and multi-layered supervisory structure." To the extent that Great Oaks can faithfully replicate the successes of Match Corps and MRC programs, Great Oaks' AmeriCorps program can demonstrate a similar pattern of impact for the students of Newark that it serves.

Notice Priority & Intervention

The proposed intervention falls within the AmeriCorps Funding Priority for Education and aligns with Education Performance Measures ED1, ED2, and priority outcome ED5. The intervention described below and in the logic model will contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged students and prepare these students for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

The core of the direct service performed by AmeriCorps members at Great Oaks Charter School is small group instruction in the form of tutoring 2- 3 students at a time in small groups. AmeriCorps members provide instruction that focuses on building skills learned in the classroom to at least two different groups of students of two different grade levels during the school hours of 6:50am and 4:30pm. AmeriCorps members provide instruction in ELA, Math, or both, as determined by the student's entrance criteria in the RtI framework. Corps members spend one hour on the subject or subjects of focus for the student, and each student receives either one hour (one subject/one session) or two hours (two sessions, one ELA, one Math) for each school day on Monday through Thursday. AmeriCorps members are assigned a caseload of six students each on average.

For the first time since the program's start, Great Oaks Corps members will also serve outside of the school regularly. In the first year of the grant cycle, Great Oaks program staff will place members at a Newark public school to work with at least 30 students regularly on Saturdays during the school year. The program will be implemented fully in the second year of the grant cycle, with members rotating between serving at Great Oaks on Saturdays and some members serving at the district partner school on Saturdays mornings. Students being served at the Newark district school will participate in a pre- and post-test using iReady and members will tutor these students in math only for two hours on Saturdays. In the third year of the grant cycle, Great Oaks will evaluate the effect of the tutoring program on partner school students served, report on the progress, and integrate this portion of the program into future grant applications, if deemed effective.

As a final component of their service, Great Oaks Corps members are also charged with bringing the spirit of volunteerism to the school community. Corps members are responsible for planning and executing three service projects, including for MLK Day of Service, over the course of the school year

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for students, families, and other school staff. Corps members will recruit at least 100 unique volunteers from the school community across these three events.

Member Training

To conduct effective tutoring sessions, AmeriCorps members require a great deal of training and preparation time. AmeriCorps members at Great Oaks will receive over one hundred hours of training over the course of their Corps year, beginning before their very first student interaction.

At the start of the program, members arrive and move in to dormitory-style housing, and participate in a welcome dinner. Orientation begins the next day on Monday with teambuilding exercises as Corps members meet each other and become familiar with staff and the school structure. Training is led by the Corps Director and Assistant Corps Director, with assistance from other school staff.

Member Orientation proceeds for the duration of the week and the week following and commences from 8:00am to 5:00pm each day. Training and supervision at Great Oaks aligns with the qualifiers of an effective tutoring program identified by the evaluation of the MRC discussed above, including:

- * High-quality training regime -- all Corps members receive two weeks of full-time training prior to the beginning of the school year. Topics covered on the training schedule include core instructional techniques, review of curriculum, time management, school culture, parent communication, professional working environment, using student data to inform instruction, and supporting students with behavioral challenges and IEPs.

- * Research-based, scripted interventions -- all Corps members are trained in appropriate tutorial format, follow a uniform tutorial structure, and use the same materials in tutorials for each grade level (i.e., all 6th grade students use the same worksheets, and so on). Members are expected to submit detailed plans for each tutorial session each week for the following week to the Corps Directors for approval and monitoring.

- * Regular objective assessment -- The Corps Directors or tutorial coaches observe each member in tutorial at least once every other week and evaluate the tutorial session using a rubric provided to Corps members during Orientation. Each Corps member is evaluated formally once per trimester (every 3 months) by either the Corps Director or Assistant Corps Director using a separate rubric.

- * Ongoing on-site coaching -- Corps members attend weekly coaching meetings with tutorial coaches and can reach out to coaches as needed for advice and support. Members meet weekly with coaches and with classroom teachers to review grade-level concepts for upcoming tutorial sessions to guarantee comprehension for uniform instruction.

- * Multi-layered supervisory structure -- Corps members have multiple staff members in place to

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support them before, during, and after their service year. Members report to and interact with their coaches first for day-to-day feedback. Members elevate concerns to or reach out to the Assistant Corps Director or Corps Director for additional support with student issues, tutorial methods, or issues between Corps members. The AmeriCorps Program Manager provides guidance on AmeriCorps enrollment, exit, service, and other benefits and requirements. Great Oaks maintains an open door policy, in that all Corps members have the opportunity and are encouraged to interact with staff as needed, including the school's social worker, teachers, special education providers, and Executive Director.

In addition, Great Oaks believes that fostering team spirit is crucial to member retention and a fulfilling Corps service year. Corps members participate in teambuilding activities daily during Orientation, including personal reflection and visioning activities, and several on- and off-site challenge-based events. Corps members participate in social events and celebrations several times throughout the year as well, including regular basketball games, movie night, potlucks, and mid- and end-of-year celebrations.

At the end of Orientation, members are officially enrolled in the AmeriCorps program and complete all enrollment paperwork. Members are expected to complete all required criminal history background checks prior to Orientation: NJ State and FBI fingerprint checks conducted through the Department of Education by MorphoTrust, and name-based checks in the state of the member's previous residence as determined by the CNCS list of State Repositories. The Program Manager will conduct a search of the member's name on the National Sex Offender Public Website and provide the results for members to review during Orientation. New AmeriCorps members spend four hours over the course of Orientation reviewing AmeriCorps policies and procedures, learning the history of AmeriCorps and national service, and completing all required enrollment documentation.

Once service begins, members participate in mandatory training each Friday. On Friday mornings, the Corps meets with teachers to review curriculum and grade-level concepts and has additional planning time. On Friday afternoons, the Corps participates in professional development with other school staff on topics that include school culture, instructional techniques, behavior management, and more. This past Corps year, the Corps participated in several ELA schoolwide strategy sessions and participated in adjacent professional development trainings on Friday afternoons with Sarah Tantillo, Ed. D., the school's ELA consultant.

In summary, there is a clear link between the need for increased academic achievement among Newark's students and the use of tutoring as a highly effective intervention for students at risk of

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academic failure. AmeriCorps members, as civically-engaged college graduates trained and managed effectively and committed to a year of service, are particularly well suited to serve as full-time tutors within the structure of our integrated tutoring program, and the school is well positioned to support these members through their service year by providing high-quality training and support in line with the tested interventions provided by MRC and Match Corps. The addition of Corps members as an intervention will ultimately lead to our anticipated outcomes of increased reading and math achievement and higher engagement with school.

Intended Outcomes & Outputs

At the end of the grant cycle, Great Oaks intends to cause a measureable, positive increase in student achievement through increased time spent in individualized, small group instruction. As a tutoring program aligned with the focus area of Education, the Great Oaks AmeriCorps program will measure the primary service activity and outputs using National Performance Measures ED1, ED2, and ED5 -- the number of students who enroll in an AmeriCorps tutoring program, the number of those students who complete the program, and the number of students completing the program as measured by ED2 who demonstrate measureable, improved skills in ELA and math at post-test as compared to pre-test using an independent standardized exam, iReady.

For the new grant cycle beginning in 2015, Great Oaks will pursue the following target outputs: ED1 - 120 students in grade 6 through 10 will enroll in the Great Oaks AmeriCorps tutoring program, and ED2 -- at least 108 students (90% of those enrolled at the start) will complete the program. The measure of 120 students entering the program corresponds with the number of students on average meeting the criteria for Tier 2 of the Response to Intervention system (or RtI, also used by the MRC program) at Great Oaks Charter School. Students at Tier 2 have scored below proficiency on state exams or internal diagnostic exams at the start of the year. Tier 2 also includes students who were retained the previous year.

To measure intermediate outcomes, Great Oaks will use Priority Performance Measure ED5, students who complete the program who demonstrate improved academic progress in ELA and Math. 85% of students in the program will demonstrate an increase of at least 150Q on the math section of the exam and/or at least 150 L on the ELA portion from pre-test in August to post-test in June. To measure change in student achievement, Great Oaks will use the iReady diagnostic exam. This exam has several advantages: it is electronic and can be administered easily on a laptop; it measures student progress in Math and ELA during the same testing period, and it measures student progress on a research-backed universal numeric scale used by many states to quantify state standardized

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assessment, Lexile for ELA and Quantile for Math. A numeric scale is preferable to a grade level scale, as students in the program vary in grade level. Based on past performance of our program and performance standards provided by the test maker, average gains in Lexile or Quantile score over the course of one year as demonstrated by norm-referenced score ranges are about 100L or 100Q. We can hypothesize that students will be able to make greater than average gains by participating in the AmeriCorps tutoring program as demonstrated by the results of the Match Corps program and the MRC reviewed in the evidence section above. Therefore, greater than average gains will be defined by the program as 150L or 150Q, about 1.5 times the average student gains made in one year of education as measured by the test.

Member Selection

Great Oaks employs a full-time Director of External Operations who spends about 25% of her time facilitating the selection process for program applicants. Our recruitment strategy includes communications with dozens of universities, intensive on-campus recruitment with a focus on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), online postings on college and job board websites, and peer-to-peer Corps referrals through twice annual "e-blast" sessions.

Great Oaks AmeriCorps receives over 500 applicants annually from across the country and conducts a rigorous interview process for selected candidates. Recruiting staff first screens candidates' resumes and cover letters; then, a subset are selected for phone interviews; finally, a smaller sub-set (about 20%) are invited to visit the school for an in-depth, in-person interview day. While certain criteria for member selection are consistent (college graduates with strong academics, leadership, and a demonstrated commitment to service), we also aim to promote diversity in our Corps. Individuals of diverse races, ethnicities, genders, orientations, and abilities are encouraged to apply to the program, and over the past three program years, Great Oaks has brought in Corps groups that were 52% Black/African-American identifying, 12% Latina/o-identifying, 6% Asian-identifying and 30% white. Great Oaks is an equal opportunity employer for both staff and AmeriCorps volunteers and makes any reasonable accommodation necessary to support a qualified applicant. Great Oaks recruits locally as well as nationally to promote geographic diversity, and 28% of members in the past grant cycle identify their hometown in the local area.

Member Experience

Great Oaks provides AmeriCorps members with communal housing in dormitory-style apartments next to the school building for the duration of the program. Members receive a stipend the amount of \$12,530 distributed in equal amounts every two weeks over the ten months of the program and may

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opt into health insurance through the Corps Network Cigna plan, which exceeds the requirements for health insurance required by the Affordable Care Act and most recent AmeriCorps provisions. Members not only receive the appreciation and support of school staff, but they will also receive all of the benefits of serving as an AmeriCorps member, including strong affiliation with the AmeriCorps national identity and brand. Upon acceptance to the program, AmeriCorps members attend Orientation sessions that cover the history and significance of AmeriCorps in the U.S. and the accomplishments of AmeriCorps members in years past at Great Oaks. AmeriCorps members at Great Oaks proudly wear pins with the AmeriCorps logo on their professional attire each day, and wear AmeriCorps polo shirts provided by the program when attending all-state AmeriCorps events and Corps service events in Newark. Great Oaks has displays the AmeriCorps logo on site in the main office at the school and on the school's home page. Website visitors can click past the home page for more information about the AmeriCorps program at Great Oaks in Newark. Great Oaks AmeriCorps members practice a short "elevator speech" about their service year in AmeriCorps during Orientation and feature "AmeriCorps member" in their email signature in order to promote the identity of the program and work that they do.

In addition to attending high-quality training for their Corps year, Corps members also receive support and training for life beyond their Corps year. During Orientation, Corps members build skills for communicating effectively in the school and professional environment, and during the year, Corps members have opportunities to network with education professionals at the school and around Newark at several education-focused events. Members will attend a resume and interviewing workshop to promote member placement after their Corps year. Half of the 30 Corps alums from 2012-2014 now work in the education field and 11 alums are now employed in Newark. Four former Corps members are now employed at Great Oaks in teaching and supporting administrative roles, and the school expects to recruit from future Corps members, as Corps members are able to gain a unique insight into and demonstrate propensity to work in the school environment during their service year. Great Oaks has set the goal of 50% of Corps members remaining in the public or non-profit sector following their Corps year, and has met this goal over the past two complete Corps years.

Member Supervision

Great Oaks employs a full-time Corps Director for both the middle school location and the high school location and a full-time Assistant Corps Director. The Corps Director spends up to 15 hours each week observing members in their capacity as tutors for 15 - 20 minutes per member and providing personal feedback and adjustments as necessary. Each Corps Director is responsible for assigning members to

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students, monitoring the success of student groups, and mediating issues within student groups. Each Corps Director is responsible for meeting individually with each member to conduct a mid-year evaluation and end-of-term evaluation, and addresses members who are not performing satisfactorily to determine adjustments and disciplinary action if necessary. The Middle School Tutor Corps Director has been with the program for the past three years directly supervising AmeriCorps members, and she was involved from the start in implementing the AmeriCorps program at Great Oaks Charter School. She has over ten years' experience working in high performing urban schools as a teacher and administrator, and has experience facilitating tutoring and service programs in schools. The High School Corps Director has two years' experience working indirectly with Corps members at Great Oaks and formerly served as a program manager at Citizen Schools, a similar high-performing charter school that utilized AmeriCorps volunteers to fulfill its mission to serve a high-poverty population.

In addition to the Corps Directors, the Assistant Corps Director and AmeriCorps Program Manager directly support the program members. The Assistant Corps Director supports the Corps Director by conducting daily member reflection surveys, observing members, and facilitating weekly meetings between teachers and Corps members to promote understanding of the classroom material. The Assistant Corps Director is a Great Oaks AmeriCorps alumnus from the program year 2012-13, has been serving or working with the program for three years, and is familiar with the program from both the member perspective as well as the management perspective.

The AmeriCorps Program Manager works with AmeriCorps members, the Tutor Corps Directors and Assistant Corps Director to assure that AmeriCorps members and the program are fully executing the program as described in the grant and in compliance with all AmeriCorps regulations and guidelines. Great Oaks' Program Manager has been with the program since the first Great Oaks AmeriCorps members began serving at Great Oaks, and has three years' experience working with Corps members and the Commission managing reporting of performance measures and collection of data from Corps members, assuring timely completion and keeping of all enrollment, exit, and timekeeping paperwork, and creating and managing policies and procedures for the program, including all criminal history checks.

The three staff members above have attended Commission-sponsored trainings and events and are well versed in AmeriCorps rules, regulations, history, program operations, reporting, and prohibited activities. The Program Manager will attend all Commission-sponsored trainings ongoing and with the Corps Directors complete a full review of AmeriCorps provisions in planning for each new

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program year.

As supplementary support and program oversight, the school's Executive Director is involved with the execution of the program through Corps members' activities and management of program members and staff. The Executive Director has attended State Commission-sponsored AmeriCorps trainings and has a working understanding of all AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and provisions. The Executive Director is responsible for holding the program to the fidelity of the application and reporting to the Board of Trustees progress made by the program. As a continuing part of managing the program, the Executive Director meets at least weekly with the Corps Director and Program Manager to stay updated on program progress, reviews all required submissions of documentation and reporting to the NJ Commission, and participates in the yearly review of program successes and challenges with the Corps Directors and AmeriCorps Program Manager.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Background

Great Oaks Charter School has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan, implement, and evaluate the proposed AmeriCorps program. Core members of our team have experience working with the highly successful Match Corps program discussed above, and many also now have several years of experience working with our own burgeoning AmeriCorps program. The founding Executive Director of Great Oaks Charter School, Jared Taillefer, was previously a Dean of Students at the Match School, where he worked for more than 8 years after having begun as an AmeriCorps member of the Match Corps. One of Great Oaks' Operations Directors is also an AmeriCorps alumnus of the Match Corps, and has a strong understanding of the breadth of reporting and compliance requirements associated with AmeriCorps. The Middle School Corps Director has been with the Corps since the beginning of the program and has successfully established expectations and structure for Corps members during the program that comply with all AmeriCorps regulations and reflect the activities outlined in the grant proposal. The High School Corps Director will be new to supervising AmeriCorps members, but having worked at Great Oaks with AmeriCorps staff, understands the demanding nature of AmeriCorps requirements and the strictness necessary for good management of members and the program. With support from the experienced program staff, she will be able to fulfill her role as Corps Director for members serving at Great Oaks High School. The AmeriCorps Program Manager at Great Oaks has worked with the program since its inception in 2012, and her primary role has been to ensure the success of the program, develop effective management systems, track, and report on member service. She acts as a liaison between the service

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site and the Commission staff to connect the service of members at Great Oaks with the service of the state of New Jersey and AmeriCorps programs nationwide. Over the past three years, the Program Manager has worked with the Corps Directors, coaches, and school leadership team at Great Oaks to correct compliance issues and ensure effective program management.

Compliance and Accountability

The Great Oaks Charter School has adequate resources, staffing, and systems established at the school to assure the continued compliance and success of the AmeriCorps program. For the past three years, Great Oaks staff has successfully managed a Corps of 20 full-time members with near 100% retention of members and 100% enrollment each year at the start date of September 10. Great Oaks employs eight full-time staff members who spend a significant portion of their time interacting with and supervising Corps members, and with that comes the necessity to understand the complexity and severity of handling compliance issues in AmeriCorps. Three staff members that work directly with and supervise AmeriCorps members are AmeriCorps alums: the Executive Director, the Assistant Corps Director, and the Director of Internal Operations. Three other staff members that work most closely with Corps members, the Program Manager, the Middle School Corps Director, and the Director of External Operations, who assists with recruiting Corps members, have attended Commission-sponsored and on-site AmeriCorps trainings from the Program Manager and have worked with AmeriCorps members for at least two years at Great Oaks.

Each year, the AmeriCorps Program Manager attends State Commission AmeriCorps trainings, relays new information to Great Oaks staff members interacting with and supervising AmeriCorps members, and reviews important procedures including fingerprint and background check timelines and documentation, member file documentation, policies and procedures, keeping of records related to performance measurement, and prohibited activities. As the Corps Directors and AmeriCorps Program Manager meet on-site at least once per week and with the Executive Director at least once per week, and work at a single site with the AmeriCorps members, issues of compliance are handled swiftly.

Past Performance

In the first three years of the grant cycle, Great Oaks has established a sustainable program structure, is providing a fulfilling and meaningful member experience, has managed program issues and executed the grant proposal with fidelity, and is moving toward meeting all programmatic and performance goals.

Great Oaks has brought on qualified staff that is capable of the significant challenge of executing and maintaining a program that follows AmeriCorps regulations, is accountable, and responsive to

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member's needs and funder's requirements, and provides a worthwhile and engaging member experience. As a result of the substantial amount of staff time on the part of the Directors of Operations, Corps Director, Program Manager, and Executive Director, the program has reached 100% enrollment from the first day of service for all three years of existence.

Great Oaks also provides a layered staffing system for Corps members that allows for multiple channels for input and feedback during their service. Corps members interact most closely with their other Corps members and tutorial coaches, but also meet weekly with their coach and formally for training or professional development at least weekly with the Corps Director, Assistant Corps Director, teachers, Program Manager and/or Executive Director. Corps members are encouraged to seek support from and interact with program staff and school staff during their service year and participate in training and activities with all school staff to be both a Corps in its own and an integral part of the school environment. Program staff are working to continuously develop a program that fosters member engagement and growth as well as team spirit, and will work to add more new social activities and training topics for the Corps each year, depending on interests identified in Orientation. The outlets offered by school staff, open door policy, simultaneous member and program feedback, and programming that fosters a united Corps are part of Great Oaks' environment that have undoubtedly contributed to the high member retention rate of 98% over the first three years of the program's existence.

In implementing performance measures, Great Oaks AmeriCorps program has shown successes and growth points in the first few years of the first grant cycle. For performance measure ED1, students enrolled in the AmeriCorps tutoring program, the program moved from not meeting the goal in the first year of the program to meeting the goal through the end of the program year in the second year of the program, and meeting the goal thus far in the third program year. The program performed similarly with respect to ED2, students who complete the AmeriCorps tutoring program. In the first year of the previous grant cycle, the program did not meet the goal, but we met and exceeded the goal in the second program year, enrolling 65 students in the program to completion, higher than the goal of enrolling 60 students, to work with 10 AmeriCorps members.

In measuring outcomes, we have used the first three years of the program to adjust the tools and metrics used to measure ED5, students who demonstrate improved academic achievement in ELA and Math, to arrive at an effective means of measurement and a feasible goal for the program to attain over the course of one academic year. After the program's first year in 2012-13, we had determined that the target set for ED5 was too high, at an increase of 200 L for 85% of students, as

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only 8 students in the program were able to meet the target. The program did not measure a target for student performance in Math in the first year. In 2013-14, we set the target instead to achieve 85% of students demonstrating an increase of 150L on the ELA exam and completing a score of at least 75% on the Math post-test. Though the program has not yet reached the goal metric for improving student academics in Math or ELA, improvements in gains made from one program year to the next have demonstrated that the program is moving toward and capable of meeting the goal metric. In the first program year, just 18% of students met the target outcome for ELA (as measured by the updated target for 2013-14), but in 2013-14, 33% of students in the program met the target. Students in the program did not meet the target outcomes for ELA or Math in the second year; however, students in the program demonstrated an increase in overall performance from one year to the next of 15%, indicating that the goal of 85% of students reaching the new target is obtainable for the program. The program has made an effort to work with staff and the NJ Commission to identify and address compliance issues and put in place corrective actions to prevent issues of recurrence. In the first program year, the Commission identified a number of compliance issues at Great Oaks, including failure to identify criteria for student admission into the program, missing state of previous residence checks for AmeriCorps members, issues with member timekeeping, performance measure data, and breaks during service, and missing staff timesheets. In the month following these findings, Great Oaks program staff instituted a number of policy changes and corrective actions, including: a change in the member schedule to allow for an hour break during the service day; regular hours of 7am -- 5pm; clear expectations around submission of timesheets, including a fine for lateness; completion of all outstanding background checks and an updated background check policy; a clear policy for students to be entered into the program in the following year, using the RtI framework; completion of all outstanding staff timesheets and a policy for staff timesheets ongoing; and the introduction of a new tool to measure performance measures ED1 and ED2 using the example provided on the CNCS website.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

Cost Effectiveness

If funded, the Great Oaks AmeriCorps program will begin its fourth year in existence in September 2014, the first year under this AmeriCorps grant cycle. From our experience managing the Corps in its first grant cycle, the program has already established a strong working budget for the program, with all cost categories directly supporting the members in either benefits -- living, travel, and health care costs -- or training and supervision support --travel to staff and member training events. Because the

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majority of costs are tied to the amount of members in the program, we will need to scale up the amount spent in each of the cost categories already allocated by the program. School staff has in place already the financial planning knowledge needed to manage successfully the budgeting and reporting process for AmeriCorps and are familiar with proper AmeriCorps accounting processes and compliance, having handled the program's accounting for the past three years. Furthermore, all funding received from CNCS goes directly to AmeriCorps member stipends, a mechanism that makes the management of federal funds incredibly straightforward.

Budget Adequacy

As a charter school, Great Oaks' primary source of revenue is a per-pupil payment calculated, according to New Jersey statute, as 90% of the per-pupil expenditures of the district from which students are drawn. At Great Oaks, that translates to a guaranteed revenue of \$16,268 per student for the 2015-16 school year. The guaranteed revenue provided to Great Oaks as a charter school under New Jersey law, combined with our unique blended human capital model, means that the Corps and Great Oaks' required matching contribution will be sustainable over the course of this and future awards, and, in fact, Great Oaks has matched at the highest level of match required, near 50%, for each year of the previous grant award. Great Oaks is able to afford to run an integrated AmeriCorps program with low reliance on external fundraising because of the innovative staffing model. We increase class sizes in the large groups slightly to an average of 33 students per classroom, which generates additional revenue that allows us to successfully support a thriving AmeriCorps program that is integrated into the school's daily operation.

Based on past expenses, Great Oaks has constructed a budget that extends to the amount of full-time members that will serve under this fixed amount grant. Great Oaks intends to provide the same benefits and support to members that it has in the past, including housing for all members in apartments across the street from the school, compensation for all fingerprinting and background checks, health insurance via the Corps Network, and transportation to and from service and AmeriCorps events. No federal funds will be used for the recruitment, training, or supervision of members; this is all accounted for with matching funds.

Members will receive the minimum living allowance of \$12,530, distributed in equal amounts every other week from the beginning of their term in September 2014 to the end of their term at the end of June 2015. Great Oaks is requesting CNCS funding to provide the total amount of member living allowances only, in the amount of \$626,500.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Narratives

Introduction

Program Summary:

The Great Oaks AmeriCorps provides reading and math tutoring to 300 at-risk middle and high school students at Great Oaks Charter School in Newark, NJ in order to close the achievement gap.

Theory of Change

Need: Newark's students demonstrate a significant achievement gap as compared to the rest of the state.

Intervention: Students who have been identified as at-risk or lacking proficiency in Math or ELA will be placed with an AmeriCorps member who provide one hour of ELA instruction, one hour of Math instruction, or both to their assigned students each day during the school week, four days per week, with one or two other students at their same grade level.

Evidence: Quasi-experimental studies published in 2013 and 2014 of the Match Corps program in Boston and the Minnesota Reading Corps, also an AmeriCorps program, demonstrate that school day tutoring programs have a significant effect on academic gains made by students who have an identified achievement gap.

Outcomes: Great Oaks has set the goal of producing gains equivalent to 1.5 years of academic instruction for at least 85% of students as measured by internal standardized exams in one year. The program also strives toward the medium-term outcome of increasing student achievement in Math and ELA on state standardized tests, demonstrating overall proficiency on grade level, and the long-term outcomes of students graduating from high school on time, attending, and graduating from college.

Research Questions

- * Is the model being implemented with integrity by AmeriCorps members and school staff? (Examine and compare the model used by Match schools.)
- * Does the site's infrastructure support services provided by AmeriCorps members?
- * Have students improved reading ability as anticipated?
- * Have students improved math ability as anticipated?
- * If students have improved reading ability, how much change occurred and are there any factors that affect a ceiling on gains made by students?
- * If students have improved math ability, how much change occurred and are there any factors that affect a ceiling on gains made by students?

Study Components

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1. Summary: The evaluation approach will employ an exploratory and descriptive design to collect data for evaluating the research questions outlined above. The evaluation will focus on the process of the program -- whether the program is addressing the need in executing the intervention and is executing the program structure according to the proposed model -- and the outcomes of the program -- whether the program is connected to the outcomes it proposes to produce and if there are factors that influence these outcomes.

2. Data Types: The evaluator will collect data on the integrity of implementing the program model as well as on the relationship between the intervention and outcomes. Data includes the number of hours of tutoring provided per student, the number of tutoring sessions per week over what period of time, the number of sessions a student spent with the same tutor, tutoring methods used and topics covered in tutorials. For the outcomes assessment portion of the evaluation, we will utilize data currently collected for performance measures, including student performance in ELA and Math on internal assessments on pre- and post-tests.

Data sources include:

- * Contact Logs, documenting each tutorial session contact with each student served by an AmeriCorps member including the date, amount of time, location, topic, and other students working in the same group, will be collected from AmeriCorps members and supervising staff
- * Tutorial materials used by AmeriCorps members will be collected from AmeriCorps members
- * Tutorial plans developed by AmeriCorps members and submitted to the Corps Directors will be collected from AmeriCorps members and supervising staff
- * Information on implementation will be collected by interviews with AmeriCorps members, supervising staff, and other school staff as relevant
- * Data on student outcomes on post-tests will be collected from AmeriCorps supervising staff

3. Ethical Considerations:

The evaluator will clear the background check process, and will be on site with members each day during the evaluation. If students are interviewed during the process, the student's parents will first sign a consent form. All service member and student records have protocol in place to protect students' and members' confidentiality and evaluators are required to complete training on protection of student information and confidentiality.

4. Data Collection

- * Methods

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- o Survey Questionnaire
- o Secondary Data Analysis
- * Instruments to be used
- o Summary and analysis tools to be developed by evaluator
- o Existing performance measure data collection tools for participants
- * Person responsible for data collection
- o AmeriCorps Program Manager
- o Evaluator
- o Data & Technology Specialist
- * Timeline
- o Student outcome data will be collected at the beginning of Year Two at the start of the school year in September and the end of the school year in June
- o Student Contact Logs will be collected each month
- o Process data will be collected monthly

5. Evaluation Design

Great Oaks' evaluation design will include an exploratory and descriptive design centering on using data and effects produced by the program to answer the evaluation questions outlined above.

* Exploratory Design: The evaluator will conduct a review of the need for tutoring services in the school, which students need the service, and if students needing help are participating in the program. A literature review of the programs outlined in the evidence section above will be conducted as well as results of similar scientifically-based tutoring programs.

* Descriptive Design: Evaluation methods will include frequent observations of service, interviews with Corps members and relevant staff, outcome surveys, and best practice surveys. The evaluator will also use materials generated by the program (student test data, service member Contact Logs, and comparison of outcomes to goals) to assess the execution and effectiveness of the program and respond to research questions outlined above.

6. Data Collection Procedures

Data will be stored by paper and pencil hard copies on site at Great Oaks. The evaluator will also use a computer provided by Great Oaks to keep records and analysis in Excel and other relevant programs.

The evaluator will be the person responsible for the analysis and reporting of all data.

7. Reporting Results

The evaluator will compile a final report outlining all processes and outcome findings for each

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research question. The evaluator may present recommendations for improvement for some findings, and staff and stakeholders will also contribute to the recommendation report in the debriefing meeting. The complete report will be made available to the state Commission/Corporation as part of the next grant application. We will share key facts and findings with the Board of Trustees, community partners, members, parents, teachers, and school staff.

Program staff will prepare a post-evaluation action plan based on recommendations made by the evaluator and as discussed in the debriefing meeting with staff and Board members.

Evaluator Qualifications

In the first year of the evaluation process, Great Oaks will seek an evaluator who meets the following qualifications: a) is familiar with current theories in education and ideally works in the education realm, either academically or in practice; b) has experience conducting a review of a program of similar size or conducting research of a similar subject and scale; c) is familiar with protocols and procedures for protecting student and member information; d) does not work with or supervise members in their current capacity.

Timeline of Project

Year One: Great Oaks leadership staff and AmeriCorps supervisory staff (Corps Directors, Assistant Corps Director, AmeriCorps Program Manager, and Executive Director) identify and meet with evaluator to determine data collection periods, methods, and tools or resources needed for the evaluation.

Year Two: Evaluator collects data from student assessments at the beginning and end of the year and from AmeriCorps members periodically. Evaluator observes sessions, conducts interviews with members and staff as necessary. At year end, the evaluator prepares the report, and Great Oaks will hold an evaluation debriefing meeting to review methodology, implementation, findings, and recommendations with the evaluator and stakeholder representatives.

Year Three: Great Oaks will prepare a post-evaluation action plan based on recommendations made by the evaluator, participants of the evaluation debriefing meeting, and other stakeholders. The program will prepare to implement changes, report, and discuss the evaluation in the re-application process for the following three-year grant cycle.

Program Budget: 50 hours of evaluator work per year @ \$50/hr = \$7500.00

Amendment Justification

N/A

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Clarification Summary

A. Programmatic Clarification Items

Please describe how members will be supervised by individuals with expertise in tutoring, consistent with requirements of 45 CFR 2522.940.

Each Tutor Corps Member at Great Oaks receives supervision via a multi-tiered supervision system. Core members of our team have several years of experience working with our own burgeoning AmeriCorps program.

Jared Taillefer is the Executive Director of the Great Oaks Charter School, a role comparable to that of a school principal. As Executive Director, Mr. Taillefer provides supplementary support and program oversight of the Great Oaks Tutor Corps Program. Mr. Taillefer is involved with the execution of the program through Corps member activities and management of program staff. Having served as the Executive Director of the Great Oaks Charter School for three years, Mr. Taillefer has a full scope of understanding of all AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and provisions.

Mr. Taillefer received his Bachelor of Arts from Boston University in 2005. He previously served as an AmeriCorps member, providing tutoring to the students at MATCH Charter Public High School in Boston. MATCH Charter Schools are nearly identical to Great Oaks in that they have identified a need in their community stemming from students not performing academically on grade level and have employed a school-day tutoring program to address this need.

After completing his year of service at MATCH, Mr. Taillefer worked as a math teacher for two years and then played several leadership positions at MATCH: Director of Development at MATCH Charter Public High School and Dean of Students at MATCH Charter Public High School and MATCH Charter Public Middle School. Through these roles he has gained expertise in utilizing the Tutor Corps Model to help students make gains in their ELA and math skills.

Great Oaks Charter School also employs a full-time Tutor Corps Director, Chiffon Rushford, who will spend 100% of her time directly managing the AmeriCorps program. She began her career at Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families and worked there for fourteen years as the program

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evolved to Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). She held various positions at HCZ that included a data manager, a high school coordinator, a program coordinator, an assistant director and a dean of students at Promise Academy. While working at HCZ, Mrs. Rushford obtained a Bachelor's degree from Hunter College, a Master's degree in Social Work from Fordham University and a Master's degree in School Building Leadership from Mercy College. Mrs. Rushford assumed the Tutor Corps Director position with Great Oaks Charter School in 2011.

Great Oaks Charter School also employs an Assistant Tutor Corps Director who spends 100% of his time supporting the Tutor Corps Program. Yemi Olorunnipa spent a year as an AmeriCorps member from 2012 to 2013, a year as a coach to Great Oaks's Tutor Corps members and now serves as the Assistant Tutor Corps Director. His direct experience as an AmeriCorps member has proven invaluable in this role. Mr. Olorunnipa graduated from Princeton University in 2012.

Clarify that the program meets the requirements of a tutoring program, which requires specialized member qualification and training as identified in 45 CFR 2522.910-940.

The Great Oaks Charter School Tutor Corps program requires that all of our AmeriCorps members have a college degree, which surpasses the requirement of § 2522.910. This is clearly specified in all of our recruitment materials and in our member contract.

Our program design and training is research based. The Great Oaks Tutor Corps Program mirrors the recommendations of the Minnesota Reading Corps, whose evaluation CNCS just released this past week. As stated in our application:

Training and supervision at Great Oaks aligns with the qualifiers of an effective tutoring program identified by the evaluation of the MRC discussed above, including:

- High-quality training regimen -- all Corps members receive two weeks of full-time training prior to the beginning of the school year. Topics covered on the training schedule include core instructional techniques, review of curriculum, time management, school culture, parent communication, professional working environment, using student data to inform instruction, and supporting students with behavioral challenges and IEPs.

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¿ Research-based, scripted interventions -- all Corps members are trained in appropriate tutorial format, follow a uniform tutorial structure, and use the same materials in tutorials for each grade level (i.e., all 6th grade students use the same worksheets, and so on). Each tutorial session has the following format: a do now, has a focus on reviewing concepts rather than finishing homework, and ends with an exit ticket quiz to ensure that the student has mastered the material of the tutorial session. Members are expected to submit detailed plans for each tutorial session each week for the following week to the Corps Directors for approval and monitoring.

¿ Regular objective assessment -- The Corps Directors or tutorial coaches observe each member in tutorial at least once every other week and evaluate the tutorial session using a rubric provided to Corps members during Orientation. Each Corps member is evaluated formally once per trimester (every 3 months) by either the Corps Director or Assistant Corps Director using a separate rubric.

¿ Ongoing on-site coaching -- Corps members attend weekly coaching meetings with tutorial coaches and can reach out to coaches as needed for advice and support. Members meet weekly with coaches and with classroom teachers to review grade-level concepts for upcoming tutorial sessions to guarantee comprehension for uniform instruction.

¿ Multi-layered supervisory structure -- Corps members have multiple staff members in place to support them before, during, and after their service year. Members report to and interact with their coaches first for day-to-day feedback. Members elevate concerns to or reach out to the Assistant Corps Director or Corps Director for additional support with student issues, tutorial methods, or issues between Corps members. The AmeriCorps Program Manager provides guidance on AmeriCorps enrollment, exit, service, and other benefits and requirements. Great Oaks maintains an open door policy, in that all Corps members have the opportunity and are encouraged to interact with staff as needed, including the school's social worker, teachers, special education providers, and Executive Director.

In addition to the pre-service training that Corps members receive before beginning to tutor students, they receive extensive and regular coaching and throughout the year provided by the experienced professionals who are described above.

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B. Budget Clarification

We will edit this section when our application is sent back to us on eGrants.

C. Performance Measure Clarification

1. Please clarify if students must improve in both reading and math in order to be counted or if improvement in one of these subject areas is sufficient to be counted as improved.

In the Performance Measures section of our application, students who demonstrate improvement in ELA and Math have been counted separately. We will report on ED5 \checkmark students who improve in English Language Arts. We will also report on ED5 \checkmark students who improve in math.

2. In ED2 output Completion is identified as a measure. Please indicate how much time is required in order to complete this activity.

The Great Oaks Tutor Corps Program defines completion as students having attended tutorial sessions regularly (Monday \checkmark Thursday, unless a student has been suspended or is absent) for at least one month as documented by regularly submitted Contact Logs. Each student will attend a daily hour-long tutorial session in English Language Arts and a daily hour-long session in Math. Completion is also defined as a student attending the program through the end of the year in June. Students will complete at least 200 hours with the program as documented by Contact Logs.

D. Strategic Engagement Slots

The Great Oaks Charter School is firmly committed to equal opportunities. We will not discriminate in our selection process for all qualified persons on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, age, disability (including AIDS/HIV status), marital status, military status, citizenship status, predisposing genetic characteristics, or any other characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law. Corps Member selection decisions at The Great Oaks Charter School will be made in a non-discriminatory manner and are based on qualifications, abilities, and merit. This policy governs all aspects of service at this school including recruitment,

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hiring, assignments, training, compensation, employee benefits and discipline.

E. MSY with no Program Funds Attached

Great Oaks Charter School will not be requesting additional MSY with no program funds attached.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics