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Executive Summary

The BHK Child Development Board proposes to have 20 AmeriCorps members who will provide evidenced based and informed education services to prekindergarten through 3rd grade rural students at risk of reading failure in 9 schools and 5 pre-kindergarten sites. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for having assisted 450 participating children to demonstrate improved academic performance in literacy (ED5) and 50 participating pre-kindergarten children to demonstrate improved school readiness skills in terms of literacy skills (ED24). In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 400 volunteers who will be engaged in delivery of the evidence based program Start Making A Reader Today and supporting reading related school activities and classroom projects.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of education. The CNCS investment of \$234,000 will be matched with cash resources of \$140,000 and in-kind public funding of \$271,285.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

B. Program Design: 1. Problem/Need: The problem AmeriCorps members will address is the need for economically disadvantaged students at risk of reading failure in pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade to receive evidenced based education services to improve reading achievement. Children in low income families are at exceptional risk of poor outcomes ("Children at Risk: Consequences for School Readiness and Beyond" Rand Corporation Labor and Population Research Brief, 2006). These children also experience far more learning loss during the summer in comparison to their more affluent peers. According to a Rand Corporation study: "The loss of knowledge and educational skills during the summer months is cumulative over the course of a student's career and further widens the achievement gap between low- and upper-income students". According to a study by Alexander et al (2007), more than half of the achievement gap between higher and lower income students can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. The area served by the Superior Ameri Corp program (SAC) has a higher percentage of low income students as compared to Michigan and the nation, evidenced by three statistics: 1) median family income: \$60,895.00 (Michigan); \$60,700 (US) vs. \$46,021.00 (area average); 2) free and reduced lunch rate: 48.1% (MI); 45% (US) vs. 53.3% (area); and unemployment, June 2014: 7.5% (MI); 6.1% (US) vs. 10.5% (area).

Reading on grade level by 4th grade is a high priority as more than "85% of school curriculum requires the ability to read" (retrieved from: www.readingfoundation.org). Further, according to the

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Anne E. Casey Foundation report, "Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters" failure to read proficiently is linked to higher rates of school dropout, which suppresses individual earning potential as well as the nation's competitiveness and general productivity. Local data from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessments conducted with entering kindergarteners in local schools shows 58% of children failed to reach the benchmark for phonemic awareness, placing them at risk for reading failure. DIBELS are a set of assessments that measure the acquisition of early literacy skills. Poor literacy outcomes continue; according to Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) data reported by Kid's Count, students' proficient in reading at 3rd grade is 66.5% for the state with only 58% of area students achieving reading proficiency at 3rd grade as measured by the MEAP.

This 2500 square-mile, three-county region of the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan is rural, rugged, and very remote. Residents are scattered at a rate of 16 per square mile as compared to the state average of 174 (2010 census). Families live in very rural, geographically large school districts with few if any nearby support services such as health clinics or Department of Human Services' offices. Only three hospitals serve the 2500 square mile region, creating great travel time for some residents. The largest district by geography, L'Anse Area Schools, encompasses 731 square miles with an enrollment of only 687 students and is the 3rd largest by geography out of 533 Michigan districts. It is a 40 to 45 minute drive to access the Department of Human Services. The Baraga Area Schools are of similar circumstance: 207 square miles with an enrollment of 467 students. Research by the Southwest Educational Research Laboratory (SEDL) finds this combination of large geography and small community size place many rural areas at a distinct disadvantage relative to their urban and suburban counterparts due to significantly higher education costs and frequently limited social and health services (<http://www.sedl.org/rural/atrisk/policy.html>). These disadvantages are clearly evident in the rural western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Furthermore, the region must look to itself to solve problems as significant distances separate this area from urban resources: Lansing, 494 miles; Detroit 550 miles; and Grand Rapids 500 miles. This, too, is addressed by SEDL: these "districts are often better able (because of small enrollment) to look at students individually to assess the adequacy of their program to meet individual educational needs. However, they may need to be more creative in meeting these needs because of limited financial, human, and other resources"

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model: Superior AmeriCorps (SAC) is the creative solution founded by BHK and area schools to positively impact our educationally disadvantaged pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade students at risk of reading failure. The total number of members in SAC will be 20. Four will

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be placed at 5 different BHK pre-kindergarten centers and BHK pre-kindergarten classrooms housed in elementary schools. Sixteen members will be placed at 9 elementary schools, working with k-3 students.

Description of Proposed Interventions: Based on referral criteria, pre-kindergarteners up through second graders will participate in the Start Making a Reader Today (SMART) program. Our referral criteria are: low income, teacher concerns about literacy/reading, and/or less than benchmark scores on the Child Observation Record (COR) (pre-kindergarten) or DIBELS assessments. These criteria align with SMART program eligibility recommendations. Students receive thirty minute sessions two times per week for a minimum of 8 months. Four components are the focus of each session and incorporate their theory of change: reading to students, reading with students, re-reading, and asking comprehension questions. Students also receive two books a month to take home. The SMART model will be implemented with the same dosage (30 minute session 2x per week) and four components evaluated in the study cited in Section 3: Evidence Base. Delivering the program are both SAC members and the parents/community members recruited to serve as volunteers. SAC members will reach about 225 students with this program, with volunteers serving another 225 students.

Two programs, Read Naturally and Phonics for Reading, will be implemented by SAC members with kindergarten through third grade students at risk of reading failure; we anticipate service to 150 students annually. Referral criteria are: low income, teacher concerns about literacy/reading, and/or less than benchmark scores on the DIBELS assessment. Whether a student receives Read Naturally or Phonics for Reading is determined by classroom teachers based on assessed student literacy needs. Key activities of the Read Naturally theory of change are: reading aloud with a fluent model, repeated reading of passages at individual student reading levels, literal and inferential comprehension questions and continuous progress self-monitoring using charts and graphs. All participating sites have the Read Naturally software and the necessary internet access and technology for program implementation and training. In our model, Read Naturally will be delivered for 30 minutes a day, four days a week for a minimum of 32 weeks, which aligns with the dosage in the studies cited in Section 3 Evidence Base.

Eight components comprise the research-based Phonics for Reading program theory of change: phonemic awareness, letter sound associations, fluency, passage reading, comprehension, spelling, decoding of short and long vowels and high frequency words. Program assessments determine whether a student begins at level 1, 2, or 3. It takes 20 to 50 minutes to complete a lesson; longer lessons can be split over two days. In our model, students will receive this intervention for 20 minutes

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a day, 4 days a week for a minimum of 32 weeks, resulting in the completion of at least two lessons per week.

Services for students continue in the summer, assisting students to maintain school year gains over the summer months. BHK operates Great Explorations (GE), an out of school time program at all participating schools. While any student may attend GE, the target population is low achieving students with more than 65% of regular attendees eligible for free and reduced lunch. At least nine members will serve 1550 hours during the school year and 150 hours in the morning academic enrichment portion of the summer GE program where they will continue providing SMART, Phonics for Reading and Read Naturally as described previously.

About 10% of member hours will be spent in capacity building activities. Members will recruit, support and manage volunteers for the SMART program. A standard volunteer manual will be read and a short training module completed before working with students. This orientation will be replicated throughout the year for new volunteers. This volunteer training plan, designed by SMART authors, has been shown effective via the success SMART has achieved in Oregon. Use of volunteers builds capacity and sustainability for the SMART program at each site. SAC members may also serve on advisory boards and/or market services by creating brochures.

How the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes: Our theory of change is that implementation of these three interventions as designed will lead to the intended outcomes in improved reading achievement as listed on the logic model. This theory is supported by the evidence base presented in Section 3, which provides preliminary and moderate evidence that student literacy skills and reading achievement increased as a result of these interventions. Research proves that shared book reading and access to books in the home during a child's first formative years are strong predictors of early literacy skills. This research is the fundamental concept underlying the SMART program and the four components previously described. The Read Naturally theory of change combines three research-proven strategies--teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring--in effective intervention programs that improve reading proficiency. Fluency is an important focus of the Read Naturally theory of change because studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between oral reading fluency and overall reading achievement. Read Naturally develops and supports the five essential components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel--phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonics for Reading is rooted in the same theory--that a focus on the five essential components leads to improved literacy skills and increased reading achievement.

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As illustrated by the logic model, the delivery of the proposed interventions will lead to attainment of short, mid, and long term outcomes. Members are trained in all interventions and work with a "case-load" of students receiving the different interventions. On-going monitoring activities assures each student is making appropriate progress in the acquisition of literacy skills necessary to read on grade level by 4th grade. Data collection tools for monitoring progress include specially developed logs, such as the SAC intervention log, the DIBELS assessment (K-3), the COR (pre-kindergarten) and the progress monitoring tools embedded in the Phonics for Reading and Read Naturally programs.

Specially developed logs designed by the local evaluator, such as the intervention log, are an anecdotal record that captures the date, type of intervention, activities undertaken, and the resulting outcome(s).

DIBELS monitoring occurs three times per year, measuring student progress towards literacy benchmarks. The COR is an early childhood observational assessment monitoring student progress in eight domains critical to school success, including language, literacy, and communication. In addition to these data collection tools, school grades, and standardized test scores from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) will document attainment of long term outcomes.

The community impact and effectiveness of AmeriCorps members' service is significant. Members will advance the literacy and reading skills of children at risk of reading failure by delivering the evidence based and evidence informed interventions described. SAC members' service also builds the schools' capacity to deliver SMART in future years through the recruiting and training of volunteers to deliver SMART. The interventions chosen can be effectively delivered by SAC members: they are designed for para-professionals, provide progress monitoring tools, and include detailed scope and sequence for instruction. As full day members serving the entire school year and summer session, SAC members are conscientious caring individuals who provide students with a one-to-one long term relationship during which they share the joy of reading and assist them with learning to read. Many members will have grown up in the area and, thus, understand the culture, values, climate, and challenges of the students, schools, and communities they serve, further contributing to their effectiveness. SAC serves a large extremely rural region in the state of Michigan, bringing an important effective resource to an otherwise resource limited region.

3. Evidence Base: There is both preliminary and moderate evidence to support the attainment of stated outcomes through the implementation of the interventions described in Section 2. The SMART model was evaluated in one randomized controlled trial of 127 first-graders at risk of reading failure from six elementary schools in a diverse range of communities, who were randomly assigned to an intervention group that received SMART or a control group that did not. The intervention group

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students participated in SMART for six months per year in both first and second grade. At the 2-year follow-up, the SMART group outperformed the control group on all reading outcomes including word identification, word comprehension, fluency, and passage comprehension. In reviewing data from this study, The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) June 2007 Intervention Report from the Institute of Education Sciences found SMART "to have potentially positive effects on alphabets, fluency, and comprehension." Additionally, data collected via teacher surveys on over 5,000 students found that the number of students showing grade appropriate reading performance improved from 18% at the beginning of the year to nearly 50% at year's end in 2013-14. This data provides both preliminary and moderate evidence, as defined in the Notice of Funding. There are nine control group studies for Read Naturally, all showing statistically significant effects for comprehension, fluency, rate, and accuracy. Three studies are discussed here. The 2003-2004 Heistad study showed an effect size for reading comprehension of .38 on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). One hundred and fifty seven students from four Minneapolis elementary schools were included in the study. The Christ and Davie study was done in 2008-2009 with 109 low performing 3rd grade students who received a dosage of 30 minutes a day for five days a week for ten weeks. The study showed effect sizes of .66 for fluency with the Grey Oral Reading Test--Fourth Edition: Fluency (GORT 4: Fluency) and .66 for accuracy with the GORT 4: Accuracy. In the 2010-2011 Tucker and Jones study, students received the program 30 minutes a day, four days a week for ten weeks. The study documented effect sizes of .51 for rate with GORT 4: Rate, .87 for accuracy with GORT 4: Accuracy, and .75 for GORT 4: Fluency. Randomized control groups were utilized; this is moderate evidence providing causal conclusions of program effectiveness.

The design of Phonics for Reading reflects the findings of major national documents on reading, including Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow et al., 1998), and the National Reading Panel Report (2000), which summarized reading research on numerous topics. Program design was also informed by the research on beginning reading (Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn, 2008) and the research on explicit instruction (Archer and Hughes, 2011). The Florida Center for Reading Research found no weaknesses in the program and multiple program strengths. Several of the identified program strengths confirm that, with training, SAC members can successfully deliver the lessons and monitor student progress. These strengths include: explicit instruction with a detailed scope and sequence for every lesson; materials that are easy to navigate; and free web based training. "Extensive Reading Interventions in Grades K-3: From Research to Practice" (Scammacca et al; 2007) presents findings from 12 studies that focused on students with reading challenges who received

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a dosage of more than 100 sessions of supplementary reading interventions; all studies used an evidence based treatment/comparison group design. Effective interventions identified in the studies included: a) use of trained paraprofessionals; b) phonological awareness, decoding, and vocabulary activities; c) guided and independent reading of progressively more difficult stories; and, d) engaging students in answering comprehension questions. These components are congruent with elements of Phonics for Reading and Read Naturally: Our plan for using Phonics for Reading and Read Naturally exceeds the dosage of 100 sessions by 28 sessions. This evidence of alignment between our total intervention dosage and quasi experimental research studies provides evidence supporting our theory of change and, thus, attainment of outcomes stated on the logic model.

4. Notice Priority: This program meets all of the requirements detailed in the Comprehensive Guidelines and Glossary. The purpose of AmeriCorps is achieved as SAC members deliver interventions and recruit volunteers that will result in both improved reading achievement and the strengthening of the community. The priority focus area of Education is met by providing multiple evidence based interventions directed at improving student's literacy skills and reading achievement. National Performance Measures ED5 and ED24 will be achieved by participating students. Our focus on improved academic performance in reading meets a 2015 funding priority as stated in the Notice of Funding. Services are sustained and capacity built through the recruitment of 20 parents and community volunteers per member (400 total) who will deliver the SMART program at each site as well as engage in other reading-related volunteer activities. These volunteer plans directly align with the AmeriCorps focus on volunteer generation and capacity building as described in the comprehensive guidelines.

5. Member Training: SAC members are well prepared for their service activities through comprehensive training, daily supervision, monitoring, and on-going support. Members begin service the third week in August with 5 days of pre-service training covering: a) What is AmeriCorps and Superior AmeriCorps?; b) allowable and prohibited activities; c) introductory training and guided practice in SMART, Read Naturally, and Phonics for Reading; c) CPR and First Aid; d) responsibilities and accountability of sites and members; and, e) progress monitoring using DIBELS and COR. Power point presentations, interactive group activities and guest presenters instruct and reinforce concepts on these topics. Content experts from BHK, the Copper Country Intermediate School District (CCISD), and consultants serve as trainers; for example, CCISD school psychologists conduct the DIBELS training.

A three hour training is devoted to allowable and prohibited activities using the document "Prohibited

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Activities and Safety Protocol". The training involves item by item study using lecture, discussion, role-plays, and examples. Members follow a "Code of Conduct"; the code and the prohibited activities/safety protocol document are part of a detailed manual members receive for reference. In addition to trainings, members learn how to complete the bi-weekly impact report which details time and activities for the reporting period. They also receive a BHK email address with a requirement to check it at least once daily. Following the five days of training, members report to their sites for several days of site orientation, inclusive of a facilities tour, site staff meetings, and additional trainings individual schools may have scheduled. Finally, members participate in the BHK all day staff in service which orientates members about the BHK organization and educates agency staff about SAC and AmeriCorps.

Member trainings continue for a minimum of one 8 hour day per month, totaling nearly 100 hours annually. Standard agenda items include: a) opportunities for reflection of successes and concerns; b) review of allowable and prohibited activities; c) interventions review; and d) use of OnCorps reporting. A specific training topic is also covered each month; topics include but are not limited to: professionalism, life after AmeriCorps, citizenship, effective communication, team building, and networking with other AmeriCorps programs and the community. Email is used daily to communicate goals, answer questions, and trouble-shoot concerns. Members are required to contact BHK SAC staff immediately if questions arise as to whether or not an activity is allowable under AmeriCorps regulations. Generated volunteers are trained regarding prohibited activities by SAC members during training for the SMART program. SAC members, school personnel and site supervisors monitor volunteer's adherence via observation and discussion. Member adherence is monitored by review of reports, discussions during meetings and quarterly unannounced site visits.

6. Member Supervision: As sites agree to host a member(s), BHK SAC staff review the role of supervisors with site administration; responsibilities include: day to day supervision, oversight of members' progress, site orientation, assisting in training and development, maintaining regular contact, and approving time sheets and leave requests. A four paged consortium agreement describes these responsibilities in detail. Site administration than appoints a site supervisor responsible for fulfilling stated responsibilities. The majority of site supervisor positions are filled by teachers or support staff of the host site in which the SAC member serves; the site consortium agreement requires a designee be named should the site supervisor be unavailable for any reason. Should problems arise, the BHK SAC director is able to effect a change, per the site agreement. Site supervisors receive four hours of initial training. Each site supervisor sets a schedule for meeting with their assigned

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member(s) based on individual member and site needs, with weekly meetings a common occurrence. Day to day member questions are handled by classroom teachers familiar with the interventions, site supervisors, and the BHK SAC director via phone and email contact. The BHK SAC director maintains contact with site supervisors via email, phone, and both announced and unannounced site visits. Monthly meetings occur between building principals and the SAC director to discuss AmeriCorps activities and progress. The BHK SAC director communicates daily with members via email, leads the monthly member meeting, and travels to sites as needed to address concerns; all sites are within thirty minutes travel of the BHK SAC director's office.

7. Member Experience: On a daily basis, SAC members help underachieving students make progress in their reading achievement, a meaningful outcome occurring as a result of the member's assistance. As a result of training and service, AmeriCorps members develop valuable skills in how to work with students as well as collect, manage, and organize data and other documentation that monitors student progress. The monthly training topics and member experiences also contribute to skill development in multiple areas including leadership, conflict resolution, working with diverse populations, and stress management. Members become well versed in the operation of a public school and well-prepared to seek employment in a support staff role or enroll in college with teacher education as a goal. Members keep a portfolio of their training accomplishments and community activities which will support them in future job interviews. Since 2004-2005, BHK is able to identify 127 former AmeriCorp members (out of 310 total) who achieved gainful employment following service; this includes 47 members who were hired by schools or other local employers, 45 hired by BHK, and 35 who were hired outside the area. Time for reflection, sharing, and celebration of accomplishments takes place during each monthly meeting, helping to build a spirit of fellowship and pride within the SAC group. Espirit de Corps is further nurtured by encouraging members to participate in MCSC sponsored events, Make a Difference Day, and an Upper Peninsula (UP) Signature project organized with the other UP AmeriCorps program located in Marquette, Michigan. They are also encouraged to connect with the AmeriCorps alum network. Continual reflection on member experiences and the sharing of outcome data reinforce the meaningful impact member service is having on students and the community. This, in turn, supports members continuing to engage in public service following their AmeriCorps service. Information about other community service opportunities is regularly disseminated during monthly meetings.

Recruitment activities conducted by BHK SAC staff and local district staff include the distribution of flyers and brochures throughout the community, newspaper and radio public service announcements,

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and several recruitment events individuals can attend to learn more about the AmeriCorps program with current AmeriCorps members present to share their experiences. Targeted locations include local schools, community service agencies, grocery stores, retail businesses and the two local universities; these efforts reach a diverse population inclusive of low income parents enrolled in Head Start, college and high school students approaching graduation, low income individuals receiving community services and residents of the communities served by the program.

Our yearly successful recruitment plan includes 2 to 4 members from the disabled sector of our three county service area (Houghton, Baraga, and Keweenaw). This is approximately 1-2% of our targeted slots. Superior AmeriCorps has a long history of outreach to those with physical and cognitive disabilities. Our efforts to recruit the disabled include a strong working relationship with the following community partners: The Copper Country Intermediate School District, the area Special Education Director, area School Psychologists, Michigan Rehabilitation Services from Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw counties, and the Horizons Alternative School.

In working with the above organizations, AmeriCorps staff provides extensive information, on-site visits, and one on one dialogue with potential applicants as recommended by these community partners. In all cases, AmeriCorps staff has personal and effective relationships with the organizational staff at the Copper Country Intermediate School District, Michigan Rehabilitation Services and the CLK School District.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: Understanding of AmeriCorps is woven throughout the week of pre-service training and re-enforced each month as a standard meeting agenda item. Members receive hooded sweatshirts, vests (K-3) and/or smocks (pre-kindergarten) with the AmeriCorps logo, an AmeriCorps pin, and a lanyard name tag with the logo. Members are required to wear an item with the AmeriCorps logo prominently displayed during all hours of service. Host sites are required to reinforce this policy as well as post the AmeriCorps logo on site. All materials, handouts, and other items developed by members are inclusive of the AmeriCorps logo. Community awareness occurs as members recruit SMART volunteers, interact with site personnel, and participate in Make a Difference Day and other community activities. Members are prepared to competently speak about their experience during these community interactions through discussion and sharing of "stories from the field" during monthly meetings.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity:

a. Organizational Background and Staffing: BHK currently manages a budget totaling \$6, 617,000;

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funds come from multiple large state, federal, and foundation grants including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Early Head Start/Head Start, and the WK Kellogg Foundation. The agency was an AmeriCorps grantee from 1997 through 2012. This application has a new focus based on community needs and state priorities. Experience gained and lessons learned from more than thirty years of successful agency operations and fifteen years of AmeriCorps programming are brought together to create the SAC staffing and management plan.

The BHK SAC staff consists of director Jamie McCrum (.8 FTE) and administrative assistant Chrissy Karry (.5 FTE), for a total combined FTE of 1.3; this combination has been approved by state consultants as meeting program director requirements of at least 1.0 FTE. Ms. McCrum's background includes a BA in Business Administration and work as a substitute teacher; prior to assuming the AmeriCorps director position, she served as supervisor of BHK's Dollar Bay Great Exploration's site. She is currently pursuing a degree in special education. Her responsibilities include member recruitment, development, and training; quality assurance; site partnerships and oversight; advocacy for volunteerism and community service; and program evaluation. She interacts with the directors of Finance, Great Explorations, Technology, Head Start/Early Head Start, and other BHK departments during bi-weekly leadership team meetings with the BHK executive director to connect with agency resources in finance, technology, training, and human resources. Administrative assistant Chrissy Karry has 15 years AmeriCorps experience and handles functions including but not limited to: review and submission of bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports, routine communications with sites, members and the community, and other activities in support of members' service, like arrangements for member child care and insurance.

In addition to engaging other departments at BHK, SAC actively interacts with CCISD staff as well as administration from the local school districts. The superintendent council and building principal council were active in choosing the interventions and program model via discussion at their monthly roundtable meetings. Member selection is finalized at the site level, with sites conducting interviews and making offers to candidates. Kiwanis, Rotary, and other community civic organizations are kept up to date on SAC activities and outcomes via the BHK administrators who serve on these groups.

2. Compliance and Accountability: Compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations is assured and monitored through the use of three documents (the highly detailed site consortium agreement, prohibited activities and safety protocol, and member code of conduct), on-going training during member meetings, site supervisor contacts, principal meetings, and continuous monitoring via paperwork review and site visits. If instances of site or member non-compliance are identified, the

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three documents clearly define the consequences: a four step process which begins with a verbal warning. Step two is a written warning; step three may be suspension of the member for one or more days. The final step is loss or dismissal of the member. Ms. McCrum and Ms. Karry monitor site's adherence to their oversight responsibilities through the member's required bi-weekly impact report, quarterly unannounced site visits, site supervisor contacts, principal meetings, and regular written and verbal communication. During quarterly unannounced visits, the three documents are used as observation checklists to assure compliance by member and site. During monthly meetings, standard agenda items like prohibited activities and progress on performance measures remind everyone of the regulations surrounding and the outcomes intended by the grant. Any instance of risk or non-compliance identified are addressed immediately, beginning with step one.

All BHK programs engage in on-going monitoring. If a finding of non-compliance occurs within an agency program, including SAC, a corrective action plan is immediately developed. If staff is involved, the agency's progressive discipline policy is followed. The corrective action plan includes a timeline for correction as well as reporting of the finding to the funding agency.

3. Past Performance for Current and Former Grantees: From 1997 to 2012, BHK operated an AmeriCorps program focused on K-12 tutoring and mentoring. For the last full year of operation, the enrollment rate was 100% with a retention rate of 93%; two members left for full time employment. Our corrective action plan for retention includes continued recognition of the value of member service, quality supervision, and continuous improvement activities in support of member's success. The program was also very successful during its' last year of program operation, exceeding all set performance measures, as described in the submitted evaluation report. The report shows that of the 737 students tutored in public K-12 schools, 560 students (76%) gained at least a half-letter grade in teacher-assessed performance, compared with 25% in the control group. During the last year of operation, late reporting was an issue, caused in large part by an upheaval in executive staffing within the agency. The agency is now two years beyond this challenge and the current BHK executive director has set high expectations for timely, accurate reporting for all programs, including SAC. The management team of director, finance director and administrative assistant will be held responsible for timely accurate reporting and other grant requirements by the executive director and BHK Board.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

4. Cost Effectiveness: The total amount needed to operate the program is \$645,285. Total costs were attained by completion of line item calculations to determine cash expenditures for the director, administrative assistant, member living allowance, health care, criminal record checks, books for the

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SMART program, AmeriCorps smocks and vests, program supplies, travel costs, pre-service training week, program staff benefits and external evaluation. Next, resources needed by members for successful service were considered: supervision, professional support, training, office space, and office supplies; these are in-kind contributions from sites and BHK in the amount of \$271,285. The high quality day to day supervision and support needed by members for successful service is addressed in the dedication of 20 site supervisors and office space, as an in-kind non CNCS commitment from the sites and BHK in the amount of \$219,981 and \$51,304, respectively. This is a portion of the total in-kind of \$271,285.

Cost effective approach and benefits: We anticipate members and recruited volunteers to serve about 500 students making the CNCS cost per student a cost effective \$468 for evidence based services that are inclusive of a summer program. Another type of program that provided similar services many years ago in local districts was Title 1 aides, a resource that has not been available for many years. A survey of local school districts suggest the cost of such an aide in "union" districts would be around \$43,500.00 for support to a classroom of around 25 students (\$1740 per student). Our SAC program cost of \$468 per student is a very cost efficient proposal when compared to this figure.

How the Applicant will raise additional resources: The primary source of non-CNCS cash resources is the per member rate all host sites pay annually; the rate is projected at \$7,000 for a total cash amount of \$140,000.

Cost per MSY: The cost per MSY is \$11,700; below the maximum allowed cost of \$13,430 and equal to the cost per member approved in our current grant. The current budgets of local schools cannot absorb a rate greater than \$7,000.00 per member nor can BHK provide any additional resources. For this reason, we are requesting the same amount per MSY for which we are currently funded; this amount is \$1730 below the maximum allowed MSY cost.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Interventions

There are three interventions; SMART (Start Making a Reader Today), Phonics for Reading, and Naturally Reading. These interventions have undergone rigorous testing utilizing true or quasi-experimental designs and are evidence-based or evidence-informed.

SMART (Start Making a Reader Today)

This intervention consists of training tutors in four areas as described previously in the program design. The emphasis is on showing children how reading can be pleasurable and encourage movement from dependence to independence in reading.

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Phonics for Reading

Three sequential levels are used that emphasize pronunciation of phonetically regular, one-syllable, and multi-syllable words. In the first level, words are broken down to basic phonetic components such as short vowels, double consonants, digraphs, and consonant blends. The second level adds long vowels, vowel combinations, common endings, and r-controlled vowels. Level three uses letter and vowel combinations, prefixes and suffixes, and the pronunciations of vowel combinations. Word recognition is a goal throughout the intervention and is a measurable outcome.

Naturally Reading

This intervention is a fluency-focused approach that consists of modeling, repeated reading, and monitoring student progress. A protocol of increased mastery is based on specific reading building activities including selecting a story, emphasis on key words in a passage, prediction about how the story will unfold based on such components as key words and pictures, timing how long it takes to read a selected section, reading along with adults as a basis for modeling, practicing reading under structured conditions, and exercises to increase reading comprehension.

Theory of Change and Outcomes

The logic model identified the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the Superior AmeriCorps (SAC) program. It does not provide an explanation of why and how outcomes are achieved. In order to reach this level of analysis, it is necessary to identify the underlying assumptions that guide the initial phase of the model and to continually test these assumptions against the unfolding process and short, medium, and long-term outcomes.

There are commonalities in the selection of the three interventions. This includes an emphasis on tasks that volunteers can master and deliver, use of modeling to promote imitation, positive feedback and encouragement, increased student independence, and reducing word and sentence structure to smaller component parts.

There are several underlying assumptions in the structuring of the SAC program that warrant examination. First is the belief that using multiple interventions to achieve SAC program goals will outperform outcomes by a single intervention. The second assumption is that using these interventions will produce a greater rate of change than the normative rate of change in these schools and in state, regional, and national results. Third is that applying different components of multiple interventions will produce more desirable effects. The fourth assumption is that positive results correlate with increased frequency of tutoring. Each of these assumptions is testable and will inform the project team at each measurement period about their validity.

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The measurable student achievement outcomes tested in this theory of change model are shown on the logic model as short term, medium term and long term outcomes.

Evaluation Design, Research Questions, Methodology, and Measurement of Outcomes

Referrals for tutoring are based on three factors considered individually or combined. These are scores below benchmarks or competency standards on the COR or Dibels, teacher concerns about literacy or reading, and low socio-economic status. It is not feasible to conduct a true experimental design as there will not be random assignment to experimental and control groups and subjects will be served on a first come basis. Furthermore, since there is already evidence that the three interventions have achieved some degree of efficacy, denial of services to students in need is not justified.

The proposed design has two components. First is a time series design where progress of each student is recorded before, during, and after the introduction of one or several interventions (independent variables). The frequency and duration of these interventions will be recorded. Since some interventions are further reduced to component parts, data will be entered on which component part is introduced including frequency and duration. Once these data are analyzed, the evaluator will see if there are enough students with equivalent intervention patterns to form comparative groups.

Although this type of a comparative group design has weak internal validity, it generates valuable exploratory-level data that contributes to the theory of change. A valuable outcome is the number of hypotheses that will be generated for testing under more controlled conditions.

Outcomes (dependent variables) include changes in scores on the DIBELS, MEAP, academic performance in literacy, and gains in school readiness. The first two dependent variables use quantitative scores. The last two will need to be operationally defined and tied to a specific instrument that measures changes in academic performance or school readiness.

Another type of testing is the introduction of control variables to determine if any outcomes are spurious. These include a host of demographic variables that have some theoretical or empirical evidence of an association to the dependent variables.

Data will be compared to the data generated in each school by students who are not receiving SAC. Schools have agreed to provide this control group data. The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant differences between the two groups on score changes. If the null hypothesis is accepted, it would be an excellent finding since the students referred to SAC come from the at-risk school population. Results will also be compared to available findings from other local, regional, or national sites.

This evaluation will be guided by several research questions.

Narratives

1. What are the effects of individual or combined interventions on the dependent variables identified for SAC?
2. How does administration of these interventions in temporal order, frequency, duration, or component parts affect changes in dependent variables?
3. What are the effects on the relationship between independent and dependent variables when control variables are introduced?
4. How do quasi-equivalent groups of various combinations of independent variables compare on changes to the dependent variables?
5. How do the results of 1-4 above compare to changes in the dependent variable of other students in the same schools?
6. How do the results 1-4 above compare to other studies of these independent variables?

Types and Sources of Data, Data Collection, Sample, and Data Analysis

The types of data and sample have been previously addressed in this evaluation plan. Protocols for data collection are a key element of this plan. This includes developing systems for recording valid and reliable data by tutors and creating mechanisms for entering these data into the study database. Quality control measures will be created to assure that data is collected and entered correctly, completely, and timely.

Data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The dependent variables generative quantitative data that is amenable to analysis using standardized univariate and multivariate statistical tests. Data will be entered into a relational database. Frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, and measures of dispersion will be derived for data at each testing period. A paired samples t-test will determine the significance of scores changes between the pre, intermediate, and posttest. ANOVA will be utilized for comparing quasi-equivalent groups.

Data will be analyzed and reported in ways that protect the identity of subjects. All data collection, analysis, and reporting will conform to the ethical standards set forth by the National Association of Social Workers and American Evaluation Association codes of ethics.

Data Management System

BHK has databases available for data entry including CHILD PLUS and EXCEL spreadsheets. Data are also extracted from the forms completed and submitted to the OnCorps reporting system.

Interim and Final Use of Evaluation Results

Evaluation results serve as inputs in achieving continuous improvement. It is imperative that interim results be obtained and analyzed quickly to facilitate adjustments in program delivery. Final

Narratives

evaluation results are key elements in guiding program refinement for the next program year.

BHK will adhere to all reporting requirements of AmeriCorps. Requests for dissemination of results to other AmeriCorps programs will be honored to contribute to the building of individual and collective theories of change. BHK will also be pleased to share program results with other stakeholders that have an interest in furthering the theory of change and program development of the target population served by SAC.

About the Evaluator

The evaluator is Dr. Robert Wertkin, President of Research and Training Specialists - Michigan (LLC), Director of the Western Michigan University School of Interdisciplinary Health Programs, and a full tenured professor at WMU's School of Social Work and Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation program. He conducted BHK evaluations for two Even Start program, Early Head Start, 21st Century Schools, 0-3 program, Preventing Abuse and Neglect, and consulted on the Center of Excellence and Father to Dads programs. He is the external evaluator for the current Superior AmeriCorp (SAC) program.

Budget

Six thousand dollars has been allocated for this evaluation.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics