

Narratives

Executive Summary

Reading & Math Inc. proposes to replicate the successful Minnesota Reading Corps program through deploying 50 trained and supported AmeriCorps members to provide Reading Corps' evidence-based literacy interventions to struggling readers in Milwaukee, WI ; and Flint, Muskegon and Lansing, MI. At the end of the first program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for advancing 1,000 children, age 3 to grade 3, on the path toward becoming proficient readers by 3rd grade. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 50 volunteers who will provide support for literacy events that enrich the Reading Corps experience for struggling readers and their families. Reading Corps will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$567,450 will be matched with \$645,326, including \$250,000 in public funding, and \$395,326 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. PROBLEM / NEED. From preschool through 3rd grade, children learn to read. Beyond 3rd grade, students read to learn. This time-sensitive window presents either an opportunity to build a foundation for a lifetime of education and economic success or puts a child at risk for lifelong negative consequences associated with illiteracy. Evidence indicates that if children are not proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade, they begin to become "in-school drop outs" as early as 4th grade (Paige, 2005). Children who can read proficiently by 3rd grade are four times more likely to graduate high school than those who do not (Hernandez, 2011). Add poverty to the mix, and a student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time than his or her proficient, more affluent peer. Three-quarters (75%) of children who are not reading at grade level by 3rd grade will never close the achievement gap (Francis et al., 1996; Miles & Stipek, 2006). Reading failure also is linked to a host of negative social outcomes, including teen pregnancy, substance abuse, delinquency and criminal activity (Talla, 2003). An essential skill in a 21st Century information society (www.P21.org), literacy fosters a citizenry that is engaged economically and civically in their communities.

An astounding 85% of Milwaukee students fail to achieve 3rd grade reading proficiency (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, or DPI, 2014). Just 83% of Milwaukee's children are kindergarten-ready, compared to 89% statewide (Milwaukee Succeeds, 2013). The city has the worst achievement gap in the nation: average proficiency scores on state exams were 33 points lower for Black students than White students (NAEP, 2013). Students eligible for free and reduced price lunch scored 32 points lower.

Milwaukee has among the highest poverty rates for US cities, with 28% of all residents living in

Narratives

poverty, more than double the nationwide rate. Some 82.4% of Milwaukee's students qualify for free and reduced price lunch. In a state where 72.4% of the student enrollment is White, Milwaukee schools serve a concentration of students of color: 24.1% Hispanic, 55.8% Black, 5.7% Asian and 13.6% White. About 9% are English Learners (ELs) (DPI, 2014).

In Miami-Dade County Public Schools, nearly half (47%) of all 3rd graders and 73% of those who attend low-performing schools cannot read at grade level (United Way of Miami-Dade, 2014). Despite having a statewide universal preschool program, on average 33% of Miami-Dade students enter kindergarten as "not ready" (Florida Department of Education, or FLDOE, School Public Accountability Report, 2012-2013). Outcomes are significantly worse for low-income students and students of color: In Miami-Dade County, 78% of White, Non-Hispanic students who were tested passed the 3rd grade reading test, but just 38% of the Black, Non-Hispanic students did. Only 21% of ELs achieved proficiency. Just under half (49%) of students eligible for free and reduced lunch achieved proficiency vs. 79% overall.

Miami-Dade schools have among the nation's largest concentrations of Hispanic students: 67.4% of Miami-Dade students are Hispanic, and another 23.1% are black, 1.1% are Asian and 7.7% are White (FLDOE, 2014). The 4th largest school district in the nation, Miami-Dade students represent more than 100 countries. About 22% of Miami-Dade's students are considered ELs. The district has a high concentration of low-income students as well: 76% of Miami-Dade's student body is eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

In Michigan, only 8-20% of African American and Hispanic/Latino children read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade, as compared to 70% of all 3rd graders statewide (Michigan's Children; Open Michigan, 2013). Michigan teachers report that, on average, only two of three students are ready for kindergarten. Statewide, 45,000 3rd graders are failing to achieve grade level reading proficiency each year. Of those 3rd grade students not reading at grade level, 45% come from low-income households.

Lansing and Muskegon have among the highest poverty and illiteracy rates for cities in the nation. In Lansing, 28.7% of residents live below federal poverty levels and 20% of adults are functionally illiterate. In Muskegon, 19.9% are poor and 21% are functionally illiterate (Census, 2012, Capital Area Literacy Coalition).

With research demonstrating that 95% of all children have the capacity to learn to read proficiently, and 11 years of impressive results from Reading Corps implementation in Minnesota and in 7 other states backing this finding, we are confident that reducing the likelihood of reading failure is achievable for the targeted students through an expansion of Reading Corps in the targeted

Narratives

communities. Research supports that Reading Corps has the ability to accelerate student reading levels and reading proficiency by 3rd grade (Markovitz, et. al., 2014; Heistad, 2013). Further, these positive effects are multiplied for low-income students, students of color, and English Learners (Markovitz, et. al., in press). As such, Reading Corps presents remarkable potential to narrow the achievement gap for at-risk populations, and to support nationwide initiatives such as My Brother's Keeper that help students of color to succeed in reading at grade level by 3rd grade.

Here is how Reading Corps achieves improved educational outcomes for targeted children:

1. Reading Corps partners with school districts to place trained and supported AmeriCorps members in Pre-K and K-3 settings where each member provides intensive, research-based tutoring and literacy to approximately 17-25 children annually. The model is built upon the innovative concept of bringing Master literacy coach expertise directly to the site (school) level to ensure fidelity of the model and build site and staff capacity to use data effectively to maximize the benefits of the literacy interventions to the targeted children.
2. AmeriCorps members and their on-site supervisors or "Internal Coaches" participate in the Reading Corps Institute where they receive intensive training on collecting benchmark data, monitoring student progress, and implementing research-based literacy interventions. Internal Coaches are school employees who are trained and supported in implementing and integrating the Reading Corps model and members at their school.
3. AmeriCorps members and Internal Coaches receive monthly on-site coaching from literacy experts (Master Coaches) to tailor interventions for each child based on the data collected on key literacy measures.
4. In Pre-K settings, AmeriCorps members ensure literacy rich environments in the classrooms and provide tailored instruction to small groups of children.
5. Children who learn literacy skills at a rate to "catch-up" with their peers graduate from Reading Corps and are monitored to ensure that they stay on track to become successful readers by 3rd grade.

Across the targeted communities in all three states, children are on an unacceptable trajectory of reading failure. Reading and Math, Inc. proposes to change the trajectory of 3,000 of these children, taking them from a path toward reading failure to one of reading proficiency over the next three years. To accomplish this, Reading and Math, Inc. seeks to recruit, train, and supervise 50 members in three states, as follows: 20 members in Wisconsin to serve 400 K-3 students; 20 members in Miami to serve 400 Pre-K children; and 10 members in Michigan to serve 120 Pre-K children and 80 K-3

Narratives

children. Based on past Reading Corps results, we are confident in our ability to advance 520 preschoolers toward kindergarten readiness, and 480 K-3 students to improved educational outcomes each program year.

2. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL. Because of the high number of children on a path to reading failure, direct impact on individual student performance is the chief priority of Reading Corps. However, Reading Corps pursues this goal within a broader mission that includes advancing systems change to ensure its sites and their educators become equipped to apply literacy science and research as hands-on support to struggling readers. Designed to be an integrated part of each communities' strategy to eradicate illiteracy, Reading Corps mobilizes AmeriCorps members to implement evidence-based literacy interventions in classrooms to leverage a systemic shift in the way the education system delivers support for young children identified as at-risk for literacy failure. AmeriCorps members produce significant and unique contributions by ensuring that teachers have the data they need to direct instruction as well as the supportive human touch for supplemental tutoring. Members have been proven to be a highly effective means to solve the literacy proficiency gap in the eight states nationwide that implement Reading Corps, because members are able provide something that local schools cannot -- individualized, research-based, high-quality tutoring focused on improving specific literacy skills for at-risk students.

Reading Corps' theory of change is that providing schools with the supplemental staffing and support to deliver a proven model (i.e., benchmark assessments, evidence-based interventions, data-driven decision making, and ongoing coaching for those delivering the interventions) will result in increased rates of reading proficiency for children ages 3 to grade 3. This theory is based on the work of Vaughn et. al. (2007), who found that effective reading programs have three essential elements: (a) valid and reliable measures for assessing student growth, (b) evidenced-based instructional interventions, (c) and a framework for educators to utilize the data for improved instructional decision-making.

Reading Corps also builds on research that speaks to the importance of coaching. Joyce & Showers (2002) found that only 5% of professionals implement new practices they learn in a training session, but 95% adopt the practice when they work post-training with a coach who continues to provide instruction and feedback. All of these elements are present in the Reading Corps model, as follows:

ASSESSMENTS: Reading Corps identifies the children most likely to benefit from among those that educators and policy analysts describe as falling between the cracks: They do not meet state standards for reading proficiency, but their scores are not low enough to make them eligible for mandatory assistance through Title I or special education. Members screen students each fall, winter, and spring

Narratives

using validated grade and content-specific assessments that predict college readiness. Coaches use these scores to identify students for Reading Corps placement and set clear literacy targets for each participating student. Members monitor students regularly during the intervention and use this data to modify instruction and ensure progress toward targets.

INTERVENTIONS: The Pre-K intervention protocols were developed based on the recommendations in the *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Reading Panel (2010)* that outlined 11 variables that consistently predicted later literacy achievements for preschool students: alphabet knowledge; phonological awareness; rapid automatic naming of letters; and of objects or colors; writing; phonological memory; concepts about print; print knowledge; reading readiness; oral language; and visual processing. AmeriCorps members work alongside teachers to create a literacy-rich environment using practices assessed in the *Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)* tool. Members will work 1:1 and in small groups to provide 17-20 students ages 3-5 with scripted, supplemental interventions.

In K-3, interventions align with National Reading Panel (2000) recommendations that target phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. Interventions are research-based, field-tested and supported in numerous, rigorous evaluations. AmeriCorps members will provide 20-minute, one-on-one daily tutoring sessions to 15-18 students using scripted interventions. Members collect weekly progress data on their caseload and use this to modify student instruction to accelerate growth in literacy skills.

DATA: Reading Corps maintains a secure, web-based reporting system that tracks the number of students tutored, tutoring dosage, and student assessment data. With this rich data, Reading Corps members provide a valuable service to their school's data review teams, which are comprised of teachers who meet in grade-level teams to discuss the academic progress of and appropriate interventions for struggling students. Independent evaluation findings (Wilder Research, 2011) indicate that Reading Corps is significantly advancing the capacity of school sites to apply data-informed, research-based literacy strategies to accelerate children's reading proficiency.

COACHING: Reading Corps' multi-layered delivery of coaching through Internal Coaches and Master Coaches at each school site reflects state-of-the-art practices for implementation science (Fixsen et. al., 2005), and has been recognized as a key strategy that allows Reading Corps to be consistently and effectively implemented across multiple sites (Markovitz et al., 2014). Internal Coaches, school employees who supervise and coach members day-to-day at each site, and Master Coaches, literacy experts who support effective implementation across sites, use data collected by

Narratives

members to monitor student progress, modify interventions to advance students toward literacy goals, and plan coaching and professional development activities.

VOLUNTEERS: AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 50 volunteers who will provide support for literacy events that enrich the Reading Corps experience for struggling readers and their families.

3. **EVIDENCE BASE.** Studies performed in 2013 and 2014 provide Strong Evidence for the effectiveness of the Minnesota Reading Corps' K-3 model and for its overall model, and Moderate Evidence for its Preschool model. Both studies will be emailed to CNCS.

K-3 EFFECTIVENESS. A randomized controlled trial performed by NORC at the University of Chicago found that Minnesota Reading Corps participants significantly outperformed students who were not in the program (Markovitz, et. al., 2014). There was a large effect on younger students' literacy skills and a meaningful impact on older students' literacy skills. Importantly, these results were observed regardless of the students' eligibility for free and reduced price lunch (an indicator of poverty), ethnicity, lower reading scores at initial assessment, school setting (e.g., urban, suburban, or rural) or status as an English Learner.

PROCESS ASSESSMENT. A study conducted in 2012-2013 (Hafford, et al., 2013) provided evidence that the Minnesota Reading Corps can be broadly replicated despite variations in the characteristics of the tutors, students, or schools. The study cited "the comprehensive training, multi-layered supervisory structure and ongoing coaching" as particular strengths that allow both the Pre-K and K-3 programs to be implemented with fidelity by tutors from a broad range of backgrounds, including "individuals with no specific academic or professional requisites."

PRESCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS. A Quasi-Experimental Design evaluation of the Pre-K program performed by NORC at the University of Chicago (2013-2014) found that Minnesota Reading Corps Pre-K participants were more likely to meet or exceed spring targets for kindergarten readiness, and more likely to improve scores on measures including vocabulary and rhyming, and letter name recognition than a comparison group (Markovitz, et. al, in press). Minnesota Reading Corps was found to improve student performance overall, and the performance of at-risk children even more (i.e., students enrolled in Head Start, dual language learners, and students of color).

4. **NOTICE PRIORITY.** Reading Corps operates within the notice priority area of Education in that it provides support and resources that contribute to improved student academic performance, as more fully detailed in the evidence base section. Reading Corps programming contributes to My Brother's Keeper's goals of helping students of color enter school ready to learn and succeed in reading at grade

Narratives

level by 3rd grade.

5. MEMBER TRAINING. Markovitz, et.al. (2013) found that Minnesota Reading Corps' training is high-quality and effective in ensuring that even members with no background in education or literacy can successfully implement interventions that improve student educational outcomes. Members engage in a comprehensive, four-day, pre-service Reading Corps Institute in their respective state. Institute is led by a national, certified Reading Corps trainer and local program staff who instruct members in: (1) AmeriCorps 101, (2) program requirements and expectations (including prohibited activities), (3) service sites and their assigned communities, (4) their role in addressing the literacy proficiency gap (5) the fundamentals of evidence-based reading instruction, (6) student confidentiality processes, and (7) the operational details of the tutoring model they will perform (i.e., assessments, interventions, and progress monitoring). Members meet their Internal Coach, and complete a comprehensive site orientation checklist, which includes daily schedules, key staff contacts, and expectations for staff meetings. The checklist contains open-ended questions that promote a dialogue between the member and the Internal Coach to foster deeper understanding of the community and the issues members will help to address.

At Institute, members learn to be aware of and adhere to AmeriCorps rules including rules on prohibited activities. They will receive their AmeriCorps manual, which clearly defines prohibited activities, monitoring mechanisms, and consequences. Internal Coaches will be trained in AmeriCorps regulations at Institute, including prohibited activities, to enable them to provide effective daily supervision.

During the year, all members receive bi-monthly on-site coaching and on-going training to provide effective service. K-3 members will attend three additional trainings on topics including: Student data management system, data-based decision making, student behavior management techniques, Great Leaps intervention, and cultural competency. Pre-K members will attend seven additional days of training on topics including: student assessment, student data management system, winter data review protocols, SEEDS of Emergent Literacy, and cultural competency. Training will be facilitated by national, certified Reading Corps trainers and will be held in each respective state.

6. MEMBER SUPERVISION. Reading Corps provides multiple layers of guidance and support to ensure members have a successful service year. In an independent evaluation, the University of Chicago concluded that this multi-layered supervisory structure is critical to the success of the Minnesota Reading Corps program (Markovitz, et. al., 2013). Each member is assigned an Internal Coach (on-site supervisor), a Master Coach, and a Program Manager. Internal Coaches provide

Narratives

members with day-to-day instruction, observation, and feedback. As school employees trained in the Reading Corps model, Internal Coaches help members work effectively within their school. The external or Master Coach has extensive literacy expertise and training in the Reading Corps model and supports both the AmeriCorps members and the Internal Coach. The Master Coach ensures that assessments are conducted accurately, data is used effectively to select the intervention with the best chance of advancing students toward proficiency, and interventions are implemented with fidelity. The Program Manager will manage program administration and compliance, logistics, and grant management to enable coaches to focus on program delivery. They will help members to integrate their service experience with career plans. Program managers will also train Internal Coaches on AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities and expectations at the annual Reading Corps Institute.

7. MEMBER EXPERIENCE. Reading Corps ensures a powerful service experience through:

*Training & Literacy Coaching: Members receive intensive training in evidence-based literacy interventions and coaching by literacy experts (Master Coaches) and day-to-day support from trained practitioners (Internal Coach). In the words of a member: "As a Reading Corps member, I am able to gain excellent training and professional experience, and I have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children living in my community."

*Career Building: Members with teaching ambitions (about 61% of members surveyed in Minnesota at the start of the 2013-2014 year, and 66% of those surveyed again at the end) gain invaluable classroom experience and build skills in instructional practice. Members assess and target students' specific skill deficits, tailor tutoring to effectively help each student become proficient in reading, and provide ongoing student assessment data for teachers and literacy coaches. Participation in Reading Corps also builds essential career skills such as professional communication, goal-setting, and cultural competency for all members, while adding the impressive AmeriCorps name to their resumes.

*Structured Opportunities for Reflection: Members will participate in a quarterly Member Meet-up facilitated by the Program Manager. This will be an opportunity to connect to their fellow members, build esprit de corps, and reflect on their individual and collective service.

Members also have opportunities to reflect on their experience beyond formal groups. For example, during orientation they are asked to share about their decision to dedicate a year of their life to service and what this means to them. Throughout the year, program staff engage members in discussions about their service experiences and help make connections for career exploration. Members also complete a self-evaluation prior to their Internal Coach evaluation at mid-year and yearend, which

Narratives

allows them to assess their own growth throughout the year. At the completion of the year, they're asked to express their thoughts about their service year through writing.

The Reading Corps is well-connected to other AmeriCorps and national service programs through partnerships with each state's Service Commission. Each Service Commission will include Reading Corps members in its national days of service, including the MLK Jr. Day of Service, thus reinforcing member identity and an esprit de corps with AmeriCorps State and National members and VISTA volunteers statewide. VISTA volunteers will provide outreach and recruitment support for the launch of the Reading Corps in Milwaukee.

*Growth in Citizenship and Community Volunteerism: By committing to a year of service, members build a deeper connection and dedication to their community. Reading Corps allows members to participate in civic engagement activities and community service projects throughout the year, and further their impact beyond their tutoring service. In Minnesota Reading Corps' most recent annual member survey, 95% said they are committed to the ongoing promotion of childhood literacy, and 85% said they are committed to community service.

Recruiting a diverse corps of members that reflects the students served is important to Reading Corps' success. To achieve this, Reading Corps partners with schools and community organizations, promote the program in the media, and leverage the experiences of members themselves.

Colleges and Universities: Reading Corps conducts outreach at colleges with high percentages of minority students and provides materials and content for distribution; holds open houses and career / service fairs; and makes presentations to targeted audiences including veterans, career changers, faith-based communities, and persons with disabilities.

Media: Reading Corps promotes stories to, and advertise with, media sources that target diverse audiences in the communities we serve.

Staff and Member Outreach: Reading Corps trains program 'ambassadors' to build grass roots promotional efforts. Members are compelling when they speak from experience about their passion for making a measurable impact on students' literacy skills. Reading Corps will train members in outreach skills every year.

These efforts are supported by a centralized web-based system that tracks and communicates with prospective members from the moment they express interest, through the application and screening process, until they are selected for a site.

8. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. Reading and Math, Inc. will ensure that members understand and share their AmeriCorps identity. At the Reading Corps Institute, members

Narratives

will receive service gear emblazoned with the AmeriCorps and Reading Corps logos (which they are required to wear to their assignment each day), AmeriCorps 101 training, and practice talking to the public about their AmeriCorps year of service. The annual pledge of service is a defining moment for most members, and an emotional reminder of the commitment they have made. Reading Corps will provide materials to identify the program site with AmeriCorps including signage, recruitment brochures, and press releases branded with the AmeriCorps logo. During site monitoring visits program staff verify that each service location is prominently displaying the AmeriCorps sign.

Organizational Capability

1. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING. Reading & Math, Inc. is a new entity launched in 2014 by ServeMinnesota, Minnesota's State Commission on National and Community Service. The rationale was to create one intermediary organization with the infrastructure necessary to rapidly incubate, replicate, and scale the proven Minnesota Reading Corps program in states that request the program but do not have an existing organizational structure that can efficiently and effectively manage the replication. By providing a turnkey operation, Minnesota Reading Corps can broadly scale and extend its effective interventions to more states, and more children.

ServeMinnesota, at the request of the Target Corporation, began providing training and technical assistance to other states in 2011 and since that time has successfully supported replication of the Reading Corps in Washington D.C.; Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, North Dakota, California, Virginia and Massachusetts. These requests for replication have come from Governors in Colorado and Iowa; from State Service Commissions in Michigan and Massachusetts; from educational consortiums in North Dakota and California; and from a literacy organization in D.C. This proposal supports requests from community leaders in Milwaukee, WI; Miami, FL; and Muskegon and Lansing, MI; where their preference is to have the replication supported by a national office; thus removing the burden for them to implement new organizational structures while, at the same time, providing leadership to the launch of the Reading Corps in their communities.

Supporting Reading and Math, Inc. in implementing the Reading Corps program in the targeted communities will be ServeMinnesota's Innovation Center. This center centralizes research and development, training, evaluation and continuous improvement, and will provide technical assistance throughout the grant period. Headed by educational researcher David Parker, Ph.D., the Innovation Center accelerates the research-to-practice pipeline by consolidating data, routinely analyzing data, designing research studies, developing new interventions, field-testing the implementation of new interventions, and channeling feedback into a continuous improvement process.

Narratives

The Reading Innovation Center's R&D capacity enables Reading Corps to accelerate the analysis of the impact of new or enhanced interventions. The Innovation Center can develop an intervention, field test it, analyze its effectiveness, modify it, and take it to scale through our existing pool of AmeriCorps members. The potential of this process to continuously improve the model and thus to increase student outcomes is significant. The Innovation Center also ensures that Master Coaches are deeply grounded in the model and its protocols, and have demonstrated their ability to provide the training and lead the Reading Corps expansion in their state. Longtime Reading Corps Master Coaches from Minnesota, Kathleen Horst (Pre-K) and Lorien Parson (K-3), design and deliver Master Coach training leading to credentialing.

Reading & Math, Inc. is supported by a strong inaugural board of directors including business leaders skilled in finance (Bank President); expanding businesses on a national scale (CEO of Dunn Brothers Coffee); HR systems (Executive with a staffing firm); and legal requirements of operating in multiple states (two attorneys).

Reading and Math, Inc. builds on 11 years of operational experience of ServeMinnesota, the nation's largest administrator of AmeriCorps state programs. It will be staffed with individuals who successfully scaled Reading Corps in Minnesota and who successfully accelerated Reading Corps' growth to 253 cities in eight states, reaching more than 35,000 students nationwide. This team will support implementation and scaling in Milwaukee, Miami, Muskegon and Lansing using proven training, tools, and technical assistance, and provide training for Master Coaches to ensure the fidelity of the model as it is expanded. The team includes:

V.P. of National Reading Corps Expansion, Sadie O'Connor, is the primary contact for this grant application. She will manage the day-to-day planning and implementation of the expansion; engage stakeholders; create partnerships; monitor implementation to established timelines; oversee budgeting and fundraising plans; and ensure smooth transitions from replication to on-going operations. In more than 10 years at the ServeMinnesota Action Network and ServeMinnesota, she has successfully managed Minnesota Reading Corps replication projects in Washington D.C.; Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, North Dakota, California, Virginia and Massachusetts. Ms. O'Connor has been working with the targeted communities to plan this replication effort for the past year.

An accountant, to be hired, will provide fiscal oversight and contract compliance; help to determine costs and charges; and ensure AmeriCorps reporting, accounting, and contract compliance. The successful candidate will have extensive accounting experience, including federal grant management experience.

Narratives

Reading Corps Program Specialist Anna Knier served as program coordinator for the Minnesota Reading Corps for the past four years. She will provide Ms. O'Connor with logistical support and training for the expansion proposed in this grant.

An Executive Director and Program Manager will be hired in Florida and Wisconsin, and will have leadership, management and AmeriCorps experience. They will oversee the program's implementation, monitor the program's effectiveness, coordinate with schools and partners, recruit and support the AmeriCorps members, and work closely with the Reading & Math, Inc. on administrative issues.

Three master coaches, one to be selected in each state, will be credentialed literacy experts to oversee the implementation of RC with fidelity.

Partnerships include the Milwaukee Succeeds in Milwaukee, the Center for Social Change in Miami, and the Hope Network in Michigan.

2. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY. The Reading and Math, Inc. infrastructure ensures accountability and effective compliance with a monitoring and technical assistance system. Reading and Math, Inc. will implement a risk mitigation plan that includes written agreements with sites and members, three site monitoring visits, review of required documentation, financial reviews, and an ongoing review of Program Operating Procedures to ensure continuous improvement and compliance with federal regulations.

Reading and Math, Inc. will execute an agreement annually with every site prior to a member beginning service. That site agreement will clearly outline program expectations, prohibited activities, and AmeriCorps regulations. Similarly, all members will be required to sign a contract before they can begin their year of service. Their contract will outline the term of service, responsibilities of the position, prohibited activities, grievance procedures, non-displacement policy, equal opportunity employment and non-discrimination statements, inclusive environment statement, and drug-free workplace requirements. Compliance will be monitored through site visits, ongoing Master Coaching, and regular staff meetings at which program staff review Program Operating Procedures with members, introduce any new AmeriCorps regulations, and address any issues.

The Program Specialist will prevent and detect compliance issues by reviewing 100% of the member files. The accountant will prevent and detect compliance issues regarding expenditures through regular monitoring of budgets, and the Program Manager in each state will ensure accountability and compliance through on-going monitoring and training at sites. If instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the issue will be immediately addressed by the appropriate staff person. If an issue is

Narratives

severe, a plan of corrective action is implemented and the member and/or site monitored for improvement.

3. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR THE CURRENT AND FORMER GRANTEES. N/A

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. COST EFFECTIVENESS. The budget provided is designed to effectively carry out the Minnesota Reading Corps in the targeted communities, yet remain cost-effective while leveraging community support. The average federal share of each child served by Reading Corps across these states is estimated to be \$585 -- a remarkable return on investment considering that this intervention has the potential to launch a child on a trajectory of lifetime educational and economic success. Reading Corps' cost per MSY is \$13,000, \$730 below the allowable federal cost of \$13,730. To operate a program with rigorous training, coaching, and data management requirements, Reading Corps provides \$18,106/MSY in matching funds through diverse sources of non-federal funds, cash and in-kind. The total non-CNCS resources required to implement the Reading Corps is \$814,776. To date, Reading Corps has secured \$552,000 in matching funds: \$100,000 from Target to support technical assistance expenses provided by Reading & Math, Inc.'s National Office; \$292,000 from Wisconsin, including \$250,000 from the State Superintendent of schools and \$42,000 from Milwaukee Succeeds funders including the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Helen Bader Foundation, and Northwestern Mutual Foundation; \$100,000 from Florida, including support from the Center for Social Change; and \$60,000 from Michigan, including \$30,000 from the United Way of Lakeshore County, \$10,000 from Amway, and \$20,000 in fees from participating sites. Pending proposals include W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Miami Foundation, The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade, United Way of Miami Dade, Florida Blue/South Florida, Wells Fargo, Branch Bank and Trust for a total of \$262,776. All of these funders have expressed their desire to provide resources to bring Reading Corps to their communities. In total, we are providing significantly more than the minimum matching requirement (24%) required of new programs, reflecting the commitment to this program from local communities and their respective philanthropic partners.

2. BUDGET ADEQUACY. The budget of \$1,399,776 ensures the appropriate mix of leadership and direct program staff to ensure effective program implementation. It also includes carefully crafted estimates of member and Internal Coach training and Master Coach time, curriculum expenses, and evaluation costs that are required to fully implement Reading Corps so as to achieve the desired outcomes for students. The cost of criminal history and FBI checks also are included in the budget.

Narratives

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS ROUND 1:

A.1. We are unable to further reduce the federal share at this stage of the program's development as we have not yet had time in the new markets to fully build out the base of philanthropic supporters that we anticipate will be in place over time. As the program demonstrates results in these new markets, we are confident that private support will increase and, at that time, we would be positioned to further reduce the federal share.

B.1. Reading Corps meets all of the requirements for a tutoring program:

A) Prior to enrollment, members are screened to ensure they have a high school diploma or its equivalent, as well as the basic literacy skills to be successful. Members are required to participate in pre- and in-service Reading Corps training, and attendance is tracked to ensure 100% participation.

B) The tools used to assess student progress and measure student outcomes were developed at the University of Minnesota and include the Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) and Formative Assessment System for Teacher (FAST). The assessment tools used by Reading Corps were chosen because of their well-established statistical reliability and validity.

C) The tutoring curriculum and training is high-quality and research-based. It is based on the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, a research-based methodology that incorporates continuous data collection, analysis and informed instruction. Reading Corps interventions are focused on the "Big Five Ideas in Literacy" as identified by the National Reading Panel.

D) Reading Corps ensures appropriate member supervision by working with sites to select individuals with a background and experience in literacy. Internal Coaches prepare for their supervisory role with members at the Reading Corps Institute, and separately, by learning how to conduct integrity checks to assure member assessments and interventions are delivered with a high degree of fidelity.

E) All members participate in high-quality, research-based pre- and in-service Reading Corps training (led by Ph.D-level content experts) to ensure they learn all aspects of the program model and are able to deliver it with fidelity in the schools. Training attendance is tracked by staff to ensure 100%

Narratives

participation.

B.2. The Logic Model indicates 25 program sites but only 18 Internal Literacy Coaches because there will be PreK Internal Coaches that are shared across multiple locations. The typical staffing structures of early childhood programs are such that those existing employees who typically fill the role of Internal Coach have existing coaching or management responsibilities across multiple locations within their program.

B.3. A PreK tutor will provide literacy support to a classroom of 17-20 students through enhancing the early language and literacy opportunities throughout the entire day. Based on the student assessment data collected by the tutor, he or she will also provide supplemental tutoring to a minimum of 7 students in a small group or 1-1 setting to those students whose data indicates they are far from target and require additional support.

B.4. No, there are no costs in this application that overlap with another request.

B.5. We will contract with Hope Network for 20% of an FTE to support these members. The budget reflects this change.

B.6. The school districts and targeted schools have been important partners in the planning for the launch of Reading Corps. School officials have participated in site visits to Minnesota to see the model in action, participated in webinar presentations from national headquarters staff about the model, and /or participated in local meetings with national headquarters staff presenting about the model. Schools have been identified by working collaboratively with district-level administrators and community stakeholders by looking at student need, leadership commitment to the model, capacity for internal coaching and geography.

C.1. Michigan has the unique advantage of having a local, certified K-3 Reading Corps trainer who can deliver the training content for the four members in Michigan with no additional cost. The budget does, however, include the expenses associated with their training materials.

C.2. The EIN listed for Reading & Math Inc on the 424 screen is confirmed as 47-2306902.

Narratives

C.3. As a new organization, Reading & Math Inc does not yet have an A-133 to submit.

C.4. This is updated in the budget narrative.

C.5. Our organization ensures a timely turn-around for the three pre-award documents described.

D.1. The students counted in ED20, 21 and 24 include all children in the PreK classrooms where the members serve. In accordance with a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, the Reading Corps PreK model is a three tier model of instructional and intervention support (Tier 1 = whole classroom support, Tier 2 = small group support, Tier 3 = one-on-one support). Tutors are trained to support students across all tiers, and use assessment data to determine the intensity and duration of the dosage needed for each student. Historically, at least 95% of students have a demonstrated literacy need according to the fall assessment data collected by Reading Corps.

D.2. Students are determined to be eligible for supplemental tutoring based on the five early literacy assessments (picture naming, alliteration, rhyming, letter name fluency, letter sound fluency) administered to all students three times per year. Reading Corps has defined target scores for each of these five assessments that are correlated to Kindergarten readiness. There are defined ranges for 'on target', 'close to target' and 'far from target.' A student is eligible for supplemental tutoring if he/she scores in the range of being 'far from target,' with priority to skills given in this order -- picture naming, letter naming, rhyming, alliteration, and letter sound.

D.3. The number of PreK students who complete Reading Corps, as measured in ED21, are students who are assessed in both the fall and spring benchmark windows. This is an indication that the student benefited from a complete year of Reading Corps support.

D.4. Measures ED20 and ED21 ask for the "number of economically disadvantaged children or children with special or exceptional needs." The children counted in the PreK Literacy and the K3 Literacy measures meet the definition of "children with special or exceptional needs" as they have been assessed as "having literacy needs" as outlined in the CNCS definitions.

Narratives

D.5. K-3 Literacy: The definition of improved academic performance in ED5 differs from the definition of program completion in ED2 in that a student may be counted in ED2 as "completed participation" if the student has met the defined exit criteria (3-5 data points above the aimline) or has participated in at least 12 weeks of tutoring. A student may be counted in ED5 as having attained "improved academic performance" if he/she has an established growth above the established grade level target growth, or in other words -- has achieved more than a year's worth of growth in a year's time. The target for ED5 is lower than ED2 because historical data shows that within Reading Corps at least 70% of students who meet the definition for completion achieve more than a year's worth of growth in a year's time.

PreK Literacy: The definition of gain in literacy skills in ED24 differs from the definition of program completion in ED21 in that a student may be counted in ED21 as "completed participation" if the student participated in a full year of Reading Corps programming. A student may be counted in ED24 as having attained a "gain in literacy skills" if he/she shows growth on 3 of the 5 PreK assessments. The target for ED24 is lower than ED21 because the historical data shows that within Reading Corps approximately 85% of students who meet the definition for completion show growth.

E.1. While we haven't set a specific target for the slots targeted to recruiting members with disabilities, we know from Reading Corps' work in previous states that the percentage of members with disabilities has historically been between 10-20%. Recruitment strategies will be targeted to publications and job posting boards within the disability community.

E.2. No additional MSYs requested.

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS ROUND 2:

1. Yes, we are confirming that the members in this grant are serving alongside an existing PreK teacher and that the tutors are not teachers themselves.

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS ROUND 3:

1. The staffing resources have been re-allocated to support the new operating site configuration in that the percentage of the Program Manager allocated to support Michigan implementation increased from 20% to 30%. Additionally, the hours allocated for the Master Coach to provide "on the ground" literacy implementation support increased from 310 hours to 615 hours.

Narratives

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS ROUND 4:

1. Upon reflection, we increased the contracted Program Manager for Michigan to be 100% to ensure there is sufficient in-state staff capacity to support 30 members in 3 locations. This position will be based in Michigan. To clarify, the time of the Executive Director and Program Manger listed as staff in 'Personnel Expenses' are allocated to Wisconsin. To confirm, it is clear to us that no expenses from the National Direct application can be used to support staffing in Florida. All expenses related to Florida have been removed from this budget.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics