

Narratives

Executive Summary

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

A1. OVERVIEW

Local Initiatives Support Corporation is an existing grantmaking institution and is applying as a sole intermediary applicant. This is an Issue based SIF proposal under the Economic Opportunity priority issue area. Geographies will likely include: Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Cincinnati, OH; Detroit, MI; Duluth, MN; Houston, TX; Indianapolis, IN; Minneapolis, MN; Newport, KY; Philadelphia, PA; Providence, RI; San Diego, CA; St. Paul, MN; Uniontown, PA.

LISC requests: \$3,780,800/year for 5 years (Sept.1, 2015-Aug. 31, 2020). There are no pre-selected subgrantees. Main sources of match include New Markets Support Company \$3,500,000; State Farm \$100,000; BMO Harris Bank \$100,000; GCM Grosvenor \$100,000; Crown \$100,000.

LISC has experience working with high performing organizations with strong records of grant management and program implementation. LISC has run competitive selection processes previously and are confident we can complete selection process in six months.

A2. PROJECT SUMMARY

Bridges to Career Opportunity is a supported bridge program that responds to the chronic problem of low-wage stagnation among hard-to-employ unskilled workers. People are stuck on the lower-rungs of the occupational ladder, quite simply, because they lack skills. Yet while skills training has become a national priority, too many people cannot access these types of training programs, for two reasons: 1) they lack the foundational literacy and numeracy skills required to qualify for most occupational training and credentialing programs; and 2) they experience chronic financial challenges that undermine their ability to commit to a longer-term training and career development. LISC has developed the following theory of change which integrates a set of interventions needed to provide the hardest to employ population with access to economic opportunity. The first intervention is to provide adult basic education that is effective, easily accessible, culturally competent, and relevant (or contextualized) to the desired industry. The second set of interventions is to provide long term career coaching, financial coaching and access to income supports that people need to alleviate financial

Narratives

scarcity and the related cognitive burdens scarcity imposes. Through long term coaching, clients are connected and supported through skills training, job placement and advancement. LISC believes that this supported bridge program will provide the following outcomes for participants: bridge program completion, achievement of a post-secondary credential or degree, matriculation into occupational skills training, achievement of occupational skills credentials, and quantitative financial measures such as increase in credit score, movement to positive net income and wage advancement.

The subrecipient organizations we fund must be able to effectively operate a bundled program of coaching, contextualized bridge and occupational skills, and to grow and sustain that program. Based on our past work with initiating, then scaling up, our employment and financial coaching program, we believe four factors are important to effective subrecipient performance: (1) ability to faithfully deliver good programs in the needed content areas; (2) effective leadership and use of information for continuous improvement - attributes of high-performing organizations along the lines defined by SIF (3) strong ties to external organizations and networks that can provide important financial, technical and policy resources; and (4) organizational attributes that support program growth.

LISC has an extensive and highly-regarded track-record in the implementation of national programs and a demonstrated ability to raise funds, including large amounts of private matching funds for our 2010 SIF award. Our organizational leadership, governance, and management has an industry-wide reputation for high-quality performance in delivering nearly \$1 billion in investments in programs each year. National infrastructure and local field operations at LISC provide the backbone of support for on-the-ground implementation, channeling training and technical support for implementation, performance data tracking and evaluation, monitoring, partnership-building and resource development. LISC has experience working with high performing organizations with strong records of grant management and program implementation.

Program Design

B. PROGRAM DESIGN

B1. RATIONALE AND APPROACH

B1a. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM STRATEGY

LISC proposes an issue-based Social Innovation Fund project in the issue area of Economic

Narratives

Opportunity, using Strategy B to support high-capacity subgrantees that will effectively implement an evidence-based solution that LISC has identified. The evidence-based intervention that LISC will expand to additional geographic areas and site (community-based nonprofits within those geographic areas) is a supported-bridges-to-career pathways program model that LISC has piloted with a small subset of community-based partners over the past two years. Geographic areas in which LISC will likely conduct subgrant competitions to expand the program model include: Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Cincinnati, OH; Detroit, MI; Duluth, MN; Houston, TX; Indianapolis, IN; Minneapolis, MN; Newport, KY; Philadelphia, PA; Providence, RI; San Diego, CA; St. Paul, MN; Uniontown, PA.

The program model, called Bridges to Career Opportunity, has shown promising evidence of effectiveness in helping low-skilled, under- and unemployed adults connect to, and successfully complete, middle-skills job training and credentialing, and sustain a job at a livable wage. The program model has been piloted by members of our Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) network, community-based organizations who integrated financial coaching and access to income supports into a workforce development services. The proposed expansion will allow LISC and its competitively selected subgrantees to either increase the number of individuals already being served or deploy the program in additional cities and community-based sites. Bridges to Career Opportunity provides an integrated suite of interventions that are designed to help low-income individuals start and progress along a career pathway: 1) contextualized adult basic education/ESL (bridge component of the initiative) so that adult learners can reach the levels of reading, math, and English language proficiency required to enter technical skills training programs; 2) connections to middle-skills training that leads to industry recognized credentials and career ladders in locally-strong industries like healthcare and advanced manufacturing; and 3) career coaching, financial coaching, and supportive services to help participants manage the financial, navigational, and logistical challenges that often pose barriers to accessing and completing job training programs. (It is for this reason, we consider this program a supported bridges to careers program, and refer to it as such throughout the proposal.)

Bridges to Career Opportunity responds to the chronic problem of low-wage stagnation among hard-to-employ unskilled workers. People are stuck on the lower-rungs of the occupational ladder, quite simply, because they lack skills. Yet while skills training, including two-year degree and vocational programs offered by community colleges, has become a national priority, too many people simply

Narratives

cannot access these types of training programs, for two basic reasons: 1) they lack the foundational literacy and numeracy skills required to qualify for most occupational training and credentialing programs; and 2) the experience chronic financial challenges that radically undermine their ability to commit to a longer-term training and career development plan. To overcome this twin challenge, two basic responses are needed. The first is to provide adult basic education that is effective, easily accessible, culturally competent, and relevant/contextualized to the industries in which the individual is seeking a career. The second is to provide the career coaching, financial coaching and access to income supports (public and private benefits) that people need to alleviate financial scarcity and the related cognitive burdens scarcity imposes.

Evidence has shown that adult basic education is best delivered through contextualized instruction in which the basic reading and math skills taught, and the way they are taught, clearly link to the types of situations they will encounter in their intended occupation. In fact, bridge programming and occupational skills are sometimes team-taught by an adult basic education instructor and a technical-skills instructor. Though bridge programs are becoming more common, they have typically high dropout rates, a problem that afflicts skills training programs more generally. We have found that an effective way to help people enter bridge programming, persist through the course, and move from stage to stage up the career ladder, is to support them through an integrated or bundled set of career and financial coaching services, along with access to income supports. Financial coaching, in particular, helps people get their financial head above water by (re)building credit, preparing and following a budget, and making a plan to manage expenses. This is especially crucial when a person is making a time investment in a skills training program that may temporarily impact their ability to work and earn money. Through the income supports component, individuals can connect to needed income-boosting benefits like food stamps, as well as work supports like bus passes/gas cards or assistance with work clothes, occupational licensing fees, and the like. In doing so, they gain breathing room, build self-efficacy, take a longer-term view of their lives, and plan effectively for a financially secure future.

Multiple studies contribute preliminary and moderate levels of evidence point to the effectiveness of individual elements of the supported bridge package of the Bridges to Career Opportunity initiative as well as the enhanced value of delivering the initiative elements as an integrated package. Some of the same elements such as financial education and supported services were included in the White House's

Narratives

Job Driven Training Checklist. (The full checklist appears in the White House's Ready to Work report, available online at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/skills_report.pdf.)

B1b. MARKET GAPS AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR LOW-WAGE WORKERS

There is ample statistical evidence that low-wage workers tend to persist in low-wage occupations over time. (Holzer, 2002). This persistence appears to be especially true of those with lower educational levels (Poppe, Strawn and Martinson, 2004). Three quarters of low-wage workers have a high school or general equivalency diploma but lack the relevant occupational skills and connections to employers needed to launch a career (Loprest et al, 2009). Half of adults without a secondary credential have below basic literacy skills (Kutner, Greenberg, and Baer, 2005). In the communities we plan to target in this application (discussed below), 17 percent of the population 25 and older have no high-school diploma or equivalent according to the 2012 American Community Survey, amounting to over 1 million people. Fully a quarter (26 percent) of all those who worked in the past year - nearly 2 million workers - earned below \$20,000 per year, or the equivalent of a year-round \$10 per hour job. In our own work with low-income job-seekers, many of whom are homeless or formerly homeless, previously incarcerated, or have limited English proficiency, we have found that although community-based partners have been successful in placing them into low-skilled jobs, advancement into higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs has proven very difficult. The lack of reading, writing, and English-language skills is compounded by other human capital concerns.

In the communities where LISC works, too many residents work for minimum or near-minimum wage; and the work-schedule instability, volatile hours, and lack of benefits that are common in low-wage jobs further strain family finances. Ample research points to a whole set of cognitive distortions that stem from this kind of chronic scarcity, uncertainty, and lack of agency (Muallainathan and Shafir, 2013). These include lack of self-efficacy, extreme difficulty in planning for the future, inability to persist in programs that might help them gain skills and obtain better jobs. This type of cognitive distortion can especially flare up at transition points during the career pathway-like from basic/bridge education into skills training and then into employment or higher-level skills training-as individuals are stepping out of their comfort zones into unfamiliar occupational and educational territory, in addition to navigating the financial implications of training/post-secondary education.

Narratives

There is also an overall unmet need and demand for training and foundational education in the United States. Nationally, 36 million adults (or 1 in 6) in the United States have low literacy skills, and 1 in 3 have low numeracy skills, according to PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) data summarized in a February 2015 U.S. Department of Education report (Making Skills Everyone's Business). The OECDs 2013 report (Time for the U.S. to Reskill) found that only about 40 percent of low-skilled adults (out of an estimated 36 million low-skilled adults in the U.S.) reported participating in some form of adult learning or training over the past 12 months, compared to a training/education participation rate of 70 percent for higher-skilled adults. Among low-skilled adults who did not participate in any sort of adult education/training, 18 percent (or about 3 million) said that they would have liked to participate in education or training; and among the low-skilled adults who DID participate, 36 percent said they would have like to participate in more education and training than they received. Furthermore, it has become increasingly clear that clients who lack the fundamental reading and writing skills to enter into skills training need the right kind of instruction to bridge the gap between the literacy and numeracy skills that people actually have and the skills they need to enter middle-level skills job training. Relatively few of these bridge programs exist, and when they do, they typically lack the features that make them work well for low-income wage earners. For example, while community colleges and school districts often offer remedial education, the coursework is typically not industry-contextualized; as a result, adult learners can become discouraged and struggle to grasp academic concepts that seem to have little practical application to an industry or employment setting. Compounding this mismatch, education programs are not often accompanied by sufficient supports needed to respond to the compounding human capital issues that undermine the ability to commit to remedial instruction, persevere throughout, and then proceed on to middle-skills training itself. Because neither appropriate bridge program nor supportive career and financial coaching in a workforce context are available generally, even though skills training programs exist nearly everywhere, they often struggle with enrollment and completion because they fail to reach the lowest-wage workers with fundamental education gaps. The workforce system's difficulty meeting the needs of individuals with substantial barriers is one of the reasons why residents in LISC communities and others like them remain trapped in low-wage employment.

B1c. SUPPORTED BRIDGES TO CAREER THEORY OF CHANGE

Standalone or piecemeal job placement, adult basic education, job training, and social services (i.e. benefits access) are often not enough to provide lasting financial and career stability for low-skilled,

Narratives

low-wage workers. In response to this problem, LISC developed and scaled up the Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) model, and has learned through nearly a decade of operating the Financial Opportunity Center model that integrated services - employment, financial coaching, and income supports services - are effective in helping individuals find jobs and increase their monthly net income, often from a deficit to positive monthly net income. However, LISC has also learned from the FOC expansion that the hardest-to-employ clients need additional supports, foundational education, industry-recognized credentials, and career pathway planning in order to access higher-wage middle-skills jobs that can offer wage growth and lasting financial stability. Therefore, our theory of change for the proposed Bridges to Career Opportunity is as follows: contextualized bridge education integrated with robust financial coaching services and supports will allow individuals with very low educational levels to connect to skills training and career pathway opportunities, when those coaching supports continue.

There are three mutually-supportive elements of a supported bridges to career program, each of which is thought necessary for an optimally effective upward mobility program. The delivery of services as an integrated package or bundle is innovative in itself, but several individual elements, in addition, are not typically found in workforce programs. First, coaching supports include career coaching, financial coaching, and help gaining access to income supports. Career coaching helps clients understand the value of investing in job training, the specific points along a career pathway, the workplace characteristics and day-to-day tasks of various industries, and the medium-and-longer term mobility opportunities that exist. Financial coaching helps stabilize finances and repair and build credit. Clients also receive other kinds of help, including training in soft skills, learning stipends, transportation assistance, and other work supports, and placement in jobs along the client's intended career path. This theory of change stresses the vital importance of coaching, which is a collaborative, result-orientated, and personal asset-based process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of personal financial management practices in financial coaching, and career planning in employment coaching (Collins, 2012). The coach is a facilitator and a partner, not a traditional case manager. He or she helps clients build self-efficacy through articulating their long-term vision (for example, providing a better life for their children) and setting a series of short- and medium-term goals (for example, attaining an industry-recognized credential, securing a living-wage job, moving to more stable housing, saving for a college education, and so on) that can help them realize that vision. Since true financial stability can take time to achieve, coaches identify and celebrate small wins of the client

Narratives

(like increasing a credit score by 30 points or completing a six-week bridge program), and the behavior changes that led to those milestones, while helping clients stay focused on their long-term vision. Practically, coaches help clients develop budgets, track spending, examine their credit reports, identify errors, deal with delinquent accounts, connect to mainstream financial institutions, develop a personal balance sheet, and begin to adopt effective financial practices. Over time, as clients move from negative to positive net income, and therefore see concrete returns from work, a cascading series of positive consequences ensue as residents become empowered to set and adhere to their own life goals. Because coaching extends over a number of years, at the client's choice, it helps clients successfully manage those crucial transitions along the career pathway.

Second, bridge programs of anywhere from 6-16 weeks will consist of contextualized adult basic education (ABE), vocational English-as-a-second-language (ESL), or both. Contextualized program means that instruction is framed in terms of actual work situations in chosen career fields, overcoming an avoidable abstraction that adds to the difficulty of classroom work, especially for those who have not been in a classroom in some years. This contextualization offers two important benefits: 1) it helps fast track progress, since students can begin to learn industry concepts and practices concurrently with their basic education coursework, rather than consecutively; and 2) contextualization helps keep students engaged in the learning, since it is job-driven and practical, rather than abstract academic concepts. Connecting reading and math to practical on-the-job examples is especially beneficial for adult learners who have been out of school for some years. The contextualized bridge programs that LI SC supports are also designed to be flexible and responsive to student's existing work schedules and family responsibilities. Some bridge programs also offer college credit and certificates, which may be the first step toward a college degree. In good programs, providers use state and local labor market information to develop bridge programs focused on occupations or industry sectors with a high demand for employees. Providers also engage local and regional employers in order to better understand hiring needs and ensure that the curriculum aligns with the job skills that employers are seeking.

Third, connection to career pathway programs leading to the industry-recognized credentials are essential for career growth. Career pathway programs are a series of linked education and training programs that enable individuals to secure employment within an industry or occupational sector and advance through successively higher levels of education and employment within that sector. Good

Narratives

career pathways usually include multiple on-ramps and off-ramp that allow students to pause their training if need be, enter the workforce, and then re-enter training or pursue continued training alongside employment. To be optimally effective, credentials must be both portable, insofar as they are recognized by employers across an industry, and stackable, meaning that they are seamlessly articulated from one level to the next, but with standalone value, allowing temporary breaks from the education pathway but conferring intermediate credentials in the job market.

Effective delivery of this suite of services, suitably packaged, should lead to a series of two types of outcomes, related to one another, but for convenience distinguished as bridge and occupational skills outcomes versus financial and employment coaching outcomes. Bridge and occupational skills outcomes include bridge program completion, achievement of a post-secondary credential or degree, if needed, matriculation into occupational skills training, achievement of first rung (and subsequent) occupational skills credentials, and a number of other benchmarks. Financial and employment coaching outcomes can include such milestones as increase in credit score, movement from negative to positive net income, increases in wages and benefits, and others.

B1d. ALIGNING SUBRECIPIENTS WITH THE THEORY OF CHANGE

LISC will invest in nonprofit organizations that are located in low-income communities in the proposed expansion geographies, and that maintain local reputations for high-quality services delivery (including strong workforce development programs), and an understanding of the cultural characteristics of the communities they serve, as well as the needs of the residents living there. Because the integrated services bundle of bridge programming, skills training, career/financial coaching, and income supports access is comprehensive, it is most efficient and effective to expand and scale-up the model in community-based organization that have existing capacity in that they already deliver at least one of two key program elements: workforce development/training services and/or integrated financial/career coaching.

LISC has already piloted the Bridges to Career Opportunity model in seven sites. Based on our experience in the pilot phase, LISC will invest in subgrantees that align with our theory of change, which requires: 1) a recognition that the existing system of skills training is not meeting the needs of low-wage workers with education/skills gaps; 2) an organizational commitment to the coaching approach and to long-term engagement with clients, in service of helping them achieve job security

Narratives

and lasting financial stability; 3) an organizational commitment to comprehensive, integrated service delivery and the supported bridges to careers as the most effective means for helping hard-to-employ individuals access training, succeed in training, secure employment, and grow in their careers. Specific eligibility criteria for subgrantees is detailed further in Section B2, Profile of Subrecipients to be Selected.

As a national intermediary - whose track record includes technical assistance to a large set of competitively-selected subgrantees under one of the inaugural 2010 Social Innovation Fund awards - LISC excels in developing effective ways to support community-based nonprofit service delivery organizations in multiple sites and multiple cities as they operate a common program model. As will be described in more length below, LISC provides a program methodology, local- and national-level training and technical support, local oversight in each proposed geography, accountability and quality control, a national database and performance measurement framework to support program delivery and outcomes tracking, a framework for national and peer learning within and across specializations, and experienced national and local staff and back-office infrastructure. We will select subgrantees that have demonstrated competence in delivering major elements of our approach, and a willingness to align those elements to fit the incremental demands posed by the new program.

B1e. PROGRAMMING STRATEGY FOR PROPOSED SIF PROJECT

Because we have an effective and innovative program approach that has preliminary-to-moderate evidence of effectiveness, and a local LISC presence in each of the suggested geographies with strong ties with service providers on the ground who are able to adopt the program and manage it effectively within our national support system, we believe that Strategy B is most appropriate for this proposal. Our own analysis, supported by external research, shows that the combination of programs we propose will enable low-wage clients to achieve positive economic outcomes in the form of employment placement and retention and higher net incomes, compared to those who do not have access to contextualized bridge programming and that these outcomes for any given client will improve over time. The quasi-experimental evaluation outlined below will assess whether and how this approach produces these outcomes in relation to a control group, thus offering the workforce, adult education, and financial coaching field medium-level evidence to validate our claims and ultimately promote uptake of this approach beyond the network of subgrantees.

Narratives

B2. PROPOSAL FOR SUBRECIPIENT SELECTION

B2a. PROFILE OF SUBRECIPIENTS TO BE SELECTED

In keeping with SIF Strategy B, LISC will implement a competitive subrecipient selection process that identifies nonprofit organizations that are well-suited to adopt the supported bridges to careers approach. The subrecipient organizations that LISC funds must be able to effectively operate a bundled program of coaching, contextualized bridge, and connections to skills training, and to grow and sustain that program over time. Based on our past work with initiating, then scaling up, our employment and financial coaching program, we believe four factors are important to effective subrecipient performance in this Bridges to Career Opportunity initiative: 1) Program Strength: the ability to deliver quality services in the needed content areas, with fidelity to the Bridges to Career Opportunity approach; 2) Commitment to Performance Management and Continuous Improvement, in keeping with our strong focus on data-driven, evidence-based programming, as well as the SIF's definition of a high-performing organization; 3) Partnership Networks, to provide important financial, technical and policy resources; and 4) Capacity for Program Growth. These four factors are discussed in detail below. LISC will also apply general criteria, aligned with the CNCS definition of high-performing nonprofit organizations, to assess the overall financial and organizational health of subrecipients. Furthermore, based on where local LISC offices work and invest, largely in underserved communities of color, LISC will select organizations serving low income individuals with a high concentration of African American and Latino participants, reaching the hardest to employ.

B2a1. PROGRAM STRENGTH

The organizations we select must already have assembled all of the core elements of our approach (coaching, bridge programming, and skills training) or have demonstrated expertise in either the coaching or skills fields. To operate a high-quality program, subrecipients need to have mastered several of the major challenges associated with our model: the ability to effectively bundle or package services; the commitment to service integration and to developing an efficient client flow through the bundle of services; frontline staff and managers in place (or willingness to hire such staff) that embrace the coaching approach as well as data-driven service delivery; the ability, to integrate a client management system (designed by LISC) into their ongoing program operations and actively use data and outcomes as a tool for performance management; and, the commitment to build and sustain long-term coaching relationships with clients.

Narratives

We expect that some of the approximately 32 subrecipients we fund will be existing FOCs and therefore have an established coaching program. Some of these FOCs already offer contextualized bridge and occupational skills under our Bridges to Career Opportunity initiative. Some offer occupational skills, only, and will have to add bridge; some offer only coaching, and will have to offer bridge and occupational skills. However, LISC will run a competitive subrecipient selection process and existing members of the FOC network will be required to meet the same criteria as other prospective applicants.

LISC anticipates that there will also be very capable occupational skills and workforce providers that do not currently offer career and financial coaching similar to those offered by FOCs, but could efficiently incorporate those elements of a supported bridge program into their existing occupational skills programming. We have found through nearly 10 years of operating our Financial Opportunity Center network, and more recently, incorporating the Bridges to Career Opportunity enhancement, that workforce-focused community-based organizations generally have the base infrastructure needed to effectively add the coaching component of the model. This is because workforce-training organizations draw a client pool that has already self-identified as being interested in a longer-term involvement (i.e. as opposed to clients who are in crisis and/or seeking a one-time transactional service), and have natural long-term relationships with clients (throughout the educational curriculum) that is vital to effective coaching.

In our open and competitive selection process, we will look for subrecipients that can demonstrate reach into the low-income hard-to-employ population, as demonstrated by data on the income level, education, race and ethnicity, language, and other human capital indicators of their existing client base. We will select organizations with demonstrated ability to run effective programs, as measured by a metrics including: the ability to provide high-quality services to a volume of clients that is reasonable and appropriate relative to the organization's funding; high bundling rates (in the case of organizations already offering integrated service delivery); and relatively high placement and retention rates, as adjusted for client difficulty. In the case of subrecipient applicants that are already offering skills training programs, we will select organizations that offer contextualized bridge instruction or adult education programs that can be adapted into a contextualized bridge program; or occupational skills programs that lead to recognized, portable, and stackable industry credentials, as demonstrated by client graduation rates and subsequent acceptance into occupational skills training.

Narratives

Finally, we will select organizations that demonstrate ability to sustain contact with clients over time, as measured by length of client attachment. LISC will also ask applicants to document the years of experience and credentials of professionals on staff.

B2a2. COMMITMENT TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

The collection, analysis, and use of data and outcomes information is a signature feature of our existing FOC program, both in terms of client case management at the FOC level, and in terms of accountability and performance improvement at LISC's intermediary-management level - and will remain a crucial element of the Bridges to Career Opportunity expansion. Across our national network of 76 FOCs, we require use of a common data system: Family Financial Tracking, a customized template that LISC and partners designed and that operates within Social Solutions' Efforts to Outcomes system. We invest heavily in data system training, review of data quality, technical assistance, analysis of performance information for grantee accountability and course correction, and program evaluation. Our proposal review will examine, for our existing subrecipients, past programmatic and financial outcomes, grants management and compliance, and overall data quality. For those who are new to our network, we will ask for documentation of these same factors.

B2a3. PARTNERSHIP NETWORKS

No organization can successfully deliver effective bundled programming in a field as complex as workforce development without strong ties to institutions that provide needed financial, technical and policy supports. That said, we believe that this is a generally under-recognized factor in program success. Three types of relationships are paramount: those with skills training providers, those with employers, and those with funders. In most cases, LISC anticipates that the technical skills training itself (i.e. the training into which participants move after completing the bridge) will be provided by a referral partner. This structure will allow subrecipients to focus on what they do best (coaching, career navigation, and bridge education) while leveraging the infrastructure and strengths of technical training partners (particularly in industries like advanced manufacturing, where the average community-based service organization may lack the space and the resources to have, for example, their own fully-equipped machine shop on site). This approach places a premium on selecting organizations that have either already forged relationships with pathways and skills development providers in their area. Our selection process will ask prospective organizations to demonstrate ties to

Narratives

such entities as community colleges, the local collaboratives formed by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions or public-private initiatives like UpSkill Houston, as well as progressive/innovative local Workforce Investment Boards, and multi-sector systems change leadership networks such as those supported by CLASP or other national entities. Additional points will be awarded in the subgrantee proposal review process for applicants who have established Memoranda of Understanding (as opposed to a generalized, informal relationship) with a skills training provider, and an MOU with at least one employer partner that describes the nature of the employer's involvement in the bridge and skills training initiative.

Second, development of bridge program curricula must be contextualized to be effective. Subgrantees also must commit to building substantive relationships with employers, engaging employers not only as potential sources for job leads, but as subject matter experts and advisors on the development and ongoing refinement of the bridge program. LISC will accord priority to organizations that do, or have the capacity to, work with employers to contextualize bridge programming, help design occupational skills programs that lead to portable, stackable, industry-recognized credentials, and offer suitable employment to credentialed clients. Third, organizations must demonstrate their ability to secure the financial support they need to expand their program and sustain operations over time. This factor will be discussed in the next subsection.

B2a4. CAPACITY FOR PROGRAM GROWTH

There are several ways that subrecipients can be expected to grow their program. Organizations already engaged in supported bridge programs can add to their caseloads by expanding the number of clients they can serve. They can also expand their range of offerings by adding bridges to career pathways in additional sectors (adding manufacturing in addition to an existing nursing program) or adding bridges to higher rungs along a career path. Those that do not now offer the full range of services can add the missing pieces and begin to operate the full program package. We expect that most subgrantee applicants that can satisfactorily meet the criteria outlined in the preceding sections will have the ability to grow their programs. That said, LISC's selection process will further ask applicants to demonstrate their ability to manage and pay for program growth, for example by describing instances of such expansion in the past, demonstrating that they have the staff and management systems in place to accommodate the additional burdens that expansion would require, or affirming the availability of financial support to match SIF funding.

Narratives

B2a5. OVERALL FINANCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

As defined by CNCS, high-performing nonprofit organizations are those that: are well-run and financially healthy with capable leadership, clear goals and objectives; diligently collect quality data and use this data to understand which of their efforts work and which do not; and use this knowledge to make adjustments to their approach to continuously improve. Likewise, LISC prioritizes these factors in our grantmaking and grants management organization-wide. In our typical subrecipient selection processes, LISC requests and reviews information about organizational leadership and mission, with a view toward assessing the fit between mission and the proposed program. During the proposal/subrecipient application process (as well as in our annual review of grantees), LISC requires grantees and prospective grantees to submit audited financial statements, and LISC staff conducts an analysis of the overall organizational financial health as illustrated through key financial ratios (for example, the number of days of operating cash on hand). While lower ratios do not automatically bar applicants from receiving a subgrant, they are indicators of future technical assistance need and could be used as tie-breakers in especially competitive selection processes. LISC also, of course, examines past performance on federal grants, by asking prospective subgrantees to describe their track record of managing federal funds as well as by requiring prospective subgrantees to have registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM). LISC staff review each organization, prior to approving their grant, in SAM.gov to ensure that no exclusions exist for the group.

B2b. SUBRECIPIENT SELECTION PLAN

Depending on the number and quality of proposals LISC receives, we will use the process described below expect to make subawards to 30-35 grantees in 10 to 13 metropolitan areas and potentially one rural area around the country with subaward amounts ranging between \$150,000 to \$400,000 and averaging \$175,000-\$200,000. The upper range allows us to fund several large multi-site organizations in our target cities, assuming that they submit competitive subaward applications. Award sizes generally will depend on subgrantees' existing suite of services and potential for expansion, track record of success with similar work, the number of individuals they plan to serve and the level of services they need to be successful, and the level of private match that can be raised. Further, award amounts may be re-sized in any year subsequent to Year 1, to reflect program growth. We may also give larger awards to subgrantees that participate in the national third-party evaluation to compensate them for additional costs, expand the pool of clients available for analysis, or add

Narratives

program elements needed to ensure consistency in program design across evaluation sites.

The purpose of a good selection process is to ensure a competitive set of high-quality proposals from organizations that are likely to deliver efficient, effective, and sustainable programs. Because a supportive local environment is critical to program growth and scaling, as well as effective program delivery, our selection process entails first the selection of cities in which LISC will conduct the subrecipient competition, then select subrecipients within these cities. Our city selection process has followed the one used in our first, highly successful SIF funding round. In short, we have identified cities within the existing LISC footprint that: 1) have a complement of nonprofits that can incorporate the FOC approach into their core business, have a strong commitment to data and performance management, and can provide bridge instruction and/or skills training programs on-site; 2) can likely raise private funds to support the SIF match, over a five year period, with local funders interested in this work; (3) have local LISC staff capacity to support oversight of subrecipient compliance with SIF requirements; (4) have grantees with a strong track record of managing federal grants; and (5) have an infrastructure to support career pathways and skills development, such as a local National Fund for Workforce Solutions collaborative, employers that are engaged in up-skilling efforts or civic and economic development initiatives of a similar nature in their region, skills training providers, and a local Workforce Investment Board with partnership potential.

The subrecipient selection process will be effective, transparent and fair. To that end, elements of the selection process will include: broad and targeted outreach through multiple channels including a network of community-based partners as well as public dissemination of the RFP online; an RFP that details minimum eligibility criteria for applicants, clear selection criteria, instructions for proposal submission, program design and outcome expectations, and the means through which prospective bidders can submit clarifying questions about the RFP; a transparent and objective selection process, including proposal review by an expert selection committee comprised of experienced local LISC staff and other civic leaders; and a process that otherwise complies with all CNCS/SIF requirements. For the Bridges to Career Opportunity program, LISC will conduct a competitive process similar to the one we used to select SIF subgrantees under our first funding round for the Financial Opportunity Centers. This process worked very well for us: we retained 45 of the 47 subgrantees, and as a group, they mostly achieved or exceeded all of our goals for the program.

Narratives

With approval and input from the Corporation for National and Community Service, we will create a Request for Proposal (RFP) package that: provides detailed background information about the model we seek to scale and expand; details the minimum required qualifications for applicants; core elements of the program model to be implemented; additional qualifications that are important for the proposal to be competitive; and the selection factors and weights LISC will use to rate and rank proposals. To ensure a good response from highly qualified groups, we will post the RFP on local LISC websites, ask our local offices in the target cities to e-blast it to their subscribers and invite well-regarded workforce organizations with a strong skills component to apply. LISC national staff will host at least one webinar to discuss the RFP and respond to questions, and local LISC offices will hold either in-person or web-based bidders conferences. We will establish an e-mail inbox for RFP inquiries and maintain a regularly-updated FAQ document on the LISC website. Interested prospective subgrantees will be given a reasonable amount of time, about one month, to craft a thorough and high-quality proposal. LISC will assemble local proposal review committees in each target city, comprised of local LISC staff, LISC local advisory committee (LAC) members, local funders, and other key stakeholders. A broad process like this one helps us line up supporters throughout implementation, including match funders. These local committees will score the proposals, then forward their scores and funding recommendations to national LISC leadership for final selection of the subrecipients and determination of subgrant award amounts on criteria as outlined above.

B2c. SUBRECIPIENT SELECTION TIMELINE

LISC will release the RFP within the first month of the start of the SIF award and expects the final selection to be completed within two months of the release of the RFP. The subgrants will be awarded within six months from the SIF award announcement. Assuming that the SIF grant period begins September 1, 2015, corresponding subrecipient selection dates are:

- Local RFPs released September 15, 2015
- Proposals due October 25, 2015
- Recommendation of Selection from local review committees to National LISC Family Income and Wealth Building staff, by November 17, 2015
- Final Selections announced Dec 8, 2015
- Subgrants awarded February 1, 2016

B2d. CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT SUBGRANTEE SELECTION PROCESS

Narratives

In the past, and including our first SIF funding round, LISC has run highly successful selection processes that identified effective subgrantees. Experienced national LISC staff are well-versed in SIF program requirements, and expert in federal procurement and grants management rules in general; the local office structure within LISC also ensures a responsive RFP process, local transparency, and local knowledge. The geographic areas that we have chosen to target have a strong complement of prospective bidders. As an intermediary, LISC has a long and successful history of conducting competitive selection processes for subrecipients to Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and similar community-based organizations. For example, LISC has 20 years of experience implementing the Section 4 CDC capacity building and technical assistance program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Each year, LISC makes 340 HUD subgrants to nonprofit organizations throughout our footprint, each grant averaging \$27,800. LISC also developed and managed the competitive subgrantee selection for a 2010 SIF award; 90 community-based organizations in 10 cities across the country submitted proposals, and through a local and national review process, LISC selected 47 to receive SIF subgrants.

In a 2015 SIF subrecipient competition, for proposals from organizations that have an existing partnership or subrecipient relationship with LISC, the local LISC office will complete an assessment (LISC will create a checklist) based on their knowledge of the organization and their experience collaborating with them. For proposals from organizations that are not yet part of LISC's portfolio of community partners and who meet or exceed selection criteria, a local LISC program officer will conduct a site visit to the organization as part of the proposal review process. LISC will also ask prospective subgrantees that are new to LISC to submit two letters of reference from other funders that attest to the organization's capacity and readiness to scale up their programming.

B3. PROPOSAL FOR EVALUATION

B3a. EXPERIENCE IN MANAGING AND SUPPORTING EVALUATION EFFORTS

LISC's national research staff have many years of experience in the design, implementation, and procurement of large-scale social science research studies. In the last three years alone, LISC has procured and managed approximately \$2 million in third-party research projects funded by federal agencies. Results from social science research have directly informed and shaped LISC program designs. Although it is premature to specify a research design before procurement of a research

Narratives

contract, we expect to contract for a quasi-experimental design (QED) of selected subgrantees that best exemplify the supported-bridges-to-careers approach, although we are open to a randomized control trial (RCT) design. Through this contract, we expect to advance beyond what is now preliminary-to-moderate evidence of program value to a strong level of evidence, thus supporting a program area singled out for priority attention by a literature review conducted by the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and used as a research foundation for the White House's comprehensive, multi-federal agency Ready to Work initiative.

Under this grant, we will contract for a third-party evaluation of a single program model implemented by multiple subgrantees, as appropriate for Strategy B. In other words, we will execute one national evaluation contract with a third-party evaluator to assess a single program design as implemented in multiple operating sites. LISC research staff have extensive experience in the design and implementation of such evaluations, including qualitative and quantitative research design, data collection, and analysis tasks, involving multiple types of sampling and statistical analyses. In his 35-year research career (including 19 years with the Urban Institute, a highly-regarded Federal research contractor), LISC research director Chris Walker was principal investigator for more than \$10 million worth of federal and foundation research projects. Sarah Rankin, LISC research associate, is an accomplished evaluation manager, with significant subject-matter expertise in income- and asset-building programs, deep understanding of the client management databases able to support both in-house and third-party evaluations, and analysis experience with these same databases.

In the last several years, LISC has carried out its own internal analysis of LISC programs, and has contracted for approximately \$2 million in third party evaluations, including an ongoing evaluation of the program supported by our first SIF award, two evaluations of our AmeriCorps program, an evaluation of our HUD-funded Section 4 program, as well as privately funded evaluations of some of our local initiatives, such as our youth development and healthy foods programs in New York City. These projects have spanned a range of methodologies, from a QED longitudinal survey data analysis of our Financial Opportunity Centers to an ethnography that follows the lives of selected FOC clients.

Over the course of the 10-year life of LISC's research and assessment unit, we have contracted with private consultants, private nonprofits, such as Urban Institute and Abt Associates, and researchers affiliated with universities as diverse as University of Minnesota, New School for Social Research, and

Narratives

Hunter College at New York University. Finally, we have carried out a number of internal research studies, several of which have been published, including an analysis of the effects of LISC's community development investments and analysis of the effects of the Financial Opportunity Center model on client employment, income, and credit.

B3b. EXPERIENCE IN SUPPORTING GRANTEES IN USE OF DATA AND EVIDENCE

Existing grantees of LISC adopt evidence-based practices in their work, including work with researchers to improve their understanding of their program environment and program effects. For example, LISC is the lead technical assistance provider for the Department of Justice's Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation program, now operating in over 46 cities, which supports adoption of evidence-based community policing strategies by community-based crime prevention efforts in partnership with (typically) university-based criminologists.

That said, and as discussed elsewhere in this proposal, development, management, and use of client outcomes information is central to our philosophy and practice around strong program design and improvement. All existing Financial Opportunity Center subgrantees use a LISC-customized template (called Family Financial Tracking) that operates on Social Solutions' Efforts-to-Outcomes software to track a multitude of client outcomes including employment, net income, credit, and net worth of clients for use in coaching sessions, tracking organizational performance, and learning lessons for the program as a whole.

B3c. TRACK RECORD OF DATA-DRIVEN, EVIDENCE-BASED INVESTING

LISC makes investments in organizations, projects, and programs. That is, LISC provides operating grants to build the capacity of community-based organizations so that they, in turn, can work more effectively to revitalize their neighborhoods. We invest in real estate projects that benefit low-income households. And we fund community-based programs in health, community safety, income and wealth, community organizing, and other activities. LISC's diverse areas of investment all use evidence and data in a variety of ways.

Historically, LISC's organizational development grants were guided by our Capacity Mapping (CapMap) methodology that diagnoses organizational strength at baseline, identifies organizational strength in five domains, and tracks development in each with repeated applications of the survey. In

Narratives

this way, we have selected areas of investment and tracked results over time. Our proprietary CapMap tool remains in use, adopted as funds permit by local LISC offices.

Our real estate investments are guided by analysis of market conditions and tracking of property financial performance over time. As we monitor these investments, we assess projects' underlying financial strength and depending on the results, devise loan management and workout strategies accordingly. LISC has a low-income housing preservation program, in addition, that makes extensive use of housing market data to guide re-capitalization decisions for federally supported multi-family properties. Our charter school financing program has selected specific markets to work in and staff analyze existing charters, plotting locations and academic achievement and other data pertaining to neighborhood location and conditions, which research is then used to guide LISC's education investment strategy citywide. Finally, LISC investments are tracked through a set of social investment metrics recommended by the Global Impact Investment Network, as well as the CDFI Fund of the U.S. Treasury Department.

LISC investment in Financial Opportunity Centers is rooted in data and evidence. Each of 76 centers in the FOC network use the same data platform. LISC makes grants to community-based organizations based on their ability to implement the model with fidelity and their ability to impact their communities as evidenced in the data.

B3d. COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT OF SIF EVALUATION CONTRACTOR

As described earlier, LISC has a highly experienced internal research and assessment team who will oversee the evaluation activities of this grant. The evaluation contractor for this work has yet to be procured, as befits a stage of the work where no award has yet been granted and therefore no meaningful competitive bidding process can be implemented. However, LISC has considerable experience in the procurement of successful third-party evaluations. Our most important selection factor will be the prospective contractor's ability to design and carry out an evaluation that meets the highest professional standards. We will conduct a national competition to select our evaluation partner.

Selection criteria for national procurement process will require that the contractor document: 1) expertise in bridge program and career pathways; 2) expertise in income and asset building programs;

Narratives

3) experience with conduct of federally-funded evaluations; 4) experience in conduct of multi-site evaluations; 5) experience in data collection and follow-up for longitudinal studies; 6) sampling expertise and comparison group construction; 7) multivariate analysis; and 8) report-writing and presentation. These capabilities will pertain to both bid staff and organizational capability. We will also require the consultants to demonstrate experience in working with program grantees to structure their programs in such a way as to serve evaluation goals without compromising program quality. The evaluation selection process will require the prospective contractor to recommend an evaluation approach in their proposal, to be finalized after further exploration of the program model, estimated client counts, potential sources for construction of a comparison group, and SEP comments received from CNCS and its consultants. Finally, we will assess the reasonableness of contractor budgets in light of the proposed research activities.

In terms of the work itself, the contractor will be responsible for completing the Institutional Review Board Process, and if an OMB clearance process is required (which it was not for our earlier SIF award) they will be responsible for assembling the clearance package. Since this project is a Strategy B proposal, LISC will have a single program to be evaluated, which will allow us to bypass a Portfolio Evaluation Strategy and go directly to the creation of the required SIF Evaluation Plan (SEP). We expect that our past experience and contractor experience both will allow us to complete the SEP development and review process with dispatch, enabling us to ensure the maximum number of program cohorts as possible can contribute clients to the study population.

Lastly, our experience in monitoring evaluation contractors has led us to emphasize payments tied to deliverables, including research design, data collection and sampling plan, interim report, and final reports, as opposed to a cost-plus arrangement where we pay based on hours expended and other incurred costs. We will approve execution of any subcontractors not otherwise named in the initial evaluation proposal.

B3e. ASSESSING SUBRECIPIENT CAPACITY AND READINESS FOR EVALUATION

Those subrecipients selected for the evaluation will be required to cooperate with the national evaluator (and the initial RFP will make clear to prospective applicants that receipt of grant funds is contingent upon participation in evaluation efforts, should the subrecipient be selected as one of the evaluation sites). We expect that this will not be a substantial burden for subrecipients, insofar as

Narratives

extensive client data collection is already built into the program design. The evaluation contractor will select which subgrantees to include in the study, as it would be neither practical nor necessary to carry out evaluation based on all 32 subgrantees, given that this is a Strategy B proposal. The estimated five to seven subgrantees asked to participate (the exact number to be determined in the SEP/research design process) will be selected to match study goals. One likely strategy is to select organizations that resemble one another as closely as possible, agree to tailor their program model as closely as they can to one another, thereby enabling pooling of clients for analysis, and that have the highest levels of demonstrated ability to deliver quality programs, especially including the retention of clients after initial program enrollment (which is critical to the workability of the intent-to-treat design, discussed below.)

B3f. EVIDENCE LEVEL ACHIEVED BY EVALUATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

LISC expects to commission an evaluation that produces a strong level of evidence: a national multi-site QED (quasi-experimental design), at a minimum, or an RCT (randomized control trial) that yields evidence sufficient to support causal inference. The decision to perform an RCT is very much contingent on the quality of case management data to support a rigorous outcomes analysis and the coverage of those data across treatment and control groups, which in turn depends on the subgrantees we select and their existing program structure.

Development of a detailed evaluation strategy awaits development of the SIF Evaluation Plan, but based on our past experience, LISC can anticipate several likely features and parameters of the program and the evaluation. LISC already has a consensus list of established core outcome indicators that evaluators will be expected to track and analyze, and which in the Rationale and Approach section (Section B1) we distinguished as either education and skills outcomes (such as bridge program completion, occupational skills program matriculation, and accumulation of credentials along a career path) or financial and employment outcomes (including completion of financial coaching milestones, changes in net income, or attainment of employment in a chosen career path). The evaluation design will be shaped by the intervention or interventions that LISC would like to test. Research questions that we anticipate being most critical include: 1) whether people who participate in bridge programming backed by career and financial coaching supports experience better outcomes than those who participate only in bridge; and 2) the reverse, that is, whether people who participate in career and financial coaching but enroll in a bridge program achieve better outcomes than those

Narratives

who receive coaching alone.

The contractor will be expected to design a pre- and post-test with matching comparison groups to achieve a strong level of evidence that coaching supports improve program outcomes for bridge program students, and conversely, that bridge program participation improves outcomes for career and financial coaching participants. Optimally, both treatment and control groups will be drawn from the same organizational settings, which can be done if both coaching and bridge programs are delivered on-site, client totals in both treatment and comparison groups are large enough to provide adequate statistical power, and programs across multiple sites are similar enough that the evaluator can pool client data for analysis. As noted above, the evaluator will at least do a QED, and if possible, an RCT. If a QED, we would expect the evaluator to select some form of propensity score matching to identify a comparison group.

The evaluator will have multiple data collection options. As noted elsewhere, LISC has a client management system through which subrecipients will collect extensive data on the characteristics of clients at program entry; on the type, intensity, and duration of services they receive; and on the outcomes they attain throughout their engagement with coaching services. These data are used for program management purposes, and may not be fully adequate for research purposes, although LISC has budgeted additional funds to compensate subgrantees participating in the study for any extra work they incur (which we expect to be modest) in adapting programs to match the core model as closely as possible and to ensure higher quality client outcomes data. Nevertheless, the evaluator may need to supplement these data with data collected through surveys.

The research design will be an intent-to-treat design, in which all clients who enroll in either coaching or bridge programs or both are considered part of the treatment group. Such designs are vulnerable to high levels attrition in program participation (clients who exit the program prior to completion of the course of the intervention). This is why we advise selecting subgrantees with strong records of sustained client engagement.

We have concluded from past practice that the client counts available to the analysis should be sufficient to drive reasonably precise statistical analysis, conservatively assuming that if the evaluator selects, say, six subgrantees that graduate three bridge cohorts per year. If each cohort contains an

Narratives

estimated 20 clients, over the middle three years of program operation the study population will come to approximately 1,000 clients. The first year of the program will be devoted to set-up and maturation; and the last year to data analysis and final report writing. We do expect to run an evaluation procurement quite soon after award, enabling the evaluators to consult on program start-up in time to shape program features in selected subrecipient sites.

In addition to this analysis of client outcomes, the evaluator will be expected to carry out an implementation analysis to ascertain the degree to which subrecipient programs remained faithful to the core approach, which has the additional effect of helping detect any departures from fidelity at a stage early enough to enable correction. These findings along with the outcomes analysis will, to the extent permitted by the latter, be presented in an interim report, sometime at the end of year three, and a final report to be delivered at the end of year five.

Program Design continued in Organizational Capability Section

Organizational Capability

Continued from Program Design

B3g. BUDGET AND COST-REASONABLENESS OF EVALUATION

LISC has assumed three-year evaluation costs of approximately \$1.5 million, a figure based on the number of clients we expect to include in treatment and control groups, the number of subgrantee sites from which those clients will be drawn, and the time period over which data will be collected and analyzed. This amount is consistent with past evaluation experience as well as our current SIF evaluation contract, which is a multi-site quasi-experimental research design with longitudinal tracking of over a thousand treatment and comparison group members. This figure is consistent with CNCS guidance on evaluation costs as a percentage of grant award. If six subgrantees contribute clients to the study, and these grantees are awarded average grants, their total will come to \$5,250,000 over the five years, assuming renewal. This means the \$1.5 million evaluation budget will come to 28.6 percent. This figure does not include amounts from private match sources used to support LISC research staff costs incurred during procurement and contract management.

B3h. EXISTING LEVEL OF EVIDIENCE FOR PROPOSED SUPPORTED-BRIDGES-TO-CAREERS MODEL

Narratives

Based on a review of ten studies with strong designs on the effects of programs that, for the most part, are similar to our proposed Bridges to Career Opportunity intervention, we claim preliminary-to-moderate levels of evidence that our proposed intervention has demonstrable effects in one or more of our key outcome areas. Three studies using an RCT design (Martin and Broadus, 2013; Roder and Elliott, 2011; Maguire et al., 2010) established the value of core elements of our proposed intervention, as implemented by organizations that are different from the types we expect to fund under this application. Therefore, these studies meet only the preliminary evidence threshold as defined by CNCS. Three studies using QED design (Zeidenberg, Cho, and Jenkins, 2010; Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2014; NeighborWorks America, 2014) examined a different organization using a similar model, producing preliminary evidence. Two studies using QED design (Economic Mobility Corporation, 2014; Rankin, 2015a) examined similar but not identical interventions as implemented by the same types of organizations that we will select to scale our program, and found demonstrable effects on one or more intended outcomes (a preliminary-to-moderate level of evidence). One study using a QED design (Rankin, 2015b) examined the identical intervention as implemented by the same types of organizations and found positive effects on multiple outcomes within one of the two broad evaluation questions appropriate to our intervention (a moderate level of evidence). The listing of these studies and links to the studies themselves, as well as the bibliographic references contained in this proposal, can be found at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxhoeJNEQaj3MWFhcGhucmVZa1k/view?usp=sharing>.

To summarize the findings themselves, Rankin (2015b) used FOC client data to design a QED pre-post multi-site matched comparison of low-income clients receiving integrated employment, financial, and income support services and contextualized bridge/vocational education to clients not receiving bridge program services. The treatment group included 629 program clients (for employment placement) and the control group included 9,137 integrated services program clients from the same FOCs. Propensity scoring was used to match each treated client with most-similar controls. Participants who completed bridge/vocational education programs obtained jobs more quickly, an average of one month sooner than controls. Average initial wages were \$1.12 higher (\$11.89 for treatment clients versus \$10.77 for control clients), and treatment group clients were, on average, eight percentage points more likely to retain jobs for six months than participants who did not receive bridge/vocational education (73 percent versus 65 percent). Rankin (2015a) examined integrated services provided by FOCs and found that clients receiving bundled employment and financial services

Narratives

were twice as likely to get jobs as those in employment counseling only and intensive-integrated-services clients were three times more likely to do so. Economic Mobility (2014) analyzed credit outcomes to find that FOC clients are more likely to make on-time payments on trade accounts than those in a WIA One-Stop program comparison group. (The One-Stop Career Centers are workforce centers funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act; while they Centers are locally-administered, they typically provide job-search services to a large volume of clients and do not incorporate a focus on improving net income as such, nor financial coaching.) Burnett et al. (2010) analyzed pre- and post-client data and found that clients that received integrated services in an FOC program were three times more likely to achieve a major economic outcome than were clients not receiving these services.

Preliminary-to-moderate levels of evidence have been recorded for important elements of our program as implemented by others. For example, Martin and Broadus (2013) found that a participants in a community college supported bridge program offering contextualized, career-oriented curriculum with individualized transition counseling were more than twice as likely to pass the GED exam than were a randomly-assigned control group. Economic Mobility (2011) found that a supported-bridge-to-careers program for disadvantaged youth produced earnings 30 percent higher than a randomly-assigned comparison group. Zeidenberg, Cho, and Jenkins (2010) conducted a sophisticated QED study using multiple regression, propensity scoring and differences-in-differences analysis of the Washington State I-BEST program and found that participants were significantly more likely to obtain college credits and achieve higher skills gains than were non-participants.

The proposed evaluation for Bridges to Career Opportunity is designed to develop strong levels of evidence that the program achieves its intended effects. The evaluation will be a large-scale multi-site well-implemented QED or RCT specifically designed to test for the effects of our proposed intervention on multiple client outcomes in domains of education/skills attainment and employment/financial outcomes. In short, the evaluation will be designed to support causal conclusions on the joint effects of supported bridge-to-career programs on upward mobility outcomes through a quasi-experimental or experimental research design.

B4. PROPOSAL FOR GROWING SUBRECIPIENT IMPACT

We expect to grow our programs in both of the ways that the SIF envisions: through expansion of existing program sites and replication of the program to new sites in different communities. We

Narratives

believe that even though we have only preliminary-to-moderate evidence to offer, this evidence pertains to each of the individual program components in Bridges to Career Opportunity, as well as to the integrated delivery that is the cornerstone of the model. Therefore, LISC believes that this integrated bridge-skills-financial coaching approach is well-positioned for the modest-scale replication envisioned in this proposal (from the initial 14 sites to total of up to 32 sites). This expansion will allow LISC to examine issues in program replication into different city and organizational settings.

B4a. CAPACITY TO SUPPORT SUBRECIPIENT GROWTH

As outlined in our 2012 paper on how we scaled our 2010 SIF program (Walker, 2012), which supported our nationwide network of Financial Opportunity Centers, there are three basic barriers to the replication of good programs: 1) lack of information, including information about program elements and challenges in the adaptation and implementation of programs in new settings; 2) insufficient funding to support scaling and replication; and 3) absence of a national infrastructure to support expansion into multiple local sites. As a national intermediary, LISC been able to resolve all of these issues, though not without hard work, in each of these areas. As an intermediary, our essential function in community development is to design and translate program models in a variety of fields - housing, economic development and others - into the cities where we work. LISC raises national funding in service of this mission, and our national infrastructure consists of well-resourced national program leadership, backed by financial, information, research, policy, and fundraising offices, able to support our field network consisting of offices in 31 urban locations and a national rural program. Our ability to scale programs effectively is amply demonstrated by the successful scaling of our Financial Opportunity Center network, from seven centers in Chicago in 2005 to 76 centers in 32 cities in 2015.

Following the preceding discussion on the types of subrecipients that best align with LISC's theory of change - those skilled in bundling services, with good leadership and information use, good external relationships, and markers of growth potential - our approach to growing subrecipient programs calls for strengthening each of these areas of work. This means that technical assistance, training, funding, policy and research support, and other supports mentioned below will be devoted to priorities that are described in more detail below.

First, LISC will provide technical assistance for subrecipients to design and implement smoothly-functioning client flow and program-bundling processes and services that help clients effectively,

Narratives

which requires that clients engage with the appropriate services and remain engaged throughout their course of study. Over the course of LISC's management of the FOC network, we have become increasingly prescriptive about the best ways to sequence services, as we have learned lessons about what works best and why. We know, for example, that for individuals who remain engaged with the program and receive bundled services, job placement and retention rates are three times that of those receiving employment counseling alone with lower levels of engagement.

Second, LISC will invest in the subrecipients' human resources, information management, and financial management capacities, which provide a crucial backbone to the delivery of program services. Our theory of change calls for fairly intensive and sophisticated collection and use of client demographics, service participation, and outcomes - through LISC's Family Financial Tracking template in Social Solutions' Efforts to Outcomes data system - to both track ongoing service delivery and measure organizational performance and client outcomes (for example attainment of service-bundling and job placement goals). We require that all of our subrecipients adopt the same data collection protocols, procedures and technology platform, and furthermore, that they adopt similar performance management practices as they review and act upon these data.

Third, LISC will support and foster strong working relationships between subrecipients and the broader system of referrals, technical support, funding, and political and policy support. As outlined in Section B1c of this proposal, our theory of change emphasizes a feedback loop with employers, who help advise on the design of contextualized bridge and occupational skills programming, in some cases pledge to consider bridge graduates for job openings, and provide feedback on client quality and preparedness for the occupations they seek to pursue. Good relationships with both employers and skills training organizations, including community colleges, are necessary to ensure that bridge program curricula are adequately-contextualized, responsive to employer needs, and able to articulate into higher-level skills training programs.

From our 2010 effort to scale up the Financial Opportunity Center network, we learned about the importance of implementing a consistent and high-quality process for delivering bundled services, and implemented a practical performance measurement process tied to continuous monitoring and improvement. Furthermore, because organizations are nested within a changing environment, we now understand that going to scale is not a linear, but an iterative process. This means, for example,

Narratives

that program experimentation in any given site never stops, even as we replicate a standardized model elsewhere.

B4b. ASSESSING SUBGRANTEE CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

The characteristics we will use to assess subrecipient capacity for growth are outlined in a Section B4b of this proposal. In addition to the characteristics of the subrecipient organizations themselves, LISC strongly believes that it is also important to consider the broader workforce development, funding, and policy infrastructure in the subrecipients cities/regions and the extent to which the prospective subrecipients have been able to connect with that constellation of partners. In selecting the geographic regions where LISC will run a proposed subgrant competition, we also carefully considered the capacity of LISC local staff to support the program in the ways outlined below. Our review of the evidence underlying our claim that replication of our program across multiple subrecipients is warranted can be found in the section on Evaluation (Section B3). But in short, each of the program components, as well as the bundle of components, has been shown to be effective according to preliminary-to-moderate levels of evidence.

B4c. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR SUBRECIPIENT GROWTH

LISC will provide three types of support: 1) technical assistance and training; 2) data systems and supporting analysis; and 3) local and national intermediation, which includes help with accountability, program development, and resource generation.

First, upon award, LISC will create a technical assistance schedule to include four key trainings to subrecipients, which will occur within the first year of the award to ensure quick adoption of our program approach. These trainings include a service integration/mapping retreat to plan supported bridge program implementation, data tracking and performance management training (discussed in more depth below), training for frontline staff on the coaching model, and adapting bridge curriculum. Throughout the SIF grant period, LISC will continue to provide training through regional meetings of grantees and an annual meeting in which subgrantees will participate in group workshops and discussion sessions on special topics in program design and implementation. We will provide supported-bridge client flow trainings in each city (which help groups design their flow of service integrations), and conduct monthly webinars. Locally, program officers will convene the management staff from local subrecipient organizations on at least a bimonthly basis to review

Narratives

program progress and facilitate peer-learning and peer-networking between sites. LISC will also arrange for consultants to provide specialized training and technical assistance, as needed, either in-person in the local sites or via webinar if there is a broad national demand for TA on that particular specialized topic.

As discussed in an earlier section (Section B1d, covering the theory of change), seven members of the LISC FOC network have a successful track record of operating contextualized bridge instruction, and LISC further supported the development of the supported bridge models in another seven FOCs across five cities. Through our national and local structure of support to the subrecipients, we expect we will continue to build capacity for bridge through additional community-based organizations. Organizations who were a part of the pilot have created bridge programs in industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and IT. Lessons learned from the process and implementation experience, as well as the contextualized curricula developed in this pilot phase can be shared to more organizations as we expand the work.

As LISC has done with our general FOC model and expansion, we will establish a peer-learning community nationally and in each locality for Bridges to Career Opportunity sites. Peer-learning has been a highly effective TA element, as direct services professionals oftentimes learn best from other practitioners. Groups who are experienced bridge providers will be involved in providing technical assistance to new sites through peer learning meetings, webinars, and development of resources. LISC will build upon its institutionalized a system of monthly frontline staff peer meetings locally, with senior-leadership and cross-disciplinary meetings occurring bimonthly or quarterly.

Second, robust data systems and supporting analysis are central to our existing FOC work and will be equally critical to the expansion of the Bridges to Career Opportunity model. Our customized data-tracking system based on Social Solutions' Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) platform is now used by all subgrantees in our FOC integrated (bundled) service delivery program, and will be used to track Bridges to Career Opportunity program outcomes, as well. All subrecipients of the SIF award will gain access to the online platform, receive a one-day intensive training on the system within the first quarter of award, and have access to ongoing technical assistance as needed from their local LISC Program Officer as well as national LISC staff. While the initial one-day training focuses on data-entry and data quality control for frontline users of the system, LISC will provide follow-up training

Narratives

and TA in two areas: 1) troubleshooting and technical use of the data system for frontline users; and 2) strategic TA for subrecipient program managers and directors on how to interpret data and use performance reports as a tool for program management and improvement.

Third and finally, intermediation provided by national and local LISC offices has proven to be a powerful support to our FOC program scaling efforts, and we expect the same result in the Bridges to Career Opportunity expansion as well. Three elements of this support are vital to program operation and expansion: accountability, resource generation, and program development. LISC's extensive experience in subgranting federal dollars means that we have a comprehensive, strong compliance and financial management infrastructure, including monitoring policies, resources for subrecipients (for example, sample policies and procedures), in-house knowledge on current federal regulations, and experience in providing direct technical assistance via webinar and in person. In our role as national SIF program manager for our 2010 award, accountable to CNCS for results, local LISC staff use ETO data monthly to monitor operating site performance against local benchmarks, and national staff review the same data to identify leading and lagging sites against national performance patterns. Each year since 2010, when reviewing existing SIF subgrantees for continuation funding, LISC has adjusted annual subgrant award amounts to align with subgrantees' performance accordingly.

Each local LISC offices supports the development of the infrastructure, partnerships and relationships to build out customized local programs. We help facilitate advisory relationships between our subgrantees and employers, both to generate job leads for clients as well as to ensure that program and curriculum design is responsive to hiring needs of employers; for example, LISC worked with FOCs to expand the use of a job readiness curriculum, in response to employers' expressed concerns not just about technical skills gaps but about gaps in soft skills of new hires, including punctuality, conflict management, professional dress, teamwork, and customer communication. We have created new programming to close gaps in local workforce and educational systems. For example, through extensive employer engagement, LISC staff in Houston discovered a disconnect between the competencies taught in Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training programs in TX (which focus on preparing individuals to work in home health and nursing home settings) and the practical skills that hospitals seek for employees at the nursing-assistant level (often called Patient Care Associates). Local labor market research also confirmed that in general, hospitals offered higher wages, better working conditions, and more opportunities for advancement compared to long-term and home-health care

Narratives

sectors. In response, LISC forged a partnership with a local hospital to offer externships and training that will bridge newly-minted CNAs into hospital positions by equipping them with the additional skills that the job requires.

Both accountability mechanisms and our program development efforts have helped us line up industry, government, and philanthropic support for program development or expansion. LISC helps the subgrantees position themselves to secure match funding - but on a broader level we also focus on building connections with other national and local stakeholders, and jointly advocate for policies (both public policies and private/corporate policies) to better support coaching, work supports, bridge programming and occupational skills training. For example, the local hospital mentioned above has now expressed interest in investing their own resources to create additional on-the-job training offerings to will help staff fast-track into higher-level patient care positions.

Above all, LISC finds that program sustainability is enhanced (though not assured) by developing and substantiating a national and local reputation for quality service delivery, ability to show good performance management practices, ability to demonstrate good results for clients, ability to show that programs continue to innovate, and continuing support from LISC and other system partners (aside from the funding). All of these will be part of this proposed Bridges to Career Opportunity expansion.

C1. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFF CAPACITY

C1a. TRACK RECORD OF PROGRAM AND GRANT MANAGEMENT

LISC has over 35 years of experience working in underserved communities across the nation, providing capacity building support to community-based organizations. For nearly 10 years, LISC has successfully designed, grown, and managed a national network of Financial Opportunity Centers that provide integrated services in employment and financial coaching, and an excellent track record in managing SIF support for this network. We have successfully introduced a pilot Bridges to Career Opportunity (the proposed intervention for this SIF application) program on this already established platform. LISC has an extensive and highly-regarded track-record in the implementation of national programs, and a demonstrated ability to raise funds, including large amounts of private matching funds for our 2010 SIF award. Our organizational leadership, governance, and management has an industry-wide reputation for high-quality performance in delivering nearly \$1 billion in investments in

Narratives

projects and programs each year. LISC's national infrastructure and local field operations provide the backbone of support for on-the-ground implementation, channeling training and technical support for implementation, performance data tracking and evaluation, monitoring, partnership-building, and resource development.

C1b. TRACK RECORD DEVELOPING AND MANAGING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVES

The Economic Opportunity issue area is closely aligned with LISC's national mission, and as an intermediary nonprofit, LISC has significant experience working with subgrantees. Our 10 years of experience managing the Financial Opportunity Center network witnessed growth from seven centers in Chicago in 2005 to nearly 50 centers in 2011 with the SIF award and now to over 76 centers in 32 cities. The network collectively provides bundled services to over 23,000 predominately low-income individuals each year, using a common program approach and performance management system. LISC has have gained industry recognition for this program, and is a founding member of the Working Families Success Network, an umbrella organization of intermediaries and funders dedicated to promoting integrated services delivery as a transformative approach to social/human services and economic opportunity work. As noted in our evaluation section (Section B3), we have put in place a very successful multi-site pilot of our Bridges to Career Opportunity program.

The SIF award will be primarily managed by LISC's Family Income & Wealth Building (FIWB) program. FIWB Program Director, Seung Kim, earned her MBA and began her career in finance before working as a coach at a LISC FOC, then a consultant to National and Chicago LISC, providing technical assistance and strategic guidance to FOCs during rapid national expansion of sites. All three of the Program Officers in FIWB have been with LISC since the early stages of LISC's 2010-2015 SIF project, and accordingly have extensive experience with compliance, grant management, and providing grant-related technical assistance to subrecipients. Over the last two years, local and national LISC staff have piloted our Bridges to Career Opportunity approach in seven cities, enabling us to build our own capacity to scale and oversee this work, as well the capacity of our community-based partners to integrate bridge programming into their organizations. The FIWB team is overseen by LISC Senior Vice President for National Programs, Kevin Jordan. As Mr. Jordan was previously the Program Director for LISC FIWB department and himself has extensive professional experience in workforce development and asset building, LISC senior management has strongly encouraged

Narratives

development of the Bridges to Career Opportunity initiative, and the LISC board has discussed and approved this application.

C1b. CAPACITY TO COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

As noted in our evaluation section (Section B3), and below, our very experienced research and assessment staff have carried out numerous federally-funded program evaluations. The LISC research director and staff have extensive experience in qualitative and quantitative research design, data collection, and analysis, involving multiple types of sampling and statistical analyses, including leadership of more than \$10 million worth of federal and foundation research projects. For the proposed Bridges to Career Opportunity project, staff have significant subject-matter expertise in income and asset-building programs, deep understanding of the client management databases able to support both in-house and third-party evaluations, and analysis experience with these same databases. In the last several years, LISC has carried out its own analysis of LISC programs in-house, and has contracted with some \$2 million in third party evaluations, including an ongoing evaluation of the program supported by our first SIF award.

To manage our large network of organizations, we have successfully designed, implemented, and improved our FOC performance management system (Family Financial Tracking-Efforts to Outcomes, or FFT-ETO), which enables sites to track demographics, outputs, and outcomes of their client base. We have experience training over 80 organizations on that data system. LISC provides opportunities for technical assistance on FFT-ETO throughout the year. Experienced staff at the local and national level provide direct support to sites and manage data review processes; our national team reviews data site by site and on an aggregate level to determine whether Financial Opportunity Center sites are on track to meet their goals. LISC use the data to seek out opportunities to continuously improve program implementation and also to provide sites with targeted additional technical assistance. On the fiscal management side, local and national LISC staff review monthly financial reports for federal subgrantee disbursement, to ensure sound subgrantee financial management, as well as additional compliance provisions such as the criminal history check requirements of our 2010 SIF award.

C1c. ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET AND IMPACT OF A SIF AWARD

LISC's total operating budget is approximately \$130 million per year. Our financial strength is

Narratives

excellent, as measured by our reserves, operating ratios, net assets, stability of funding streams, and amounts of earned income. This grant as would represent approximately 3% of the total organizational budget, but it is crucial to our ability to scale the promising Bridges to Career Opportunity model to more organizations and communities, and seize a unique opportunity to expand at a time when Federal policy environment has become favorable to supported-bridges-to-career programming.

C1d. LISC INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FEDERAL GRANT AND CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK COMPLIANCE

LISC has been a federal grant recipient for over 20 years and has an excellent track record of effective grants management. Our systems have enabled us to readily comply with federal requirements, including criminal background checks, under our 2010 SIF award. LISC program staff are supported by a team of grant management professionals who provide technical assistance and resources to LISC staff and subrecipients. Together with our Government Accounting Department, our eight-member Grants and Contracts Management (GCM) department oversees subgrants and direct expenditures of government and private funds and coordinates quality program plans, program/financial reports, and compliance with federal regulations within LISC and among partners, including 2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 200, OMB A-133, FFATA, and ARRA. GCM supports program staff as they provide TA to nonprofit groups to meet federal requirements (DUNS, SAM registrations, debarment checks, business management systems, internal controls, and so on), and train LISC's local program staff in grants management to ensure grant compliance and timely expenditure of funds.

C1e. COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUBGRANTEES

LISC has over 35 years of experience providing capacity building support in the communities in which we work, with an emphasis on multi-year commitments and on blending multiple types of project and organizational support. We are long-term investors in most of the neighborhoods in which we work, often including our community partners in those same communities. In the Bridges to Career Opportunity expansion, we will competitively select subrecipients for a three-year commitment, though performance against organizational goals will drive annual funding levels. As we have done in our FOC performance management process, we will develop both short-term and long-term goals with each organization. In this case, short-term goals may include bridge curriculum development, building relationships with employers, and testing the curriculum with a pilot cohort. Medium-term

Narratives

goals will focus on the types of outcomes we expect clients will achieve through the bridge program. Long-term goals will include achieving scale through expansion of these services to reach more individuals.

C2. SUBRECIPIENT SUPPORT, MONITORING, AND OVERSIGHT

C2a. GOAL-SETTING, PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR SUBRECIPIENTS

As an organization, LISC prides itself on performance-based funding. In 2014 alone, LISC awarded over 1,000 subgrants to community-based partners around the country. Local LISC staff provide the first level of technical assistance, network building, compliance monitoring and general oversight. National staff support local staff with specialized knowledge in program implementation, federal regulations and compliance. Since 2010, LISC has managed a SIF award of \$4.2 million per year. Our performance measurement system involves monthly tracking of subrecipient performance against annual goals for program quality (such as service-integration rates and client engagement) and client outcomes (such as employment placements and increases in net income). Our performance measurement system contributes client data to this process, but it is also used to help subrecipient case managers and coaches help each client achieve his or her individual goals.

Our FOC performance management process includes analysis of client outcomes information, including such metrics as employment placement and retention rates, changes in credit score, changes in net income and net worth. Under our 2010 SIF award, LISC worked with every subrecipient to set program output and outcome goals. Then throughout the award year, LISC monitored subgrant performance against the goals and provided technical assistance if needed. In addition, subgrantees used the data to improve program performance by identifying weak areas of implementation and correcting as needed. Finally, data quality and achievement of outcomes were used when evaluating subgrantees for additional funding on an annual basis, and we have in the past de-funded grantees for inadequate performance and both increased or decreased funding amounts based on performance.

As discussed in Section B4c Technical Assistance Plan for Subrecipient Growth, LISC provides support in three broad areas: 1) technical assistance and training; 2) data and analysis support, including performance measurement; and 3) intermediary services, which include monitoring and accountability, program development, and resource generation. As part of our support and technical

Narratives

assistance, LISC has a strong commitment to facilitating peer-network and peer-sharing in local learning communities, as well as in national meetings we convene, the direct training we provide in those program areas that in the past have proven to pose the most difficult challenges, such as coaching or design of smooth client flow systems, and assistance with data systems, data management, and performance tracking. Upon receipt of this award, LISC will create a technical assistance schedule to provide four key trainings to subrecipients: a) a service mapping retreat to plan the implementation of the Bridges to Career Opportunity initiative; b) data tracking training (discussed in more depth below); c) coaching training to train frontline staff on the coaching model; and d) a curriculum training on the specifics of contextualizing curriculum for the Bridges to Career Opportunity model. All trainings will take place within the first quarter of the subawards.

With respect to performance management, LISC's well-developed performance measurement and management system (ETO-FFT) includes a customized data-tracking system to support its workforce and asset-building programs. This platform will also be used to track supported bridge outcomes. All subrecipients of this award will receive a one-day intensive training on the data tracking system within the first quarter of the award, as well as ongoing follow-up technical assistance as needed from their local LISC Program Officer and national LISC staff. (All local LISC Program Officers will have received the data system training, and the data/performance management lead on LISC's national team has received advanced training from Social Solutions, in addition to having over five years of experience providing capacity building and technical assistance to a local network of sites that use ETO-FFT.) While the initial one-day training focuses on data-entry and data quality control for frontline staff users of the system, LISC will provide follow-up TA in two areas: 1) troubleshooting and technical use of the data system; and 2) TA and guidance to subrecipient program managers on how to interpret their data and how to use their performance reports as a tool for program management and improvement. This will enable subrecipient management and leadership to effectively review performance data and adjust programs and processes accordingly.

C2b. PLAN TO DEVELOP SUBGRANTEE COMPLIANCE CAPACITY AND PROGRAM GROWTH
With LISC's extensive experience in subgranting federal dollars, key compliance systems are already in place. At the start of all new federal grants, LISC first assesses subgrantee capacity to manage federal funds and then provides training and tools on creating compliant policies and procedures as well as understanding the federal regulations. LISC conducts annual monitoring visits to all

Narratives

subgrantees to ensure compliance with regulations and uses these occasions to provide direct technical assistance as needed. In addition, for this grant, LISC will provide training in the form of webinars on topics such as cost allowability, timesheets, and criminal background checks within the first six months of the grant period.

LISC's plan for helping subrecipients grow their programs is discussed at some length in Section B4a of this proposal. Note that as a Strategy B proposal, we consider ourselves the primary scaling agent, responsible for providing the national infrastructure needed to support our proposed program intervention, grow and improve programming, and help subawardees incorporate the Bridges to Career Opportunity approach. In proposal Section B4, Growing Subrecipient Impact, impact, we detail three types of support: technical assistance and training, data systems and analysis for performance management, and local and national intermediary services.

C3. STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Family Income and Wealth Building department of LISC oversees workforce development and asset building initiatives, and is a critical aspect of the broader comprehensive neighborhood improvement strategy we pursue, which also includes programs in community safety, education, and other domains. LISC is committed to continue to support and grow these programs, as we have with the Financial Opportunity Center model as it continues to grow far beyond the SIF-funded footprint - of the 76 FOCs currently in LISC's national network 45 are funded by the 2010 SIF award and 31 are funded through non-SIF sources (and LISC continues to receive inquiries from non-SIF organizations interested in implementing the FOC model). One way we have done this is by building out the local support networks that subgrantees will need to draw upon to sustain their work. We have found that the data and evaluation work we do has been vital to raising and sustaining this support, and it is also critical to making the policy case nationally. LISC will continue to inform both policy makers and private funders about the need for program models like Bridges to Career Opportunity for the hardest to serve population.

All of our subrecipients will have access to the ETO-FFT data and performance management system even after the SIF grant ends. As a part of LISC's ETO enterprise, sites pay only between 5-10% of the cost of carrying their own license. And as noted, we work throughout the grant period to build the support networks organizations need to continue their work. LISC is also actively involved in

Narratives

researching the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the funding options it may provide for local organizations; WIOA clarified that financial counseling, in the context of providing employment services, is an allowable use of federal workforce funds. While WIOA does not create a dedicated funding stream for financial counseling or coaching, the acknowledgment of financial counseling relevant to employment services is a promising first step - and one that highlights the importance of demonstrating that integrated program models like Bridges to Career Opportunity are effective and worth broad replication. LISC is also encouraged by the added interest in integrating other services such as employment training in the context of SNAP E&T through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. On the financial side, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau created a financial counseling resource guide for human service providers. This level of interest in integration provides promise that with enough evidence, there may one day be additional federal funding for financial counseling and supported bridges to career pathways initiatives.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

D. COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY

D1. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

LISC created a budget for the Bridges to Career Opportunity program that is both cost effective and supportive of high quality program implementation. LISC will support 53% of the overall costs with match funds. The specific costs are outlined below.

D1a. SUBRECIPIENT SELECTION

Costs related to subrecipient selection are largely reflected in the local and national staff time required to run a successful competitive selection. At the local level, in each of the targeted areas, local LISC will broadly disseminate the Request for Proposal. Each local office will convene a group of reviewers made up of local funders and stakeholders interested in supporting local work. The national office will support the selection by organizing the overall selection infrastructure and reviewing the final applications. This process will take staff time and minimal resources for advertising the RFP and printing any materials as needed.

D1b. EVALUATION

The evaluation will be overseen by LISC's Research and Assessment team and we have budgeted \$49,500 for LISC Research and Assessment staff time. We expect the total costs of the evaluation are \$1,500,000 over three years. We have budgeted \$350,000 for the first year of SIF. We expect the

Narratives

major costs associated with the first year include those for technical help throughout early program start-up in the research sites, research design costs, and costs associated with early data collection activities, particularly those tied to use of the existing performance measurement data collection system.

D1c. PROGRAM GROWTH

National program staff overseeing this initiative (including LISC Senior Vice President for National Programs) will work to support expansion of the program within the subrecipient network. Through operating grants to sites, we plan to replicate the program to over 30 centers in up to fourteen cities. We will look for ways to promote evidence of the program so that it becomes a critical aspect of the core business of each subrecipient. Furthermore, LISC will grow the program beyond the subrecipient network sharing some of the same learnings and best practices to other organizations in and out of the network. LISC will participate in national conferences to provide field-building support through knowledge dissemination.

D1d. SUBRECIPIENT SUPPORT AND OVERSIGHT

LISC National Staff and local staff will provide technical assistance throughout the grant period. In the first subrecipient grant term, LISC will provide training to each organization in three key areas: 1) understanding Bridges to Careers implementation 2) SIF compliance and grant management, and 3) training in Family Financial Tracking Efforts to Outcomes (important for performance management and evaluation of the program). Local LISC staff will be a part of these trainings and provide intensive local support in these areas.

This grant will also support consultants for technical assistance in bridge implementation and bridge curriculum design, and career coaching for all of the subrecipients. National staff will travel to provide assistance, support, and for compliance site visits. LISC will host a conference to promote peer learning and knowledge sharing of the Bridges to Career Opportunity Program; and LISC will provide 15 technical assistance webinars in the first year.

D2. CAPACITY TO RAISE MATCH

LISC has significant experience with raising match for the Social Innovation Fund award. We were in the 2014 inaugural cohort of SIF intermediaries and were renewed for five years at \$4.2 million per

Narratives

year. We successfully raised private match each year.

LISC has raised both local and national support for this project and has \$660,000 raised for this program from various sources (see attached documents for list of funders). Furthermore, LISC also raised \$3,500,000 in grants of unrestricted dollars that are currently reserved for this grant. Therefore, we have raised more than 100% of the match required for this grant.

The plan to continue to raise non-federal match includes a two pronged development: 1) LISC national will continue to cultivate relationships with large national funders interested in implementing new and innovative practices across multiple geographies; and 2) LISC local offices will also reach out to local private funders (such as local United Ways or local foundations) interested in bringing successful national models to their cities.

We are actively fundraising for the Bridges to Career Opportunity Program. We are awaiting notification from Kellogg Foundation for a \$750,000 grant. We have begun the application process with Walmart Foundation for a \$2 million award. And we are engaging with our existing funders such as MetLife Foundation and JPM Chase (who have previously provided \$2.25 million and \$1 million grants respectively) and who are interested in supporting the financial coaching aspect of supported bridge programs. As funding partners emerge, the actual match sources may change. There is also considerable local interest in supporting this work as well.

LISC will provide subrecipients with support to raise money for this work. We will share language that helps describe the program that sites can use in fund development. We will also share the preliminary evidence that we have shown through our own existing network of subgrantees that sites can use to raise awareness and support for the supported bridges to career program. Furthermore, we will provide network wide data that subrecipients can use help frame their work in the context of the larger network.

Clarification Summary

CLARIFICATION ITEMS

PROGRAMMATIC

Narratives

1. In your application, you mention that you developed and piloted the Bridges to Career Opportunity program model based on learnings from nearly a decade operating the Federal Opportunity Centers (FOC). Specifically, you described learning from the FOC expansion that the hardest-to-employ clients need additional supports, foundational education, industry-recognized credentials, and career pathway planning in order to access higher-wage middle skills jobs that can offer wage growth and lasting financial stability. Please describe the relationship between the current FOC program and the proposed Bridges to Career Opportunity program.

The current Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) program strategy aims for stable employment among hard-to-serve clients, with financial coaching and credit-building support that enables them to make the most of what most often is a low-wage job. We believe that this program is necessary, but not sufficient, to help workers advance up the jobs ladder. Our new Bridges to Career Opportunity Program offers FOC program participants a pathway to do that. As such, it is best thought of as a companion program, drawing on the resources FOCs provide, and in turn contributing to the ability of FOC programs to accomplish their goals.

Our FOC program integrates services under three core program areas: workforce development, financial counseling, and access to income supports. Most of the FOCs in LI SC's network layered financial and income supports services on a job-readiness platform, typically consisting of employment-search assistance, such as resume and interview preparation, job referrals, and in some cases multi-week job readiness classes that taught job-search basics along with workplace skills like communication, professionalism, and teamwork. Only a few also offered more substantial in-house technical skills training and credentialing programs.

Most clients have been able to stabilize and improve their financial situation. But too many struggle to attain job security and reach higher-level financial goals, such as retirement savings, homeownership, or entrepreneurship. These clients need occupational skills training that will lead to industry-recognized credentials and middle-class, middle-skills jobs. However, it became clear to us that because FOC clients lacked the foundational reading and math skills required to be successful in skills training, they needed more support - specifically, industry-contextualized academic preparation that is accessible, relevant, and efficient for adult learners who have not been well-served by traditional community college and general adult basic education systems.

Narratives

LISC views Bridges to Career Opportunity as a new application of the FOC integrated services strategy. Our data indicate that adding basic education and skills training to existing bundled FOC services helps FOC participants achieve even better economic outcomes than they would without bridge programming. And although we cannot test this with our own data, we believe that in turn, adding FOC-like supports to bridge and occupational skills programs helps students and trainees achieve better outcomes than they would under standalone bridge programs.

Some of the FOCs in LISC's existing network are already operating generalized adult basic education programs, and a small group of others have operated or recently launched contextualized bridge programming with LISC's support. But this does not mean that any FOC could adopt a companion bridge and occupational skills program, or that any bridge program would do better if grafted onto an existing FOC. Should LISC receive an intermediary 2015 SIF Classic grant, we will run a competitive selection process. We expect to receive proposals from FOCs that have the capacity to launch a Bridges to Career Opportunity strategy, as well as organizations that are not part of LISC's network but are operating similar contextualized bridge programs and are interested in enhancing and incorporating FOC integrated services into the bridge programming. Through the evaluation, we will continue to learn from, and build the case for, larger-scale replication of contextualized bridge programming integrated with career coaching, financial coaching, and income support services.

2. We understand you will require subrecipients to have formalized partnerships with at least one employer and will provide contextualized skills training in locally-strong industries like healthcare and manufacturing. The diversity of your proposed target geographies gives you an opportunity to examine your program model in the context of structural factors such as the local labor market (e.g. unemployment rates/employment in certain industries) and labor policies (e.g. wages, benefits) and their impact on clients' career growth. Please clarify whether, and how, market conditions and labor policies factor into your program strategy and site selection.

LISC believes that the core strategy of Bridges to Career Opportunity - providing contextualized basic education that connects to skills training or credentialing and is bolstered by ongoing coaching and other comprehensive supports - is adaptable to a wide variety of geographies and local market

Narratives

conditions. For example, USA Today recently published an analysis of Economic Modeling Specialists Intl. and CareerBuilder data, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/09/30/job-economy-middle-skill-growth-wage-blue-collar/14797413/>) which showed that most of the metropolitan areas targeted for LI SC's Bridges to Career Opportunity initiative projected numerous jobs in growth sectors and occupations that require no more than an associate's degree or shorter-term post-secondary non-degree credential. The crux of the problem that Bridges to Career Opportunity seeks to address is that living-wage and middle-skills jobs do exist, but that too many unemployed and low-income neighborhood residents are locked out of these job opportunities because basic skills and education gaps prevent them from accessing the needed training.

Broadly speaking, LI SC will select geographies based on where we have invested considerable resources to improve the economic viability of communities. Within this framework, we will select subgrantees in places where employers commit to partner with the public and nonprofit sectors to create (up-)skilling opportunities for low-income individuals. But we also want to show that our approach is effective across different types of labor markets. This means that our Bridges to Career Opportunity subgrantees must implement this strategy in a manner that is tailored to local, and regional market conditions.

If awarded a 2015 SIF Classic grant, LI SC will conduct a competitive selection process and will require prospective subgrantees to demonstrate in their proposals that they have examined labor market research on in-demand, growth-potential sectors, and used this information to inform the proposed focus for their contextualized bridge program. (This research could include federal, state, and local-level labor market data, projections on future growth jobs/industries, and qualitative input from employers on emerging hiring demands.)

Subgrantee proposals will further be required to map out the career pathway(s) into which bridge program participants will be equipped to transition after graduating. These maps will specify any external training for technical skills training or credentialing necessary after completing the bridge component of their education and training. They will specify their region's average wages (or wage ranges) for positions along the pathway(s). Prospective grantees will be advised that LI SC will prioritize industries and occupations where a worker might reasonably expect to have schedule stability, an opportunity to qualify for employer-provided benefits, and a prospect for earning a family-sustaining wage.

Narratives

3. You mention that the SIF award will be primarily managed by LISC's Family Income & Wealth Building (FIWB) program. The FIWB staff is also managing the 2010 SIF grant. Please clarify how you plan to ensure that your staff has the capacity to manage its time?

If we were to receive a 2015 SIF Classic award this summer, it would be at a time that our final subgrant year for the FOCs is winding down (the final subgrant period is February 2015 through January 2016). This means that there will be an approximate six-month period in which both SIF grants would be active.

Throughout this transition period, we will have a number of resources available to us to enable us to effectively manage both grants, especially important during the start-up phase of a 2015 grant. It is worth noting that because we have already created the internal systems necessary to manage SIF-funded work effectively, LISC is well-placed to smoothly roll out the program.

First, the SIF award will be managed primarily by LISC's Family Income and Wealth Building (FIWB) team, supported by LISC's national Grants and Contracts Management (GCM) staff and by the Government Accounting staff, both of whom are experienced in the management of federal grants and subgrants to community-based organizations. Both GCM and the Government Accounting staff have deep knowledge and experience with federal awards and have been trained in federal regulations including 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 215 and Circular No. A-122. GCM staff is comprised of eight staff members including grants managers and compliance specialists. LISC Government Accounting staff will assist with the close-out of the 2010 SIF grant and the GCM staff will assist in launch of the new grant should it be awarded.

Second, we have added a FIWB staff person on this 2015 SIF proposal. This staff person has been a member of our team since 2009, but she was not part of the SIF 2010 project budget. She has focused on other workforce development and Financial Opportunity Center initiatives, and has a strong workforce development background that includes staffing our Bridges to Career Opportunity pilot phase. She is also very familiar with SIF grant management and reporting, having overseen our 2010 SIF grant on an interim basis when our lead compliance Program Officer was on maternity leave in 2013.

Narratives

Finally, as with our 2010 SIF award, LISC would also work closely with staff at the local LISC offices in each of the geographies where 2015 SIF Classic subgrantees are selected. Therefore, we expect that with our national team working in conjunction with our field staff, we will have ample capacity to operate this much-needed program.

BUDGET

Consultant Selection

LISC follows a competitive selection process for hiring consultants. One part of the selection process is a review of proposed costs to ensure they are reasonable for the work being performed. The consultant amounts included in the contract are estimates based on LISC's experience in this field. Actual costs may be more or less depending on the bids received. The consultants included in the budget will be hired using a deliverable-based contract, meaning they will not receive payment until they have provided pre-defined deliverables. All costs are included in the deliverables. When the costs are broken down into a daily rate, LISC will not exceed the rate of \$800/day.

Continuation Changes

N/A