Narratives

Executive Summary

Mile High United Way proposes to have 54 AmeriCorps members, 54 full-time slots, who will focus their efforts to improve literacy proficiency of kindergarten through third grade students in the highest-need schools in a four-county area of Metro Denver, CO consisting of Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, and Jefferson County. At the end of the first program year, AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing the reading proficiency of over 1200 students in Metro Denver, CO. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 900 volunteers, who will be engaged in providing literacy mentoring sessions to over 700 third grade students throughout Metro Denver, CO. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of education. The CNCS investment of $648,000 will be matched with $900,333, $0 in public funding and $900,333 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

PROBLEM/NEED. Research suggests that a student reaching reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a significant predictor of timely high school graduation rates. Currently, 26% of third graders in Colorado are reading below grade level (Serve Colorado, 2015) and 22.7% of Colorado’s high school population is not graduating on time (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). Furthermore within the districts Colorado Reading Corps serves, up to 53.6% of third graders are reading below grade level and up to 41.7% of students are not graduating on time (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). By focusing on improving children’s reading proficiency from kindergarten through third grade, we believe we can make lasting impacts on our community. A study conducted stated if 8,600 high school dropouts were to earn a diploma, Colorado would see $101 million in increased annual earnings, 850 new jobs, and $4.5 million in increased state tax revenue (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2013). We believe that our efforts will make significant progress to make these statistics reality.

On July 1st, 2013, the Colorado Reading To Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act was passed and mandates that all kindergarten through 3rd Graders in Colorado schools who are not proficient at the end of their grade are provided with supplemental reading intervention. Schools across Colorado can apply for READ Act funds to implement an approved literacy program. Colorado Reading Corps is an approved READ Act program. With the implementation of the READ Act, Colorado is experiencing a great deal of political discussion about the effectiveness of early literacy interventions. Lieutenant Governor Joe Garcia has, on multiple occasions, endorsed Colorado Reading Corps as an exemplary
Narratives

program for engaging READ Act students throughout Metro Denver to increase their reading proficiency.

LOGIC MODEL. Our AmeriCorps program would include a total of 54 full-time AmeriCorps members. 51 of the members (51 MSY) would be Colorado Reading Corps tutors, providing daily, one-on-one literacy interventions to kindergarten through third grade students. The remaining 3 AmeriCorps members (3 MSY) will serve as School Partners Coordinators, mobilizing community volunteers to serve as literacy mentors to third grade students.

Colorado Reading Corps tutors will receive training, guidance, and supervision by a Master Coach and Internal School Literacy Coaches, all highly knowledgeable in the literacy interventions. Colorado Reading Corps tutors will be placed in the highest need schools in Adams 12, Aurora, and Jefferson County. The School Partners Program will coordinate volunteer literacy mentors to provide weekly one-on-one reading instruction to increase fluency, vocabulary, and confidence in Denver Public Schools. Our AmeriCorps program will provide Mile High United Way with the opportunity to provide direct service in one of its primary community impact goals, increasing students' reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Colorado Reading Corps and the School Partners Program allow Mile High United Way the ability to deliver high impact literacy and volunteer programs to the community.

THEORY OF CHANGE. Colorado Reading Corps' Theory of Change states that providing schools with the staffing and support to deliver a proven evidence-based model (i.e., benchmark assessments, evidence-based interventions, data-driven decision making, and coaching) will result in increased rates of literacy skills for children in kindergarten through third grade. Internal and external evaluations over 12 years support our replication model's effectiveness, as well as 4 years of our own programming and evaluation in Colorado. Results have validated this theory, for example Reading Corps students outperform their peers; the percentage of third grade students in Reading Corps exceeding target growth rates is 91%. Furthermore, kindergarten students improved at a rate that exceeded the expected rate of improvement through the Reading Corps model. Colorado Reading Corps helps struggling K-3 readers build the skills to read at grade-level within one year (Markowitz, et. al., 2014).

Colorado Reading Corps' Theory of Change is based on Minnesota Reading Corps and the research of
Narratives

Vaughn et. al. (2007), who found that effective reading programs have three essential elements: (a) valid and reliable measures for assessing student growth, (b) evidenced-based instructional interventions, (c) and a framework for educators to utilize the data for improved instructional decision-making. AmeriCorps members play a significant role in implementing all three elements under the day-to-day supervision of a trained school employee (i.e., Internal School Literacy Coach) and with monthly coaching from a Reading Corps literacy expert (i.e., Master Coach). In this model, AmeriCorps members are a unique and highly effective way to solve the literacy proficiency gap because they are given the tools and training to provide something schools cannot -- individualized, research-based, high-quality tutoring focused on specific literacy skills for at-risk students, as follows:

ASSESSMENTS. AmeriCorps members screen students at fall, winter, and spring benchmarks using validated assessments that have been established as strong predictors of later reading success. Evidence for this can be traced to the work of Deon (1985) and has been replicated by Marston & Magnusson (1985); Fuchs et al. (2004); Shinn et al. (1992); Good et al.; 2001; Hintz et al., 2002; and Deon, et al., (2006). Assessments are used to determine which students are most likely to benefit from Colorado Reading Corps from among those who score below standards for proficiency but not low enough to make them eligible for Title I or special education assistance (i.e., target population). Master Coaches analyze these scores and set clear literacy targets for each participating student. AmeriCorps members monitor student progress with benchmark assessments and weekly assessments to utilize this data to modify student instruction to accelerate growth in literacy skills.

INTERVENTIONS. AmeriCorps members work directly with students and teachers to deliver evidence-based supplemental instruction. In K-3, interventions align with National Reading Panel (2000) recommendations that target phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. Interventions are research-based, field-tested, and supported in numerous, rigorous evaluations. The number of students served is variable based on duration within the program; however an average of 20-25 students will be served by each AmeriCorps member. In order to meet the full number of hours necessary to fulfill service requirements, AmeriCorps members support before or after school activities, or additional community impact activities provided by Mile High United Way or other partner nonprofits. 51 AmeriCorps members are anticipated to serve a total of over 1200 students using our evidence-based interventions for 20 minutes daily. Full-time members will serve for 1700 hours and serve as tutors to 20-25 students in the year. The average length of time
Narratives

a student receives tutoring from a Colorado Reading Corps member before graduating the program is 18.46 weeks. Additionally in the School Partners Program, three AmeriCorps members will facilitate weekly 45 minute literacy mentoring sessions, utilizing over 900 volunteers to serve an estimated 725 students each school year.

These interventions are developed from best practice assessment tools - the Curriculum-based Measures for Reading (CBMReading) and Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST). These were selected for use in Reading Corps because of their well-established statistical reliability and validity for screening and progress monitoring purposes. The Test of Letter Names, Test of Letter Sounds, Test of Nonsense Words, and CBMReading are measures of early literacy skills that have been supported by decades of thorough research, most recently as part of the FAST. Reading Corps uses measures from FAST, which are some of the strongest available measures for assessing the skills targeted by Reading Corps. CBMReading provides an assessment of connected text reading. Early and ongoing research on this measure has also been conducted at the University of Minnesota. All these measures fit under the umbrella of Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) and are fluency based assessments, meaning that students respond to an unlimited number of items within a fixed amount of time and the number of correct responses is counted. The information that follows summarizes empirical findings related to the statistical reliability and validity of the measures used in Reading Corps.

DATA. AmeriCorps members collect, input, and monitor student progress data each week. Reading Corps' secure, web-based reporting system tracks the number of students tutored, tutoring dosage, and student assessment data. With this rich data, AmeriCorps members provide a valuable service to schools' data review teams, comprised of teachers who discuss the academic progress of and appropriate interventions for struggling students. Minnesota Reading Corps then collects disaggregated data and analyzes said data to evaluate our effectiveness as a replication site. Through these analyses, Minnesota Reading Corps has found that students have made significant growth in their reading proficiency.

COACHING. AmeriCorps members are supported by Internal School Literacy Coaches who provide day-to-day supervision, and external Master Coaches who help members to use data monthly to inform instruction and monitor the fidelity of implementation. This coaching model builds on
research (Joyce & Showers, 2002) that found that only 5% of professionals implement new practices they learn in a training session, but 95% adopt the practice when they work post-training with a coach who continues to provide instruction and feedback. This multi-layered coaching reflects state-of-the-art practices for implementation science (Finsen et. al., 2005), and has been recognized as a key strategy that allows Reading Corps to be consistently and effectively implemented across multiple sites (Markowitz, et. al., 2014).

EVIDENCE BASE. Colorado Reading Corps level of evidence is preliminary. The program is a replication of the Minnesota Reading Corps program, a strong evidence-based program. The Minnesota based program has been in operation for over ten years and has been extremely successful serving more than 100,000 struggling readers. Minnesota Reading Corps had a Randomized Control Trial conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago in the 2012-2013 school year. They evaluated the effectiveness of the tutoring methods AmeriCorps members delivered to kindergarten through third grade Minnesota students across the state. Students in the study were demographically diverse: White or Caucasian (36%), African American or Black (27%), Hispanic or Latino (9%), Asian (26%), and Other (2%). One-third (33%) were Dual Language Learners and 74% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL), an indicator of living below 150% of the federal poverty level. Results showed that after a single semester of tutoring (15 weeks), the average kindergarten student with an AmeriCorps tutor performed twice as well as students without one; AmeriCorps tutors helped the average first grade student perform 11% better than peers without tutoring; student performance did not vary by AmeriCorps member characteristics, demographics, nor by the specific school at which the tutoring occurred (Markovitz, Hernandez, Hedberg, & Silberglitt, 2014). Results showed a positive effect size (1.06, .37 and .10, respectively) that was statistically significant (p <.01). Most importantly, NORC at the University of Chicago provided findings to support that the Reading Corps model made significant gains increasing reading proficiency by third grade.

Programmatic outcomes are the driving force of our literacy interventions. Replicated from the Minnesota Reading Corps model, Colorado Reading Corps is one of the most successful replication sites across the country. The Colorado Reading Corps program follows the implementation guidelines of the Minnesota Reading Corps program to maintain program fidelity through annual pre-post evaluations. Currently, of the K-3 students we’ve served, on average nearly 80% have exceeded target reading growth rates for their grade level. Reading proficiency at third grade is the most significant
Narratives

indicator of projected graduation rates. Third grade is recognized as the point in which students no longer "learn to read", and begin to "read to learn" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011). Colorado Reading Corps addresses this need through having tutors conduct daily one-on-one literacy intervention sessions for 20 minutes with each student enrolled in the program. These interventions are focused on five different reading skills: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each tutor is trained to implement ten interventions that highlight phonological awareness, phonics, or fluency. These interventions are the building blocks to developing vocabulary and comprehension, the other two focal points of the program. These interventions are monitored regularly by Internal School Literacy Coaches within the schools, as well as a Master Coach that oversees the program's operations, making sure that they are replicated with high degrees of fidelity. Our annual evaluation for 2014-15 found that Colorado Reading Corps implemented the model with 90% fidelity. Additionally, the evaluation concluded that there was 98% fidelity to assessments administered to students. Through our literacy intervention services, an average of nearly 80% of students succeed in scoring above target growth rates as they progress through the program.

Colorado Reading Corps also adheres to strict and rigorous implementation guidelines produced by Minnesota Reading Corps. Minnesota Reading Corps' implementation guidelines to ensure fidelity are that we strictly align with the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS), which are two descriptions of a framework for delivering educational services effectively and efficiently (Burns, Deno, & Jimerson, 20071). This model is to be implemented through the following:

-A Five Day structured training is provided to tutors and Internal School Literacy Coaches on literacy interventions
-An intensive training for Master Coaches to oversee both Internal School Literacy Coaches and AmeriCorps members
-Daily 20 minute interventions per student, utilizing one of ten interventions including phonological awareness, phonics, and/or fluency
-Monthly data review with tutors, Internal School Literacy Coaches, and Master Coaches to review student progress

We are currently operating at 90% fidelity implementing the model. Colorado Reading Corps replicates the Reading Corps model through implementing the same rigor in supervision and training.
Narratives

that is required to implement the interventions as developed by Minnesota Reading Corps. Our 
Reading Corps Master Coach and Program Manager, both have monthly and biweekly check-ins 
respectively with their counterpart at Minnesota Reading Corps to ensure their correct 
implementation of the Reading Corps model.

NOTICE PRIORITY. Colorado Reading Corps and the School Partners Program operate within the 
Focus Area of Education by providing services and resources to improve educational outcomes for 
economically disadvantaged children. Mile High United Way's AmeriCorps program also aligns with 
Serve Colorado's Three in Three priorities. We strategically partner with key nonprofit and corporate 
organizations in order to develop community impact. The School Partners Program has been integral 
to bring corporate partners into schools across Denver to provide mentorship opportunities, increasing 
students reading skills in addition to providing positive role modeling. In addition to the School 
Partners Program, MHUW increases public awareness and engagement in national service and 
volunteerism through advancing GetConnected, a website that our 800 corporate partners utilize to 
establish days of service - a day designated for volunteerism with one of our nonprofit partners.

Finally, Colorado Reading Corps aligns with Serve Colorado to expand the state portfolio to effectively 
impact regionally identified priorities. As an evidence-based solution that has already shown its 
geographical diversity in its expansion from Minnesota, we are confident that Colorado Reading Corps 
can effectively work in other communities across Colorado.

MEMBER TRAINING. High quality training and coaching in our program is the unique foundation 
of our success. Prior to each school year, Colorado Reading Corps hosts a five-day Reading Corps 
Institute to train returning and new Master Coaches, Internal School Literacy Coaches, & AmeriCorps 
members. Participants receive extensive training to provide foundational knowledge in the research-
based literacy interventions they will be using throughout the year to provide effective service. 
AmeriCorps members learn the best practices available to serve as effective tutors, as well as an 
orientation on AmeriCorps requirements including the rules regarding prohibited activities.

MEMBER SUPERVISION. Schools provide Internal School Literacy Coaches as direct supervisors, 
mentors, & advocates for our tutors and provide high quality guidance and support to ensure the most 
effective program possible. AmeriCorps members' supervisors will go through the same five day 
training that members complete. Supervisors complete additional training regarding time sheet
Narratives

approval, member discipline, and evaluation expectations to effectively supervise with fidelity. Additionally, there will be monthly check-ins with their designated Master Coach to ensure they are supervising appropriately and with fidelity. Additionally, Mile High United Way employs Master Coaches to train and evaluate Internal School Literacy Coaches to follow AmeriCorps program regulations, priorities, and expectations.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE. MHUW strives to ensure that all AmeriCorps members have a meaningful year of service. Members gain essential employment skills such as professional communication, goal-setting, and cultural competency. AmeriCorps members receive intensive training in evidence-based literacy interventions, coaching by literacy experts, and support from trained practitioners that are valued by future employers.

Colorado Reading Corps provides structured opportunities for reflection, including weekly participation in professional learning groups that unite members from various sites to share best practices. Last year's evaluation showed that 96% of tutors reported that Reading Corps had a positive impact on themselves, 80% of tutors were considering a career in education, and that 88% of members are committed to the ongoing promotion of childhood literacy.

During Life After AmeriCorps Day, members receive workshops in resume building, networking, interviewing do's and don'ts, as well as all the ways to use the Segal Award. Reading Corps staff manages a forum that is available to members and posts various opportunities in Education and elsewhere such as Teach for America, Boetcher Foundation Teaching Residency, and Charter School opportunities. Program staff members also regularly writes letters of recommendation for our members after their service year ends.

We engage our members through multiple events. Staff members host a week long institute which culminates in a scavenger hunt, Monthly Professional development or Service Days, a holiday party to recognize the members, as well as a summer year end picnic to recognize and appreciate members' service.

All members are assigned a 'cluster' group -- this is a group of members that are serving in the same geographic region who provide peer support to one another. Each cluster has an assigned leader and
Narratives

the clusters participate in small group activities, self-led service projects, and professional
development.

COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. Mile High United Way ensures that
members understand and share their AmeriCorps identity and can discuss their service year with the
public through training, materials, and review with program staff. At the Reading Corps Institute,
members receive uniforms with AmeriCorps and Colorado Reading Corps logos that they must wear
to their service site daily to identify the program. Colorado Reading Corps provides each site with
AmeriCorps-branded materials including signage, recruitment brochures and press releases. Every day
program staff members ensure that each service location is prominently displaying the AmeriCorps
sign.

Organizational Capability

STAFFING & MANAGEMENT. Mile High United Way has a strong team of program and operational
staff. Our Chief Program Officer leads a staff of 40 employees, within the areas of direct program
services, evaluation and measurement, and strategic grant making. She has 25 years of nonprofit
experience, including 4 years of experience managing the successful implementation of AmeriCorps
programs here in Colorado. The Chief Program Officer oversees the AmeriCorps team and ensures
effective operations. This team includes: Grants & Contracts Accountant, providing fiscal oversight
and compliance. Currently, the Grants & Contracts Accountant has 8 years of nonprofit finance and
accounting experience including 4 years of experience with AmeriCorps and over five years managing
other federal grants effectively. Our Vice President of Human Resources has 30 years of experience in
Human Resources and ensuring positive and effective talent management, performance
management, employee relations, and administration. The Program Manager has over ten tears of
experience in nonprofit, early education, as well as serving as a literacy tutor and an AmeriCorps
member; providing extensive knowledge and support to ensure effective programming of the Colorado
Reading Corps through overseeing partnerships with school districts, managing the programmatic
components of daily operations, and ensuring that the program model is followed to fidelity. Director
of Volunteerism has extensive experience in multiple positions bridging corporate employees to serve
the philanthropic needs of Metro Denver through volunteering. Our Program Coordinator has
extensive knowledge regarding the AmeriCorps model, serving two terms of AmeriCorps service - one
of which was with Colorado Reading Corps as "Member of the Year". This position is responsible for
recruiting, supporting, training, and guiding Colorado Reading Corps members through their year of
Narratives

service. The position provides service, professional development, and social opportunities for Reading Corps tutors while ensuring that they are on track to finish their service year successfully. The Lead Master Coach has spent six years teaching in the classroom as a special education teacher prior to joining Colorado Reading Corps. This position ensures that members conduct interventions to fidelity. Day-to-day operations are directly led by 3 full-time staff and two contracted master coaches across Metro Denver. More than half our staff has served as AmeriCorps Members. All staff are trained in AmeriCorps and Federal Office of Management and Budget regulations. Additionally, Mile High United Way resources in evaluation, marketing, technology, and other areas support this program with their expertise. Because of these organizational resources, we can ensure a smooth transition if an individual or staff member leaves their role and we can commit and train interim resources if needed to ensure continued quality.

Mile High United Way's Colorado Reading Corps and School Partners Program regularly engages with community members and partners including the 800 local businesses leveraged through volunteerism, as well as school districts to plan and implement effective intervention delivery.

COMPLIANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY. Colorado Reading Corps' Lead Master Coach prevents and detects compliance issues through site visits. Mile High United Way's Chief Financial Officer ensures internal controls and monitors expenditures to budgets. Additionally, the Vice President of Human Resources maintains and reviews member files to ensure all documentation is in place. If instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the issue is immediately addressed by the appropriate staff. A plan of corrective action may include administrative action, retraining, or if an issue is severe, member relocation. Staff will monitor until the matter is corrected. Additionally, program staff ensure AmeriCorps members adhere to AmeriCorps rules and regulations.

Accountability is ensured through written agreements with every site that clearly define program expectations, prohibited activities, and AmeriCorps regulations. AmeriCorps members must sign a service agreement before they can begin their year of service. Their agreement outlines the term of service, responsibilities of the position, prohibited activities, grievance procedures, non-displacement policy, equal opportunity employment and non-discrimination statements, inclusive environment statement, and drug-free workplace requirements. Compliance is monitored through site visits, ongoing master coaching, and regular professional development trainings. Mile High United Way's
Narratives

Human Resource department, as well as program staff, reviews any new AmeriCorps regulations, and addresses any issues.

Mile High United Way has strong internal controls in place to ensure continued compliance and accountability to federal regulation. The following summarizes the key elements of that system:

* Full compliance with generally accepted accounting standards/practices (GAAS/GAAP) as well as all American Institute of Certified Public Accountant (AICPA) guidelines and all applicable governmental (federal, state, local) regulations as required.

* All financial policies and procedures are reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee & Board of Directors.

* General ledger is maintained through Microsoft Dynamics SL, which enables systemic tracking of revenue and costs by grant. Accounts are reviewed and reconciled monthly.

* Monthly general accounting, reconciliation and reporting processes are in place that ensure multiple levels of review and reporting, at both the management and board level. In addition, we have a segregation of responsibilities among staff to ensure the proper controls are in place.

* Independent audit: We have an independent financial audit and OMB A-133 audit performed annually to ensure internal controls are in place and tested. Current year and previous year audits have had unqualified opinions by our audit firm, EKS&H. In particular, the OMB A-133 audit tests financial controls and compliance requirements related to federal funding. In 2014, our AmeriCorps grant from CNCS was selected for audit testing as part of the OMB A-133 audit and found to be in compliance.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

COST EFFECTIVENESS. Colorado Reading Corps continues to provide a cost-effective solution: the average federal share per child served is $550, while CO spends an average of $8,000 to educate a child. The total non-CNCS resources required to implement Colorado Reading Corps in Metro Denver is $900,333. Mile High United Way provides this funding through individual and corporate contributions, service agreements, family foundation grants, and other unrestricted funds through
Narratives

workplace campaigns. Mile High United Way's projected source of funds consist of: $100,000 from individual and corporate contributions, $600,000 from service agreements, and $100,000 family foundation grants, and $100,333 from other unrestricted giving received through Mile High United Way workplace campaigns. Specific persons and entities may change from year to year. In the past year major donors included the Pierls Family Foundation, Target Corporation and Excel Energy. Additionally, Mile High United Way conducts over 800 corporate workplace campaigns which support the organizations' unrestricted funding. We are confident we will raise the balance of $900,333 for the PY 2016-17, as we have for each of the past 3 years. Our request for funding at $12,000 per AmeriCorps member is at a 5% decrease from last year. In addition to the 5% decreased request, program operating cost increases including healthcare benefits to AmeriCorps members have been absorbed through the Mile High United Way match. Additionally, as the member living allowance increases over the next three years, we will absorb increases through our match. Mile High United Way will also fund the independent impact evaluation that is required over this funding cycle.

BUDGET ADEQUACY. The budget of $648,000 is submitted correctly, and without error, to ensure the appropriate mix of leadership and direct program staff to ensure effective program implementation. It also includes carefully crafted estimates of member and Internal School Literacy Coach training, Master Coach time, curriculum expenses, and evaluation costs that are required to fully implement Colorado Reading Corps so as to achieve the desired outcomes for students. The cost of criminal history and FBI checks also are included in the budget. The budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Short Description of the Theory of Change:

Colorado Reading Corps provides schools with the staffing and support to effectively deliver one-on-one, 20 minute, daily evidence-based instructional interventions to children performing under grade level in reading; resulting in at least 80% of students reading at or above grade level upon the completion of the program.

Outcome of Interest:

Our primary outcome of interest is student performance in reading proficiency (reading at or above
Narratives

grade level), as measured by test scores.
Research Questions:
1. Do students who participate in Colorado Reading Corps have improved near-term reading achievements when compared to similar students who do not participate in Colorado Reading Corps?

2. Are there differential impacts of Colorado Reading Corps on various student groups including ELL vs. non-ELL students, boys vs. girls, grade level, and different races?

3. What are the longer-term literacy impacts, after 1 to 2 years, of children participating in Colorado Reading Corps? (exploratory)

Research Design:

In order to conduct an independent impact evaluation that meets the requirements of CNCS, we will first conduct a feasibility assessment to inform whether a randomized controlled trial (RCT) will be viable given the interests and needs of our school partners.

Assuming positive findings from the feasibility assessment, Mile High United Way proposes a Short Interrupted Time Series (SITS) experimental design. Students referred to the program by their teachers or principals will be randomly assigned to either receive Colorado Reading Corps tutoring or to a control group to receive regularly scheduled programming. All students in the control group will acquire Colorado Reading Corps tutoring services after one semester serving as a control student. This will allow comparisons in near-term reading achievements. Long-term reading proficiency gains will be evaluated as an exploratory question, meaning we would only analyze the longevity of reading proficiency gains with the treatment group. We believe this is a necessary trade off to maintain equity and opportunity for all children in need.

If our feasibility assessment does not yield high viability for an RCT, Mile High United Way will consider a quasi-experimental study design utilizing propensity score matching (PSM). PSM would allow Mile High United Way to serve all eligible children with the Colorado Reading Corps program within study schools therefore relieving any potential ethical concerns from school leadership. PSM matches intervention children with similar children based on predefined criteria (e.g. age, family income, reading scores) from the district providing the comparison sample needed to determine the impact of Colorado Reading Corps. Through our work with the Social Innovation Fund, we have found that this study design still maintains a high level of rigor and aligns with CNCS' moderate level
Narratives of evidence.

Data Collection tools/process:

To inform changes in outcomes for both the treatment and control students, the researchers will assess progress in a child's phonics and reading fluency skills at three, district-established screening periods (fall, winter, and spring), by a well-trained, independent assessment team. Researchers will work with the selected partner to identify current student literacy assessment tools utilized by the district and establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to gain access to these assessment data throughout the academic year. Data for these literacy outcomes are reported from student performance on measures of early literacy that are designed for students in Kindergarten through grade 3. Researchers will utilize data from district grade-level proficiency tests to inform long-term reading proficiency gains.

Sampling Plan:

Our proposed research team would select a diverse and representative sample of schools that have been fully implementing the program for at least 1 full year. While we have not yet conducted a formal power analysis, a previous RCT study of Minnesota Reading Corps conducted by NORC at University of Chicago demonstrated positive effects of the program. NORC's impact study was performed with a sample size of over 1,300 K-3 students in treatment and control groups at 23 participating schools. As a replication site of Minnesota Reading Corps with 90% fidelity, we anticipate that our program will be able to provide an adequate sample size for detecting a statistically significant effect on student literacy, as we currently serve over 1,200 students in 39 schools. Importantly, many of our schools have an overabundance of eligible students in need of tutoring assistance and, therefore, a credible random assignment process can be efficiently inserted into the current program model within each selected school, as was done in the Minnesota evaluation.

Qualifications for the Evaluator:

We will conduct a thorough process to identify the most qualified evaluation team. Selection criteria will include:

* 15 years of experience conducting and leading evaluations, serving as the principal evaluator for at
Narratives

least 1 quasi-experimental or experimental evaluation
* Experience conducting evaluations in educational settings
* Extensive background and training in educational research methods and analysis
* Solid understanding of implementation science factors within education
* Solid understanding of educational measurement and assessment, including standardized and curriculum-based measures
* Capacity and/or access to other resources necessary to manage the scale and scope of the evaluation (e.g. staff has the time to commit to the project; the organization has the resources to collect and analyze breadth of data needed)
* Strong project management and interpersonal skills
* Strong references from previous clients
* Absence of investment in the program to be evaluated; independence is essential to avoid potential or perceived bias on the part of the evaluator

Estimated Budget:
In order to conduct the proposed evaluation, we are estimating between $50,000-$85,000 per year, for a two year total of $100,000-$255,000. These costs will encompass contract fees, travel, and any additional fees or supplies needed to conduct the evaluation and analysis.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. General Clarification Items:
1. The Executive Summary, budget, and performance measures have been adjusted to reflect the amount different than the original request. The request has been modified to propose 54 full-time members (54 MSY) at $12,000 each, totaling $648,000.

B. Programmatic Clarification Items:
1. Understanding that a low cost per Member Service Year (MSY) is a competitive advantage, Mile High United Way proposes to decrease the proposed cost per MSY from 12,608 to 12,000, which is a 5% reduction. Mile High United Way is committed to the high quality and ongoing effectiveness and efficiency of the Colorado Reading Corp program. We will continue to invest over $900,000 of Mile High United Way funding to ensure the integrity of the program and to cover any new costs within
Narratives

the program, including the new evaluation requisite for this period of funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

2. Colorado Reading Corps' AmeriCorps members are tutors as defined by 45 CFR 2522.910 - 45 CFR 2522.940 since all members serving have attained at least a high school diploma or its equivalent and successfully completed a pre- and in-service specialized training (the Reading Corps Summer Institute). These members are supervised by the Internal Literacy School Coaches that, under 45 CFR 2522.940, have completed a pre- and in-service specialized training in both the curricula used by members, and in how to properly supervise members to uphold AmeriCorps compliance measures.

3. Mile High United Way’s AmeriCorps program will no longer have members serving half-time. The request has been modified to use 54 AmeriCorps members, all serving at full-time capacity.

4. $900,333 was entered in the Demographic Section: Other Revenue Funds.

D. Performance Measure Clarification Items:

Due to space limitations in the instrument description, additional information regarding ED5 was placed in this section.

2. Initially, the 9% was not attributed to a performance measure because those members' service activities were different than those serving as Colorado Reading Corps members. This has been reduced to 6% by reducing the number of AmeriCorps members not affiliated with the performance measures. These three AmeriCorps members will serve as School Partners Coordinators, mobilizing community volunteers to serve as literacy mentors to third grade students. The School Partners Program has been integral to bring corporate partners into schools across Denver to provide mentorship opportunities, increasing students reading skills in addition to providing positive role modeling. In leveraging 900 volunteers, who will be engaged in providing literacy mentoring sessions to over 700 third grade students throughout Metro Denver, CO, these three AmeriCorps members have the following service activities:

- Facilitate and participate in the Power Lunch program by preparing volunteers for weekly one-on-one reading sessions with 2nd and 3rd grade students within the Denver Public School (DPS) system.
Narratives

- Professionally represent Mile High United Way, DPS, the Power Lunch program, and AmeriCorps to participating volunteer groups and schools in all interactions.
- Engage teachers in program planning, volunteer interactions and periodic student assessment to ensure program success.
- Track number of volunteer and student participants, volunteer hours, successful sessions, student, volunteer and teacher satisfaction, and overall student progress.
- Collaborate with school district stakeholders as needed and participate in community literacy nights and other school based programs at schools where the Power Lunch program is currently, or may be in the future, implemented.

Additionally, this is the data for the current year (15-16 school year):
- Number of Volunteers: 378 (avg. 89% committed, 11% episodic)
  - 1st quarter volunteers = 341 ; 2nd quarter volunteers = 37 ; total = 378
- Number of Students Served: 226
  - 1st quarter students = 207 ; 2nd quarter students = 19 ; total = 226
- Number of Schools: 8 DPS schools
  - Columbian, Columbine, Fairview, Greenlee, Harrington, John Amesse, Place Bridge Academy, Stedman
- Number of Classrooms: 10 classrooms (second or third grade)
- Number of Volunteer Hours to date for current reporting quarter (through February): 1,987 hours
  - 1st quarter volunteer hours = 617 ; 2nd quarter volunteer hours = 1370 ; total = 1987
- Number of Volunteer Hours projected for full year: 2,604 hours

The 9% of MSYs have been reduced to 6% by reducing the number of members performing these activities from 5 to 3 MSY.

F. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification Items
1. No Cost MSYs will be requested.
2. N/A
3. N/A
Narratives

4. N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics