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Executive Summary

The Children’s Forum proposes to develop an AmeriCorps program serving in the north, south, and central regions of Florida that will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of "Education". The CNCS investment of $58,643 will be matched with $19,178 ($18,378 in public funding and $800 in private funding). No AmeriCorps members will be needed to execute this plan.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

NEED: The Children's Forum (Forum) is proposing to develop an early care education (ECE) workforce improvement and diversification initiative in the state of Florida through AmeriCorps. The work will align with the Florida Office of Early Learning’s overarching objective of initiatives related to "improving professional development pathways and opportunities for teachers of young children as well as to support the overall improvement of the accessibility and affordability of high quality early education and care programs" and to support children’s school readiness.

The primary goal of this planning grant is to generate a work plan for AmeriCorps members that will lead to the enhancement of a high quality and diverse early care and education (ECE) system for the improvement of children's school readiness. Research shows that participation in high-quality ECE programs is linked to better social, emotional, academic, and health outcomes for children well into adulthood (Campbell et al., 2012; Reynolds, 2007; Reynolds & Ou, 2011; Yoshikawa, et al., 2013).

While there are several indicators of quality in the early childhood classroom known to impact child outcomes, instructional practices are arguably the most critical determinant (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000). Furthermore, teacher education and training, continuity of care (high staff retention), and a fairly compensated workforce are critical factors impacting child care quality and child outcomes (Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston-Casas, 2007; Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2006; Whitebook, Phillips, Howes, 2014). A positive relationship has been found between the training and education of teachers in early childhood programs and child outcomes (Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2006; Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai, & Kipnis, 2009). Practitioners who are better prepared professionally are likely to do a better job in working with young children. Understanding how children grow, learn, and develop is essential in implementing evidence-based curricula to improve school readiness and overall child well-being. Moreover, the quality of the interactions between the adults and children in the classroom plays a significant role in helping children grow, thrive and reach their potential (Institute of Medicine, 2015). We know, however, that well qualified teachers do not
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exist in a vacuum. Therefore, the literature review aims to understand the variables and dynamics affecting quality in early childhood programs and job satisfaction in the workplace.

Nationwide, teachers in early care and education are predominantly female with estimates ranging from 95% to 99% (Herzenberg et al., 2005; Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002). This is true in Florida as well where only one percent of those working directly with children in ECE programs report being male according to a recent statewide workforce study (Clements et al., 2013). This of course does not mirror the national or state population statistics for gender for which rates of male and female are more evenly split (e.g., 51% of individuals report being female and 49% report being male in Florida according to the U. S. Census Bureau). Florida's ECE workforce race and ethnicity data show that 43% are White, 27% Hispanic, 27% Black, and 3% Other (Clements et al., 2013) which follows a similar trend to race/ethnicity statistics for adults in Florida (55% White, 25% Hispanic, 17% Black or African American). However, the race and ethnicity of the ECE workforce does not appear to mirror that of individuals living in poverty. In Florida, the race and ethnicity dispersion for families living in poverty is 10% White, 25% African America/Black, and 19% Hispanic, with multiple other races also represented. There is clearly a need for better representation to the child populations served in the ECE field, particularly for families living in poverty. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency cites that "gender diversity within the workplace encourages different thinking and problem solving and drives innovation, productivity and performance. That's not to mention ensuring our children experience diversity in their classroom role models." (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2016). It is also noteworthy that research shows when males become more integrated into previously female-dominated jobs, wages for that workforce tend to increase (see http://statisticalhorizons.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/88.2.levanon.pdf).

Teacher Motivation: Understanding why teachers are drawn to this field and why they stay are helpful in understanding their behaviors in the classroom and relationships with children. These motivators are typically segregated into intrinsic and extrinsic variables. Intrinsic motivation characterizes the extent to which individuals are committed to performing well according to task specifications, perceive their jobs as significant, and have autonomy. Intrinsic motivation is a predictor of an individual’s intention to stay in a given profession (Houkes, Janssen, deJonge, & Nijhuis, 2001). When teachers are committed to the field, they bring stability to the classroom and foster a greater sense of warmth toward children (Weaver, 2002). Teachers who reported that they believed their job is their calling also reported a sense of responsibility to the children and indicated that their actions are directly related to building that sense of community (Howes, James, & Ritchie,
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2003). Their actions foster both short-term and long-term dedication to children and their well-being. While there is evidence linking motivation to quality in early care and education settings, Tout et al. (2006) note that, currently, research is nonexistent that examines the motivations and characteristics of teachers who are likely to pursue professional development.

Workforce Turnover: Examining extrinsic motivation for ECE teachers (such as compensation, benefits, perceived credential demands in early childhood) are important in understanding whether or not these variables impact decisions to take advantage of professional development opportunities afforded through the professional development system, Steps to Success in Florida. ECE teachers earn less than their K-12 counterparts and educational qualifications differ. Low wages are associated with higher staff turnover, which is detrimental for developing young children (Phillips et al., 1991; Whitebook & Eichberg, 2002). Low satisfaction with wages was found to be the most important work-related factor in the decision to leave (Stremmel, 1991).

Annual turnover rates in the ECE field have been reported at 30% to 40% as compared to annual turnover of teachers in K-12 public schools nationally, reported at 8.6% Ingersoll & Rossi, 1995). The high rate of teacher turnover in early childhood and other risk factors affecting young children have been referred to as the "quiet crisis," as it rarely surfaces to the public's consciousness (Carnegie, 1994).

The quality of care is jeopardized by the changing of teachers in the child's environment (Cummings, 1980,1986; Howes, 1990; Kontos & Fiene, 1987). Several studies have reported that children in program with higher staff turnover rates are more aggressive with peers, more withdrawn and spend more time aimless and unoccupied (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Whitebook et al., 1990). Teachers are also more likely to remain with their programs if there is a good match with the teaching assignment and the children in the classroom (Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon & Stottlemyer,2000). Teachers were often put in classrooms in early care and education settings without a choice of assignment. Each developmental stage from birth to five requires expertise and understanding of child developmental levels. A teacher who is ill-prepared to meet the challenges of a different age group often experience frustration (Whitebook, et al., 1990).

Teacher Education, Training, and Coaching: Several studies link teacher quality with teacher formal education (Barnett, 2003; Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2006; Whitebook, 2003). Others have also linked higher quality programs and more positive teacher-child interactions to the formal education levels of the teachers (Loeb, Fuller, Kagan & Carroll, 2003; Howes& Galinsky, 1998; Tout et al.,
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Proponents of degrees for teachers cite studies that link the best outcomes with teachers possessing bachelor degrees in early childhood (Barnett, 2003; Whitebook, 2003). A later meta-analysis of earlier studies complicated claims that bachelor degrees correlated with better outcomes for children (Early et al., 2005). Those findings suggest that teachers' years of education have little effect on children's achievement. While evidence is lacking that directly correlates teacher degrees with achievement levels of students, the literature consistently finds that specialized training in early care and education directly impacts teacher quality and, consequently, child outcomes (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006; Whitebook, 2003).

Evidence suggests that coaching can be a powerful tool for stimulating change in early education classrooms. One-time reliance on "spray and pray" approaches to professional development such as workshop attendance has come under scrutiny with the recognition that they are minimally effective (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005) and rarely result in changes in actual classroom practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002). There is also increasing recognition of the idea that professional development has both a knowledge acquisition component and a knowledge application component, and while coursework and workshops may be an effective way to begin the process of knowledge acquisition, they will most likely not be an effective way to support the ongoing translation of new information into practice (Catlett, Smith, Bailey, & Gaylord, 2009).

Summary: Considering the evidence, it is clear that the early childhood workforce demands are growing and the ability to attract and retain a more diverse and dedicated qualified workforce is fundamental in ensuring that young children have the foundation they need to succeed. The proposed planning grant is intended to incorporate the AmeriCorps service delivery model with an evidence-based coaching intervention model designed to positively influence the ECE workforce and the children they serve. This planning grant also has the simultaneous goal of ensuring that the AmeriCorps member group is representative of the child population served in areas of high need in the state. In doing so, we hope to yield positive outcomes for Florida’s youngest children.

EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION: Research shows that what teachers know and do has a powerful influence on what children learn. However, the ways in which teachers acquire and apply knowledge gained through professional development activities are not fully understood and often fall short of their intentions. As a result, a growing number of researchers are focusing on factors and strategies that may affect the way in which teacher knowledge is acquired and the degree to which it is translated into everyday classroom practice. One strategy for the development and delivery of
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Individualized professional development that is uniquely relevant to each teacher is through the use of education coaches. Coaching has been particularly embraced by the field of early childhood education as a means to change teacher behavior and ultimately impact children's developmental outcomes.

This planning project proposes to explore opportunities for AmeriCorps member volunteers to serve in ECE classrooms in a supportive role to the classroom teachers through use of positive caregiver-child interactions and implementation of evidence-based early childhood curriculum for the benefit of children's early learning gains. AmeriCorps member volunteers would receive education and coaching provided by a Forum staff member to positively impact members' skills, and the capacity of the child care facility where they are serving; thereby impacting the school readiness of the children in the program. Specifically, the intervention would be designed to improve AmeriCorps members' skills in the areas of child assessment, caregiver-child interactions, and working with children from diverse backgrounds. In addition, AmeriCorps members would receive T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® scholarships and personalized coaching to assist them in furthering their formal education through college coursework and academic degree/credential paths. An evaluation plan would be developed as part of the planning grant to assess the impact of the coaching model on program quality and child outcomes.

The evidence-based intervention selected would provide coaching to AmeriCorps members on scientifically-valid ECE curricula through relationship-based professional development (RBPD), which includes onsite coaching and participating in college coursework in order to promote the school readiness of children in the areas of language and cognitive development, and early reading and early literacy skills. RBPD is a term being used to describe types of professional assistance that use specialized relationships as their foundation, with coaching as one of the most promising approaches. The objective of the intervention is to increase knowledge, skills and practices of AmeriCorps members through comprehensive early childhood development coursework with specific course topics on curriculum and through RBPD and technical assistance provided to the AmeriCorps members. Additionally, we plan to recruit a diverse group of AmeriCorps member volunteers to represent the child population that they serve. The intervention planning will take into consideration factors that motivate those who work with young children for purposes of increasing and measuring their dedication to and satisfaction with the ECE field.

This work is based on evidence from a quasi-experimental research study conducted by the Children's Forum examining the impact of a statewide RBPD initiative for pre-kindergarten teachers called Partners in Education and Research for Kindergarten Success (PERKS).
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PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE: The Children’s Forum will carry out the following workplan as part of the proposed Evidence-Based Planning Grant to develop and plan for the implementation of an AmeriCorps Early Learning Workforce Coaching Model within early care and education (ECE) programs throughout Florida.

* August to November 2017: Develop intervention and operations grant processes, plans and procedures including the membership selection, training and supervision plans, logic model, and evaluation plan. Select and secure agreements with ECE program sites located in the major geographical regions of Florida (North, South, and Central) for participation in the intervention to be implemented as part of the operations grant, prepare the draft budget for the operations grant (including securing match) and meet regularly with early learning partner stakeholder groups to guide the process.

* December 2017: Establish and coordinate a schedule of visits with proposed ECE program sites where the intervention would be implemented.

* January to July 2018: Continue meeting regularly with partners to anticipate barriers and refine the plans for implementing the intervention model.

* January to July 2018: Meet in person with each ECE participating program site to anticipate barriers, refine plans, and prepare logistically for intervention implementation.

The specific tasks, timelines, persons responsible and outcomes of each major activity are detailed below. The Project Director, a part-time staff member to be hired, will be responsible for leading the project activities and attending the mandatory Volunteer Florida trainings. Dr. Melissa Clements, VP of Research with the Children’s Forum, will serve in an oversight role ensuring quality assurance and adherence to Forum and AmeriCorps policies and regulations. Dr. Clements will also be responsible for developing the intervention evaluation plan. An advisory team composed of Forum leadership and a contracted technical consultant will serve to inform the development of the intervention model and implementation plan. As well, a partner workgroup encompassing ECE stakeholders from around the State will be convened on a volunteer basis to offer direction to the project. The Forum has already reached out to a large group of early learning partners who have expressed interest.

Activity 1: Project Management

+ Task 1a: Hold kick-off meeting with Volunteer Florida.

  * Timeline: August 2017
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* Person(s) Responsible: Project Director; Planning Advisory Team (PAT; Phyllis Kalifeh, Lori Stegmeyer, Melissa Clements, Jack Levine)
* Product/Outcome: Meeting Minutes

+ Task 1b: Hold regular internal team meetings.
  * Timeline: On-going
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Meeting Minutes; Planning and strategy discussions.

+ Task 1c: Conduct quality assurance activities.
  * Timeline: On-going
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director
  * Product/Outcome: N/A

Activity 2: Intervention Model Planning

+ Task 2a: Develop evidence-based intervention program; conduct literature review, develop intervention processes and procedures.
  * Timeline: August to October 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Written Intervention Implementation Plan

+ Task 2b: Develop plan to effectively manage the operations grant program.
  * Timeline: August to October 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Written Program Management Plan

+ Task 2c: Develop and refine Logic Model; establish theory of change, inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes along with rationale.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Final Logic Model

+ Task 2d: Develop membership selection and training plan; determine membership selection criteria; develop training process and procedures.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner Workgroup
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* Product/Outcome: Written Membership Selection and Training Plan
  + Task 2e: Develop membership supervision plan; identify members for the operations grant and the process for supervision of AmeriCorps members.
    * Timeline: August to November 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
    * Product/Outcome: Written Membership Selection and Training Plan
  + Task 2f: Identify program sites; Work with partners to identify best-fitting ECE programs to participate in the Operations Grant.
    * Timeline: August to November 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner Workgroup
    * Product/Outcome: Written Membership Supervision Plan
  + Task 2g: Identify program sites; Work with partners to identify best-fitting ECE programs to participate in the Operations Grant.
    * Timeline: August to November 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner Workgroup
    * Product/Outcome: Secure letters of agreement to participate in AmeriCorps Operations Grant.
  + Task 2h: Develop compliance and accountability plan including ensuring commitment to AmeriCorps Identity; work with identified ECE program sites to obtain commitment to following AmeriCorps Operations Grant policies and procedures.
    * Timeline: August to November 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
    * Product/Outcome: Written compliance and accountability policy; Commitment Agreement Form.
  + Task 2i: Develop estimated budget for Operations Grant.
    * Timeline: August to November 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT, Forum Fiscal Department
    * Product/Outcome: Draft budget spreadsheet.
  + Task 2j: Identify and secure match for Operations Grant program
    * Timeline: August to November 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner Workgroup
    * Product/Outcome: Letters of support detailing match agreements.
  + Task 2k: Develop evaluation elements (e.g., fidelity, existing intervention outcomes, anticipated outcomes of integrating intervention into AmeriCorps program).
    * Timeline: August 2017
    * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director
    * Product/Outcome: Fidelity measure(s); measurable outcomes; written data collection plan.

Activity 3: Establish and Convene Partner Collaborative Workgroup
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+ Task 3a: Engage potential partners and secure agreements from various ECE agencies and organizations to serve on a workgroup providing direction and support around the proposed intervention, ECE program selection and operations grant match opportunities, direction and support for the proposed intervention program.
  * Timeline: August 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner Workgroup
  * Product/Outcome: List of individuals to serve on Partner Workgroup.
+ Task 3b: Coordinate and hold regular workgroup meetings.
  * Timeline: Approximately eight meetings throughout the year
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner workgroup
  * Product/Outcome: Meeting minutes

Activity 4: Planning and Coordination with Selected ECE Program Sites
+ Task 4a: Visit with identified ECE program sites to understand contextual nuances and logistics specific to each site to anticipate and avoid potential barriers to implementation.
  * Timeline: Fall 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director
  * Product/Outcome: Visit notes
+ Task 4b: Refine policies and procedures per communication with sites; ensure policies and procedures are pragmatic and adequately tailored to each implementation site while remaining aligned with all AmeriCorps requirements.
  * Timeline: June to July 2018
  * Person(s) Responsible: Project Director, PAT, Partner Workgroup
  * Product/Outcome: Revised policies and procedures

Activity 5: Evaluation Design and Analysis Plan
+ Task 5a: Conduct literature review, establish theory of change, and produce a Logic Model.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Written literature review; final logic model
+ Task 5b: Identify evidence-based measurable outcomes of the proposed intervention.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
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* Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
* Product/Outcome: List of measurable outcomes with supporting literature.
+ Task 5c: Establish Research Questions grounded in the literature base.
  * Timeline: August --November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: List of research questions
+ Task 5d: Develop research methods and identify data collection tools, processes and procedures.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Evaluation design, analysis, and data collection plan
+ Task 5e: Identify evaluator qualifications and determine whether the evaluator will be an internal or external evaluator.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Project Director, PAT
  * Product/Outcome: Summary of evaluator qualifications
+ Task 5f: Determine costs and develop the evaluation budget.
  * Timeline: August to November 2017
  * Person(s) Responsible: Melissa Clements, Forum Fiscal Department
  * Product/Outcome: Draft evaluation budget

Organizational Capability

Background and History of the Organization: The Children's Forum (Forum) is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to provide leadership and advocacy to achieve high-quality and accessible early care and education (ECE) for all children. Incorporated since 1989, the Forum has an organizational history grounded in principles, programs and policies designed to serve and support Florida's ECE community. The Forum now operates several large-scale programs with a budget of over $15 million and 80 employees located in various Florida cities. The Forum has a central office located in Tallahassee, FL and satellite offices throughout the state in Brevard County, Miami-Dade County, and Palm Beach County.

General Experience and Expertise: Over the past 25 years, the Forum has proven its ability to effectively manage large-scale and multi-year projects through many long-standing state and local contracts and grants. We have had much success in cultivating relationships with stakeholders and funders in the field. Our major ongoing projects include:
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* Quality Counts Career Center for Early Care and Education, Miami-Dade County, (2007-ongoing) -- A comprehensive initiative funded by The Children's Trust, supporting child care practitioners through career advising, scholarship awards, and technical assistance to improve program quality, and a training registry.

* Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®) Scholarship Program Florida, statewide licensee (1998--ongoing) -- A scholarship program for child care practitioners providing college tuition, counseling, and collateral expenses (e.g., books, travel).

* Child Care WAGE$ Florida statewide licensee (2002--ongoing) -- A wage supplement program for child care practitioners rewarding ongoing educational achievement.

* Program Assessment Services (2009-ongoing) -- A service designed to improve the quality of early care and education settings through formal program assessment in Palm Beach County.

*Help Me Grow Florida (awarded in 2016): Statewide screening and resource referral system serving families of children with suspected developmental disabilities. This initiative also conducts outreach to physicians and community partners to ensure that developmental screenings are being offered to all children under age nine.

Experience and Expertise Relevant to this Project: Below is a brief summary of Forum products related to the work described in the RFP. These reports demonstrate the Forum's experience with intervention implementation and qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis including interventions in the classroom and dissemination of results for policy implications. Of most relevance to the proposed intervention planning grant is the quasi-experimental coaching model (PERKS) the Forum implemented through a federal grant.

U.S. Department of Education Early Childhood Educators Professional Development (ECEPD) Research Grant; Partners in Education and Research for Kindergarten Success (PERKS); Funder: U. S. Department of Education, 2005-2008; Examined the effects of a two-part professional development model implemented throughout the state of Florida. Entitled Florida PERKS, this initiative provided services to 240 Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) to study the combined effects of coaching and college coursework on teacher knowledge, classroom quality, and child outcomes.

Florida Partnership for School Readiness (FPSR), Technical Assistance Paper Series; Funder: FPSR; Publication Date: 2002-2005; The 2002-2005 Technical Assistance Paper Series is designed to advance awareness, knowledge, skills, and understanding of theory and practice in the field of child care and early education. The Series presents topics of interest to practitioners, administrators, educators, trainers, researchers, and students.
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Charting the Progress of Child Care and Early Education; Funder: Agency for Workforce Innovation; Publication Date: 2005; Quality child care and early education provides a system of support for children and families. The level and intensity of support varies depending on the needs of families and the resources available in communities to help. This report is framed by three issues: quality, availability, and affordability.

Seminole County Child Care Workforce Study: (Phases I and II); Funder: Early Learning Coalition of Seminole; Publication Date: 2006 and 2007; Describes the Seminole County ECE workforce in terms of demographics of ECE practitioners and programs, employment characteristics, program business characteristics, practitioner education levels, career plans, teacher recruitment strategies, training experiences, trainings available and desired trainings, earnings, benefits (non-medical and medical), working conditions, job satisfaction, staff turn-over rates, and costs associated with turnover, training, and recruitment.

Planting the SEEDS for Change: Research and Data Assessment; Funder: Early Learning Coalition of Orange County; Publication Date: 2006; Provides data and assessment pertaining to and affecting early learning services in Orange County, Florida. Examined quality indicators for learning, costs of quality care and early learning and affordability to families, capacity to provide high quality early learning programs for children, community services available, and business engagement in support of early learning.

Miami-Dade County Quality Counts Workforce Study; Funder: The Children’s Trust; Original Publication Date: January, 2011 (study is updated annually through 2016); Describes the Miami-Dade County Quality Counts workforce in terms of demographics, educational level, employment status, wages, professional development and trainings accessed and professional development supports (i.e., wage stipends, educational scholarships) accessed. Provides data and findings regarding the impact of the Quality Counts initiative on practitioner education levels, program level QRIS ratings, and staff turnover rates.

Staffing: Brief biographical sketches (or position description) for key persons staffed on this proposal are provided below. These include each person’s role on the project and relevant experience.

Phyllis Kalifeh, Ed.D., President/CEO, will serve in an oversight capacity and will sit on the Planning Advisory Team offering direction, guidance, and input to the planning grant process.

Background: Phyllis' professional career has spans over 30 years in delivery of services for young children and their families to include administration of grants and programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, statewide child care resource and referral network, training programs for practitioners and
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parents, subsidy administration and former owner of her own school. She served as the co-principal investigator for the Florida PERKS project, a national study funded by the U.S. Department of Education and as researcher on several other projects. She holds a doctorate in educational leadership and policy studies focusing on early childhood quality issues. She serves on various boards in leadership capacities at the local, state and national levels to include NACCRA Finance Committee, National T.E.A.C.H. Advisory Board, and treasurer for The National Registry Alliance board.

Melissa Clements, Ph.D., Chief Research Officer, will provide oversight and quality assurance to the project and will be responsible for developing the intervention evaluation plan. Background: Dr. holds a doctoral degree in Developmental Psychology with specialization in early childhood. She has 15 years of experience in program evaluation, quantitative and qualitative methods, survey research, and data management. Dr. Clements oversees ongoing projects including the Miami-Dade Quality Counts Career Center and the Refugee Home-Based Child Care Microenterprise Development Project. She also served as the principal investigator for several Forum research projects (e.g., Statewide Early Childhood Workforce Study). Prior to joining the Forum, she co-directed a federally funded longitudinal, multi-site study of K-3 intervention models. Dr. Clements has authored scholarly books and journal articles, presented research at state and national conferences, and taught college level courses in early childhood.

Lori Stegmeyer will serve on the Planning Advisory Team offering direction, guidance, and input to the planning grant process. Background: Serves as the Director for the T.E.A.C.H. program and the Florida Child Care WAGE$ Program. She is responsible for developing, promoting and managing the operation these programs. Lori holds a Bachelors degree in education and has served in various leadership capacities including teaching, child care center director, Even Start program coordinator and Pre-kindergarten Early Intervention program director. She serves on the Florida Professional Development Steering Committee.

Jack Levine will serve on the Planning Advisory Team offering direction, guidance, and input to the planning grant process. After a 25-year tenure as president of Voices for Florida’s Children, a statewide advocacy network, Jack founded 4Generations Institute to promote inter-generational policies and programs that benefit the young, their parents, and more experienced family members. Jack is President of Advocacy Resources, a consultancy specializing in communications strategies, public policy initiatives, and creative resource development. He holds a Master's Degree in Child Development and Family Studies from Purdue University and an undergraduate degree in English Literature from Hunter College, City University of New York. A graduate of Leadership Florida, Jack
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was the recipient of that organization's first Distinguished Alumnus Award. He was named Floridian of the Year by The Orlando Sentinel. Jack was a founding member of the Board of Directors of Voices for America's Children, is Partnership Director for GRAND Magazine, is active with Generations United, and is a member of the Capital City Kiwanis Club and the Tallahassee League of Women Voters.

The Project Director (to be hired) will be responsible for the coordination and management of this project. This person will be required to hold a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in a child development, research methods, or a related field with at least three years of project management experience.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

The total proposed budget is $77,821 with a CNCS share of $58,643 and match amount of $19,178. Sufficient staff time has been budgeted within this grant proposal for project members with the necessary expertise to carry out this project (see the Organizational Capacity section of the application for details on the staff selected). As well, adequate funds are allocated for the travel, material, and operational needs of the project. Travel funds are budgeted for a staff member to attend the two required Volunteer Florida trainings and for the Project Director to visit early care and education centers selected for possible participation in the evidence-based intervention. Visits to ECE centers will require three trips for the Project Director throughout the state of Florida to include one trip in the Central Florida area, one in the South Florida area, and one in the North Florida area. These travel costs are budgeted because it is anticipated that ECE centers participating in the intervention will be selected from each major region of Florida.

The budget also includes costs for required background checks for newly hired staff. As a matter of policy, the Forum conducts federal background checks for all employees at the time of hire and therefore existing staff have already met this requirement. The budget also conforms to the grant match requirements and all other budget instructions. The match percentage would be fulfilled through two sources: (1) T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Project contract held by the Children's Forum with the Florida Office of Early Learning which is funded through Child Care Development Block Grant funds for a cash match on a portion of the staff FTE and (2) Moore Communications Group for an in-kind match for use of meeting space for holding eight partner workgroup meetings. Each of these partners is agreeable to the in-kind match described within the Forum's proposed budget.
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Evaluation Summary or Plan

The Children’s Forum will assess the feasibility of integrating the proposed Early Learning Workforce Coaching Model into the AmeriCorps service model and the implications of this integration on expected intervention outcomes. Part of the Forum's proposed planning grant activities will include the development of an evaluation design and analysis plan to assess the implementation process and impact of the proposed evidence-based intervention which is detailed in the Planning Process and Timeline portion of the Narrative section of this application. In brief, the evaluation plan developed as part of the proposed planning grant will include the identification and/or development of a logic model to include the theory of change, anticipated outcomes of the intervention, fidelity measures to examine intervention implementation, and research questions, as well as the evaluation protocols and data collection procedures.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

5/16/16

1) Corporation Fixed and Commission Fixed Amount calculations have been updated to reflect the following formula:

* \[ ([\text{CNCS Section I} + \text{CNCS Section II}] \times 0.0526 \times 0.60) = \text{Corporation Fixed Amount} \]

* \[ ([\text{CNCS Section I} + \text{CNCS Section II}] \times 0.0526 \times 0.40) = \text{Commission Fixed Amount} \]

2) The application is not being considered for an amount different than the original request.

3) The in-kind meeting space, Moore Communications, is proposed at this moment.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics