

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Waynesville R-VI School District proposes to have 36 AmeriCorps Members who will provide academic support, mentoring, service-learning, enrichment, and fitness and wellness support to students, of whom over 75% are military-affiliated, in the Waynesville, Saint Robert, and Fort Leonard Wood communities of Missouri. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps Members will be responsible for increasing student achievement of K-8, at-risk and military-affiliated students through member- and volunteer-supported tutoring and mentoring programs during the regular school day and in the afterschool setting. In addition, the AmeriCorps Members will leverage an additional 1,000 leveraged volunteers who will be engaged in providing educational enrichment and support to students in the Waynesville R-VI School District.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of Veterans and Military Families and Education. The CNCS investment of \$431,656 will be matched with \$374,644, \$374,644 in public funding and \$0 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

NEED: The Waynesville R-VI School District is home to Fort Leonard Wood Army Installation, where 76% of students in the district are military affiliated (dependents of active duty military, veterans, reserves, or DoD [Department of Defense]) and 60% are direct military dependents (dependents of active duty military) (Federal Impact Aid data). Poverty is prevalent throughout the school district as indicated by 47% of students being classified as economically disadvantaged youth and receiving free/reduced lunch (based on data from the USDA - United States Department of Agriculture). The Waynesville School District is one of six school districts serving rural Pulaski County, with a population of 52,879 (2010 US Census). Within Pulaski County, unemployment rates continue to exceed state levels by 17% and national levels by 22% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2016). These statistics indicate a lack of resources within family units to assist students who may require additional support outside of the regular classroom setting.

Many military affiliated students experience frequent moves resulting from parental deployments, temporary duty relocations, and reassignments. Student mobility rates exceed 60% across the district, with some schools exceeding 80% mobility rates based upon annual student enrollment and exit numbers tracked within the district. It is not atypical for a military child to attend 6-9 schools during their K-12 education (Military Child Education Coalition, 2012). As a result of high mobility rates,

## Narratives

many students struggle with academics due to gaps in learning that result from the curriculum being varied in schools across the country and overseas. Students also struggle with making friends and forming attachments to their school and community, based on observations by teachers and administrators within the district and annual climate surveys. Waynesville AmeriCorps Members (ACM) serve to close achievement gaps and help students make connections during mentoring/tutoring sessions throughout the school day and afterschool. In the state of Missouri, studies have shown that 32% of children in grades K-12 are alone and unsupervised after school (AfterSchool Alliance, 2013). The Waynesville area has complex challenges posed by the high density of military affiliated families, reducing the level of family support available to the parents of at-risk students. Compounding this is the low-income level of the rural community which limits the resources available to parents to enroll their children in activities to promote academic achievement, health and wellness, and other learning opportunities that enhance students' school day learning. While individual students continue to make progress and experience success, 34% of K-8 students are performing below grade level in English Language Arts, and 51% of K-8 students are performing below grade level in Mathematics as demonstrated by students scoring at Basic or Below Basic on the 2016 MAP (Missouri Assessment Program). Additionally, 40% of students scored in the bottom 40th percentile on the Fall 2016 STAR Reading Assessment. The district has responded by conducting in-depth studies of areas of weakness, adopting new materials to provide support, and implementing building level Response to Intervention (RtI) systems to better meet student needs. However, there is simply not enough manpower to provide students with the individualized direct instruction that is needed to close achievement gaps. AmeriCorps provides a solution to this need, providing mentoring and tutoring in skill-deficient areas to at-risk students identified as most in need of support. ACM, working directly with classroom teachers, provide much needed additional time and support to K-8 students who are not reaching proficiency levels.

**THEORY OF CHANGE:** The Waynesville AmeriCorps program will provide academic interventions to at-risk students so that they may improve their academic performance and achieve grade-level expectations in the key areas of reading and math. The primary population to be served is military-affiliated students who have recently transitioned into the school district and require additional assistance in order to be on track with both local and state grade level expectations. In addition, approximately 46% of the students served will also be economically disadvantaged - increasing their barriers to academic success. Academic remediation will be provided both during the school day and

## Narratives

after school in order to provide students with greater opportunities for growth. During the school day, AmeriCorps Members will serve as Tier II and III interventionists in the school-wide Response to Intervention (RtI) Program; these are the most intensive tiers students can qualify for. The support of AmeriCorps will provide the resources necessary to implement individual and small-group sessions in partnership with the teaching staff. Initial ACM RtI caseloads will be built using end of year assessment data from the previous school year to identify the students most in need of reading or math remediation. From there, as new students enter the district baseline assessments will be administered and the program director will receive weekly student add/drop lists from the district. Using this information, the director and assistant director will work to add and remove students from ACM caseloads to ensure that new students entering the district are provided any extra support that is required. District-wide assessments will be conducted on a quarterly basis and the assistant director will use the data to update ACM caseloads as needed.

As a part of the RtI process, ACM will utilize the research-based instructional strategies of Direct Instruction/SRA/Reading Street and Check & Connect during the school day. The Direct Instruction/SRA/Reading Street methods will provide easy to implement curriculum that will address skill deficits identified by national assessment tools (STAR Reading, STAR Math, SMI, SRI) in the areas of reading and math. Once students are assigned to an ACM's caseload, the ACM will administer SRA placement tests to identify where the child needs to begin in the provided curriculum. Students will be placed in small groups based on their current skill set, as opposed to grade level; this will allow students performing significantly below grade level to work at their current skill level and progress at their own speed so that gaps of knowledge can be filled. By following the prescribed curriculum, students will learn missing concepts that are preventing them from performing at grade level. As a result of the daily, individualized interventions, students will make academic gains and achieve grade-level expectations.

As part of the RtI process, the Check & Connect program will not only focus on academic remediation, but will also work to address underlying issues that may be contributing to poor academic performance. ACM will utilize goal and planning sheets to teach students responsibility necessary for academic success. ACM will regularly "check" three key areas for each student assigned to their caseload: academic performance, attendance, and behavior. The ACM will work with their students to help them set and achieve goals in any or all of the three areas of concern. As an outcome, student engagement will increase and students will take greater responsibility for their performance related to academic, behavioral, and attendance.

## Narratives

In addition to the school day interventions, ACM will allow the district to provide affordable afterschool programming through the Club TIGER Afterschool Program. The Afterschool Program is designed to keep K-8 students actively involved in their school and community. Through the Afterschool Program, ACM provide tutoring/mentoring while helping students develop positive relationships with peers and caring adults. ACM will extend the classroom learning into the afterschool program through academic assistance, service learning, interest-based clubs, enrichment, and health and wellness activities. Afterschool programming will include daily academic assistance through both tutoring and problem-based learning projects. Problem-based learning will be included through the use of 4H afterschool program curriculum. The hands-on activities will allow the students to actively participate in team projects while also reinforcing academic standards. This will provide a relaxed atmosphere where students can develop positive relationships with their peers, ACM, and community volunteers, leading to increased student engagement levels. In addition to the 4H curriculum, the Afterschool Administrators (certified teachers) will work with the ACM to allow them to select additional activities from other curriculum sources if the ACM has a specific interest they would like to share with students. Additional curricula available include Quirkles (hands-on STEM learning through experiments and themed books), PlayWorks (active learning through play), Boys/Girls Clubs of America (skills-based activities), and Get Fit Be Strong (Army-commissioned health/fitness curriculum). This works to promote engagement of both students and ACM. Afterschool programs are crucial to students new to the district, providing a safe, nurturing environment to meet fellow students, develop new skills, and build relationships. In addition, many military families rely heavily on afterschool programs to provide care for their children while they are working non-traditional hours or have a spouse deployed.

In addition to the direct service provided to students by ACM, volunteers will also be leveraged to provide tutoring and mentoring support. ACM will play a crucial role by recruiting, training, and matching volunteers with disadvantaged youth. ACM will serve alongside the school district's Volunteer Coordinator to reach out to the military and civilian communities to leverage new volunteers.

The proposed activities will support the achievement of improved academic performance, smoother transitions for military-affiliated students, relationship building, and greater school engagement - results that will not be possible without the support of AmeriCorps members.

EVIDENCE BASE: The research-based interventions of RtI, Direct Instruction (SRA, Reading Street),

## Narratives

Check & Connect, and high-quality afterschool program activities will be combined to provide students with an evidence-based, systematic approach to meet their needs. The four components detailed below demonstrate evidence that supports positive impacts on student learning, and meet or exceed the criteria for a pre-preliminary evidence program. These components were also part of the previous program design, which demonstrated evidence of effectiveness. During the 2015-16 program year, it was anticipated that 75% of students completing the program would demonstrate academic gains. The actual outcome was 93% of students demonstrating academic gains in reading and/or math, as reported in the annual performance measure final report. In addition to monitoring data related to the required performance measures, program staff worked with the evaluator to select two additional measurements: percentage of students reaching Grade Level Equivalency (GE) (as determined by nationally-normed assessments) and average Grade Level Equivalency (GE) growth. The program analyzed STAR Math and STAR Reading data for the whole district, and identified all students who scored 1 or more grades below grade level on the quarter one assessment and who also retook the assessment during quarter four. This totaled 872 students for STAR Math and 863 students for STAR Reading. From this data, two subgroups were identified for each assessment: students receiving less than 5 ACM tutoring sessions (baseline group; Math N=176, Reading N=175) and students receiving 40 or more ACM tutoring sessions (treatment group; Math N=249, Reading N=272). Initially, the program was only going to include students receiving no ACM services in the baseline group, but the number was statistically insignificant (less than 15 students) when compared to the treatment groups (over 200 students) for each assessment. The cutoff for the treatment groups was set at 40 sessions and above because most students were assigned to daily ACM services for at minimum one quarter, which ranges from 40-45 days.

The results demonstrated positive and statistically-significant data supporting the use of ACM services. The percentage of students reaching Grade Level Equivalency (GE) in math was 44.3% for the baseline group compared to 49.4% for the treatment group. For reading, the results were 36.0% for the baseline group and 39.3% for the treatment group.

The second measure assessed was the average Grade Level Equivalency (GE) growth for each group. The average GE growth in math for the baseline group was 1.4 and for the treatment group was 1.7. For reading, the results were 1.3 for the baseline group and 1.5 for the treatment group. As an average, students are expected to grow by 1 GE each year (GE scores should correspond with a student's grade level; for example a 3rd grade student would be expected to score 3.0 at the start of the school year and 3.9 by the end of the school year). These results indicate that both groups progressed

## Narratives

faster than the norm, with the treatment group showing the highest progression. The reason that the baseline students progressed faster than the norm is most likely attributed to the fact that all students monitored were already more than 1 GE behind where they should be, and therefore, most would have received other remediation services in addition to any ACM services received. Additional services may have included attending Title I Reading/Math classes with specialists, staying after school for tutoring (which would have been provided primarily by ACM, but those sessions were not included in the above analysis), or qualifying for special education/paraprofessional services.

RtI: Response to Intervention (RtI) is an accepted method of bridging academic proficiency gaps and providing early detection of learning disabilities through tiered, research based learning interventions supported by strong evidence. The concept of RtI is explicitly included in the No Child Left Behind act of 2001 and the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 (Klotz & Canter, 2006), lending inherent credibility to the method. Waynesville R-VI School District utilizes a tiered early intervention model of RtI (Standard Protocol/Problem Solving) (VanDerHeyden) that utilizes SRA and Teacher Directed Interventions for Tier II and III interventions. Field Studies of RTI Effectiveness St. Croix River Education District Model (SCRED), a quasi-experimental and historical contrast design study by Bollman, Silbergliitt, & Gibbons in 2007 explored the impacts of a K-8 RTI program on reading achievement by looking at academic data prior to and after RtI was implemented. It found "The overall percentage of students reaching the grade-level standard increased from 51% in 1999 [prior to RtI] to 80% in 2005 [after full RtI implementation]." In addition, the study reported "overall improvement in student reading outcomes as indicated by an increase in percentages of passing CBM [curriculum-based measurement] benchmark scores (from 35% in 1995--1996 to 70% in 2005--2006)."

Direct Instruction (SRA and Reading Street): The Direct Instruction model has proven beneficial to participating students based upon pre- and post-assessments conducted in conjunction with the ACM services. During the 2015-16 program year, 93% of students receiving ACM SRA services demonstrated academic gains. In addition, one school serving students in grades 3-5 will continue with a pilot program implemented the past program year using ACM to implement Reading Street curriculum. Reading Street is designed by Pearson (education publisher) to work as part of a tiered RtI program to provide remediation in fluency. It is based upon four components: nurture the love of reading, build a foundation for reading, grow student capacity, and inspire confidence. The program will collect data on student progress using this model, and if gains comparable to the SRA program are demonstrated, the model may be expanded to 3rd-5th grade students at other schools within the

## Narratives

district.

Numerous studies on the effectiveness of SRA have been conducted, with the most notable study in support of the SRA learning intervention being Project Follow Through (FT), a large and well-constructed experimental study funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The experimental study spanned multiple decades and included over 20,000 student participants at over 180 sites (Grossen, Bonnie; University of Oregon, 1997). Compared to the other models evaluated, Direct Instruction (SRA Reading Mastery was explicitly evaluated) performed consistently higher in all areas and demographics and supported the causal conclusion of increased academic performance as a result of Direct Instruction. The immediately applicable result of this study, emphasized by researcher Bonnie Grossen, PhD. at the University of Oregon is as follows: "... FT Project did successfully identify what does work. The only model that brought children close to the 50th percentile in all subject areas was the Direct Instruction model" (Grossen, Bonnie; University of Oregon, 1997). In addition, the journal *Education and Treatment of Children* published a study by Donald Crawford and Vicki Snider of Western Washington University and University of Wisconsin (respectively) in May 2000, titled "Effective Mathematics Instruction: The Importance of Curriculum". This study examined two groups of students in the area of multiplication, with one using Direct Instruction and the other using the standard textbook. The direct instruction group averaged a score of 74% on the end of year national math assessment, and the standard group only achieved a 27% on the assessment.

A quasi-experimental study conducted by Foorman, Francis and Fletcher, published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1998, confirmed the effectiveness of the SRA Model for English Language Arts. The well-designed and implemented study evaluated three instructional strategies (explicit, embedded, implicit) for early literacy in 285 first and second grade students identified as at-risk for reading failure. The participants were provided literacy instruction with one of the three instructional strategies. The results of this study clearly showed that the students who received the Direct Instruction intervention [implicit] increased their reading skills at an accelerated rate compared to the embedded and explicit learning strategies (Foorman, Francis, & Fletcher, 1998).

In 2002, academics from the Oregon Research Institute published a study titled "Supplemental Instruction in Decoding Skills in Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Students in Early Elementary School: A Follow-up" in *The Journal of Special Education*, evaluating the effects of supplemental reading instruction in students grades K-3. The 256 students who were identified for participation were randomly assigned to either receive the supplemental instruction or not. The reading ability of all participants was evaluated using the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills -

## Narratives

developed by the University of Oregon) measurements prior to supplemental instruction, and after the supplemental instruction ended. The researchers conclude that "results support the utility of supplemental reading instruction for children in grades K-3, and provides evidence of the effectiveness of Corrective Reading and Reading Mastery [part of the SRA curriculum] in improving the reading achievement of children at risk for reading difficulty. Hispanic and non-Hispanic children benefitted comparably from instruction, as measured by a significant effect on oral reading fluency, with an effect size of .40 and no interaction" (Gunn, Smolkowski, Biglan, & Black, 2002).

**Check & Connect:** Check & Connect is a research-based Response to Intervention Tier III program developed by the University of Minnesota as a means of increasing student engagement, to improve academic performance and promote completion (Institute on Community Integration | University of Minnesota, 2013). Check & Connect is proven to increase the likelihood of academic success for at-risk students through improved engagement (104% increase over baseline), lowering truancy (135% increase over baseline) and improving the likelihood of academic completion (91% of treated at-risk students remained enrolled at the end of a 20 month period, compared to 70% of control group at-risk students) (Institute on Community Integration | University of Minnesota, 2013). The University of Texas at Austin and St. Louis University conducted a two-year experimental study evaluating the efficacy of an intensive reading intervention and dropout prevention intervention (modified implementation of Check & Connect) in 457 at-risk students in grade 9, from varying demographics. Students participating in the modified Check & Connect treatments (with and without reading intervention) reported higher levels of school engagement over time compared to students in the untreated comparison (Roberts, Vaughn, Fall, & Vaughn, 2013). Results were based on the School Dropout Risk Indicator (Vaughn, Roberts, Wexler, & Fall, 2012) and demonstrated a standard deviation effect of .89 for psychological engagement and .62 for academic engagement (the first indicating a large effect size and the second a moderate effect size). The Check & Connect program incorporates both mentoring and tutoring support focusing on academics, attendance and behavior monitoring. Through Check & Connect, ACM will empower students to solve their own problems and take responsibility their academic success. When placing students into intervention groups, an emphasis will be placed on ensuring that students new to the district (typically military-affiliated) receive extra support during the initial transition phase of relocation.

**Afterschool Programs/4H Curriculum:** 4-H curriculum is used as the basis for the afterschool program. 4-H has partnerships with military bases across the country and provides continuity to military families as they transition into new communities. Students are able to continue progression

## Narratives

through a consistent afterschool program regardless of their parents' relocation due to the prevalence of 4-H programs in military communities. 4-H commissioned a longitudinal experiment, performed by researchers at Tufts University that involved over 7,000 participants from 44 states over seven years. Key findings from this study include: 4-H participants are 2.1 times more likely than non-participants to make contributions to their communities, 1.8 times more likely to have higher scores on measures of active/engaged citizenship, 1.5 times more likely to report high academic competence, and 1.7 times more likely to report high engagement in school (Lerner, Lerner, & Colleagues, 2011). There is substantial research to support the efficacy of afterschool programs to enhance the development of many positive outcomes for youth in a variety of areas including: improved school attendance and engagement in learning; improved test scoring and grades; great improvements in performance for students at-risk for failure; decreased instances of crime perpetrated by youth and directed toward youth during After School Program hours; reduced drug and alcohol instances; and increased support for working parents (reducing employee absences and improving working conditions) (National AfterSchool Alliance, 2013). The 4-H curriculum is designed to be easy to follow so that no formal teaching experience is required to effectively implement the lesson plans.

NOTICE PRIORITY: The Waynesville School District is applying under the CNCS funding priority of Veterans and Military Families: positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength. Over 70% of enrolled youth who will be served through the AmeriCorps grant will come from military-affiliated families. Since Fort Leonard Wood serves as a training installation, military families are typically stationed here for a maximum of two years. Additionally, some families experience the challenge of one parent being deployed or stationed in another state/country.

Students entering the district transfer from other states and countries where their previous school's curriculum rarely aligns with Waynesville curriculum. This results in immediate academic gaps that can be difficult for classroom teachers to address due to frequent student transfers within their classrooms. Additional remediation support provided by ACM through SRA/Direct Instruction, RtI, and Check & Connect have proven to be effective in eliminating achievement gaps that may exist in the areas of reading and math. Additionally, through the afterschool program ACM will provide a safe, engaging, and supportive environment for students to receive academic remediation and enrichment, explore new interests through club activities, and develop relationships with their peers. ACM support will allow the afterschool program to provide these services at a reasonable price to

## Narratives

military families. The program will also offer scholarships to families who are unable to afford afterschool care. Due to the program's affordability, it is heavily relied upon by military families, as many parents work long and varied hours on Fort Leonard Wood Military Installation.

MEMBER TRAINING: ACM will attend a one-week, high-quality, pre-service training which will emphasize how to serve within an educational setting. In addition, ACM will participate in guided observations and onsite trainings specific to their service sites. The training advisor will meet with the ACM at four times during the first two weeks to lead discussions on best practices observed within the classrooms. Experts from outside and within the Waynesville School District will be contracted to provide implementation instruction on research-based interventions including SRA Reading & Math, RtI (Response to Intervention), CPI (Crisis Prevention Intervention), classroom management techniques, differentiated instructional strategies (with an emphasis on student engagement), and PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support). Training specific to the AmeriCorps program will also occur intensively during orientation and be re-emphasized during biweekly meetings throughout the service year. AmeriCorps topics will include the history and purpose of AmeriCorps State and National, the overview of CNCS, program guidelines, expectations of ACM, prohibited activities, and a detailed review of the Member contract and handbook. ACM will be provided ongoing follow-up training and will be assessed periodically on the adherence to program guidelines and prohibited activities through site observations and surveys. A climate and compliance survey, modeled after the annual MCSC (Missouri Community Service Commission) survey given to members, will be administered anonymously to ACM throughout the year to allow program staff to identify any training deficits early on, and to also monitor the satisfaction level of members. Aggregate survey results will be presented and discussed with the members to encourage an open dialogue with staff, as well as promote a solutions-based environment. ACM will receive in-service training throughout the service year during bi-weekly meetings and through on site training, focused on improving and enhancing specific strategies to ensure program and student success. Training will be provided by teachers, administrators, school staff, community leaders, and through weekly collaborative Professional Learning Communities within their schools. Topics will include specific instruction in the delivery of Response to Intervention (RtI), SRA Reading and Math, teacher directed interventions, Check & Connect, and afterschool program methodologies. Mentor teachers and administrators will be provided with AmeriCorps handbooks and program staff will review program guidelines, branding, and prohibited activities through annual review training. Mentor teachers and

## **Narratives**

administrators will provide ongoing monitoring of ACM performance and will provide feedback, which will guide training delivery and ensure that instructional strategies are being delivered with fidelity. Information collected from mentor teachers, administrators, and site observations will be used to determine training needs during bi-monthly training sessions. ACM will share best practices and lessons learned during bi-monthly training sessions, providing opportunities to build on both research-based training protocols and ACM success. Celebrations of success will be a part of each training meeting. Team building and personal assessment exercises will be utilized to establish an esprit de corps among Members. Trainings on the topics of poverty, resiliency, and self-awareness will also be provided periodically in order to promote greater social awareness and personal growth.

**MEMBER SUPERVISION:** Supervision and support of ACM will be multidimensional and coordinated with mentor teachers and building principals. The Director and Assistant Director will act as a liaison between administrative staff and ACM to provide support, supervision, compliance monitoring, and administration-related oversight (including the approval of timesheets). They will maintain regular, open communication with site supervisors and ACM to ensure that ACM have a positive experience and that student needs are met. ACM will be encouraged to contact the Director or Assistant Director regularly with any feedback, questions, or concerns. Building administrators will provide onsite supervision of ACM, review student achievement data with ACM, and provide support in determining student eligibility, schedules, and delivery methods. Mentor teachers, selected by the building principal for their expertise and abilities to support ACM, will provide direction and guidance for ACM and help to ensure that ACM have the resources and skills necessary to effectively implement their assigned instructional strategy. Mentors and administrators will also continuously monitor for prohibited activities and adherence to program guidelines. Any discrepancies will be immediately brought to the attention of the program director. The AmeriCorps Director will provide building administrators and mentor teachers training and periodic reminders regarding AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations. Any issues or discrepancies in policy-adherence will be immediately addressed by the Director to ensure ACM are provided with the best-possible service experience, in alignment with all CNCS regulations.

**MEMBER EXPERIENCE:** ACM will gain extensive skills and experience that will assist them in their future career and school goals. ACM will develop skills in the areas of classroom management, academic instruction, public speaking, and working as a member of a team. Program staff will

## Narratives

provide end of year training to ACM to assist them with resume development and college/career planning. Within the Waynesville School District, nearly 70 former national service participants have received employment offers within the district following their service.

In addition to the practical teaching skills ACM will develop, ACM will develop an array of soft skills through serving alongside professional educators. When areas of needed improvement are identified by supervisors, program staff will lead small group or individual coaching to help develop their awareness of how to succeed in a professional environment. Coaching sessions may cover a variety of topics, including time management, budgeting, planning, goal setting, punctuality, or conflict-resolution. ACM will also participate in resiliency and self-discovery trainings so that they may learn how to effectively respond to unexpected changes and differing personalities.

ACM will be able to see the direct impact of their service on a daily basis, and will have opportunities to reflect upon that impact through the sharing of Great Stories and the tracking of student progress and growth in their daily journals. ACM will be encouraged to connect with national service social media pages online, and announcements of online networking opportunities through CNCS will be shared with ACM. ACM will also see their impact recognized publicly through press releases and celebration events.

Program staff will recruit a diverse population of ACM reflective of the populations they will serve. A focus will be placed on recruiting military veterans and family members, low-income individuals, and rural residents. Military veterans and family members will be recruited through participation in job fairs on the military installation and recruitment from military groups such as FRGs (Family Readiness Group). Program staff will work with local nonprofits serving low-income individuals to advertise and recruit for the AmeriCorps program and will also include advertising online and in print throughout the rural communities served.

COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: The AmeriCorps brand is well established within the community and AmeriCorps Members' reputation for "getting things done" is consistently communicated utilizing a comprehensive marketing strategy. The following components ensure that ACM are consistently identified: ACM are required to wear shirts/sweaters, ID badges, and lanyards with the AmeriCorps logo during all service activities; window clings are displayed in building entrances at all service sites; AmeriCorps posters are displayed in all tutoring areas; multiple press releases are distributed throughout the community sharing ACM success stories; and pride in service is promoted during bi-monthly training sessions through the development of elevator speeches to share

## Narratives

with community members, exploration of service impact, and sharing of success stories.

### Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: The AmeriCorps Program Director, Todd Whalen, serves as the primary contact for the program and Dr. Trish Adkins, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, serves as the secondary contact for the program. The district has extensive experience with managing federal funding and has effectively managed the AmeriCorps program for nine years. Additionally, the district manages federal funding for Federal Impact Aid, Title I, IA, ID, IIA, III, Department of Defense Education Activity funds, Army Youth Programs in Your Neighborhood, AmeriCorps VISTA, and other federal sources. Financial management and oversight is provided by the Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Dr. Chris Berger. Waynesville AmeriCorps is integrated and coordinated by district staff with explicit support from the Superintendent and Board of Education, building principals, classroom teachers, afterschool program directors, and AmeriCorps Assistant Program Director and the AmeriCorps Program Director. ACM are provided support from the AmeriCorps Program Director and the Assistant Director including: training, supervision, oversight, compliance monitoring, communication, and team building. The building principals provide on site support, training, and monitoring. Mentor teachers are assigned to each Member to provide daily support and direction. The Program Director receives support from the offices of the: Assistant Superintendent of Personnel in the form of recruitment and Member support; Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction in the areas of program integration, monitoring and compliance; and Assistant Superintendent of Operations in areas related to finance, insurance, and Member benefits.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulation will be closely monitored and supported. All program guidance and rules will be adhered to at the program, site, and member levels. The Missouri Community Service Commission (MCSC) provides extensive guidance, monitoring tools, and support to ensure compliance. This guidance will provide the basis for all internal and external compliance monitoring protocols. Annual program reviews with building principals regarding AmeriCorps policies and regulations will be conducted, in addition to regular, ongoing site visits by the Director and Assistant Director to ensure site and member compliance. Internal self-evaluation by program leadership and site visits and reviews by evaluators will provide additional levels of compliance regulation. Evaluators will utilize file and program compliance checklists based on MCSC guidance to enforce consistent delivery of quality programming. Program

## Narratives

administrators, site supervisors, and ACM will receive feedback from evaluators regarding any instances of risk or noncompliance and immediate corrective actions will be initiated. Program administrators will work with State Program Officers to develop improvement plans if any risks are identified during program operations. Members and site supervisors training in compliance expectations will be intentional and ongoing and will include review of compliance requirements and prohibited activities at the program, site and member level. As a previous grantee, the Waynesville AmeriCorps Program has consistently achieved a low-risk level during the annual audit by the state commission and will continue to be proactive to ensure all regulations are followed.

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

**COST EFFECTIVENESS** The proposed budget will be sufficient to effectively carry out the proposed program design. The Waynesville School District has the funds on hand to meet all cash and in-kind grantee share budget items. The proposed budget will exceed the required match and will decrease the cost per MSY by a modest amount. Due to significant funding cuts from other sources during the 2015-16 school year, the program is unable to implement a more substantial decrease at this time.

**BUDGET ADEQUACY:** The proposed budget is accurate, reasonable, and in compliance with budget instructions. The Waynesville School District will utilize general operating funds to cover all non-CNCS funding and resources listed in the budget.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

AmeriCorps Evaluation Plan 2017 - 2020

Waynesville AmeriCorps Members (ACM) meet community needs in the focus areas of veterans, military families and education by serving alongside PreK-8 teachers in the Waynesville School District to provide reading and math tutoring/mentoring to at-risk youth. ACM serving in the afterschool program provide academic assistance, health and wellness activities, and club sponsorship to K-8 students.

ACM will enhance the Response to Intervention (RtI) program utilized throughout the district by providing Tier II and III interventions including SRA reading/math, teacher-directed, and Check & Connect. ACM will also lead afterschool tutoring and activities.

The theory of change for the AmeriCorps Program suggests that when students at risk for academic failure or disengagement are supported through evidence-based tutoring models, they will increase mastery in literacy/math skills as evidenced by assessments.

## Narratives

The intensity, frequency and duration of the interventions provided during the school day vary based on student need and intervention delivery models. Tutoring and mentoring sessions range from 20-45 minutes, 1-5 times a week, throughout the entire school year. In the afterschool setting, students participate up to 2.5 hours per day, 5 days per week for the duration of the school year, depending on family needs and circumstances. Nationally-normed assessments combined with student participation data will provide a causal link between intervention methods and increased student achievement. Through school-day interventions and afterschool programs, 2000 students will be served, at least 1400 of those students being military-affiliated. Students receiving services will demonstrate increased participation during the school day and afterschool program. Increased participation will amplify into improved assessment performance, fewer behavioral problems, improved attendance and students will achieve grade-level performance. Further expanding the capacity of the program, ACM will recruit, train and manage volunteers to serve as tutors/mentors to meet student needs. With the support of ACM, the program anticipates recruiting 1000 community volunteers.

In consultation between the external evaluator and the Program Director, the following evaluation questions were identified:

Process:

- Are ACM implementing the Program's tutoring and mentoring models with integrity? If not, why?
- Do the sites' institutional infrastructures (facilities/resources/personnel support/etc) support the services provided by ACM? How or why not?
- What changes to service delivery are recommended?

Outcome:

- Have students in the Program improved their reading/math ability as anticipated?
- What level of change was observed? In which subject areas? Which subgroups have demonstrated the most change, considering military status?
- How do the outcomes of students enrolled in the Program compare with similar non-participating students?
- What changes were seen in students' academics, behavior and attendance performance as a result of participation in Check & Connect?
- What other causal factors have an impact on the desired program outcomes?
- How many volunteers have been recruited to serve in the district? How can we improve their experience?

Student academic data will be analyzed to determine which students are making appropriate growth

## Narratives

and which are in need of more targeted interventions; if available, attendance and behavioral data will also be analyzed. In addition to the above data which is housed in Youth Enrollment System (YES), Volunteer2, and eSchool, data from interviews, surveys and observations will be aggregated and analyzed to provide input in answering research questions.

The following Measurable Program Outcomes will be the targets that determine if appropriate progress is made in answering the identified research questions:

-How many students receiving school day tutoring services in Year 1 were still present in the district by the end of Year 3? Of those students, how many received services all three years? By the end of year three, how many students had achieved grade-level performance in reading? Math? (based on assessment data)

-How many military-affiliated students receiving school day tutoring services in Year 1 were still present in the district by the end of Year 3? (based on available assessment data). Of those military students, how many received services all three years? By the end of year three, how many military students had achieved grade-level performance in reading? Math? (based on assessment data)

-How many students participating in CNCS-supported afterschool programs in Year 1 were still present in the district by the end of Year 3? (based on YES student attendance data). Of those students, how many participated all three years? By the end of year three, how many students had achieved grade-level performance in reading? Math? (based on assessment data)

-How many students participating in CNCS-supported early childhood programming in Year 1 were still present in the district by the end of Year 3? (based on eSchool enrollment data). By the end of year three, how many students had achieved grade-level performance in reading? Math? (based on assessment data)

-Over the three year period, how many unduplicated students received school-day AmeriCorps tutoring services? (5+ sessions)

-Over the three year period, how many unduplicated military-affiliated students received school-day AmeriCorps tutoring services? (5+ sessions)

-Over the three year period, how many unduplicated volunteers were recruited or managed as a result of CNCS-supported services?

-What trends were observed over the three year period with regards to average hours served by a volunteer or total hours served by all volunteers?

Data

Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected as part of the evaluation of efficacy of the

## Narratives

AmeriCorps Program. Quantitative data will be collected using databases implemented at the district level. Databases include:

-Volunteer2 - tracks volunteer recruitment, demographics and service. A minimum of 1000 volunteers will be tracked.

-Youth Enrollment System(YES) - captures students' participation in tutoring services provided by ACM and participation in afterschool academic assistance, clubs, and activities. A minimum of 2000 students will be tracked, with a minimum of 1400 of those being military-affiliated.

-eSchool - includes student demographics including grade level, grades, attendance and military affiliation for all district students.

Nationally-normed reading and/or math assessments will be used in conjunction with YES and eSchool data to monitor students' progress with respect to participation in mentoring, tutoring and afterschool activities. Assessments will be conducted 2-4 times per year, with baselines established prior to services. Program staff will work with district administration to obtain demographics, attendance and performance data for participating students.

The external evaluator and Program staff will collect quantitative data on an ongoing basis through observations of tutors/mentors; interviews of ACM and administrators; surveys of ACM, administrators and participating students; monitoring adherence to program guidelines, and mid-term and end of year evaluations of ACM.

### Results

The interim and final evaluation findings will allow the Waynesville School District and AmeriCorps Waynesville Program to make more informed decisions toward continued improvement of the Program. Interim evaluations will guide the development of trainings held during bi-weekly AmeriCorps meetings and will help refine the processes for selecting students for participation in the tutoring programs. Program staff will work closely with the evaluator to design trainings that will strengthen Members' instructional strategies.

Final evaluation findings will shape future instructional service delivery by providing causal evidence of the most effective instructional strategies at each school site. Stakeholders, including the MCSC, district administrators, school board, and community partners will review results and work closely with program staff to review current practices and make adjustments to member assignments and interventions based on evaluation findings. Outcomes will be reviewed for relevancy and will enable the program to determine if short, mid, or long-term goals should be adjusted to ensure continued growth and relevancy of the program. The program evaluation will answer the research questions and

## Narratives

serve as a management and decision-making tool for devising appropriate action plans

Qualitative and quantitative evaluation data gathered through performance databases, assessments, interviews, surveys and observations will shape methods for promotion, recruitment, orientation, and trainings for the following year. Timelines and goals for ACM recruitment, training, and performance will be developed using feedback from Members and administrators. Evaluation findings will also be applied to improving promotion and outreach activities for recruiting new community volunteers, nonprofit partners, and strategic business partners.

Evaluator qualifications

The selected evaluator will possess experience with conducting both process and outcome evaluations. The evaluator will be knowledgeable of instructional strategies and have experience in the educational field. The evaluator will also need to be experienced with the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data sources.

Budget

The school district has budgeted \$2500 for an external evaluator. This is based upon a \$500 daily rate. The evaluator will conduct three to four onsite visits to conduct observations, surveys, etc. The remaining 1-2 days budgeted will be used for developing a written evaluation report to provide feedback to the school district.

### **Amendment Justification**

N/A

### **Clarification Summary**

N/A

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A

### **Grant Characteristics**