Narratives

Executive Summary

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) proposes to place 40 AmeriCorps members (28.468 MSY) who will mentor high-needs students in 21 middle, high, and continuation schools in nine urban and rural communities in Kern County, California. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will mentor 800 targeted youth; 640 (80%) of them will receive services for the minimum dosage, with at least 397 demonstrating improvement in school attendance and/or behavior. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage 300 volunteers who will be engaged in supporting local community projects on national days of service and providing enrichment activities and information for mentees.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of $385,192 will be matched with $587,900, $560,000 in public funding and $27,900 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

NEED: Located at the southern end of California's Central Valley, Kern County is home to 884,436 residents. It is a large diverse county ranging west to the Coast Ranges and east beyond the Sierra Nevada into the Mojave Desert. Children in the county face several challenges. Kern County suffers from high levels of poverty, a poor economy and low educational attainment. Children represent 29% of the county population, the 3rd highest percentage in the state. According to the Kern County Network for Children (2016), Kern County has the 5th worst childhood poverty rate (33%) out of California’s 58 counties. Unemployment from Kern's oil and agricultural industries caused by plunging oil prices and severe drought continue to expose more families and children to poverty. Research shows poverty threatens every aspect of a child's wellbeing.

Kern County students are chronically failing. According to recent test data, nearly 62% of students do not meet the English Language Arts achievement level and 75% do not meet the achievement level in math. Kern County has one of the state's lowest college-going rates; only 15% have completed a bachelor's degree, compared to 32% statewide (US Census Bureau, 2014). With a changing economy and a shift towards 21st Century careers and skills, students must be prepared and engaged in college and career readiness activities while in school. Kern County also suffers from a high truancy rate; nearly 26% of elementary students are truant (Attorney General's, CA Elementary School & Truancy, 2015). Kern County’s suspension rate of 6.2% is 63% higher than the state’s rate (California Dept. of Education, Suspension and Expulsion Report, 2014-15).

Partner school districts were identified by KCSOS in its role as facilitator of the Local Control
Narratives

Accountability Plan (LCAP) oversight process with districts in the county. The LCAP is a requirement for each school district as part of the statewide Local Control Funding Formula, which allocates more resources to districts with greater numbers of disadvantaged students, including socioeconomically disadvantaged, English learners, students with disabilities, and foster youth. The LCAP communicates district goals that include specific actions and services with measurable outcomes to address 8 state priorities. Stakeholder agreement is a required component of the process. The Building Healthy Communities (BHC) AmeriCorps program helps districts work towards improving measurable outcomes in the priority areas of pupil engagement (attendance) and school climate (suspensions and discipline). Identified districts were presented with the option to use their LCFF funds to provide supplemental mentoring intervention through AmeriCorps.

The schools that elected to participate in the program include 5 high schools, 9 middle, 3 K-8, 1 elementary, and 3 continuation. Fifteen of the schools had placed Members in 2016-17 and six are new. Truancy rates (from 2014-15, the most recent available) range from 3-88% in the participating schools; 18 out of the 21 schools have rates above 20%. Suspension rates range from 1-21%, with 15 schools exceeding the state average. Students served by BHC AmeriCorps in 2015-16 missed an average of more than 11 days each the prior school year, about one out of every 16 days; over 3 days, on average, were unexcused. More than one-third of them had at least one suspension the prior year. While the schools have been making efforts to provide alternatives to suspensions and expulsions in recent years, they lack the staff and resources to provide the necessary intervention for all students who need it. Consultation with partner districts provided important information in the development of the 2017-18 program. Data show school administrators and supervisors rank behavior as the highest priority area (8 of 15 respondents), followed by attendance (6 of 15 respondents).

INTERVENTION: Forty Members will serve 900-hour followed by 300-hour terms, for a total of 1200 hours from September-May providing school-based mentoring in a program structured according to evidence-based best practices. The program is designed to provide over 800 high-needs students with a caring adult who will conduct meaningful activities on a sustained weekly basis that meets each student’s developmental/academic needs for a total of 30 hours of mentoring during the school year (20 hours over a semester for continuation schools). Targeted youth are economically-disadvantaged, meet the criteria outlined in CNCS National Measure ED3A, and have attendance or behavior challenges.

Due to the variety of students and schools in need of mentoring, the direct service activities are largely member-driven. The BHC AmeriCorps program recruits high-quality members, provides substantive
trainings, resources, and tools, and empowers them to develop meaningful approaches to address the needs and interests of their students in consultation with their school site supervisor.

The mentors will follow elements of effective practices: (1) clear expectations of the mentoring relationship between Member and student; (2) clear opening and closing of the relationship; (3) meeting at least 1 hour weekly with mentees individually or in groups of 2 or 3; (4) activities that are structured, intentional, and varied; (5) focus on both developmental and academic needs; and (6) pre-service and ongoing training focused on youth development, effective mentoring practices and activities, boundaries, safety issues, confidentiality, planning, and documentation. As noted in the Evidence Base section in this narrative, high-quality mentors, well-trained and following effective practices, should have a positive impact on youth development across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains. The Members will supplement current efforts by school sites that lack the resources and staff to provide intervention to all students in need.

The Members will be supervised and supported by a Program Coordinator and Project Facilitator as well as a Site Supervisor at each site. The program staff will rely on KCSOS for administrative support. The KCSOS Department of School-Community Partnerships and community partners will provide training by experts in the fields of youth development, mentoring and intervention. Through this network, the program will also coordinate access to other resources in the community for both mentors and mentees, such as foster youth services, college readiness, and career guidance.

**THEORY OF CHANGE/LOGIC MODEL:** The program design and structure are based on current research that such relationships can positively affect a youth's school attendance, behavior, performance and attitude.

Program Design: The design builds on the model developed over the first 6 years of the BHC program. In an October 2016 survey, site supervisors and administrators expressed overwhelming appreciation for the service provided by the Members. Based on their feedback, the program will expand the mentee criteria but still target youth as identified in Measure ED3A. Rather than focus primarily on truants or chronic absentees, schools have the option to refer students who had 3 or more suspensions and/or documented discipline referrals in the previous school year. They also requested flexibility to allow Members placed at their schools to mentor up to 25 students.

Targeted Population: Each mentor will be assigned students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch and meet one or more of the disadvantaged criteria outlined in Measure ED3A. Targeted youth must also be either truant (3 or more unexcused absences of 30 minutes in the prior school year), chronic absentee (absent at least 10% of enrolled days in the prior school year), and/or have excessive
Narratives

behavior issues (3 or more suspensions and/or disciplinary referrals in prior school year). Students generally fall in Tier 2 of a standard intervention pyramid, in need of moderate intervention but not so severe that intensive intervention by qualified professionals are required. Students in traditional schools may be in grades 3-12 and will be mentored from September or October until the end of school in May.

Students in continuation schools may be in grades 9-12 and possibly enrolled for only a semester. For that reason, Members will mentor them for 3-8 months, depending on whether the student is enrolled at the school for a semester or full year. As described in the Evidence Base section, a meta-analysis of prior research studies found establishing a clear expectation of the time frame (even if less than 6 months), with a clear opening and closing of the relationship, would more likely determine positive outcomes than the overall duration of the relationship. An analysis of the BHC program data from 2014-15 showed no significant difference in outcomes for students mentored 20-29 hours as compared to those mentored 30 or more. There was a stronger correlation, however, between the quality of Members (as determined by scores on performance evaluations) and improved attendance.

Member Roles: After pre-service training, 40 Members will begin service at school sites in mid-September, serving approximately 6.5 hours/day, 4-5 days/week. A Site Supervisor at each site will orient the Members to their particular school, introduce them to school staff, and arrange for workspace, computer and internet access, and basic supplies. The Supervisor will also assign students who meet the criteria and work with the Members to secure parent permission. Once established, the Members will develop a schedule to meet with each of their mentees at least 1 hour per week. Each Member will serve 20-25 students. They will begin by getting to know each student and discussing expectations of the program. Their goal is to develop a sustained relationship with each youth for the duration of the academic year for a minimum total of 30 hours (or at least one semester and 20 hours for continuation students). Crucially, the Members will also formally close the relationship with each mentee by the end of the school year as recommended by evidence-based best practices.

During mentoring, the Members will offer a variety of activities to address mentees’ developmental and instrumental needs. Activities may involve pulling the students out of class (normally a non-core subject) or pushing in (shadowing them in class). Mentors and mentees may also meet during lunch periods or after-school programs. The Members spend part of their week planning and preparing for structured activities designed to address the needs or interests of the youth. Activities may include social skills, relationship building, academic support, behavioral support, college/career exploration, physical activity, visual/performing arts, and community service. School-day activities are
Narratives

supplemented by enrichment activities after school. Members at continuation schools, where students are behind on credits or struggling to graduate, will emphasize more academic support and college/career readiness. Under strict guidelines and with permission from the Site Supervisor and program staff, Members may participate in off-site mentoring activities during out-of-school time. Examples include community service projects, physical activities like ice skating and hiking, and visiting colleges and cultural or sporting events.

Outcomes: The outputs and outcomes are based on current research and past results. Each Member should enroll at least 20 students by mid-October and retain at least 16 (80%) by the end of the year. Mentors at continuation schools may pick up more mentees in January as some first semester students graduate or return to their regular school. To measure short-term changes in attitude, the program will gauge student strengths using a pre-, mid-, and post-survey Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale, 2nd Edition (BERS-2) with sample groups in three subsets: middle school, high school, and continuation school. Medium-term outcomes for students in traditional schools will track improved attendance and behavior from the prior year to the current one. Based on research and past results, 397 students (62% of mentees who are mentored the minimum dosage) will improve their attendance rate by 1% or more and/or decrease the number of their suspensions/disciplinary referrals by at least one incident.

The BHC evaluation plan will also determine the impact of mentoring on the social-emotional development of the youth, beyond any progress made in attendance and documented behavior. Utilizing BERS-2, the evaluation will measure the effect of services on students' interpersonal, intrapersonal, school functioning, affective, and career strengths. The evaluation will focus on sample groups of mentored students and comparison groups of similar students in middle, high, and continuation schools.

EVIDENCE BASE: BHC AmeriCorps' purpose and structure were developed in accordance with current research on effective youth mentoring as well as data from the program's first 6 years. The heart of the program addresses positive youth development and resiliency, offering youth support to increase school engagement and physical/emotional safety, improve social skills and behavior, and lay the foundation for healthy, productive lives. A caring adult relationship will nurture youth by providing assets and protective factors that will help them thrive despite challenging circumstances. Impact of Mentoring on Youth: All 40 Members will provide caring adult relationships to youth through mentoring. As the evidence-based Big Brothers Big Sisters 2000 National Evaluation reveals, mentees are 1) 52% less likely to skip a day of school; 2) 46% less likely to start using drugs; 3) 27%
Narratives

less likely to start using alcohol; 4) 33% less likely to engage in violent behavior; and 5) more likely to show significant improvement in their relationships with family and peers. The study further indicates 1) 64% of students developed more positive attitudes towards school; 2) 58% achieved higher grades; 3) 55% were better able to express feeling; 4) 64% had higher levels of self-confidence; and 5) 62% were more likely to trust their teachers. As explained, mentoring can create changes that lead to healthier, more productive lives. Although the Big Brother Big Sister model is similar in scope (weekly sessions, consistent, primarily one-on-one), there are some fundamental differences in relation to the proposed program (duration, location of services, mentors matched to multiple mentees).

Recent research indicates that sustained mentoring produces positive results. In How effective are mentoring programs for youth: A systematic assessment of the evidence (2011) by David DuBois, et al, a meta-analysis of mentoring program evaluations, the authors found value in mentoring as a strategy for enhancing youth development. The evidence shows that mentoring can produce positive impacts with youth "across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains." By contrast, comparison groups of non-mentored youth showed significant declines. Improved outcomes were seen in objective areas such as behavior and academic performance and subjective ones like attitudes.

A meta-analysis on school-based mentoring (Wood and Mayo-Wilson, School-based mentoring for adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis, 2012) also cited the preponderance of evidence that indicate mentoring’s positive effects on school attendance, academic performance, and behavior but that no reviews at that time specifically examined school-based mentoring. Sheldon and Epstein (Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism, 2004) found that connecting chronically absent students with community mentors was one of three practices that showed the greatest effect in reducing absenteeism.

In the previous grant cycle, the BHC program assessed the impact of its services through a comparison of school record data of matched pairs of targeted students who received the minimum dosage. Each partner district provided data on Student Tracking Logs. Active written consent by parents to waive FERPA rights were obtained before school records were requested. Baseline data from the previous year were collected in the fall, mid-year data at the end of the first semester, and second semester data immediately at the end of the school year. Based on the Big Brothers Big Sisters data cited above, target outcomes were set of 55% of students mentored for the minimum dosage would improve attendance (a little greater than the 52% BBBS results) and, if they had at least one suspension the previous year, 64% would reduce suspensions (under the assumption that more positive attitudes towards school will lead to improved behavior).
Narratives

In the first 2 years, the current program met its output measures of 20 mentoring relationships commenced for each Member, with an average of 16 sustained for the minimum dosage. In 2014-15, with 44 Members, 943 mentoring relationships commenced and 721 were sustained for the minimum dosage (Original targets: 45 Members, 900 relationships commenced, 720 sustained). In 2015-16, with 21 Members, 499 relationships commenced with 347 sustained for the minimum dosage (Original targets: 25 Members, 500 relationships commenced, 400 sustained). Outcomes steadily increased from 49.5% (345) of mentees who received minimum dosage improving attendance rates in 2014-15, short of the target of 55%, to 58.5% (167) in 2015-16, which exceeded the target. Suspensions also decreased; in 2014-15, 73% (160) of students with prior suspensions had fewer suspensions, almost meeting the original target of 161, while in 2015-16, 85% (100) demonstrated a similar decrease, surpassing the target of 91. Combined, over 60% of unduplicated mentees either improved attendance or reduced suspensions in 2015-16. This approach allowed the program to assess the impact of its services with objective, quantifiable data. It was limited in that there were no data for comparison groups of students with similar backgrounds. Additionally, it failed to capture the larger impact mentoring had on beneficiaries. Several anecdotes were received from students, staff, and Members that showed a positive impact on the mentees’ social/emotional development, but any program-wide effect was never assessed systematically.

Targeted Population: The meta-analysis by DuBois et al (2011) also cited trends that found mentoring programs were more effective with youth who exhibited behavioral difficulties or personal vulnerabilities, such as risk for academic failure. Their findings suggested it was more optimal for mentors to be matched with youth with more intermediate challenges rather than those with severe, deep-rooted difficulties that require professional intervention and counseling. For this reason, the program serves students who meet the criteria and fall into Tier 2 on the typical three-tier intervention pyramid adopted by many intervention programs. These are students who could benefit from short-term intervention of moderate intensity.

Dosage: Most research into best practices recommends that the mentoring relationship last at least 12 months for a community-based program and 6-9 months for school-based (Jean B. Grossman et al, The test of time in school-based mentoring: The role of relationship duration and re-matching on academic outcomes, 2012). The BHC Members based at traditional schools will follow this practice and serve their mentees 7-8 months from early fall to the end of the school year in May. By meeting weekly for an hour or more, each mentee should receive 30 hours or more of mentoring services. Mentees placed in continuation schools are often enrolled at the school for only one semester,
Narratives

making it difficult to serve them for a significant length of time. Studies on outcomes of relationships that end in less than 6 months seem to indicate that the overall impact is detrimental on the young person. However, the research on short-term relationships is sparse and appears to investigate relationships that ended prematurely. On the other hand, DuBois et al (2011) failed to find evidence that relationships of three months or less showed declines. More important, the authors found compelling evidence that relationships that "continued for the full duration of whatever time frame is established as an expectation" is a more likely determinant of improved outcomes. For this reason, the Members serving in continuation schools may mentor students for less than 6 months as long as expectations are clearly set and there is a distinct opening and closing of the relationship.

Activities: BHC Members will employ a variety of intentional, structured activities that address the mentees' developmental and instrumental needs and interests. DuBois et al (2011) states, "The strongest argument can be made for utilization of mentoring when there is interest in promoting outcomes across multiple areas of a young person's development" and that "judicious efforts to incorporate more systematic teaching or advocacy activities . . . could significantly enhance prospects for programs to achieve desired outcomes." McQuillin and Lyons (Brief instrumental school-based mentoring for middle school students: Theory and impact, 2016) found evidence to show that in short-term relationships, student outcomes were more likely to improve if the mentor provided activities that were developmental in combination with those that focused on academic needs.

Recruitment, Selection, and Ongoing Training: Available research recommends programs carefully recruit and select mentors and provide solid training prior to the initiation of the mentoring relationship as well as throughout the year. The National Mentoring Partnership (Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, 4th Edition, 2015) bases the following recommendations on research-informed and practitioner-approved best practices: (1) Recruit appropriate mentors and mentees by realistically describing the program’s aims and expectations; (2) Screen prospective mentors to determine if they have the commitment and personal qualities to be a safe and effective mentor; and (3) Train prospective mentors in basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills to build an effective mentoring relationship. The BHC program employs a rigorous process to recruit and select Members who meet the requirements and level of commitment expected of AmeriCorps and also the expectations for strong mentors who will be good matches for the schools and students they will serve. The selection process includes application screenings, panel interviews, reference checks, and a full-day orientation designed to immerse the top candidates in the mission and expectations of the program. Current Members share their experiences, as well as rewards and challenges, with the candidates. Site
Narratives

supervisors are invited to attend, to relay the expectations of their school sites, and to observe or interact with the applicants. The training program is designed to incorporate all elements to fully prepare and support them in their role as mentors.

FUNDING PRIORITY: Not applicable.

MEMBER TRAINING: Over the course of its 20-year tenure as an AmeriCorps multi-site intermediary, KCSOS has developed a highly effective training structure that will prepare Members serving in both traditional and continuation schools. Training will focus on instruction of high-quality mentoring; youth development theory and practice; civic engagement and national service; volunteer recruitment and support; and life after AmeriCorps. Mentor training will meet the best practices criteria outlined by Stephen Small of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in What research tells us about effective youth mentoring programs (2008): 1) an understanding of developmental issues the mentee is experiencing; 2) an understanding of the familial, cultural, and community context in which mentee lives; 3) realistic expectations about the mentoring process and its outcomes; 4) relationship building; and, 5) on-going training.

Member development will begin with a 2-week pre-service training prior to placement at school sites. Core topics include the role of the mentor, initiating the mentoring relationship, boundaries, confidentiality, youth developmental assets, mandated child abuse reporting, effective mentoring activities, and policies and procedures. Training is provided by experts in the mentoring field, local agencies, and program staff. Visits to service sites are also arranged with their site supervisors. The components are designed to provide the Members with essential information and skills to successfully begin service at their sites. Pre-service training also includes reviewing the AmeriCorps Member Agreement, prohibited activities, the history of AmeriCorps and National Service, information about the youth and communities being served, CPR/First Aid, volunteer recruitment and fundraising, continuity of operations and emergency procedures, documentation, and team-building.

Site supervisors supplement pre-service training by orienting Members to the campus, providing guidance on school climate approaches, instructing them on community resources available to students, providing work space and relevant background information concerning students, and inviting them to participate in school-based professional development opportunities, when relevant.

Ongoing training will be provided once or twice a month, facilitated by KCSOS prevention program staff, community agencies, and BHC staff with expertise in youth development and intervention. Essential topics include youth mental health first aid, motivational interviewing (an intervention strategy to help beneficiaries make positive changes), bullying prevention, cultural competency,
emotion management, and closing the mentoring relationship. Other topics will be based on Member and site supervisor input. As part of its initiative to boost college-going rates in the county, Kern Community Foundation will facilitate an integrated training and support effort to provide knowledge and resources so the Members can guide youth as they explore options for the future. Developmental trainings will include the AmeriCorps Advantage, with topics such as lifelong civic engagement and volunteering, education and career options, and using the education award. In addition, Members will be prompted to reflect on their experiences both privately and in team activities.

Program staff receives regular feedback regarding the quality of the training through surveys and debrief sessions. Facilitated discussion groups during mid-year and end-of-year sessions help gauge the effectiveness and relevance of the training and provide feedback on improvements to the training schedule. Input is also requested from site supervisors to help strengthen the training regimen.

MEMBER SUPERVISION: Members will receive daily support from their supervisors at the sites. Most supervisors are counselors, intervention specialists or assistant principals. The Coordinator trains them prior to the start of the year on roles and responsibilities, mentee criteria, and the level of support to be provided to the Members. Site Supervisors will help recruit eligible students and secure parent permission, assist Members in scheduling mentees, approve time sheets, orient Members to the campus, provide workspace and computer access, provide feedback on Member performance, report possible rule violations or inappropriate behavior to the Coordinator, serve as a coach to the Members, meet regularly with them to discuss ongoing mentee activities, issues, and progress.

The program staff consists of a Coordinator and Project Facilitator and is part of the School-Community Partnerships Department. Department staff provides in-kind administrative, clerical, and training support. The Coordinator and Facilitator will work together to set program expectations, recruit and select Members, engage in ongoing communication (text, email, meetings, trainings), and troubleshoot problems. The Facilitator (.50 FTE) will facilitate weekly team meetings with Members to assess progress, provide support and guidance, troubleshoot challenges, and provide opportunities to air grievances. The Coordinator will provide support regarding Member benefits, coordinate trainings, and handle discipline issues. The Coordinator and Facilitator will share the duties of site visits. The Coordinator will evaluate Member performance 3 times per year, focusing on their performance at their service site, as a team member and in service projects, specific strengths, and areas for improvement. He solicits feedback from site supervisors about their performance as mentors, effectiveness with students, and their strengths and areas to improve. The Coordinator incorporates the feedback with his assessment of their performance he has observed.
Narratives

The Coordinator will handle situations involving Member dissatisfaction in a quick and efficient manner. Furthermore, Members will complete self-assessments of skills and personal/professional goal worksheets, which will be used to guide training and technical assistance. They will be revisited during performance evaluation meetings and updated regularly to demonstrate growth and target deficiencies. KCSOS will build an online communication hub, featuring documents, mentee and mentor spotlights, and best practices. Staff will also promote connections through social media, especially promoting the AmeriCorps identity.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE: The BHC program is designed to maximize the Member experience as it relates to serving youth, career goals, their role as community leaders and as team members, and their role in the national service network. Trainings and team meetings provide forums for sharing effective mentoring strategies, team development, exploring their role in the community and national service, reflection, self-care, and problem solving. In-depth reflection sessions are scheduled at the end of pre-service training, at mid-year, and at the end of the year.

During their term, Members will build skills and knowledge in working with youth and understanding youth development. In prior years, most of the Members in this program had career goals of education, counseling, social work, or probation, and the training and experience will prove invaluable in their futures. In most cases, the Members came from the same communities or have similar backgrounds as the youth they served. They know the environment in which the mentees are growing up and serve as role models who successfully graduated from high school and attended college.

In the communities served, the Members collaborate with local non-profit and public partners to organize meaningful service projects and seek opportunities for mentees to interact with community members in a positive manner. The networking contacts and leadership skills the Members develop also benefit them in their future careers and endeavors. Program staff and in-kind trainers also facilitate AmeriCorps Advantage trainings during the year, including personal portfolios, resume writing, interview skills, using the Education Award, and AmeriCorps Alums.

COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: As required in the Member agreement, Members will be obligated to wear AmeriCorps apparel or identification any time they are serving. All recruitment and training materials will have California AmeriCorps and CaliforniaVolunteers logos, including website, Member and mentee applications, forms, electronic presentations, and social media. AmeriCorps signs are posted at all placement sites.

During pre-service training, Members explore their role as part of the larger national service
Narratives

initiative. They learn of the diversity of programs nationwide and are encouraged to share experiences with members of other AmeriCorps programs. When possible, the program collaborates with other programs. For example, on Martin Luther King Day 2016, members of NCCC joined the BHC team to paint a youth recreation center and a VFW hall in Arvin.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: KCSOS, formed in 1866 as the county office of education, is the lead agency and provides support services for 47 school districts in Kern County. These services include prevention programs (gangs, drugs, truancy), instructional support (teacher development and program improvement) and health services. KCSOS also provides direct services at 125 special education classrooms throughout the county, oversees Alternative Education in 16 locations, and provides services to children ages 0-5 at 44 child development sites. KCSOS's mission is "As advocates for children, we provide leadership, education and support for students, school districts, and the community through programs, services and fiscal accountability."

KCSOS has extensive experience managing grant programs. The KCSOS Business Office provides fiscal support, adhering to all audit and fiscal requirements and policies of KCSOS, state and federal guidelines. KCSOS tracks and stores grant funds separately. A KCSOS Account Clerk and Senior Accountant are assigned to monitor and provide day-to-day billing and tracking for all program budgets. KCSOS Human Resources works with the Coordinator to manage AmeriCorps service position applications, criminal background clearances, living allowances, and health insurance.

The BHC program is housed with the KCSOS School-Community Partnerships Department and its Director, Ann Georgian. A key component is the development of collaborative partnerships to build capacity between school districts and community partners. These partnerships are the building blocks for a safe, healthy, and educationally sound future for children and families. The department's in-kind support includes administrative oversight, communication with district administrators, clerical support, and training/resources from a myriad of prevention programs. The program will be managed by Coordinator Jeff Coomber. He has extensive experience in youth programs and nonprofit administration, including 17 years running AmeriCorps programs at KCSOS. A 50% FTE Project Facilitator will be recruited to assist with team supervision, facilitation, training, and site visits. School partners assist in the Member selection process, liaison between Members and school staff and students, and provide feedback to drive program improvements. Other community partners provide training/support to increase mentoring effectiveness and guide Members in career exploration.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Since 1995, KCSOS has successfully operated AmeriCorps
Narratives

programs serving diverse underserved students throughout the state and locally. From 1995-2010, it managed an AmeriCorps tutoring program, recruiting and training over 450 Members who served over 10,000 elementary and middle school students. Since 2011, it has operated the mentoring program, at first in 10 communities throughout California, and now focused solely on Kern County communities. A total of 228 Members completed their terms in the first 5 years of the program, serving over 5000 youth. As the program was continually refined, the percentage of students who demonstrated improved attendance and behavior steadily increased. The program staff is well aware of and in compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations, including prohibited and unallowable activities. The program has several systems in place to detect and address noncompliance:

Criminal History Checks - All FBI and California Department of Justice clearances are checked by the Coordinator and KCSOS Human Resources Department, and signed by the HR Director. The Coordinator and Facilitator both check that NSOPW checks have been completed, printed, and verified, and all documentation are placed in Member files.

Service Site Compliance - A Service Site Placement Agreement between school administrators and KCSOS details the role and allowable activities of the Members as well as prohibited and non-allowable activities. Prior to the start of the program year, the Coordinator meets with each supervisor and goes through a checklist to ensure the site is prepared for its Members. During the year, site visits will include checking to see that sites are in compliance.

Member Activities - On the first day of service, the Coordinator reviews the Member Agreement with Members, including prohibited activities, roles and responsibilities, rules of conduct, and AmeriCorps provisions. Member compliance are monitored during team meetings, trainings, site visits, and performance reviews. The program staff also reviews weekly online reporting logs Members submit detailing mentoring activities.

Fiscal Management - KCSOS adheres to fiscal management guidelines and procedures established through the California Department of Education. The procedures reflect standard practice: financial reports to document and track separate revenue sources; source documentation for all program costs; payroll documentation through time, attendance, and payroll tax records; and written costs allocation procedures and records.

Throughout the service year, program staff will be in constant contact with Members, supervisors, and school administrators through meetings and site visits to prevent compliance issues. Should an issue arise, the Coordinator will immediately communicate with site administrators to take corrective action; failure to take action will result in denial of services the ensuing program year. Noncompliance
Narratives

by a Member may result in a conversation between program staff and the Member (for less severe infractions) with agreed-upon steps to ensure corrective action. More severe issues of noncompliance may be addressed by the Coordinator through a progressive disciplinary process. Team meetings are also used to remind Members about allowable/unallowable activities; for example, as the team brainstorms service projects, it is often discussed if the proposed activity is in compliance with the program’s grant. In the past 3 years, the program did not have any major compliance issues.

AmeriCorps Members have served diverse underserved students for the past two decades. From 1995-2010, it managed an AmeriCorps tutoring program, recruiting and training over 450 Members who served over 10,000 elementary and middle school students. Since 2011, it has operated the mentoring program, at first in 10 communities throughout California, and now focused solely on Kern County communities. A total of 228 Members successfully completed their terms in the first 5 years of the program, serving over 5000 youth. As the program was continually refined, from recruiting to training to supervision to data collection and analysis, the percentage of students who demonstrated improved attendance and behavior steadily increased.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

COST EFFECTIVENESS: The overall cost of the program of $973,091 is adequate to properly recruit, train and support 40 Members during 9 months of service. The cost per MSY is $13,531, slightly above the $13,153 from prior years. The partner school districts have pledged $14,000/Member to support the program, a substantial increase from the $10,000/Member that schools contributed in 2016-17. The Kern Community Foundation has committed to provide $25,000 in in-kind training and support for Members to work with students on career and college readiness. KCSOS School-Community Partnerships will also contribute $2900 worth of training in youth development and prevention/intervention strategies.

BUDGET ADEQUACY: The budget provides for a full-time Coordinator and half-time Project Facilitator to oversee the program. The budget is adequate as it includes: 1) competitive salaries for highly-skilled program staff; 2) an average California living allowance; 3) travel expenses; 4) online reporting tools; 5) modest expenditures for supplies and operating costs; 6) program evaluation; and 7) a low indirect rate at 6.56%. The curriculum and training lines will enhance the Members' effectiveness in engaging mentees at the schools. Over 60% of the program cost ($559,546) will be in cash and in-kind match from districts and other private and public partners.

Evaluation Summary or Plan
Narratives

Building Healthy Communities AmeriCorps Evaluation Plan

THEORY OF CHANGE: Through sustained mentoring on an individual or small group basis, 30 hours or more over 7-8 months in traditional schools and 20 hours or more over 3-8 months in continuation schools, mentored students will exhibit improved outcomes in attendance, behavior, school engagement, and interpersonal, intrapersonal, affective, and career strengths.

OUTCOME OF INTEREST: As a supplement to the student record data on attendance, suspensions, and referrals, the program seeks to measure the impact mentoring has on the overall social and emotional development of targeted youth.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What measurable impact does mentoring have on targeted students beyond objective measures of attendance and behavior?

2. How much does mentoring contribute to students’ ability to function in school and classroom tasks, interact with others, build internal emotional strengths, accept and express affection, empathy, and feelings toward other, and career aspirations?

STUDY COMPONENTS

Research Design: The research design will use quasi-experimental non-equivalent groups to examine the impact of participation in the AmeriCorps mentoring program. Changes in school attendance and discipline will be examined, along with progress in socio-emotional indicators as measured by the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale, 2nd Edition (BERS-2).

All sites would have both treatment and comparison groups, which would be similar in that all students in the comparison group would also be eligible for mentoring under the program’s required criteria. The reason this program uses a non-experimental design is because students would not be assigned randomly. School staff and Members will have input on which students are selected for mentoring. Changes in school record data would be examined for all students in both the treatment and comparison groups.

Treatment and comparison groups in subsets of middle school, high school, and continuation school will complete the BERS-2 at the beginning, middle and end of their program. Because of the relatively small number of students, all mentees in the continuation schools will complete the BERS-2. A random sample of mentees will be selected to measure short-term progress with students in middle and high schools. Sampling is often used to obtain the same information from a subset of the population, making it more cost and time effective. To avoid sampling bias, the program proposes to use stratified random sampling. The goal with stratified random sampling is to create a smaller
Narratives

version of the population. Prior to sampling, the population is divided into characteristics of
importance, such as rural/urban, gender, disciplinary incidents, etc., and the population is randomly
sampled within each category. By the end of the sampling process, the sample will match the
population in key characteristics. In the primary PMW, the program proposes to survey 260 students
in traditional schools, with an estimated 210 who will remain in the program by the end of the year.
This size sample will yield a 95% confidence level and a 5% confidence interval, which is considered
standard and strong. In other words, if 60% of students respond positively to the same question on
the survey, you can be 95% sure that the true percentage of the population is between 55% and 65%.
The decision was made to include this additional assessment because in the three previous years, the
program collected and analyzed school record data on attendance and suspensions to measure
progress in the primary performance measures. However, anecdotal reports from students, Members,
and school staff indicated that mentoring was having a broader impact on the mentees’ social and
emotional development and outlook. Consequently, the program is including the BERS-2 to quantify
and more systematically measure this kind of progress in mentees.

Strengths: Using a quasi-experimental design rather than focusing on data for mentees who are part
of the AmeriCorps program provides context and measurement about the program’s impact. The
addition of an assessment tool that gauges socio-emotional strengths also provides a more robust
evaluation of the full impact of participation in the mentoring program.

Limitations: Because quasi-experimental designs do not have randomized assignment, their internal
validity is not as strong, but once data are collected, statistical testing can be done to determine the
degree to which it is a limitation for this group. In addition, results from the BERS-2 are self-
reported, they can impact results if students provide socially desirable responses.

Sampling Methods, Tools, Data Collection: The examination of school record data will be a census;
data from every student participating in the mentoring program will be included. The BERS-2 will be
completed three times a year by comparison and treatment groups in middle school, high school, and
continuation schools. Incentives will be offered to the comparison group students for completing the
assessment since they are not receiving services.

As previously mentioned, the primary data collection tool outside of school record data will be the
BERS-2. It is an assessment instrument that measures personal strengths and competencies in six areas:

a. Interpersonal Strength - strengths relating to others
b. Intrapersonal Strength - internal emotional strengths
c. School Functioning - strengths in school task participation

d. Affective Strength - strengths in accepting from and expressing feelings towards others

e. Career Strength - strengths in future outlook and aspirations

f. Family Involvement - strengths relating with and participating in family life

Because Members will have minimal interaction with parents and other family members, the analysis of the assessment will focus on the first five areas. Mentees will complete the assessment at the start of their mentoring, at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the mentoring relationship. Teachers will be asked to complete a companion assessment at the same interval.

BERS-2 is widely used by local, state, and federal agencies and includes normative tables for comparison of local program results with a larger population. An independent study of school-wide social and emotional learning assessment instruments rated BERS-2 good on internal and test-retest reliability. In regards to criterion validity, BERS-2 was shown to differentiate between individuals with emotional-behavioral disorders and those without in a larger national sample. Regarding convergent/discriminant validity, BERS-2 consistently demonstrated moderate to high correlations with competence-oriented scales on the Social Skills Rating Scale and moderate to high negative correlations with deficit-oriented scales across different age ranges. AmeriCorps Members will be responsible for collecting the assessment to be turned in to the program evaluator.

Analysis Plan: School record data will be collected three times annually for all targeted students. Analyses will be conducted to examine changes in attendance and discipline, and the degree to which results varied between the treatment and comparison groups.

BERS-2 Comparison: Results from both school record data and the BERS-2 subsets will be analyzed with level of program participation to determine if there is a threshold for participation and positive outcomes. As previously mentioned, the administration of the BERS-2 is time and cost intensive, making it unfeasible to administer it at all sites. Results from the BERS-2 baseline will be compared to the posttest to determine the degree to which mentees improved in any of the competencies and strengths. Results from the BERS-2 will also be analyzed in relation to the level of program participation to determine if mentees showed better outcomes based on the intensity of program participation.

An analysis will be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between students’ ratings of themselves on the BERS-2, and those provided by their teachers. This will be conducted for both the comparison and treatment groups. An analysis of comparison and treatment groups along with student school record data will also be conducted to determine differences in change between the two
Narratives

groups. Similarly, an analysis of comparison and treatment groups along with results from the BERS-2 will be conducted to determine differences between the two groups related to personal strengths and competencies.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR EVALUATOR: Evaluator must have experience evaluating school-based programs and analyzing data from school records, understand FERPA and other student/parent confidentiality rights and issues, and has ability to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. Knowledge of the BERS-2 or similar assessment instruments is preferred.

ESTIMATED BUDGET

1. Personnel (Salary and Benefits)
   a. Principal Investigators 28,000
   b. Clerical 17,000
2. Assessments 2,600
3. Travel 600
4. Incentives 300
5. Other Costs (printing, etc.) 1,500
Total Evaluation Budget ¿ Year 1 $50,000

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

2017-18 RESOLUTION ITEMS

Programmatic Resolution
A. 1. NA

B. 1. The match amount in the Budget Narrative and Executive Summary accurately reflect the match amount of $587,900.

Performance Measure Resolution

1. In an effort to maintain statistical integrity while accounting for the budgetary constraints of administering the BERS-2 instrument, BHC will utilize a stratified random sampling process with
beneficiaries in the Improved Academic Engagement through Mentoring performance measure. The sampling process will match mentees to students not receiving the mentoring intervention. The process will be done in partnership with an evaluation consultant in order to ensure procedural and statistical integrity.

2. Please note that the Output 40113 has been renumbered as OUTCM44076. We removed Mentoring as the selected intervention and selected "Other". This change was made in order to account for the challenge of defining mentoring in Continuation schools using CNCS's dosage guidance. The time constraints on working with mentees in continuation schools mean it is unlikely that they will be able to receive a full 6 months of dosage. However, continuation schools represent an incredibly high need population of beneficiaries and still benefit from mentoring services in the same way that mentees in traditional schools benefit from these services.

D. N/A

RESOLUTION ROUND 2

1. Why Sampling? -- In an effort to maintain statistical integrity while accounting for the budgetary constraints of administering the BERS-2 instrument, BHC will utilize a stratified random sampling process with beneficiaries in the Improved Academic Engagement through Mentoring performance measure. BERS-2 requires the purchase of survey forms plus manual entry of all responses, thereby making a survey of all beneficiaries and a comparison group cost-prohibitive. Sampling is often used to obtain the same information from a subset of the population, making it more cost and time effective.

2. Type of Sampling/Strata for Stratified Random Sampling - To avoid sampling bias, the program proposes to use stratified random sampling. The goal with stratified random sampling is to create a smaller version of the population. Prior to sampling, the population will be divided into characteristics of importance - rural/urban, gender, middle school/high school - and the population is randomly sampled within each category. The process will be done in partnership with an evaluation consultant to ensure procedural and statistical integrity.
Narratives

3. Sampling Size - In the Improved Academic Engagement through Mentoring performance measure, the program proposes to survey 260 (out of 720 total) students in traditional schools, with an estimated 210 who will remain in the program by the end of the year. This size sample will yield a 95% confidence level and a 5% confidence interval, which is considered standard and strong. In other words, if 60% of students respond positively to the same question on the survey, you can be 95% sure that the true percentage of the population is between 55% and 65%.

4. Comparison Group -- A comparison group will also be selected using stratified random sampling of students who meet the criteria for high-needs beneficiaries in the Primary Performance Measure but who do not receive mentoring services. The same guidelines by which the treatment group is selected will be used. Results will be used as part of the program evaluation study and not reported on the performance measures.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics