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Executive Summary

WINGS for kids proposes to have 92 AmeriCorps members who will implement the WINGS Social and Emotional Learning Program in Charleston County, South Carolina; Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; and Fulton County, Georgia. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving academic engagement (behaviors) by increasing executive function and self-regulation skills and improving student attendance in low-income students. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 100 volunteers who will be engaged in providing one on one tutoring support.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of education. The CNCS investment of \$499,960 will be matched with \$479,298, \$444,298 in public funding and \$35,000 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. Need: The WINGS for kids (WINGS) program proposes to serve high-poverty, at-risk Title I elementary school students in Charleston County, SC; Mecklenburg County, NC, and Fulton County, GA. While serving in multiple states, the commonalities among these students are they come from low-income backgrounds, experience high rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and need a strong social and emotional learning (SEL) program to improve self-regulation and executive function skills, school behavior, and school attendance..

Our target students come from low-income backgrounds. Based on state published state department of education data, the average poverty rate at our target schools is greater than 95% (free/reduced lunch, TANF, Medicaid). According to the US Census Bureau, the specific communities where we propose to serve have poverty rates 135% higher than the national average and median household income 50% lower than national averages. Not only are our students impoverished, their entire communities are in poverty.

Low-income children demonstrate the need for an intervention that increases social and emotional (SE) skills, especially self-regulation and executive function skills, and a program that improves school attendance. Executive function skills are the group of skills that allow us to plan ahead, pay attention, and regulate our emotions - the skills people use to make decisions and control impulses, and the skills that allow students to be successful in school.

Need for SE skills: Children living in poverty experience significantly higher levels of childhood trauma through abuse, neglect, and maltreatment than those living in more affluent communities, called Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs (Children's Bureau). Childhood trauma raises the

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stress level of students to critical levels. Chronically elevated levels of stress impede the development of the prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain that controls our ability to regulate ourselves emotionally and cognitively, which diminishes executive function skills. Students with elevated levels of stress experience behavior problems and exhibit poor performance in school. Improved SE skills mitigate the impacts of increased ACEs. When low-income students are taught SE skills they can cope, self-regulate behavior, and learn in the classroom.

Need for improved attendance: More than 6 million students (14% of all students) are chronically absent (missing 10 percent of school a year) annually. Low-income students are chronically absent at a rate of three to four times higher than other students (Johns Hopkins). Students who are chronically absent in early grades are much less likely to read at grade level in third grade, a predictor of dropping out of high school (US Department of Education). There is a need for an intervention that improves attendance in low-income students.

2. Intervention: The WINGS SEL learning program utilizes a comprehensive approach to teaching SEL. The program takes place in the afterschool setting at Title I elementary schools. The WINGS program runs 5-days per week, 3-hours per day, throughout the entire school year (33 program weeks). Students commit to WINGS for the entire year since each week builds upon the previous week. The explicit curriculum focuses on the five core SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills. These competencies are broken down into 30 sequential learning objectives taught throughout the school year, providing opportunities for students to develop all five core competencies through practice, reflection, and positive reinforcement. Research shows improvements in SE skills increase self-regulation, executive function skills, behavior, and school attachment and attendance.

Beyond the explicit curriculum of core competencies and learning objectives, our intervention also focuses on developing member skills and practices. Once members comprehend and internalize these skills on an individual level, they are able to transfer their knowledge to the at-risk youth as they implement the competencies and objectives. Through pre- and in-service trainings, we utilize the SET Framework of Support, Engage, and Teach. This creates a supportive environment for students by being encouraging, empathetic, and trustworthy. Students are engaged through creative activities and energetic and relatable members. Finally, members teach, serving as role models and utilizing key teachable moments and positive and corrective feedback.

3. Theory of Change: The Theory of Change ties together the specific community need, the WINGS AmeriCorps intervention, and our anticipated outcomes.

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Community Need: Approximately 51% of students nationally qualify for free/reduced meals, which serves as a proxy for poverty, and the percentage has increased more than 38% since 2000 - the number of students living in poverty is growing (National Center for Education Statistics). Our specific target schools experience extreme rates of poverty, with more than 95% living in poverty (State Department of Education data, 2014-15). The target population for our intervention are low-income elementary school students. There is demonstrated need locally and nationally.

Multiple incidents of ACEs lead to disrupted neurodevelopment and impaired social, emotional, and cognitive skills, including decreases in executive function and self-regulation. This leads to increased behavior problems and poor academic performance. As the number of ACEs increase, so do learning and behavior problems. Children with two ACEs are eight times more likely than children with zero ACEs to demonstrate learning or behavior problems. This rate increases to 17 times more likely with children who have four or more ACEs. Poverty is the most common predictor of ACEs, and two-thirds of students living in poverty experience two or more ACEs, double the overall rate of students with multiple ACEs (Institute of Child Development, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Child Trends).

There is a strong need for an intervention that increases self-regulation and executive function skills in low-income students to combat the impacts of multiple ACEs. The WINGS SEL program fills this need.

Another challenge low-income students face is chronic absenteeism. Students who are chronically absent in early grades are much less likely to read at grade level in third grade, a predictor of dropping out of high school (US Department of Education). Low-income students are chronically absent at a rate of three to four times higher than other students (Johns Hopkins). The target population of our intervention have a need for a program that strengthens connection to school and decreases chronic absenteeism.

Target population: Our target population is low-income elementary school students with multiple ACEs and high rates of chronic absenteeism - these students have the greatest need for our intervention. By serving in schools with 95%+ poverty rates, nearly all students qualify as being a student in need. We will also work with school administrators and counselors to further hone in on students who have extreme circumstances and are in the most need.

Intervention: The WINGS intervention is a social and emotional learning program for low-income elementary school students. AmeriCorps members serve with our students in low ratios during the afterschool hours (approximately 2:30 - 5:30 each day). The program occurs three hours per day, five

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days per week, throughout the school year. Targeted students receive nearly 500 hours of dedicated programming each year.

Each day begins with Community Unity. All students gather together in a common meeting space (cafeteria or gym) and are organized into small groups of approximately 12 kids per one AmeriCorps member. The member welcomes each student to the program, students receive a snack, the WINGS Creed (SEL objectives in kid-friendly language) is recited, and students play small group and/or large group games focused on specific SEL objectives. This sets the stage for a positive program experience and reinforces SEL goals in a fresh and fun way.

Following Community Unity, members lead their groups through different activities based on the day of the week. On Mondays and Fridays the students have a small group discussions focused on the specific SEL learning objective of the week. On Tuesdays and Thursdays the students participate in enrichment activities (Choice Time Activities). Student choose these activities based on individual interests, and it is a chance to bring in community partners and to tie together SEL objectives, academic objectives, and fun to expose students to new opportunities while increasing student engagement. Wednesdays include a dedicated community service component (WINGSWorks) to strengthen attachment to school, which has been shown to increase attendance. Monday - Thursday students go to Academic Centers to receive academic instruction before or after their other activities. Finally, Fridays are days where students wrap up their week by playing innovative games that combine academic enrichment with SEL objectives (WildWINGS). In addition to our activities, students receive dinner prior to heading home at most service sites.

AmeriCorps members lead the students throughout the program. Members are highly trained so they can model positive SE skills with the kids by supporting, engaging, and teaching.

Reduced half-time members: Reduced half-time members will serve as afterschool counselors to the at-risk youth, directly implementing our AmeriCorps program. Each member will lead a small group of students through the WINGS components of Community Unity, Choice Time Activities, Academic Centers, WINGSWorks, WildWINGS, and discussions. While leading these activities, members will utilize proactive and supportive behavior management techniques to keep kids on task and engaged and teachable moments to reinforce SEL lessons. Based on research on our program, having members who are SET produces the greatest outcomes.

Full-time members: Full-time members will serve in our programs in a behavior management role, assist in the coaching of the reduced half-time members, and lead student groups. During the school day, full-time members will serve as liaisons among the school, parents, and WINGS program

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by leading parent education and literacy events, attending parent/teacher conferences, meeting with the school principal, attending faculty meetings, and communicating with parents about their students.

Members who bring additional experience serving with at-risk youth and/or implementing a SEL curriculum may be assigned as Team Leaders to provide additional coaching and support to fellow members. Team Leaders will not supervise other members.

Role of community volunteers - Leveraged community volunteers will serve as academic mentors during academic center, provide support during Choice Time Activities, and help with family programs.

Need for AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps members are critical to the success of the program since they bring dedication to a difficult role and a commitment to service and community. Volunteers lack the commitment to implement such a difficult service role. Employees do not have the intrinsic drive to return to their service day in and day out. Through the support of member networks and commitment to service, plus the available member benefits, members are the only individuals who can implement the WINGS intervention.

Evidence - Our intervention is both evidence-informed and evidence-based. Evidence-based will be discussed in the following Evidence Base section.

Evidence-informed: SEL programs have been shown to improve executive function, self-management, and self-regulation skills, which directly combats the impacts of multiple ACEs. This ties concretely back to the demonstrated community need. To further illustrate the importance and impact of SEL programs, students who demonstrated improved social and emotional skills had an 11-percentile point gain in their academic achievement (Durkac, Weissberg, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2012).

Further research notes SEL programs that are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) demonstrate significant positive effects on student outcomes, including child self-perceptions (self-confidence and self-esteem), school bonding, positive social behaviors, problem behaviors, drug use, achievement test scores, school grades, and attendance (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Durlak, Weissberg et al., 2010). WINGS is designed as a SAFE program. Based on the aforementioned benefits, students involved in our intervention are expected to improve attendance and behavior, among many other positive outcomes, which ties back to community need.

Outputs and Outcomes: Our program falls under the CNCS Education focus area. We are proposing to use priority output measures ED1 and ED2 and priority outcome measure ED27B. These measures were selected since they align with the community need:

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ED1: 800 economically disadvantaged students (those qualifying for free/reduced lunch) will start in our CNCS-supported education program. This output is aligned with need as students need to enroll and start our intervention to realize positive outcomes.

ED2: 560 economically disadvantaged students will complete our program. This output is aligned with need since students need to complete our program to maximize positive outcomes.

ED27B: 423 economically disadvantaged students will demonstrate improved academic engagement (behaviors) through our program. Teachers will be given specific questions from the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA-mini). The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social-emotional competencies that serve as protective factors for kids in kindergarten through the eighth grade. The DESSA utilizes a Likert-type scale, where 0 = never and 4 = very frequently. Chronic absenteeism rates will be evaluated over the course of the intervention.

This measure aligns with the community need as improvements in social and emotional learning and student behavior are needed due to our population having multiple ACEs, and chronic absenteeism is a demonstrated need of low-income students.

4. Evidence Base: WINGS clearly fits into the strong evidence category with a well-designed and well-implemented randomized controlled trial (RCT) being performed directly on our program. Our intervention is being tested at the state-level (multi-site, four WINGS locations) utilizing a three-cohort, block randomized control trial design. The study is being completed by an independent entity external to WINGS. Headquartered out of the University of Virginia, the co-principal investigators on the study are:

David Grissmer, Ph.D., is a Principal Research Scientist at the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). Dr. Grissmer has more than 30 years of experience leading interdisciplinary research teams and managing complex research and evaluation projects.

Andrew J. Mashburn, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in Applied Developmental Psychology at Portland State University, and formerly a Senior Research Scientist and the Assistant Director of Research Methods at CASTL at the University of Virginia. Dr. Mashburn has designed two federally-funded RCTs evaluating an early literacy intervention and a fine motor skills intervention, and led analyses of two other federally-funded RCTs evaluating a preschool curriculum and preschool teacher professional development program.

A brief evaluation description follows, with additional information having been submitted to the

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AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov email address:

-1. Dates: the five-year project began with planning in 2011. Data collection and the intervention dates are fall 2012 - spring 2015. The final report will be issued in 2017.

-2. Relevant to proposed intervention: the study is on our WINGS SEL AmeriCorps intervention, the study is directly on our proposed intervention.

-3. Target population: schools and communities in low-income areas of Charleston County, SC are being evaluated. These students attend WINGS schools outlined during the needs section of this application. All schools are low-income, with 95% or more of the students being at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

-4. Methodology: the study is a three-cohort, block randomized control trial at four school sites. Cohorts are followed from the time they enter the study for one, two, or three years (based on cohort number).

-5. Data and data collection methods: direct assessments of students, teacher surveys, parent interviews, direct observations of children in classrooms, and administrative records were collected.

-6. Outcomes and impacts: utilizing a "treatment on treated" (TOT) analysis, effect estimates were positive and very large for teacher-reports of all five key SEL competencies (self-management, self-awareness, decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness). Teacher reports were made using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social-emotional competencies that serve as protective factors for kids in kindergarten through the eighth grade. These results demonstrate that WINGS is improving student SE skills, which is the cornerstone of our Theory of Change and a demonstrated community need.

In addition to improving SE skills, moderate effects are noted in the reduction of negative behaviors, with significant effects in reductions in negative engagement and bullying.

Executive function and self-regulation skills, noted needs, are shown by increases in self-management skills. This ties our intervention directly back to the community need. Improvements in all skills are tied to greater attachment and attendance to school, which again ties back to the community need.

-7. Strength of findings: since this evaluation is directly on the WINGS program, results are very strong indicators of future success of the WINGS program. When looking at the effect sizes, they are large when compared to typical educational and behavioral interventions, the equivalent of moving students from the 25th percentile to the 50th percentile. When looking at improvements in the SE

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categories, findings are:

- Self-Management, positive effect size 1.04 SD, $p < 0.10$
- Self-Awareness, positive effect size 0.99 SD, $p < 0.10$
- Responsible Decision-Making, positive effect size 0.85 SD, $p < 0.20$
- Relationship Skills, positive effect size 0.97 SD, $p < 0.10$
- Social Awareness, positive effect size 0.97 SD, $p < 0.20$

*The strongest positive effect size was on the SE skill most closely related to community need.

When looking at reductions in negative behaviors, the findings are:

- Negative Engagement, effect of -0.58 SD, $p < 0.20$
- Bullying, effective on -0.83 SD, $p < 0.20$

*Negative effect sizes represent a decrease in a negative behavior, i.e. a positive outcome.

In addition to the external RCT on our program, internal data strongly supports positive outcomes. During our last program year, WINGS students averaged 48% fewer disciplinary referrals than students at the same school not enrolled in WINGS (non-WINGS students), 82% of WINGS participants had fewer than two disciplinary referrals, compared with only 32% non-WINGS students, and chronic absenteeism rates were 67% lower for WINGS kids compared to non-WINGS kids.

5. Notice Priority: The WINGS program will focus on the education funding priority. WINGS will utilize National Performance Measures ED1, ED2, and ED27B to document the number of students who begin our program, complete our program, and who demonstrate improved academic engagement (behaviors).

6. Member Training - Members will receive high quality training in order to be SET through pre- and in-service trainings. Prior to beginning service, members will receive up to 40 hours of training. Topics covered include the developmental stages of childhood, behavior management techniques, implementing social and emotional lessons and academic standards into daily activities, and social and emotional learning theories and practices. Materials will be presented through direct instruction, discussion, and observation. An additional 15-25 hours of in-service trainings will be held throughout the year. The content of these trainings will be determined based on member observations and evaluations. Examples of in-service trainings may be a refresher course on behavior management or a new curriculum initiative. Trainings will be designed and led by our AmeriCorps Program Director, Site Supervisors, and professionals in their respective fields.

During the pre-service training sessions members will receive their full AmeriCorps orientation, covering such topics as prohibited activities and opportunities for additional service. Members, Site

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Supervisors, and volunteers will be reminded of the rules regarding prohibited activities through the year during in-service training sessions and the AmeriCorps handbook.

7. Member Supervision: Members are supervised at each school by their Site Supervisor. Members will meet with their Site Supervisor at least twice a week to discuss strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the overall program, specific member performance, and student outcomes. Site Supervisors will also provide members with support and guidance through daily modeling, shadowing, and feedback.

Site Supervisors are carefully screened and trained before being placed in their roles. They must be college graduates and have at least one year of WINGS experience, social and emotional learning, or youth development experience. Site Supervisors must successfully complete their own pre-service training where they learn and practice different management and training styles and the administrative and supervisory requirements of their positions. SEL Coaches and Regional Operations Directors (RODs) directly oversee the Site Supervisors, providing on-going coaching and professional development.

Site Supervisors, and all AmeriCorps staff, will be trained on and prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations by reviewing and signing the AmeriCorps handbook during training, having the grant and application accessible, and being reminded of prohibited activities.

8. Member Experience: The WINGS curriculum is specifically designed to deliver instruction on social and emotional (SE) skills. As members learn about SE skills in order to teach and mentor at-risk youth, they are also developing their own SE skills and gaining experiences that are highly valued by future employers. The importance of SE skills in the workforce is illustrated in a paper by Dr. David Deming of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In his paper, "The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market," Dr. Deming outlined the importance and need for people to develop non-cognitive or SE skills, which is exactly what our members are developing.

The service performed by WINGS members is challenging, but extremely rewarding, especially as members see the SE progress made and relationships formed by the students they serve over the course of the year. We build in time to our program for members to reflect with each other and their supervisors on their service through weekly member meetings and formal reviews. AmeriCorps members also have time to reflect and connect to the broader National Service network as they participate in 9/11 and MLK Service Days.

We place a premium on recruiting members from the geographic and demographic communities

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where we operate. Oftentimes the members who are most impactful are those who the at-risk students can relate to easiest. We strive to have members who are from similar geographies and demographic communities as the participants so the participants can see the positive decision-making and pathways that led others similar to them to complete high school and to advance to college.

9. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: Beginning with the application process, members are constantly reminded that they are in an AmeriCorps member service position. The application notes the role is for AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps identification is further ingrained during training and member service orientation by reviewing member benefits and policies and reciting the AmeriCorps Pledge. Once performing their service, members and staff wear member service gear with the AmeriCorps logo prominently displayed. The AmeriCorps and CNCS logos are displayed on our website and in our communication materials, clearly letting the community know we are an AmeriCorps program.

Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staffing: WINGS has ample experience to implement the proposed program. WINGS was founded in 1996, and we have been implementing our SEL curriculum in the after school setting since 1998. Since 1996 we have served more than 6,300 kids.

In addition to our longevity, we have been recognized for our program and management practices, demonstrating our strong organizational capacity and ability to plan and implement the proposed program. A few examples include: 4-star rating by Charity Navigator; GuideStar's Transparency Seal; featured by Edutopia, George Lucas' education foundation; featured in Mario Morino's "Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes" and Paul Bloom's "How to Scale Your Social Venture" as examples of a performance-driven, outcome-oriented nonprofit organization; awarded the SC Association of Nonprofit Organizations' highest award for excellence in nonprofit management; and we were profiled by Scholastic magazine.

WINGS is designed to support and implement federal programs. We are led by Bridget Laird, the WINGS CEO. Serving with WINGS since 1998, Bridget has experience in all areas of nonprofit management and program implementation. Working with Bridget is a leadership team where all members have at least six years of experience at WINGS implementing federal programs. Specific roles to lead the AmeriCorps program include our Operations Director (serves as the AmeriCorps Program Director) and Chief Financial Officer (serves as AmeriCorps fiscal agent). Organizational support to assist with compliance, data reporting, and program fidelity and implementation include the roles of HR Coordinator, Grants and Compliance Manager, Performance Measurement Analyst,

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and Social and Emotional Learning Coaches. The aforementioned roles are housed at our corporate office. Within each state, the organizational structure includes a Regional Executive Director to oversee sustainability and broad programmatic issues; a Regional Operations Director to oversee member recruitment, partnership development, local training, and the Site Supervisors. Key administrative functions are centralized to realize economies of scale, but we have enough boots on the ground in each region and site for adequate oversight.

We have ample experience administering AmeriCorps grants and other federal grants effectively. We are currently a Georgia State Commission grantee and have previously received State Commission and State Competitive grants in South Carolina and a National Direct grant. In addition to our AmeriCorps experience, we were awarded a Social Innovation Fund grant as a subgrantee of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, are recipients of multiple 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants (U.S. Department of Education grants), and are currently administering a Department of Health and Human Services grant. To illustrate our commitment to proper grant administration and compliance, we have gone through the audit requirements under Title 2 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations Part 200 (formally called the A-133 Single Audit) process each year since fiscal year end June 30, 2011. In all audits, the auditor's report has been unqualified or unmodified, and there have been no findings or questioned costs.

Community members and partners are critical to the success of our program. During the planning process we go through a comprehensive needs assessment with our local communities to select specific sites to ensure programming meets local community needs. Once sites are selected, we engage community partners as volunteers, to provide enrichment activities to our at-risk students, and as part of our sustainability efforts. While all partners are critical to our success, our most important partnerships are with the schools and school districts where we serve. As part of our district partnerships we adopt formal Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) so roles and responsibilities are clear. For example, each school provides in-kind facility and office space for the WINGS AmeriCorps program.

2. Compliance and Accountability: The most effective way for WINGS to prevent and detect compliance issues is to set strong policies and procedures that follow AmeriCorps rules and regulations, and then establish a monitoring plan to ensure policies and procedures are being followed. As a current and past AmeriCorps grantee, we understand the regulations associated with AmeriCorps, and we have already incorporated them into our standard operating processes and policies.

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Monitoring plan: the Site Supervisor is accountable for ensuring compliance at the program and service site level. Site Supervisors will be trained on the rules and regulations of AmeriCorps during their annual training. Site Supervisors will be directly supervised and monitored by our Regional Operations Directors (RODs) and the AmeriCorps Program Director. Our Program Director has five years of experience within an AmeriCorps program, giving her extensive experience with rules and regulations. The Program Director and RODs will make frequent visits to each service location and discuss compliance issues and concerns with the Site Supervisors. The WINGS Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will provide an additional layer of oversight.

Financial oversight is performed by the Grants and Compliance Manager and the CFO. All expenses must go through a multi-step review process prior to being submitted for reimbursement. An independent CPA firm will perform an annual audit to monitor financial compliance. As noted earlier, WINGS has always received clean audit reports.

Member and employee documentation is audited internally to ensure criminal history checks and other required documents are in order. Prior to beginning service, members must be approved by the WINGS HR Coordinator, who performs a final review for eligibility.

If an area of risk or noncompliance is identified, we will take immediate action to remedy the issue. If necessary, we are willing to take drastic measures, such as terminating members and employees who are unable to meet compliance standards. If unallowable expenses are discovered we will reverse the expenditures, and as needed, we will report them to our Grants Management Specialist.

Compliance with prohibited and unallowable activities is a key component of our monitoring plan. At pre-service training all AmeriCorps members will review and sign official member handbooks and service agreements that list the prohibited activities. Prohibited activities will also be discussed during training. Member duties will be described and reviewed during training, all of which have been vetted by the Program Director and senior management team to ensure they are allowable. Members will be instructed how to report concerns to supervisors and senior management if they fear they may be engaging in prohibited activities. Members may report concerns confidentially.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost Effectiveness: Given our history as an after school provider and current AmeriCorps grantee, we are confident that the proposed budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively. When looking at the proposed budget against prior AmeriCorps budgets, they are very similar, thus further validating our proposal.

The total proposed AmeriCorps budget is \$979,258, with CNCS providing \$499,960 and WINGS

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matching with \$479,298. The WINGS match far exceeds the minimum match requirement, demonstrating our commitment to the AmeriCorps program. In addition to the formal budget, we anticipate spending an additional \$1,216,560 that is not included in the formal budget. These funds will be used to support site supervision (\$162,840), additional activity supplies and student snacks (\$158,120), collaborative program partners (\$64,000), and member stipends (\$831,600). These additional costs were not included in the formal budget to reduce the burden of match documentation. Member stipends will fall within AmeriCorps guidelines. In order to recruit high quality members, we skew towards the higher end of the member stipend range. Additional supplies will be utilized by the at-risk youth and partners will bring in enrichment activities. Our innovative program permits many different supplies, from athletic supplies such as basketballs and yoga mats to academic enrichment supplies such as science experiment kits.

Our budget clearly aligns with the program narrative. The WINGS program is delivered by members in low member to student ratios, and members are highly supported and supervised by staff. As a result, more than 70% of our expenses are dedicated to member and personnel costs. The second largest component of our budget are direct participant support costs (activity supplies, student snacks, student transportation expenses, and enrichment partners). The balance of the budget is made up of expenses related to member and staff training and travel, evaluation, member recruitment, and professional services necessary to run an AmeriCorps program (criminal history checks, member service gear, IT support, etc.).

WINGS is responsible for raising \$479,298 in match funding in the first year of the grant. Through a combination of public and private funders, we secured non-CNCS resources for the upcoming year. Public funding sources include 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) funding and in-kind student snacks as provided by the USDA. Both 21st CCLC grants and USDA snacks are federal funds, however, per U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Agriculture memos, these funds are permitted to be used as AmeriCorps match funding. We also secured a private cash grant from the NoVo Foundation. While year 1 funding has been secured, we will continue to implement a sustainability plan to support the program for the duration of the grant. Key strategies include:

- *Utilize the "Meet WINGS" program, where numerous community leaders, politicians, and philanthropists have the opportunity to experience WINGS. Meetings are followed with donation requests.

- *Continue to seek out and apply for corporate and foundation grants.

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*Strengthen financial commitments from our partner school districts.

*Continue to seek public funding through additional avenues, particularly through 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants.

*Further develop the spirit of volunteerism within our communities to increase the number and quality of volunteers serving within WINGS and other service organizations.

We previously were a National Direct grantee, and our cost per MSY is in line with previous grant applications. Organizationally, we have seen cost increases (cost of living adjustments, increases in supplies expenses). We are well below the maximum cost per MSY.

2. Budget Adequacy: Details regarding the budget have been submitted via the budget narrative sections in eGrants. As noted earlier, all match funding has been secured. The additional funds needed to run the program that are outside of the scope of the AmeriCorps budget are a combination of additional 21st CCLC grants, USDA snacks, and private funds. We have secured the aforementioned NoVo Foundation grant at \$200,000 annually and a United Way grant for \$162,000. These two large grants form the basis of our private funding.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Theory of Change: Low-income children demonstrate the need for an intervention that increases social and emotional (SE) skills, especially self-regulation and executive function skills, and a program that improves school attendance.

Children living in poverty experience significantly higher levels of childhood trauma through abuse, neglect, and maltreatment than those living in more affluent communities, called Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs (Children's Bureau). Childhood trauma raises the stress level of students to critical levels. Chronically elevated levels of stress impede the development of the prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain that controls our ability to regulate ourselves emotionally and cognitively, which diminishes executive function skills. Students with elevated levels of stress experience behavior problems and exhibit poor performance in school. Improved SE skills mitigate the impacts of increased ACEs. When low-income students are taught SE skills they can cope, self-regulate behavior, and learn in the classroom.

More than 6 million students (14% of all students) are chronically absent (missing 10 percent of school a year) annually. Low-income students are chronically absent at a rate of three to four times higher than other students (Johns Hopkins). Students who are chronically absent in early grades are much less likely to read at grade level in third grade, a predictor of dropping out of high school (US Department of Education). There is a need for an intervention that improves attendance in low-

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income students.

Evidence-informed: SEL programs have been shown to improve executive function, self-management, and self-regulation skills, which directly combats the impacts of multiple ACEs. In addition, students who demonstrated improved social and emotional skills had an 11-percentile point gain in their academic achievement (Durkak, Weissberg, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2012).

Further research notes SEL programs that are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) demonstrate significant positive effects on student outcomes, including child self-perceptions (self-confidence and self-esteem), school bonding, positive social behaviors, problem behaviors, drug use, achievement test scores, school grades, and attendance (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Durlak, Weissberg et al., 2010). WINGS is designed as a SAFE program. Based on the aforementioned benefits, students involved in our intervention are expected to improve attendance and behavior, among many other positive outcomes.

Outcome of Interest: Student attendance and rates of chronic absenteeism.

Research Questions:

- 1) Does attending the WINGS program reduce a student's chance of being chronically absent?
- 2) Do kids that attend WINGS attend school more than kids who do not attend WINGS?
- 3) Do kids who attend WINGS have reduced rates of chronic absenteeism compared to kids who do not attend WINGS?

Study Components:

A Pre-Post design will be used to compare participant groups and measure the degree of change in attendance occurring between the WINGS and non-WINGS groups. Quantitative approaches will be utilized to examine group differences. To determine if a relationship exists between the WINGS program and absenteeism among students, attendance records will be examined at two points in time for both groups of participants. They will be examined from the previous school year when neither groups were participating in WINGS and at the end of the study year after the WINGS program has taken place. Kids participating in the study year will not have participated in WINGS in the prior year.

This design was selected since student attendance data is valid and reliable, initial sample size will be high, and it is a cost effective way to measure an important student outcome.

Key strength: A key strength of this design is WINGS versus non-WINGS attendance data is reliable and readily available for the participating students.

Key limitations: the demographic group of kids being studied have high rates of mobility which may affect the sample size used for analyses. We will mitigate this limitation by including as many

Narratives

participants as possible in the initial design, knowing there will be high rates of attrition. While we will be able to examine the relationship between WINGS and school attendance this design does not allow for casual inferences to be made.

Sampling Methods: Participants will attend an elementary school that offers the WINGS intervention. They will be divided into two groups; WINGS and Non-WINGS. Kids classified in the WINGS and non-WINGS group will not have attended WINGS prior to the year of study. Both groups will have attended the elementary school the prior year or attended a school where attendance records are available. Only kids with two years worth of attendance records will be eligible to participate. All participants will be of similar demographics, i.e. from a Title I elementary school and a low-income background.

Measurement Tools & Data Collection: The research questions will be assessed using school attendance records and WINGS program enrollment:

School Attendance Records. School attendance records will be collected from the school district for all participating students. Non-WINGS kids data will be de-identified. The attendance records report all dates a kid has missed school for the time period being studied.

WINGS Program Enrollment. WINGS program enrollment data will be examined to ensure participants in the non-WINGS group have never been enrolled in WINGS, and that kids in the WINGS group attended WINGS for the entire program year. Program enrollment is stored in a performance management system called "Efforts to Outcomes."

Analysis of Plan: Descriptive statistics of both data sets will be analyzed. Means, standard deviations, and the range of absent days will be reported for both groups for all time periods. The normality of the data will determine the use of parametric versus non-parametric testing. Assuming the data has a normal distribution, parametric tests will be used for a portion of the analyses examining mean differences of groups while non-parametric tests will be used to examine "chronic" versus "not-chronic" categorical data.

The first major analysis will examine the effect size between the mean absences of both groups before and after the completion of the WINGS Program. This will be done using a repeated measures between-subjects ANOVA. If a significant ANOVA result is found post hoc, multiple comparison tests will be used to determine which groups differ significantly. An alternative analysis method that may be used is the ANCOVA model which will assess the differences in the post-test means after accounting for pre-test values. This will determine whether the post-test means, adjusted for pre-test scores, differ between the two groups.

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The second major analysis examines participants that fall into "chronic" versus "non-chronic" absenteeism category before and after the WINGS intervention. Chi-square or McNemar's non-parametric test will assess if a statistical significant change in proportions have occurred between all the groups Pre-Post.

Evaluator Qualifications: The evaluator is expected to the WINGS Performance and Measurement Analyst, Lee Hilton. Key qualifications include:

- Experience with the use of statistical methodology and survey design to investigate research questions;
- The ability to develop, evaluate, and analyze surveys and measures;
- Experience utilizing statistical software such as SPSS;
- Experience processing large amounts of data; and the
- Ability to interpret data and to make recommendations.

To assist with the evaluation, external contractors will be brought in to validate findings and methodologies.

Budget: As an internal evaluation, the budget is limited to \$2,500 to work with external evaluation consultants. The consultants will be used to review our evaluation design, data collection methods, and statistical analysis.

Internal staff time is in the budget under personnel expenses. The Performance Measurement Analyst, Chief Program Officer, and Program Director will be the key staff reviewing measures inputted into our data collection system. In addition to staff time, \$10,560 has been budgeted for our performance management software, Efforts to Outcomes. This expense is budgeted under contractual and consultant services since it serves day to day uses with program administration as well as for the program evaluation.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Clarification Items - March 21, 2017:

The following issues were noted regarding our past performance. Please see our explanations and plans to address the issues:

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1) Not meeting performance measure outcome targets:

The primary reason we did not meet prior performance measure outcome targets is due to reducing a service site during the course of the previous grant period. This reduced the number of at-risk youth who started our program, which had trickle down effects on the number of students who completed our program and achieved positive outcomes.

In planning for the upcoming grant cycle, we have secured strong commitments with our service sites, allowing us to keep at-risk youth enrollment, completion, and outcome rates high.

In the event we do need to reduce a service site, we proactively incorporated a way to increase enrollment in other service sites on an as needed basis by shifting members from one site to another. By shifting enrollment, we will be able to meet our performance measures.

We also improved our measurement tools and data integration with our partners. Stronger data integration ensures we are fully capturing the school-day attendance records of the at-risk youth we serve, which is a key outcome measure.

2) Less than 100% Enrollment:

Similar to reducing a service site and decreasing at-risk youth enrollment, the reduction in a service site impacted member enrollment. We are planning for this contingency by being prepared to increase members at other sites. This allows us to maintain member and at-risk youth enrollment.

We are also improving our member recruitment and application experience. We have an online application tracking system, making it easy for prospective members to apply. We have made positive strides in our recruitment efforts, especially with our online recruitment presence. This is generating a larger and more qualified applicant pool.

3) Less than 100% Retention:

Due to the challenging nature of our service, we continue to work on ways to improve member retention. We have found we lose most of our members early in their term of service, when they realize how difficult the service will be on a day to day basis; and at the middle of the year, when personal schedules change, making it hard to serve daily.

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To mitigate these issues we are improving how we tell and show prospective members about our service opportunity. This way they have a more accurate understanding of the challenges and expectations of the service role. We are also increasing recruitment efforts, allowing us to select members who are more likely to complete their term of service.

During the interview process we are pushing further on potential scheduling conflicts and updating how we ask applicants about possible conflicts.

We have found retention is highest among members who are pursuing specific majors in college (youth development related majors, psychology, and social work) and members who come from similar communities to where we serve. As such, we are focusing additional recruitment efforts with these populations.

Once members are enrolled we are incorporating member surveys to elicit member feedback in order to create as positive of a service experience as possible. Through these surveys we are finding members are interested in additional services that we can provide, such as resume building workshops in order to better prepare them for life after AmeriCorps.

4) Less than 100% compliance with 30-day enrollments and exits:

In the past we oftentimes waited until close to the end of the 30-day enrollment period before enrolling members to ensure the member is fully committed to the term of service. Internally we are prepared to enroll members shortly after they begin their term.

We have had trouble exiting members while waiting for the final paperwork to be completed and returned. At times, when a member terminates early, he or she is less likely to return the exit documents.

To facilitate enrollment and exit compliance, we are incorporating these member documents into our online applicant tracking system. This better automates the process, allowing us to capture enrollment information quickly on the front-end of the member lifecycle and for us to capture exit information on the back-end.

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We have also held internal training updates to reemphasize the importance of on-time enrollment and exits. Since our trainings, we have only been delayed on enrollment due to social security number conflicts in eGrants.

Clarification Items - May 8, 2017

Areas affected by the project include: Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. This is noted in the Application Info section.

Consultation with state commissions:

Prior to filing the National Direct application, consultation forms were submitted to the state commissions in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Follow up calls and/or emails were had with the state officials as needed and requested.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics