

PART I - FACE SHEET

APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to conform to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application Non-Construction

2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):

3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:

20-JAN-11

STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:

N/A

2b. APPLICATION ID:
11AC122776

4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:

FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:

09ACHWI0010010

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System
DUNS NUMBER: 161202122

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):

NAME: Robert San Juan

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (608) 890-1414

FAX NUMBER:

INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: rsanjuan@wisc.edu

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):
Research and Sponsored Systems
21 North Park Street, Suite 6401
Madison WI 53715 - 1218
County: Dane

6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):
396006492

7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:

7a. Higher Education Organization - State Controlled

7b. 4-year college

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

NEW NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE

CONTINUATION AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es):

A. AUGMENTATION B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):

9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:

Corporation for National and Community Service

10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006

10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State

11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:

Project Grow

11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):

Project Grow affects areas in Madison, WI, which is located in Dane County.

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/01/11 END DATE: 08/31/12

14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant b.Program

15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:

a. FEDERAL \$ 69,240.00

b. APPLICANT \$ 51,238.00

c. STATE \$ 0.00

d. LOCAL \$ 0.00

e. OTHER \$ 0.00

f. PROGRAM INCOME \$ 0.00

g. TOTAL \$ 120,478.00

16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?

YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:

DATE:

NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?

YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. NO

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:
Robert San Juan

b. TITLE:
Outreach Specialist

c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:
(608) 890-1414

d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

e. DATE SIGNED:
05/02/11

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Executive Summary

Project Grow is an outreach program affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Human Ecology. Our focus is improving the school readiness of at-risk preschoolers. Project Grow has established partnerships with local non-profit early care and education programs that mainly serve low-income families. Corps Members establish one-on-one relationships with teacher-recommended preschoolers, and the pair works together on kindergarten-readiness skills for the entire academic year.

Rationale and Approach

a. The Problem

For the past four years, Project Grow has been addressing the school achievement gap during the preschool years by improving the kindergarten readiness skills of low-income preschool children. Poverty creates many challenges that contribute to school difficulties; however, differences in some parenting practices during early childhood appear to play a significant role in the achievement gap. For example, the average child growing up in a middle class family is exposed to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading upon entry into kindergarten. In comparison, the average child growing up in a low-income family is exposed to 25 hours (The Literacy Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions, 1998). In addition, a study published by Betty Hart and Todd Risley at the University of Kansas (Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children, 1995) describes their examination of parent-child talk in two groups of families: low-income, receiving welfare, and professional families, with middle to upper middle class incomes. The families were followed from the ages of 7 through 36 months. Hart and Risley found that on average, professional parents talked to toddlers more than three times as much as low-income parents, resulting in a significant discrepancy in children's vocabulary size. The average three-year-old from a low-income family demonstrated an active vocabulary of around 500 words. In contrast, a three-year-old from a professional family

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demonstrated a vocabulary of over 1000 words. Hart and Risley also found children's academic successes at ages nine and ten were attributable to the amount of talk they heard from birth to age three. Thus, children experiencing poverty are likely to have difficulty when reaching kindergarten partly due to the fact that, on average, low income children have comparatively fewer literacy and language experiences. As a result, low-income children are less likely to have mastered skills of early literacy or counting (National Education Center Studies, 2000), thus entering kindergarten with inadequate school readiness skills.

Given the significant correlation between economic disadvantages and low academic achievement, Project Grow targets communities in Madison, WI where children under five are living in poverty and where community stakeholders agree on the tremendous need for the program. The 2005 American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census, indicated that 15% of families in Madison with children under five experience poverty. Project Grow has worked closely with the Office of Child Care and Family Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Madison Area Accredited Early Childhood Association to determine which neighborhoods and preschools would benefit most from Project Grow's intervention services. Project Grow takes this community-based, collaborative approach to ensure that our program is targeting the young children and families most in need of services, and that efforts have the support of key stakeholders necessary to building an effective community infrastructure.

For the last five years, Project Grow's program partners have been Animal Crackers, Inc., Child Development, Inc (CDI), and Eagle's Wing. Each school is a non-profit organization, which works mainly with low-income families. Animal Crackers serves 85 children of which 33 are between the ages of 3-5 years. Sixty-six percent of the children qualify as low income (according to federal guidelines for reduced meals), and only 1% receives special needs services. CDI serves up to 90 children, with 32 between the ages of 3-5 years. Over 90% of the children qualify as low income

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(according to federal guidelines for reduced meals) and only 8% receive special needs services. Animal Crackers and CDI serve similar low-income populations. Both schools have a high representation of African American families, single-parent households, and primary caregivers who often have only a high school education (sometimes less). Also, the children at these schools often experience different caregivers (mother, aunt, grandparent, older siblings), often leading to inconsistent daily and weekly schedules. Although preschool does provide a level of consistency, the demands of classroom routines, as well as relationships with teachers and peers can be challenging to the children.

Eagle's Wing serves 140 children, with 40 between 3-5 years. Fifty-four percent of the children qualify as low income (according to the child care tuition assistance program), but only 3% receive special-needs services. In contrast to the other preschools, Eagle's Wing serves mainly children of graduate students, with a high representation from foreign countries. These individuals must balance graduate school commitments and parenting responsibilities. Although parents in these families generally have more education and the children experience more stability, these families have their own unique difficulties to navigate. The language barrier and cultural differences in caregiving practices can lead to challenging classroom experiences for teachers, parents, and their children.

As indicated by the demographics of these three preschools, many of the children are not receiving the special attention needed for success in their early education. Teachers often do not have the time and resources to provide the individualized attention needed by many of the children. Support from AmeriCorps would allow Project Grow to continue fulfilling this need by pairing caring, well-trained adults in one-on-one relationships with preschool children to help them develop early learning skills crucial to success during the school years and beyond.

b. Solution: AmeriCorps Member Roles and Responsibilities

Project Grow will recruit 40 students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to be minimum time

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AmeriCorps members. They will be trained to deliver a preschooler school-readiness intervention program. For the entire academic year Each Corps Member will be paired with a preschooler from one of our program partners. The bond built between Corps Member and child will create a context for learning, support, and scaffolding through the academic and social challenges the pair will face together during the program year.

Corps Member service will occur during the academic year from September through May. After pre-service training, Corps Members will work 10-12 hours per week, including: 2, 2-hour sessions, 2 hours of team planning, and 4 to 6 hours of classroom service. Corps Members will work with their partner children at their preschools, focusing on activities that foster language, literacy, and social skills. These are skills that local school districts are expecting children to achieve in Kindergarten. In addition, each Corps Member will be assigned to a Project Grow team of 8 to 10 Corps Members. Each team will have a leader, who usually does not work with a partner child. The remaining Corps Members will be assigned a partner child. Each team will be placed at one of our Program Partners.

The bi-weekly, Project Grow sessions will involve large group, one-on-one, and choice-time activities. For each session, Project Grow teams will work with partner children in a separate classroom. For these sessions, Corps Members will be trained to promote the development of their partner children by following a set of key principles: a) Support children's early or emergent reading and writing; b) Utilize developmentally appropriate practices; c) Strike a balance between adult and child-initiated learning, d) Engage children in active learning experiences. Large group activities during session will include Circle Time and Group Games. These activities will help to build a sense of community and respect among the Project Grow children and their Corps Member buddies. The children will learn important social skills such as focusing attention, asserting choices, and being more confident in front of a group. Teams also will foster literacy skills such as rhyming and letter recognition through singing and movement activities.

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Reading time will be the main one-on-one activity. After choosing a book, partner children read individually with their Corps Member. Children will learn about the conventions of print (e.g. title and author of a book, reading left-to-right), and develop language skills. In addition, Corps Members will use the dialogic reading method, developed as part of the Stony Brook Reading and Language Project. With this approach, Corps Members will engage the child in a conversation about the book and what the child sees on the page, rather than simply reading the book word-for-word. This approach will make reading a much more dynamic, interactive process.

Children will pick from a variety of activities during Choice Time, which provide opportunities to work on reading, writing, and social skills. Corps members will encourage their partner children to make a plan, carry it out, and then review their experiences after play. This "plan-do-review" method will help children develop self-regulation skills by becoming thoughtful and active participants in planning their routines and activities.

Corps Member responsibilities also will include two hours of team meetings per week, as well as four to six hours of teaching assistance in the preschool classrooms. During team meetings, Corps Members will write anecdotes about partner child progress, and also reflect on successes and challenges with the children. Finally, Corps Members will work in the classroom of their partner child assisting the lead teacher during the regular school day. Corps members presence will improve the classroom's adult-child ratio, providing more opportunities for one-to-one and small group literacy activities with children. In turn, Corps Members will gain additional classroom experience, learn to effectively collaborate with veteran early childhood professionals, and extend the benefits of the program to more children.

c. AmeriCorps Member Selection, Training, and Supervision

i. Corps Member Selection

Project Grow Corps Members will be recruited from the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. To

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garner interest, Project Grow will collaborate with campus-based community service centers, the financial aid office, cultural organizations, student organizations and clubs, employment centers, organizations dedicated to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and relevant academic departments to publicize the program and recruit Corps members. Because Project Grow recruits from such a wide variety of organizations on campus, Corps Members from past years have represented over 25 college majors from across the UW-Madison campus, including the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, education, math, business, communication arts, and journalism. In addition, because Project Grow primarily recruits students receiving financial aid, Corps Members' demographics tend to reflect the communities they serve. Because of this recruitment plan, Project Grow will recruit Corps Members who represent a variety of academic disciplines, as well as cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Individuals interested in being part of Project Grow will submit an application. Project Grow's Director will evaluate these applications, and invite promising candidates to be interviewed for a Corps Member position. During the interview, candidates will share their previous experience with children, discuss their ability to effectively work on a team, demonstrate the basic skills to support the academic and social development of young children, and convey enthusiasm for impacting the lives of young children, families, and communities.

ii. Corps Member Supervision

The Program Director will supervise, support, and guide Corps Members throughout the program year. The Program Director will be assisted by Team Leaders. Team Leaders are responsible for facilitating Project Grow sessions and team planning meetings. Team Leaders are chosen by the Program Director, and usually are returning Corps Members, who are familiar with Project Grow's systems and goals for both Corps Members and their children. After the start of the new program year in September, the Program Director will provide training for the new Team Leaders to help them

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understand their roles and responsibilities during the program year. The Program Director and Team Leaders will work together to ensure Corps Members' success during sessions and with partner children throughout the program year. This team will use in-service training and development systems (described below) to assist Corps Members throughout the program year. In addition, the Program Director and Team Leaders will have weekly meetings to discuss issues related to sessions and Corps Member concerns.

iii. Corps Member Training

Prior to Project Grow sessions, Corps Members will undergo a five-week pre-service training program, from mid-September through mid-October. First, the Program Director will provide an orientation to AmeriCorps and the terms of Corps Member service. This orientation will include the history of national service in the U.S., as well as the origins of AmeriCorps. This orientation also will involve an education on prohibited activities, and a ceremony to take the AmeriCorps Pledge. Information about prohibited activities and Project Grow's policies will be included in the Corps Member handbook and contract.

The next part of pre-service training will be orientation at program partner sites. Here, the preschool's director will discuss the program's history, as well as information about the families served. The director also will have Corps Members complete site specific paperwork (e.g. emergency contact info, and confidentiality agreements), and provide a tour of the school and classrooms.

Training then will focus on preparation for Project Grow sessions, which will begin towards latter part of October. Corps Member will participate in (up to) 30 hours of bi-weekly interactive workshops and seminars. Corps Members also will attend an all-day, immersion workshop on the weekend just prior to the start of sessions. Training areas will include the basics of early childhood development, developmentally appropriate practices, emergent literacy, play-based learning, dialogic reading, as well as behavioral management and conflict resolution.

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Corps Member trainings will be facilitated by Project Grow's Director, Dr. Robert San Juan, who has a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies, with an emphasis in early childhood development. Dr. San Juan has been working in the early childhood field for over 15 years, and has extensive experiences teaching and training students on early childhood theories and practices. In addition, Dr. San Juan regularly invites speakers from the Madison community to facilitate some Corps Member trainings. Outside speakers have included preschool directors who talk about the day-to-day challenges of working with low-income children and families, University professors that study emergent literacy, as well as individuals who work for the Madison Metropolitan School District speaking on topics such as cultural competency and working with socio-behaviorally challenging children. Thus, very qualified individuals will facilitate pre-service training.

After sessions begin towards the end of October, in-service training and support of Corps Members will be an integral part of their success during the remainder of the program year. Corps Member development will continue through reflection, discussion, and feedback with the Program Director and Team Leaders. This will occur through 1) team planning meetings, 2) observation and feedback from team leaders and the Program Director, 3) completion of a school success guide to track child progress throughout the year, 4) bi-weekly reflections, as well as 5) bi-monthly all-corps meetings and a second weekend immersion workshop that will take place at the end of January.

For each Project Grow session, team meetings will involve discussion of session plans, as well as reflection on work with the children. Discussion about session plans will help Corps Members understand the school readiness goals of each session, and how planned activities will be used to address those goals. During reflection time, Corps Member will write anecdotes about children's progress on language, literacy, and social skill goals. This reflection also will ask Corps Members to consider how their own behaviors are impacting the children during sessions. Finally, team meetings will give Corps Members the opportunity to receive feedback from peers.

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For each team, the Program Director will visit once a week to observe Corps Members and child progress. When appropriate, the Program Director will share observations and concerns with the Team Leader, who will later relay that information to the team. If possible, the Program Director or Team Leader will provide suggestions directly to Corps Members, or even model alternative interaction strategies, if difficulty with a partner child arises. Once a month, the Program Director will attend each team's meeting and provide feedback about the strengths of the overall session, and areas for improvement. Also on a monthly basis for, the Program Director will meet with Team Leaders to complete a formal evaluation of Corps Members. This will provide Corps Members with specific feedback regarding their interactions with partner children, and allow Corps Members to see where they meet expectations, or need to improve.

Three times during the program year, Corps Members will complete a School Success Guide for their partner child. The School Success Guide will track child progress on language, literacy and social skills school readiness goals throughout the year. Completion of the School Success Guide will assist Corps Members in understanding areas of strength and for improvement, and knowing where to focus activities. Also, team leaders will use the School Success Guides to inform the development of session plans to address the needs of the group.

Every 2 weeks, Corps Members will be asked to submit a reflection and great story using the OnCorps online reporting system. Reflections and great stories will give Corps Members a written forum to step back from their work, and understand the moments, interactions, frustrations, and triumphs that define AmeriCorps service.

To provide more opportunities for cross-team interaction among Corps Members, bi-monthly All-Corps meetings, as well as a second weekend immersion-training workshop in late January, will take place during the program year. The All-Corps meetings will give Corps Members the opportunity to share stories about partner children and sessions, and build a sense of community across all teams. In

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In addition, meetings will include opportunities for deeper discussion about the importance of early childhood education and the integral role that Corps Members are playing in the children's development. This in-service Corps Member training plan will add an additional 20-30 hours of activities to ensure continued development of Corps Member knowledge, skills and experience related to preschoolers, as well as professionalism within the workplace and among peers.

iv. Fostering Corps Member's civic engagement and responsibility

To fostering a lifelong dedication to service in its AmeriCorps members, Project Grow will implement a citizenship-building component in its trainings throughout the program year. This component will focus on the importance of engaged citizenship and how AmeriCorps members can impact their own communities through action. The immersion workshops will include outside speakers who emphasize the important role that Corps Members play in the short term, helping children become better prepared for kindergarten, and more importantly in the long-term. Corps Members' service in the preschools will help them become future advocates for ALL children getting equal access to high quality preschool education. In addition, each month, the Program Director will have Corps Members read a chapter from the book, "The Civically Engaged Reader." This book is collection of essays that asks readers to reflect upon, question, and challenge the meaning of community service. Corps will respond to questions about the book chapters, relating ideas from the readings to Project Grow experiences. This combination of outside speakers and provocative readings will encourage Corps Members to look beyond their experiences in the preschools, and understand the importance of making a lifelong commitment to civic engagement.

All Project Grow AmeriCorps members who successfully complete their term of service, regardless of their economic status at the time of enrollment, will be provided with skills, support and training that will enable them to advance into a career, post-secondary education program or a second term of AmeriCorps service. Members who secure an acceptable employment opportunity during their term

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of service will be eligible to receive a partial education award under the current guidance provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

d. Outcome: Performance Measures

Over the next three years, Project Grow will provide children from its three program partners with experiences that will help to improve school-readiness skills. To identify children for Project Grow sessions, teachers will complete the School Readiness Checklist, which is based on the High Scope Classroom Observation Record. Through this checklist, teachers provide perceptions of the preschoolers' language, literacy and social skills. Teachers will complete checklists in the fall before the beginning of Project Grow sessions. Checklist scores will be used to determine which children will be placed in the Project Grow treatment group. The remaining children will be placed in the comparison group. In the spring after the completion of Project Grow sessions, teachers will complete a second checklist for each child for whom a fall checklist was collected.

Four AmeriCorps National Performance Measures from the Education Focus area will be utilized to measure the impact of Project Grow's preschool intervention: 1) ED20: Number of children who start in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program, 2) ED21: Number of children who complete participation in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program, 3) ED23: Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness in terms of social and emotional development, and 4) ED24: Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness in terms of literacy skills. For ED20, the target will be 33 children being paired with a Project Grow Corps Member, and participating in the school readiness sessions. Project Grow recruits 40 Corps Members. Seven of those Corps Members will be either a volunteer coordinator or team leader that does not work with a partner child. Thus, the remaining 33 Corps Members will be paired with a partner child. The instrument for this measure will be a child roster created after processing the checklists, and choosing

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children for Project Grow sessions.

For ED21, the target will be at least 17 of the 33 children remaining in Project Grow for at least 4 months (approximately 32 sessions). This amount of time is considered the minimal dosage of for Project Grow sessions necessary to impact children's language, literacy and social skills. As part of the child roster, Project Grow children's attendance will be tracked.

For ED23 (social skills) and ED24 (literacy skills), improvement in children's school readiness skills will be determined by using the School Readiness Checklists as the instrument. Difference scores will be created between spring and fall checklists, and comparisons between the scores of the treatment group and comparison group will be used to examine the impact of Project Grow sessions. The target for ED23 will be that at least 17 of the children who participate in Project Grow sessions assessed for both the pre and post test will have a mean percent gain on social skills items that is greater than non-participating children, as measured by the School Readiness Checklist. The target for ED24 will be that at least 17 of children who participate in Project Grow sessions assessed for both the pre and post test will have a mean percent gain on literacy skills items that is greater than non-participating children, as measured by the School Readiness Checklist.

e. Volunteer Generation

i. Volunteer Coordinators

Project Grow remains committed to recruiting volunteers to extend its kindergarten readiness initiatives beyond our program partners, allowing us to reach a larger scope of the community. To this end, Project Grow will use an AmeriCorps position to engage and support volunteers --the Volunteer Coordinator. This position will be a minimum time AmeriCorps Member. However, rather than serving children, the Volunteer Coordinator will focus on organizing volunteer engagement activities. Project Grow will recruit 2 Volunteer Coordinators. The main responsibilities of the Volunteer

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Coordinators will be organizing and facilitating volunteer engagement events, recruiting volunteers, maintaining relationships with community partners, and regular meetings with the Program Director to discuss upcoming events and progress towards volunteer engagement goals. In addition, the Volunteer Coordinators will manage and train volunteers, and orienting them to the goals and policies of Project Grow and AmeriCorps. Also, the Volunteer Coordinators will track volunteer performance and ongoing commitment.

Finally, prioritizing National and State Days of Service will be built into the Volunteer Coordinators' pre-service training. Because participation in events on these days is essential to developing Corps Members sense of civic engagement, the Volunteer Coordinators will organize events and recruit Corps Members for participation in AmeriCorps Week, Martin Luther King Day, Cesar Chavez Day, and/or Global Youth Service Day. Participating in service activities will widen the scope of the experience by Corps Members, by having them take part in events that commemorate individuals who helped bring change to the community. In addition, the Volunteer Coordinators will be expected to research local opportunities to recognize days of service in the Madison communities in order to maximize participation and collaboration with local organizations. Once the Volunteer Coordinators have an in-depth understanding of which service day celebrations they can participate in and how they can effectively utilize volunteers in this participation, Volunteer Coordinators will be expected to build their events calendar around these key dates.

ii. Community partnerships

Volunteer Coordinators will work closely with our community partners: UW-Madison Office of Child Care and Family Resources, the Madison Area Accredited Early Childhood Association, Launching into Literacy and Math, the Madison Children's Museum, the Madison Public Libraries, Vilas Zoo, the Madison Metropolitan School District, as well as Madison School & Community Recreation. These organizations have established programs that target low-income children and families in Madison.

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With each of these entities already invested in providing services for at-risk neighborhoods, Project Grow will contribute its own resources, in particular motivated and civic-minded University students, into the established network of programs in Madison.

iii. Volunteer engagement goals

Although Volunteer Engagement is not one of our specific performance measures, Project Grow still plans to engage 75 volunteers, for a total of 225 hours. Volunteers' service activities will include a range of opportunities. For example, both episodic and ongoing, including parent education, reading and art nights, preschool beautification, and volunteer-led learning activities as part of larger community events.

f. Partnerships and Collaboration

i. School Readiness Program Partnerships

Project Grow has been working with three Madison-area non-profit preschools that serve mainly low-income children for the last four years. These schools are Animal Crackers, Child Development, Inc., and Eagle's Wing Child Care and Education Programs. Project Grow plans to continue working with these schools for the 2011-2012 Program Year. These long-term partnerships have developed into strong collaborative relationships with the directors and teaching staffs of each school. During the program year, the Program Director has weekly on-site contact with staff at all three preschools. Program Partner staff really appreciate how Project Grow makes a concerted effort to incorporate their ideas in the development of the program. As a result, Project Grow's partners feel more invested in the program.

ii. Volunteer Engagement Program Partnerships

Partnerships with Madison Area organizations play a significant role for the Volunteer Engagement Program of Project Grow and its Coordinators; for example, the Madison Children's Museum, the

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Madison Public Libraries, the Madison Metropolitan School District, as well as Madison School & Community Recreation. Project Grow's Volunteer Coordinators leverage the resources of these community organizations by tapping into their ongoing programs and events targeted at providing preschool enrichment experiences for young children and their families in Madison. In turn, Project Grow collaborates with each of these organizations by providing volunteer personnel for their programs and events, as well as enhancing the quality of their programming by offering expertise in fostering kindergarten-readiness skills in preschoolers.

g. Sustainability

Project Grow believes that higher education and community relationships, as well as a strong program staff, are essential to sustaining current program activities and expanding the organization to serve more children in the future. Project Grow will continue to be housed in the School of Human Ecology, at the University of Wisconsin Madison. This School focuses on understanding how individuals interact and develop within their environments, with an emphasis on applied work within the community. The School of Human Ecology provides several academic resources, including faculty, potential Corps Members, and strong links to University Resources, such as the University of Wisconsin-Extension, which will enhance the services provided by Project Grow. Thus Project Grow, with its focus on intervention within community preschools, is a perfect match for the School of Human Ecology at the UW-Madison. Furthermore, Project Grow has established strong relationships with its preschool program partners, as well as several Madison Area organizations: and the collaborative approach used by Project Grow ensures greater investment in the goals and initiatives of the program, further strengthening its long-term potential.

Building a strong staff is also essential to ensuring the program's quality and long-term sustainability. Project Grow collaborates with the UW- Madison, HDFS Associate Professor, Dr. Julie Poehlmann. She has been faculty advisor of Project Grow since it came to the UW-Madison. Dr. Poehlmann meets

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regularly with Project Grow's director to discuss funding opportunities, programmatic issues, as well as long-term strategic plans for Project Grow. Project Grow also works with the School of Human Ecology Associate Dean of Research, Diane Barrett and her staff, as well as the UW-Madison Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. These two offices handle Project Grow's financial reporting and grant management. Support also comes from the UW-Madison Financial Aid office, which manages federal work study funds of Corps Members, and assists with their usage of AmeriCorps Education awards.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background

The primary contact for Project Grow will be its Director, Dr. Robert R. San Juan. The secondary contact will be Project Grow's Faculty Advisor, Dr. Julie Poehlmann. Through Project Grow, Dr. San Juan and Dr. Poehlmann have worked together for the last four years, implementing the program and administering the AmeriCorps grant funds. Throughout the year, the program director and faculty advisor will meet to assess whether or not Project Grow is maintaining disciplined spending in line with the program budget, as well as examining any systems, for example issues related to work study, financial aid or match funds, that might influence Corps Members' ability to effectively fulfill their responsibilities. The Program Director and Faculty Advisor will meet formally on a monthly basis, and informally through email correspondence for regular check-ins. The Program Director also will meet periodically with grant administrative staff to maintain sound financial reporting and fiscal oversight.

In addition, Project Grow has been successful raising matching resources for AmeriCorps grants since 2006. A large portion of Project Grow's match comes from the UW-Madison, which gives a significant amount of in-kind and financial support to the operation of Project Grow. The University provides Project Grow with resources in-kind, including staff time, office space, and program supplies.

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In addition, the UW-Madison Financial Aid office provides \$51,000 in Federal Work-Study dollars to fund eligible Corps Members. Finally portions of the time and benefits of faculty and staff members who are involved in the management of the program make up part of the UW-Madison's match contribution to Project Grow. Furthermore, Project Grow's program partners, Animal Crackers, Child Development, Inc., and Eagle's Wing also provide several resources in-kind that contribute to Project Grow's match funds. These resources include time provided by preschool staff for meetings with Project Grow's director, as well as completion of Project Grow paperwork and child assessments. In addition, program partners provide classroom space in-kind for Corps Members to implement Project Grow sessions. Finally, Project Grow has supplemented CNCS funding through grants from the Evjue Foundation and the Beckner Endowment, via the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as the Morgridge Center for Public Service. These resources will continue to provide match support for the 2011-2012 program year. Overall, for the last two program years, AmeriCorps grant funds from CNCS have accounted for 58% of Project Grow's total budget, and Project Grow has provided a match of 42%. An identical split has been developed for this year's proposed budget.

b. Staffing

Project Grow will continue to be led by Dr. Robert R. San Juan, as full-time Program Director. Dr. San Juan has worked in the early childhood development field for over 15 years, as both a preschool educator, and early childhood development researcher. His research has included early social and emotional development as linked to relationships to parents, non-familial caregivers, and peers. In addition, Dr. San Juan has researched quality of care practices in early care and education programs as related to teacher-child interactions, as well as classroom curriculum and environment. Finally, Dr. San Juan received postdoctoral training in preschool school-readiness intervention research, with an

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emphasis on improving early language and literacy skills. For the past four years, Dr. San Juan has been director of the Project Grow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The faculty advisor of Project Grow will be Dr. Julie Poehlmann, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Poehlmann has functioned as faculty advisor of Project Grow since it came to the UW-Madison. Fiscal reporting of Project Grow will be handled by Dr. San Juan and Dr. Poehlmann, with assistance and oversight by Diane Barret, Associate Dean of Research in the School of Human Ecology, as well as her staff at the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration. Prior to becoming Associate Dean in the School of Human Ecology, Ms. Barret worked for several years in the Department of Research and Sponsored Programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Project Grow's director will provide orientation and on-going communication with each preschool program partner. The Program Director will make weekly visits to each preschool to ensure that partnership needs are being met. Technical assistance is provided to centers as needed; examples include supporting the completion of in-kind donation documentation and conducting background checks. Preschools occasionally request and receive trainings for families, for example, to build literacy in the home.

e. Enrollment and Retention

Project Grow has a history of achieving high enrollment and retention rates. For the 2009-2010 program year, five Corps Member slots out of 40 were not filled. Recruitment challenges occurred after not receiving confirmation of funding until late August. In the spring of 2009, 29 of the 40 slots were filled; but after having to temporarily shut down the program (due to the transition from being a Jumpstart Site to Project Grow), only 17 could recommit to Project Grow. Recruitment during Fall 2009 was successful. Nineteen additional Corps Members were brought into the program; but because

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of the previously mentioned attrition, all Corps Member slots were not filled. Because members are UW-Madison students, scheduling usually is the biggest challenge. By the third week of September, student schedules are set. Thus, despite continued interest, students have more difficulty modifying schedules to meet the requirements of Project Grow. Given these circumstances, Project Grow was very pleased to reach a 87.5% recruitment rate for the 2009-2010 program year. At the end of the year, 32 of 35 Corps Members completed their service requirements, translating to a retention rate of 91.4%. Corps Members unable to complete service requirements were exited early due to unforeseen circumstances, including class schedule conflicts that could not be changed, and changes in plans that hindered Corps Members from completing service hours during the summer months.

For the 2010-2011 Program Year, Project Grow filled all 40 of its Corps Member slots. Thus far, one of these Corps Members had to leave the program prior to completing 20 service hours, because she realized she would not be able to balance her college class schedule and Corps Member responsibilities. This spot was not refilled. To ensure, an even higher retention rate for the 2010-2011 program year, Project Grow has implemented several systems to ensure that Corps Members are fulfilling their weekly responsibilities. This includes greater oversight by the Program Director and Team Leaders of Corps Members through monthly evaluation and feedback sessions. Project Grow's goal is to have all Corps Members exited, eligible for their full awards, by the end of the academic year.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. Cost Effectiveness

Project Grow is a very cost effective program that leverages funds provided through Federal Work Study, university partners, and preschool partners. In addition, Project Grow has been successful in obtaining grants to supplement CNCS funding. This includes grants from the Evjue Foundation and the Beckner Endowment, via the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as the Morgridge Center for Public Service. These resources will continue to provide match

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support for the 2011-2012 program year. Thus, The corporation cost per member service year will be \$8,194. Project Grow AmeriCorps Members are minimum time, with a 300 hours service commitment. Project Grow Corps Members do not receive any living allowance or support. Thus, the Project Grow Corps Member MSY will be \$1735.

b. Expanding Project Grow's impact

Project Grow has been developing strategies to leverage its resources and community partnerships to extend its impact beyond working with preschool children. In this regard, Project Grow is examining opportunities to help parents understand how to contribute to their children's preschool experiences, and kindergarten-readiness. Project Grow has applied for a grant from the Morgridge Center for Public Service at the UW-Madison to conduct community research, in collaboration with our program and community partners. Through focus groups and surveys with parents and preschool staff, we hope to gain a better understanding of the kinds education programs that would be most helpful to parents; and more importantly the best way to make those resources accessible to parents given time and scheduling challenges. The Morgridge Center offered this grant to Project Grow in December 2010, with a total value of \$24,285 to cover costs for a graduate project assistant salary & fringe, student hourly salary & fringe, and participant costs payments. As of this application submission, final terms of the grant are being discussed.

d. Budget Adequacy

The enclosed budget provides for complete program delivery as well as training and support of Corps members.

i) Program Director (costs related to program implementation and member outputs):

The budget includes the salary for the Program Director who is responsible for Corps member

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recruitment, as well as pre-, in-service, and citizenship training. The Program Director also is responsible for providing support and advising when Corps Members are providing direct service to children participating in Project Grow. Corps Member supervision and support by the Program Director ensures high quality work with partner children, progress towards completing AmeriCorps service requirements, and high Corps Member retention. In addition, the cost for the Program Director to attend the national trainings is included. Finally, in order to ensure program continuity, Project Grow's Program Director is a full-time employee who is eligible for benefits.

ii) Costs related to needs and service, as well as community strengthening outcomes:

The budget includes the cost to train all Corps members, including trainings provided at the Fall and Winter workshops held during the program year. In addition, funds have been allocated for Corps Member travel, uniforms, office supplies, as well as materials used by Corps Members during Project Grow sessions, and events organized by the volunteer coordinators.

iii) Miscellaneous Program Costs:

The budget includes funds to cover the OnCorps online reporting system to record Corps Member service hours and reflections on service activities. Funds have also been allocated for the cost of criminal background checks. These checks are required by all three program partners.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Project Grow will continue annual assessment of the program intervention, and its impact on the children served. In addition, although not a performance measure, Project Grow will evaluate the effect of the service learning experience on the program's Corps members.

1. Preschool intervention impact on PROJECT GROW participant children:

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i) Evaluation Questions:

The Evaluation of Project Grow on participant children in our program partners focuses on the following questions: Do Project Grow participants show greater gains than the comparison group children over the program year on a measure of language, literacy, initiative, and social relations skill development?

ii) Methods for Evaluation:

Project Grow evaluation methods of child outcomes include pre-post intervention contrasts of gains in language, literacy, and social skills among preschool children (ages 36-62 months) receiving the Project Grow school-readiness intervention and a comparison group of children matched by age and gender in the same preschool programs. Thus, children in both groups receive similar regular preschool experiences; however Project Grow participants receive additional services, specifically Project Grow sessions.

To create an assessment for the children's classroom teachers, Project Grow uses items from the High Scope Child Observation Record (COR). Project Grow's version, the School Readiness Checklist, is comprised of 15 of the 32 COR items assessing language, literacy, and social skills. The Checklist does not require direct observation but instead relies on the teachers' experiences with the children. Both the COR and the School Readiness Checklist have high reliability statistics and are valid observational measures of preschoolers' development. Two subscales for the Checklist can be derived based on the developmental skills being assessed: Language-literacy (8 items; e.g. the abilities to listen to and understand speech, and identify sounds and letters); and Initiative-social relations (7 items; e.g. the abilities to express choices and initiate play, relate to adults and children, and resolve conflicts.

Teachers complete the checklist in the fall prior to the beginning of sessions, and in the spring after

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sessions are complete. Difference scores between children's spring and fall checklist scores will be created as a measure of gains during the program year. Project Grow children scores will be compared to the scores of children who did not receive the intervention.

iii) Previous results: For the 2009-2010 Program year, on average, children who participated in Project Grow sessions showed greater gains in language and literacy skills, social and initiative skills, as well as across all items. In addition, although comparison group children did shows gains in language, literacy and social skills during the year, Project Grow children showed significantly higher gains. For example, whereas comparison group children's increased by 5-10 points on language, literacy and social skills scores, Project Grow children showed gains of as much as 20-30 points.

2. Project Grow Service Learning Impact on Corps Members

PROJECT GROW is committed to evaluating the program on member development. Project Grow Corps Members complete a pre- and post-program survey regarding their beliefs about early childhood education, as well as civic engagement and citizenship.

i) Evaluation Questions: Do 70% or more of Corps members answer correctly on the Early Childhood Practices section of the survey (modified from the research-based tool, Teacher Beliefs Scale)? Do 70% or more of Corps members agree or strongly agree with the statements about citizenship and civic engagement on the end-of-year survey?

ii) Previous results: For the 2009-2010 Program Year, in the Fall, 91% of Corps Members correctly answered Early Childhood Practice items on the Corps Member Survey. For the Spring Survey, 100% of Corps Members answered the items correctly. Regarding Corps Members feelings about citizenship

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and civic engagement, 93% of Project Grow members felt strongly about being able to make and impact in the community, as well as interest in continuing civic engagement activities in the future.

3. Outline for data collection of evaluation data

- i) Fall 2011 (October): Pre-program child assessments completed by teachers 2-3 weeks prior to first Project Grow session, and Fall Corps member survey completed prior to pre-service training
- ii) Spring 2011 (April -- May): Spring follow-up child assessments completed within 2 weeks of last PROJECT GROW session and Spring End-of-Year Corps member surveys completed within 2 weeks of last PROJECT GROW session.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Clarification for budget changes: Note - full explanation would not be allowed in 250 character limit for notes section of budget. Each year, the University of Wisconsin-Madison negotiates a new fringe rate for its different employee categories. When the original FY12 budget was developed, we had to use FY11 rates as a basis to calculate the amount of fringe benefits for program staff. All attempts are made to anticipate the fringe rates for the new fiscal year, but no indication is given to us regarding the exact rate. The final agreement was dated 4/6/2011. Thus the new rates were not posted until one month ago.

1. Project Grow for FY12 will run from the dates of 9/1/2011 through 8/31/2012. Thus the grant award start date, and member enrollment period start date will be 9/1/2011.

2. Criminal background checks for Project Grow staff and Corps Members that will have regular

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access to vulnerable populations, specifically preschool aged children:

*All Corps Members and applicable Project Grow Staff will undergo a thorough Criminal Background check, which is conducted by the Assistant Dean of Human Resources in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This background check includes the state registry [Wisconsin Circuit Court Access -Access to the Public Records of the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP)], as well as the National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPR). In compliance with the new background check requirements, Corps Members and required employees will undergo the FBI fingerprint check.

*The WCCA CCAP and NSOPR background check conducted for Project Grow's Program Director is done as a courtesy, because he is an academic staff member in the School of Human Ecology. The FBI fingerprint check of the Program Director will be conducted at his own expense.

3. Site supervision of Corps Members at Preschool Program Partners:

Supervision of Corps Members at Project Grow's preschool program is done through a collaboration between the Program Director and staff at the preschools. At the beginning of the year, each preschool's program director provides an orientation, providing information on the children and families being served at the school, policies, regulations, and procedures, as well as the curriculum approach used by the schools. When Corps Members work in the preschool classrooms, they are directly supervised by the classroom teachers. These classroom teachers are employees of the preschools. In addition, the Program Director makes bi-weekly visits to the preschools to observe the Project Grow teams during school-readiness sessions. Also, the Project Grow's director regularly visits with classroom teachers and preschool directors to ensure that Corps Members are attending their scheduled classroom assistance times, as well as complying with preschool regulations and procedures. Project Grow's Director also has regular email correspondence with preschool staff to

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communicate about any Corps Member or administrative issues that may arise.

4. Team Leader roles:

Team Leaders do not supervise the Corps Members on their teams. Instead, team Leaders are Corps Members that act as Peer Leaders for the Project Grow Teams. Project Grow sessions follow a weekly lesson plan that is facilitated by the team leader. Because during Project Grow sessions, the other Corps Members focus attention on working with their specific partner child, the team leader helps manage and transition the Corps Member-Child pairs through the different stages of the session (e.g. circle time, reading, small group activities). In addition, because Team Leaders are generally veteran Corps Members, they help to model developmentally appropriate behaviors with the preschoolers, or provide feedback to Corps Members. In addition, the team leader can help with behavioral management issues if a Corps Member is having some difficulty with his or her partner child. Team Leaders regularly communicate with preschool staff about activities that occur during Project Grow sessions, as well as updates to teachers about progress being made by the children. Team Leaders also communicate with teachers about any behavioral issues that children might be having. Team Leaders meet as a group with the Project Grow director on a weekly basis to discuss administrative issues, curriculum and lesson planning, and any Corps Member issues that might be occurring during sessions. These meetings also provide team leaders with the opportunity to receive feedback from both the Program Director and other team leaders. In addition, the team leader also has the opportunity to communicate with the Program Director during his weekly visits to Project Grow sessions. Although team leaders are not assigned a partner child during the year, they do have regular contact with the children during Project Grow sessions. Team leaders develop relationships with all of the children in the group during the year. Though time is spent setting up activities for the pairs, team leaders try to spend a little time with each pair to see how both the Corps Member and child are progressing. This

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helps when the team leader is providing feedback to her peers, and also when the team leader communicates with the Program Director about Corps Members and their partner children. In addition, if a Corps Member is absent during a session, the team leader works with the child whose "buddy" is missing. Finally, though not required, team leaders usually spend a couple of hours a week working in the classroom, getting to know the children. Thus, team leaders play an extremely important role as a peer leader, as well as communication bridge between the Project Grow Director, preschool staff, and the other Corps Members.

5. Volunteer Coordinator Training:

During the first few weeks of the program year, volunteer coordinators go through a training process that has some unique elements when compared to the other Corps Members that will be working with a partner child during the year. However, because Volunteer Coordinators still have contact with vulnerable populations, full background checks are conducted. Project Grow's director will provide the training to Volunteer Coordinators. This will include:

- *Introduction to AmeriCorps, Corps Member requirements and prohibited activities.
- *Introduction to the Volunteer Coordinator Handbook. This handbook contains a collection of tools for planning events, making contact with past and new program partners, managing volunteers, and keeping tracking of progress towards volunteer engagement goals.
- *Introduction to past volunteer engagement programs and partners. This training also includes brainstorming for possible new partners, and programs
- *Introduction to Child Development Theory and Early Childhood Education Practices. Because Volunteer Coordinators will be providing some training and feedback to volunteers working with preschoolers, this training provide the VCs with child development and ECE basics, as well as tools for giving feedback to volunteers about working with kids.

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*Introduction to the National Days of Service, and planning ahead for events that include AmeriCorps Members

*Volunteer Coordinators also are required to complete the required six hours of citizenship training.

6. Corps Member loses a partner child:

In the event that a child enrolled in Project Grow has to leave the program, the child's Corps Member would be assigned a new partner child. The process of choosing partner children at the beginning of the year involves identifying more children than available Corps Members at each school. This is done, so a new child can be quickly chosen to replace one that has left Project Grow.

7. Sustainability Plan:

Project Grow is housed in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The program has been running successfully at the University since the 2006-2007 academic year - as a site of the national Jumpstart for Young Children Program from 2006-2009 and independently as Project Grow since 2009. During the program's five years at the UW-Madison, the university has provided several resources that have contributed to its long terms sustainability beyond federal assistance from CNCS and AmeriCorps. This includes office and meeting space provided for Project Grow's director, as well as classroom space used for training of Corps Members. In addition, the University and Madison community provides resources to continue the development of program curriculum and training of Corps Members. Project Grow's director and faculty advisor both have PhDs in child development, thus the two key players driving programmatic content have over 30 combined years in the early childhood development and preschool fields. In addition, faculty from the departments of Human Development and Family Studies, Education, and Psychology regularly contribute to the training of Project Grow's Corps Members. In addition, Project Grow has maintained

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program partnerships with the same preschools, that serve at-risk children, for the last four years. These long term partnerships have helped to maintain consistency in the Project Grow intervention, as well as the overall experiences with the children at the schools. Finally, Project Grow has consistently received internal grants from the University that have contributed to match, as well as resources for the day-to-day functioning of Project Grow. This includes funds for student office workers, as well as graduate program assistants. Funds also have been used to pay for materials used by Corps Members at the preschools. Internal grant funds have come from the Evjue Foundation and the Beckner Endowment, via the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the 2011-2012 Program year, Project Grow received a grant from the the Morgridge Center for Public Service on the UW-Madison campus. This grant will be used to fund a pilot research project examining effective methods for disseminating parenting and early education practices research to the parents and caregivers at our preschools. Furthermore, the student financial aid office at the UW-Madison has contributed \$51,000 in federal work study funds for the last five years. This has been used by Corps Members using Project Grow as a work study position on campus. For the 2011-2012, the UW-Madison student financial aid office has committed the same amount of federal work study funds. For Corps Members who are not eligible for federal work study, Project Grow can be used as an internship to fulfill academic program requirements. Thus, all students have incentive to maintain a high level of service to Project Grow, beyond the education award towards which each Corps Member is working. As a result, Project Grow continues to have a pool of high quality young adults from which to recruit. This helps to ensure the sustainability of a high quality program.

8. Corps Member service hours - one-on-one work with partner child versus classroom assistance time:

The focus of Project Grow Corps Member work is split between one-on-one work with partner

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children during the school readiness intervention sessions, and classroom assistance time. Preschoolers assigned a Project Grow Corps Member receive the most intense services through one-one-one attention. However, classroom assistance time plays a significant role in both the experiences of the Corps Members as well as the services provided by Project Grow to its preschool program partners. For Corps Members, they are assigned to work in the classroom of their partner child. This provides additional opportunities for Corps Members to work one-on-one with partner children. At the same time, Corps Members are able to observe their partner children in the regular classroom context, providing additional insights into his or her cognitive, social, and emotional skills. These insights help the Corps Member to make progress with the child during one-on-one interactions. Furthermore, time spent in the classroom exposes the Corps Member to developmentally appropriate early childhood education practices in an applied setting. In the classroom, Corps Members must apply and develop further the skills they learned during training - a very different context than one-on-one interactions; and they also get to observe and interact with more experienced teachers from the field. Thus, work in the classroom plays a significant role in developing Corps Members' future teacher skills. Furthermore, Corps Member classroom assistance time allows Project Grow to extend its impact to children who are not enrolled in Project Grow. Our preschools have more needy children than the Corps Members we are able to provide to each classroom. With each Corps Member providing 3-5 hours of classroom assistance time per week, classrooms have significantly lower teacher-to-child ratios during Project Grow's program year. Thus, more children in the classroom are able to receive individual attention from adults. At the same time, when Project Grow children are participating in sessions with Corps Members, teachers have even more opportunities to address the individual needs of the other children in the classroom. Thus, although Corps Members appear to spend relatively more time in the classroom in comparison to individual time with partner children, this combination of Corps Member responsibilities contributes to the overall quality of service provided to children enrolled

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in Project Grow sessions, and the learning experiences of Corps Members. At the same time, this model of Corps Member service helps to extend the impact of Project Grow to all the preschool children in our program partners.

9. Project Grow does not function as a job training program to secure employment for its Corps Members. Thus, Project Grow Corps Members are not eligible for partial education awards if employment is secured, resulting in a Corps Member leaving the program.

10. Changes to Project Grow personnel in budget: The original budget included an administrative grant specialist. This individual does not work exclusively for Project Grow. She provides support for our program, as well as others in the UW-Madison School of Human Ecology. For the last two years, this individual has cost-shared a % of her salary to help us meet match requirements. Since our original submission back in Fall 2010, Project Grow secured a grant from the Morgridge Center at the UW-Madison. Included in this grant is funding for a graduate program assistant, who will be doing some focus group work with families at our preschool program partners, to understand methods for disseminating parenting and preschool education research. We have included a % of this PA's salary in our personnel budget. Thus we no longer need to include the cost share of the administrative grant assistant to meet match requirements. In addition, the graduate PA is directly affiliated with Project Grow; so including the PA in the grant is more appropriate.

Notes for further clarification:

1. Justification for 25% graduate program assistant: In order to expand the impact of Project Grow, we are hoping to gain a better understanding of how to best disseminate research on parenting and school readiness skill development to all parents at our preschool program partners. We hope to

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encourage families to become more involved in early childhood education (ECE) practices. The graduate program assistant is essential to the development of this family involvement piece of Project Grow. The role of this individual will be coordinating parent focus groups, and compiling the types of information that would be most useful to parents, as well as the best methods to disseminate that information. Because Project Grow's director focuses much of his effort to training, advising, and supervising Corps Members working with partner children, as well as working with the Volunteer Coordinators, he is unable to devote the time needed to adequately address the family involvement piece that we are developing in Project Grow. The graduate program assistant, in collaboration with Project Grow's director and faculty advisor, will concentrate her efforts on the focus groups with parents. Longterm, this family involvement piece would increase the sustainability of our program, as we would be able to increase the impact of our intervention work beyond the preschools. By helping parents become better informed and educated about parenting and ECE practices, we hope to create more consistency between the home and school in regards to school readiness practices. The work of the graduate program assistant during FY12 would provide an important foundation for the work we hope to do with families in the future.

2. Although Team Leaders are not assigned a specific partner child, they have direct interactions with all the children throughout each session. Managing the session goes beyond helping Corps Members and partner children move through and transition between the session elements. During large group activities (circle time), the team leader guides the entire group in a series of activities geared towards literacy and social development. Essentially the team leader take the role as the "lead teacher" of the group, with the Corps Members providing extra support to the children who may have difficulty answering the questions, or responding to the directives of the team leader. During one-on-one activities (especially reading), the team leader usually will join each pair for a few minutes -

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sometimes being the Corps Member to read to the child, other times, trying to help the child stay focused if he has difficulty paying attention. During small group activities and choice time with the children, the team leader also spends time working directly with the children. The team leader could be in charge a running specific activity in which each Corps Member-child pair participate (e.g. a pretend play game geared towards practicing writing skills). Alternatively, the team leader also spends time interacting with all of the children during "choice time." She could join in with a pair working on an art project, helping a child refocus, or taking the lead helping the child develop language or literacy skills from the art project. Thus, the team leader provides direct service to all of the children throughout the year. In fact an essential part of the team leader's role is developing relationships with all of the Project Grow children during the program year. Instead of understanding the needs of a single child, the team leader comes to understand the goals of each individual child, and as a result the group as a whole. In turn, the team leader is able to provide feedback to the Program Director about areas to address among individual children, individual Corps Members, and the group as a whole. Thus, team leaders engage in direct service to the children throughout the year. However, the nature of that direct service is different, and in many ways more challenging. We have found that this model of having a peer group leader managing session really helps the other Corps Members work most effectively with their partner children. The team leader can use his or her past experiences working with the children, to help Corps Members see alternative methods to work effectively with a child. Sometimes, if children are engaging in challenging behaviors, the team leader is necessary to gain control of a child. At the same time, because team leaders spend time interacting with all of the children, the program director is able to get another person's perspective on the progress of the Corps Member-child pairs. This really encourages optimal growth and development of both the Corps Members' and children's skills.

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3. Only assigning one partner child to each Corps Member: In order to understand the effectiveness of Project Grow's intervention services, we need to have a large enough comparison group in each preschool. This helps us validate that our program has an effect on the school readiness skills of participating children, in comparison to the children who do not participate in Project Grow sessions. Relatively unequal sample sizes between the "treatment" and "comparison" group, could skew results and make analyses of program effectiveness more difficult to interpret. By assigning more children in each school to a Corps Member, the sample size of our comparison group would decrease.

More importantly, however, our experience working with the children and families at our preschool program partners, as well as our knowledge of the research in and theories about early childhood development, indicate that the one-on-one attention children receive through Project Grow is the most effective way to achieve our school readiness goals. Although the argument could be made that we could increase our impact by assigning more children to each Corps Member, we feel this creates a "watered-down" experience for each child. In other words, the number of children directly served increases, but the actual impact on the children is not as significant. Because each Corps Member has a limited amount of time (4 hours per week) with a partner child during the 18-20 week intervention period, being able to focus on one child really allows the Corps Member to spend the necessary time building a trusting relationship with a partner child. That strong relationship becomes the basis for building and developing the child's language, literacy, and social skills. We have found that the difficult home-life circumstances, from which our preschool children often come, has made forming relationship with adults a challenge. Having a trusted adult (the Corps Members), whose role is to give her undivided attention to one partner child, is essential to helping him or her make progress both academically and socially. The preschoolers need time to develop that trust; and sharing a Corps Member with at least one other child would make that difficult.

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In addition, assigning more than one child to each Corps Member introduces many unpredictable elements that decrease the effectiveness of the time spent together. One child may be more dominant than the other. One child may be more developed in terms of language or social skills. Two children may not get along very well creating a lot of disruptions when the small group is working together. Alternatively, if the children are good friends, this could prove even more disruptive - particularly if the children together encourages inappropriate behaviors. In our experiences over the last few years, I have observed on many occasions Corps Members having to work with multiple children due to Corps Member absences. I have seen how difficult being productive can be when having to give attention to multiple children; and conversations with both the Corps Members and Team Leaders have confirmed this. What I have seen is one child dominating a Corps Member's attention, while the other is quiet and often becomes unfocused or disengaged. Also, we see children who are very shy around peers. Forcing this child into a peer relationship, through a multi-child pairing, really undermines the process of helping the child to become more socially comfortable around peers. A Corps Member can really support this type of child to develop the social skills and confidence to interact with peers. This is often a goal with a lot of our children, and achieving that goal in a multi-child-Corps Member dynamic could prove difficult. Thus, we feel that the one-on-one relationship model that we have used for several years is the most effective method for reaching our school-readiness goals. We feel that the QUALITY of the impact outweighs the need to increase the QUANTITY of our impact.

4. Cost effectiveness of \$8175 per MSY - We feel that our request for \$8175 per MSY is justified because the relatively small target of children reached does not fully illustrate the impact of the service provided by our Corps Members. Part of this impact is explained in the discussion above regarding "quality of impact, rather than quantity of impact." However, the service provided by Project Grow

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Corps Members goes beyond work with partner children. Each Corps Member provides 3-5 hours of classroom assistance time during the program year. This amounts to roughly 100 additional direct service hours per Corps Members in the preschool classrooms, working with both Project Grow AND non-Project Grow children in the classrooms. Thus, though not to the same extent, non-Project Grow children receive direct services from Corps Members. At the same time, the presence of Project Grow Corps Members in the classroom lowers teacher-child ratios, creating more opportunities for all children to receive more individualized attention from adults in the classroom. This type of individualized attention is crucial for the at-risk children present in our preschool program partners. In particular, Project Grow Corps Members can spend time with children who require less "specialized" attention, and the lead teachers can focus more attention on the children in the classroom that require a more experienced and specially trained adult. Teachers have told me how grateful they are for Corps Members helpfulness in the classroom, as well as how much the children enjoy seeing them. Finally, during sessions, the children go to a separate room to work with Corps Members. Once again, the smaller classroom size allows teachers to provide more individualized attention for the remaining classroom children. In other words, the presence of Project Grow Corps Members affects the classrooms as a whole. Thus, although our performance measures indicate a relatively small target of children served, we feel the requested amount per MSY is justified because 1) Corps Member service includes working in the preschool classrooms increasing the number of children who are directly served by Corps Members, and 2) Corps Member presence in the classrooms decreases the teacher-to-child ratios, allowing more children individualized attention, which is especially crucial to the at-risk preschoolers present in our program partners.

In addition, Project Grow plans to maintain it's Volunteer Engagement Program. AmeriCorps Member volunteer coordinators plan, organize, and run ongoing and one-time events throughout the

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program year. Project Grow's volunteer coordinators will recruit at least 75 volunteers, who will provide at least 225 volunteer hours - extending the impact of the program even more. The University provides the main recruitment pool for volunteers, but we also have recruited high school students and baby boomers. Thus, Project Grow engages college students and community members beyond the 38 Corps Members who are part of the school readiness intervention.

Volunteer events occur in the neighborhoods of our program partners, thus allowing us to impact even more at risk children and their families. Our ongoing events occur in Head Start Programs, community centers, the Madison Children Museum, and local public libraries. Next year, we plan on partnering with the UW Children's Hospital, to help provide educational activities for children who spend extended amounts of time at the facility. In addition, we plan one-time events such as preschool beautification projects, which often coincide with the National Days of Service. Thus, although Project Grow does focus a lot of attention on the school readiness intervention, we continue to extend our reach to many more places in the community.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - None c Geographic Focus - Rural
 Geographic Focus - Urban Encore Program

Priority Areas

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <i>Selected for National Measure</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 8.47

Service Categories

School Readiness/Head Start/Early Childhood Education

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

In the fall of the program year, teachers at Project Grow's program partners will complete the School Readiness Checklist, providing perceptions of language, literacy, and social skills of the children in the preschool classrooms. Results from these checklists will be used to select the children who will participate in Project Grow sessions. These children will be known as the "treatment group." Children from the preschool classrooms that are not chosen will be known as the "comparison group."

Children chosen to participate in Project Grow will be paired with a Corps Member. Each Corps Member will work with that child for the entire academic year. Twice a week, Corps Members will go as a team to Program Partner schools to work with partner children and implement Project Grow curriculum in a two-hour long session designed around one-to-one reading, circle time, choice time. On the third day each week Corps Members also will return to the classroom of their preschool child for 2-4 hours to serve as a classroom assistant interacting with all the children in that classroom under the supervision of the classroom lead teacher.

Result: Output

Result.

Teachers' responses to the School Readiness Checklists will help identify children who would benefit from participation in Project Grow sessions. Preschool children participating in Project Grow will be provided with individualized preschool literacy, language and social skill intervention during Project Grow sessions.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED21: Children completing an early childhood education program.

Target: Thirty-three preschoolers will be chosen to participate in Project Grow sessions at the beginning of the program year. Children who remain in the program for 4 months will receive a large enough "dosage" of Project Grow for the intervention to impact

Target Value: 25

Instruments: As part of the child roster, children's attendance at Project Grow sessions will be recorded throughout the program year.

PM Statement: At least 25 of 33 preschool children will complete the school readiness intervention program, meaning they will remain in the program for at least 4 months. Twenty-five children completing the Project Grow intervention will result in a 75% completion rate. Because of the transient nature of the low-income, at-risk families with which we work through Project Grow, we often lose children during the year. Although the Project Grow director works closely with program partner staff to choose children for the program that have regular attendance and fairly stable situations, we historically have encountered unpredictable circumstances. Thus, we feel that a 75% child completion rate strikes a balance between being ambitious, but also realistic given our target population.

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Project Grow curriculum targets nine social skills considered important to preschooler's school readiness, based on the High Scope Classroom Observation Record: 1) Makes and expresses choices, 2) Engages in problem-solving, 3) Plans complex activities, 4) Participates in routines, 5) Relates to adults, 6) Relates to children, 7) Makes friends, 8) Negotiates social conflicts, 9) Expresses feelings. Each of the bi-weekly Project Grow sessions will include activities during which Corps Members help to foster these skills in partner children.

Result: Output

Result.

Children participating in Project Grow who are assessed by teachers for both the pre and post test will have a mean percent gain on the social skills items that is greater than non-participating peers as reported on the School Readiness Checklist Year-End Assessment Report.

Target :Project Grow children will have an mean percent gain on social skills items that is at least 15%

greater than non-participating children, as measured by the pre- and post test School Readiness

Checklist.

Target Value: 15

Instruments: Project Grow will have teachers complete the School Readiness Checklist during the fall prior to when sessions begin, and also in the spring after sessions are completed. Comparison will be made between the treatment and comparison groups.

PM Statement: Project Grow children will have a mean percent gain on social skills items that is at least 15% greater than non-participating children, as measured by the pre- and post test School Readiness Checklist completed by children's teachers in the fall and spring of the Program Year.

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Project Grow curriculum targets eight language and literacy skills considered important to preschooler's school readiness, based on the High Scope Classroom Observation Record: 1) Understands speech, 2) Produces speech, 3) Understands sounds in words, 4) Recognizes and makes rhymes, 5) Shows interest in reading activities, 6) Knows how books work, 7) Shows signs of beginning reading, 8) Shows signs of beginning writing. Each of the bi-weekly Project Grow sessions will include activities during which Corps Members help to foster these skills in partner children.

Result: Output

National Performance Measures

Result.

The Project Grow "treatment group" children will have a mean percent gain on language and literacy skills items that is greater than non-participating "comparison group" children, as measured by the pre- and post test School Readiness Checklists completed by children's teachers in the fall and spring of the Program Year.

Target :The Project Grow "treatment group" children will have a mean percent gain on language and literacy skills items that is at least 15% higher than non-participating "comparison group" children, as measured by pre/post test School Readiness checklists

Target Value: 15

Instruments: Project Grow will have teachers complete the School Readiness Checklist during the fall prior to when sessions begin, and also in the spring after sessions are completed. Comparison will be made between the treatment and comparison groups.

PM Statement: Project Grow children will show an average gains in language and literacy skills that is at least 15% higher, in comparison to non-participant children, as measured by the School Readiness Checklist completed by children's teachers in the fall and spring of the Program Year.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable