

Narratives

Executive Summary

Admission Possible is a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to helping low-income high school students earn admission to and succeed in college. We provide students with test preparation and college counseling services, as well as financial aid assistance and guidance in the transition to and through college. AmeriCorps members are at the heart of our organization, serving as full-time coaches and mentors to our students as they prepare for the transition to college.

Rationale and Approach

1. Compelling Community Need

The US Department of Education's report "The Condition of Education 2007" documented a persistent gap in college participation rates between students from wealthy and poor families from 1972 to 2005. Currently, America's low-income high school graduates testing in the top quartile of standardized tests attend college at the same rate as the bottom quartile testers from high income backgrounds. This study cited a survey that shows most students and parents believe college is essential; however, non-academic barriers, like the many steps in college admission, prevent these students from attending college.

These trends are also seen in Wisconsin. Though they have been identified as a fundamental injustice, they are also a factor that will inhibit our ability to compete economically in the future as there is a growing need for an educated workforce in Wisconsin. Governor Jim Doyle frequently emphasizes the necessity of increased college access, writing in one of his editorials, "...access to higher education will strengthen our state, as individuals of all backgrounds and incomes have the opportunity to receive the next level of education they need to get ahead in the world and secure a good, family-supporting job."

One of the top priorities of Governor Jim Doyle's administration has been economic growth and diversity. The Governor has identified the need to recruit a large and skilled workforce to not only replace the retiring baby boomers, but also fill new jobs. Given that low-income students currently

Narratives

participate in post-secondary education at much lower rates than students from more affluent backgrounds, and that employers are increasingly seeking an educated workforce, our future success as a state depends on our ability to help these students finish high school and enroll in college.

Low-income students often lack information about the college admission and financial aid process. Often, these students are the first in their families to attend college and, therefore, lack the experience and resources wealthier families draw upon. Further, most low-income students attend high schools with fewer resources, including fewer guidance counselors, than wealthier students. For instance, one of the leading private high schools in Milwaukee has a ratio of roughly 180 students per counselor. Fewer than two miles away, a high school from the Milwaukee Public Schools District has a ratio of over 590 students per counselor.

Students from low-income backgrounds also historically suffer from significantly lower standardized test scores than students from wealthier backgrounds. For example, Wisconsin encourages their students to take the ACT (a test of 36 points) over the SAT. The average ACT score for the Class of 2007 in Wisconsin was 22.3. The average score for one of our partner Milwaukee high schools, where 78% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch, is 15.6. This disparity documents the need for additional support for these students. Without access to the same kind of test preparation wealthier students use, low-income students suffer a disadvantage in the increasingly competitive admissions process at many universities. According to the 2000 US Census, of all Milwaukee residents age 25 or older, only 18.3% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Specifically only 4.5% of the large African American population in Milwaukee hold higher education degrees.

Governor Jim Doyle and First Lady Jessica Doyle feel so strongly about college access that the Governor created the Wisconsin Covenant, a pact many high school freshman sign promising to maintain a B

Narratives

average. In exchange, the state reserves a spot for them at a Wisconsin college or university with financial aid. Governor Doyle stated, "I don't want any young person thinking that college isn't for them, that it's only for rich people, or that because their parents didn't go, they can't go." The Covenant's mission aligns with that of our organization and First Lady Jessica Doyle met with our team during our first weeks in Milwaukee, expressing her support for our organization and interest in our potential role in assisting Wisconsin fulfill their promise to Covenant students.

This proposal requests 20 full-time AmeriCorps members to help us expand our services by replicating our successful college access program model at new sites in Greater Milwaukee schools.

2. Description of Activities and Member Roles

Admission Possible was founded in Minnesota in the fall of 2000; we expanded to Wisconsin in 2008. Our mission is to make college admission possible for promising low-income students by providing ACT and SAT test preparation services and admissions and financial aid consulting.

Our AmeriCorps members are the heart and soul of that mission, providing direct service to low-income high school juniors and seniors. Each AmeriCorps member leads after school sessions for groups of 10-15 low-income students at our Greater Milwaukee partner high schools, preparing them for college admission. Sessions align with the students' academic school year, requiring AmeriCorps members to serve full-time, 1700 hour service placements in order to meet the needs of our students and complete the curriculum. These AmeriCorps members help students improve 1) their ACT test scores; 2) the quality of their college applications; and 3) their chances of receiving financial aid and scholarships. AmeriCorps members also teach our students to lead college readiness workshops for 9th and 10th grade students in their high schools and assist our program's alumni to help them access resources that will keep them in college until they graduate. Through these activities AmeriCorps members are meeting

Narratives

four of the Corporation's strategic initiatives -- Mobilizing more volunteers, ensuring a brighter future for all of America's youth, engaging students in communities, and helping communities recover from and prepare for disasters.

High School Coaches

AmeriCorps members ("Coaches") work with students over the course of their junior and senior years in Milwaukee high schools in a series of activities using our copyrighted curriculum. They meet twice a week for two hours each session over the course of those two years. This intensive, 320-hour program is aimed at improving the students' chances of earning admission to college, as described below:

*Understanding opportunities: Coaches introduce students to the advantages of college, provide print and web-based resources for students to explore, and lead students on campus visits where students connect with program alumni. This allows our alums opportunities to serve as leaders and mentors, and current students to understand what it might be like for them to attend college and have confidence that they can do it too.

*Academic support and test preparation: Coaches provide academic support to a team of students throughout the program, including: reviewing concepts covered on the ACT; assisting with difficult course material; and providing help in selecting college prep courses. Coaches provide intensive ACT test preparation for over 15 weeks, using a curriculum tailored to meet the needs of our students. Students receive one-on-one review sessions as needed and take four full-length practice ACT exams to help prepare them for the actual exam.

*Selecting target schools: In the fall of their senior year, students work with their Coach to create a list of about five schools to which they will apply. This support includes extensive searching and discussion

Narratives

about what the student is seeking in a college experience, as well as a frank discussion about realistic expectations based on their individual portfolio.

*Application preparation: Coaches help students complete their college applications, provide intensive group and one-on-one coaching on essays, and provide support in identifying and working with teachers to write recommendation letters. Coaches also write letters of recommendation for each student.

*Financial aid consulting: The final step is helping students maximize their financial aid options. Coaches give students intensive support identifying, pursuing and applying for a wide range of financial aid, including state and federal aid and local and national scholarships.

*Service: We developed a series of workshops that our seniors deliver to 9th and 10th grade students to help them understand the importance of preparing for college early in their high school career. Seniors who have participated in our programming begin to see themselves as community leaders, not just recipients of service. Realizing they do have something to offer others, they begin developing an ethic of service and want to give back to younger students in their schools who are not enrolled in the Admission Possible program. The 9th and 10th grade students who attend the workshops see other students who attend their schools, live in their neighborhoods, and share their experiences. These role models tell them, "I am going to college, and you can, too." We hope this effort begins changing the school culture so that they become places where students with ambition and talent are able to pursue their dreams. Each of our seniors becomes even more engaged in giving back to their community through these workshops.

College Coaches

We also provide services to our nearly 2200 active program alums across the country who are either in

Narratives

college or hoping to enroll. We will connect these students with other Admission Possible alums on their campus; connect them with school resources; and regularly communicate with them through e-mail, phone calls, and a quarterly newsletter. Many of our current alums regularly participate in "day on the job" events with employees of local corporations such as Travelers. Through these events, the opportunity to work with corporate employees will help our alums understand the value of internships, how selecting a major can impact your career, and other connections between college and the working world.

c. Measurable Outputs and Outcomes

We strongly believe in a laser-like focus on results and strive to measure our efforts wherever possible. Throughout the life of our organization we have set ambitious goals for our program and achieved them. One of the strengths of this program is that each of our central objectives is relatively straightforward to measure using basic tracking tools and our student database. These objectives are described in greater detail in our performance measures:

- *Improving the average test score of 75 low income high school juniors in the second year of the grant a minimum of nine percent
- *Helping at least 75% of 50 low income seniors earn admission to college in the second year of the grant
- *Providing AmeriCorps members with mission-specific training
- *Leveraging volunteers to serve the community

Our program will address the Education priority area set by the Corporation, and we will not be using standard performance measures as they have not yet been released.

d. Plan for Self-Assessment and Improvement

Narratives

A two-year external evaluation of our program model and services was conducted in 2005 by the Wilder Research Center. During the process, we developed survey instruments and tracking tools used by our Coaches to gather data. In addition, an online database specifically for college admissions counselors has been donated to us and is used on a daily basis. Each school team has a laptop and remote access to our server, enabling Coaches to enter performance data on a daily basis. This allows our program leadership to constantly review our progress on the performance measures. We report progress at weekly all-team meetings. This allows us to celebrate our work toward our goals and evaluate our results, leading to our continuous program improvement. During these meetings, any AmeriCorps members who are demonstrating particular strengths are encouraged to share strategies and techniques to address potential weaknesses. Where problems are identified, they can be reviewed and resolved with staff if they are program-wide; individual areas of concern or feedback are addressed one-on-one with AmeriCorps members at bi-weekly meetings with their supervisor.

e. Community Involvement

Our program was founded by a former low-income student who was the first in his family to go to college, and was designed based on the input of the community. As we developed the program in Milwaukee, we conducted a needs assessment of the city using publicly available data on free/reduced lunch attendance, ACT scores, and college-going rates, as well as the existence of other college access programs. Before launching the program in Milwaukee, we conducted more than 50 meetings with teachers, guidance counselors, school administrators, deans of admission, directors of other youth service organizations, potential funders, and many others. We met with other college access providers to learn about their programming and ensure that we would be adding, not duplicating, services.

After the first cohort of students complete the program in Milwaukee, we will conduct focus groups to get their feedback on the services we provide, and make necessary changes to our structure. At the

Narratives

conclusion of each year, we ask all students and AmeriCorps members to complete a survey giving feedback on the program. We meet regularly with staff at the high schools we serve and with college admissions staff to maintain our ability to meet the needs of each of those populations. Our leadership team members frequently attend community meetings related to K-12 education and college access issues to ensure that we are part of a coordinated community effort to address concerns.

f. Relationship to other National and Community Service Programs

Admission Possible Greater Milwaukee hosts both AmeriCorps and VISTA members, and is proud to collaborate with other national and community service programs supported by the Corporation. We host and attend joint trainings with other youth serving AmeriCorps members from the YMCA's Sponsor-A-Scholar, Public Allies, and the VISTA members in the DPI's ParentPlus program. During AmeriCorps recruitment, we work with other local programs to have a shared AmeriCorps presence at job fairs, and after our slots are filled, we inform non-hired applicants about other AmeriCorps/VISTA programs in the state, encouraging them to seek other avenues to pursue national service.

We also participate in a variety of statewide efforts with other AmeriCorps/VISTA programs whenever possible. As a program, we regularly participate in National AmeriCorps Week activities. Admission Possible is a member of ServiceNation, a national coalition of organizations promoting greater involvement in and support for participation in service, both civilian and military, throughout the country. The Admission Possible Milwaukee team participated locally in the first National Day of Action, sponsored by ServiceNation, promoting service in Milwaukee.

g. Potential for Replication

Admission Possible has replicated its program model in 19 Twin Cities metro area high schools since our founding in 2000, and has expanded from serving 35 students to serving 1400 students in just nine

Narratives

years Our programming in Milwaukee is a direct replication of the Greater Twin Cities program model with a focus on the specific needs of the Milwaukee community. Our goal is to aggressively increase the number of students we serve from 75 in year one of the grant to over 200 in year three. Within the first year, we have already increased our program participants to 140 students.

Organizational Capability

Since Admission Possible's founding in 2000, we have built a solid organizational structure, secured sustainable and diverse community support, and achieved an outstanding record of accomplishment both with our AmeriCorps members and the communities we serve. Drawing on the strength of the model in Minnesota, as well as the support of the Senior Management Team there and the guidance of a local Advisory Board made up of Milwaukee business and community leaders, we are confident that the Greater Milwaukee branch has the organizational capacity to achieve the high level of success we have seen in Minnesota.

Our achievements rest on the foundation of a solid organizational structure. The three member leadership team is responsible for programmatic and financial management and oversight. Additional programmatic and financial management support is available from the 16 person leadership team in Minnesota which has extensive experience in budgeting, financial and personnel management, fundraising, communications and human resources, in addition to substantive knowledge of the education system and college access issues.

Since our start in the Milwaukee area in 2008, we have worked to build a solid infrastructure. Our headquarters is centrally located for our partner high schools. Every staff member has access to telephones, computer, fax, Internet, copiers and printers. Each AmeriCorps member also has a cell phone and shared use of a laptop computer at their school sites. AmeriCorps members are able to access our server remotely, allowing them to enter information into our database or share resources with each

Narratives

other from their separate locations when necessary.

1. Sound Organizational Structure

a. Ability to Provide Sound Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight

In the spring of 2000, Admission Possible was incorporated in the state of Minnesota, registered with Minnesota Attorney General's office and received 501(c)(3) not-for-profit status from the IRS. We formally began business operations on September 11, 2000, with a pilot program of 35 high school juniors from the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. In summer of 2008, we became licensed to operate in Wisconsin.

Admission Possible has successfully managed an AmeriCorps grant for the past eight years, with the guidance of an experienced leadership team and the assistance of the state commission. Our organization's financial management structure is solid. We have worked extensively with a certified public accountant to ensure that our accounting system follows generally accepted accounting principles. We utilize an external service to process all payroll checks and have a dedicated employee responsible for all accounting, payroll and human resource functions. We have had unqualified opinions on all seven consecutive audits conducted by an external auditing firm. In the fall of 2007, we successfully completed and received an unqualified opinion on the Office of the Inspector General audit of our AmeriCorps grant. The same structures and processes have been replicated in the Milwaukee branch.

b. Board of Directors, Administrators, and Staff

We have an outstanding, experienced management staff that is responsible for administering our program. They include:

Narratives

Jim McCorkell, Chief Executive Officer

Background: Jim has a master's degree in public administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where he studied nonprofit management and strategic organizational development. He has nearly eight years of experience teaching SAT and GRE preparation courses for Kaplan, one of the largest test preparation companies in the United States. Prior to founding Admission Possible, Jim worked with City Year, a national nonprofit public service and youth development organization headquartered in Boston, where he managed the organization's developmental plan to grow from 11 sites to 20 over a four-year period.

Role with AmeriCorps: Ensures that program management, record-keeping and activities are in compliance with all federal and state requirements. Oversees budget. Ensures that the financial aspects of the program are conducted in compliance with all federal and state requirements. Provides overall management for organization.

Traci Kirtley, Chief Operating Officer

Background: Traci has a master's degree in public policy from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. She has worked for more than ten years in the field of education. Before joining Admission Possible, Traci worked for Caliber Associates, a government contracting firm in the Washington, D.C., where she evaluated and provided training to schools and community organizations. She was a policy fellow at the Humphrey Institute in 2006-2007.

Role with AmeriCorps: Oversees all AmeriCorps operations for both sites. Ensures that program management, record-keeping and activities are in compliance with all federal and state requirements. Oversees budget. Provides overall management of operations for the organization.

Kate Lundeen, Executive Director

Background: Kate has a master's degree in public policy from the University of Minnesota's Hubert H.

Narratives

Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs where she studied community and economic development and education development. She served as an AmeriCorps member and coach with Admission Possible for two terms of service before joining the leadership team as a Program Coordinator, where she led our efforts on student recruitment and managed school relationships with six Twin Cities high schools. Additionally, Kate served as the AmeriCorps and VISTA Supervisor for the City of St. Paul's VISTA program, supervising 22 AmeriCorps members and VISTAs during a grant period. She is a Milwaukee area native with strong ties to local colleges and community programs.

Role with AmeriCorps: Ensures that program management, record-keeping and activities are in compliance with all federal and state requirements. Is proficient in state and federal regulations and procedures related to the AmeriCorps program. Oversees branch budget. Directly supervises and provides support for Program Manager. Develops program objectives and evaluates AmeriCorps program. Creates and monitors evaluation plan. Assists with writing proposals and renewal requests.

Kelly Schaer, Program Manager

Background: Kelly received a Master's Degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in educational psychology with an emphasis on school counseling. She has a Bachelor's Degree in biology and psychology from Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. Prior to Admission Possible, Kelly was the Director of Guidance at St. Joan Antida High School in Milwaukee. In that capacity, Kelly coordinated testing and metrics for the school, reported results to the Board of Directors, and supervised another staff member. Her own service experience began with Kelly participated in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps of Milwaukee.

Role with AmeriCorps: Ensures that program management, record-keeping, and activities are in compliance with all federal and state requirements. Directly supervises and provides support for program staff and AmeriCorps members. Oversees member training sessions, service projects, recognition activities, and other events. Develops program objectives and evaluates AmeriCorps

Narratives

program. Monitors evaluation plan. Responsible for member recruitment and orientation. Prepares quarterly progress reports for the WI Commission. Assists with writing proposals and renewal requests.

Our remaining Milwaukee-based leadership team member is Sara Burns, our Operations and Communications Coordinator. Sara is responsible for leveraging financial and in-kind support for the organization, coordinating our internal and external communications; and overseeing accounting, human resources, information technology and office management needs. Sara brings great experience as a former AmeriCorps member with Admission Possible, and is able to direct the replication of the Admission Possible culture, work ethic and standard of success for Milwaukee AmeriCorps members.

In the 2009-2010 program year we work closely with host site supervisors who supervise between one and three AmeriCorps members.

Our organization is led by a diverse, talented Board of Directors who provides overall leadership and oversight for our efforts. The Chair of our Board, David MacLennan, is the Chief Financial Officer of Cargill, Inc., and brings extensive knowledge of successful business practices to our work. Additional Board members come from a variety of backgrounds and offer expertise in financial management, human resources, the legal system, local foundations, high school and post-secondary education and federal and state politics. Two of our board members are former participants in our program who ground our program in the realities and needs of the students we serve. In Milwaukee, we have assembled an Advisory Board made up of local community leaders from the business, nonprofit and school environments, who are able to advocate for us and help guide our efforts in the community.

c. Plan for Self-Assessment and Improvement

As a branch office, we continually evaluate our efforts to assess and improve our structure and systems.

Narratives

While we rely on our well-established Twin Cities office for guidance and support in systems of management, program implementation and development, we constantly re-examine ourselves to assure effective and reputable organization procedures. Our Executive Director Kate Lundeen and Chief Executive Officer discuss progress in Milwaukee via phone weekly. Our Milwaukee based leadership team meets frequently with weekly planned meetings and regularly examines feedback from AmeriCorps*VISTAs to improve the procedures of our branch. Both of these venues support opportunities for evaluation and improvement.

Organizational self-assessment is driven by constant consideration of results. AmeriCorps members, Program Staff, and Senior Management are all involved in the tracking and management of data on ACT scores and improvement; college applications, acceptances, and enrollment; and financial aid and scholarship completion. Updates on each of these measures are distributed throughout the organization regularly and action plans are implemented to address any areas in need of improvement. Student surveys are also used in coordination with test scores and application results to assess areas for continued improvement.

d. Plan for Effective Technical Assistance

Effective technical assistance is provided by our mature Minnesota office, currently completing its 10th year of operation. Communication between the Milwaukee and the Minnesota office occurs weekly between the Executive Director and CEO, as well as between the Operations and Communications Coordinator in Milwaukee, and the Operations Manager in St. Paul. This consistent communication allows the Milwaukee office to benefit from the experience and the resources for technical assistance in the mature office. Finally, ongoing professional technology consulting services are provided to the organization at a discounted rate.

Narratives

2. Sound Record of Accomplishment as an Organization

a. Volunteer Generation and Support

We are fortunate to have a diverse group of people who volunteer their time and expertise to support our organization. The first source of volunteers who help to increase our capacity is our Advisory Board - the Board has been dedicated to identifying and recommending potential Board members and helps to ensure that our leadership comes from a diverse group among the community, including local foundation officers, educational services, and youth serving programs. Our board members represent diversity in backgrounds, both personal and professional, and have been able to guide our efforts in reaching further into the Milwaukee community. Milwaukee Advisory Board Members include: Kim Irwin, Community Volunteer; Lauren Komp, M&I Bank; David Kundert, Retired, Banc One; Deborah McGriff, NewSchools Venture Fund; Gil Llanas, Northwestern Mutual Foundation; Kathy Munson, YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee; La Toya Sykes, Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation; Tonieh Schmitz, Milwaukee New Leaders for New Schools.

We also have many people who volunteer their time to help increase our staff knowledge and capacity. These volunteers are recruited as we identify staff needs and scan the community to identify the best source of assistance in meeting those needs. College admissions staff often volunteer their time to speak with our AmeriCorps members and offer trainings. Members of the Advisory Board and community partners provide expertise and guidance to our organization and program on a volunteer basis. As we look for guidance and support in working with the Milwaukee Public Schools, leaders from the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association have been critical. Other occasional needs, from office maintenance to photography, are met through the volunteer efforts of professionals in these areas.

b. Organizational and Community Leadership

As an organization, we hope to contribute to current efforts to increase economic vitality in Milwaukee

Narratives

and act as a community leader. We plan to share our knowledge and expertise to strengthen the greater non-profit community, and also to learn from others in areas where we can continue to improve.

Our Executive Director and other team members are involved in several community groups and task forces. Our Executive Director and Communications & Operations Coordinator serve on committees of the Young Non-Profit Professional Network of Milwaukee. Additionally, our Executive Director has been identified as one of 101 National Young Leaders in service by ServiceNation. She is also a current member of Future Milwaukee, a selective community leadership development program at Marquette University, and sits on the Milwaukee Mentoring committee at the YMCA. As a program, we have been lead planners and organizers of College Explosion in Milwaukee with 7 other college access programs, where over 40 colleges are represented. Over 300 students attended in 2008, and over 500 attended in 2009. Our entire team is active in the school communities we serve, participating in community events, school board meetings, and other local efforts.

On a national level, Admission Possible was featured in a report issued by the US Congress' Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance in Washington, DC. They examined our results-oriented program model and promoted our work as an example of organizations truly using evaluation to guide their work. Admission Possible participates in two major organizations devoted to college access issues. We are members of the National College Access Network (NCAN), and have presented at the NCAN annual conference about the work we do with AmeriCorps members. At the 2009 NCAN Conference, we were awarded the National College Access Network's Organizational Award of Excellence. We also participate in both the National and Wisconsin Associations of College Admissions Counselors. In September 2009, we won the National Association of College Admission Counselors' Human Relations Award.

Narratives

Admission Possible is a proud member of ServiceNation -- a coalition of organizations focused on building a national grassroots movement to inspire widespread public support for increasing community and national service opportunities, solving problems with proven service strategies, and elevating service as a core ideal of civic engagement. Admission Possible Executive Director Kate Lundeen attended the ServiceNation Summit and Presidential Candidate Forum on September 11-12, 2008, which brought together leaders - from now President Barack Obama and Senator John McCain to City Year volunteers to business leaders -- to champion this cause and show solidarity in the movement.

c. Success in Securing Match Resources

We have been extremely successful in securing match resources for each year of our AmeriCorps grant in Minnesota, and this year in Wisconsin. Since our founding in 2000, we have raised a total of more than \$12 million dollars. Of that total, more than 70% has come from the private sector (i.e. non-governmental). Our private sector donors include more than 1400 individuals and more than 180 different foundations. We are especially proud to note that we have exceeded the required match by at least 50% every year. Last year in Milwaukee we raised \$260,000 private sector dollars.

3. Success in Securing Community Support

a. Collaboration

We are dedicated to building relationships with existing organizations to ensure immediate service, maximum impact, and avoidance of service duplication, adding our services to a chain of support that we hope will carry students from kindergarten all the way to a college degree. To that end, we work with the College Readiness 21 program, Compass Guide, the YMCA Mentoring Programs, and the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee to reduce duplication of services and create the maximum impact for Milwaukee low-income high school students. Last summer we initiated a partnership of these and 10 additional organizations to secure a federal grant through the WIRED Initiative to collaboratively

Narratives

expand and enhance pre-college services in Southeastern Wisconsin. We are members of the Non-Profit Center of Milwaukee and participated in their annual meeting in 2008; we intend to use their resources for continued professional and organizational development. In 2009, we became a member of the Wisconsin Non-Profits Association.

b. Local Financial and In-kind Contributions

Last year Admission Possible Greater Milwaukee received \$14,655 in in-kind contributions from local businesses and community organizations. Donations included office furniture, office supplies, food, and materials for ACT tests. Our IT services are provided at a significantly discounted rate, and we receive pro bono legal services through the support of a local law firm. We have already received a three-year funding commitment from one of Milwaukee's most influential corporate foundations, Northwestern Mutual Foundation. Wisconsin's Lawrence University and St. Norbert College are a part of our College Consortium, and each pay \$12,500 in membership dues in exchange for targeted communication with our students. Finally, we are building an individual donor base, conducting multiple individual giving campaigns per year by working from a mailing list of 6000 current and potential supporters.

c. Wide Range of Community Stakeholders

Our Advisory Board has almost doubled in last year, and now includes representatives from the business community. Our Executive Director meets with the Director of School Counseling for Milwaukee Public Schools multiple times per year. We work in partnership with the higher education team at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to plan events and share best practices. Finally, school Principals and other key support staff have begun to share information about Admission Possible with their peers in order to build network of support within the school district.

A recent meeting between Admission Possible staff and leaders from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Parents Plus program of Wisconsin marked the start of collaboration on

Narratives

efforts to engage the parents of our students in our programming and volunteer efforts.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost Effectiveness

a. Corporation Cost per Member Service Year (MSY)

The attached budget and related materials demonstrate that we are committed to providing a budget to fully support the proposed program design at a cost per MSY of \$13,000.

b. Diverse Non-Federal Support

Our organization has an extremely diverse base of non-federal support, with both cash and in-kind contributions coming from a wide variety of private, non-profit, and public sector sources. We have over 1400 individual donors and over 180 private and corporate foundation supporters for our Minnesota program, and we expect to reach similar scale in Wisconsin. During the nine years of Admission Possible's existence, we have raised nearly 12 million dollars in non-federal funds, matching every AmeriCorps dollar with more than four dollars from other sources. We have developed a fundraising strategy that allows us to consistently exceed the Corporation's match requirements, and have begun to execute that strategy in Wisconsin. Our proposed budget shows a match of roughly one and a half dollars for each dollar of AmeriCorps funds--significantly exceeding the requirement for a new grantee.

Here are some of the non-federal sources of support we have been able to secure for our operations:

*Corporate foundations-We have already secured corporate foundation funding in Wisconsin, and are continuing to build relationships with these funders. These corporations see our work as a valuable contribution to producing a strong and diverse workforce in Wisconsin. They include Northwestern Mutual Foundation and the Milwaukee-based arm of Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation.

In total, corporate foundations have donated more than \$3.6 million to us since our organization's

Narratives

founding in 2000 (about 27% of all funds raised).

*Private foundations-Admission Possible has raised nearly \$5 million from private foundations since 2000 (about 38% of all funds raised). In Milwaukee, we have already received funding from Greater Milwaukee Foundation, The Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, and Elm Grove Junior Guild.

*Individual donors-The work that Admission Possible does is appealing not just to foundations, but to individuals as well. Each year, Admission Possible conducts a campaign for individual giving, which has raised about \$3.4 million from 1400 different individuals since 2000.

*Private firms-Several private sector organizations have supported our work in ways other than grants. For example, we have secured an agreement with Kaplan Test Preparation to provide all of our ACT instructional and testing materials for our students, and train our staff members to teach the ACT for a reduced cost. They also score all of our practice exams for free. Local businesses provide office supplies, furniture, food, beverages, and resources to support program efforts and offer rewards to AmeriCorps members.

*Individuals and non-profit organizations-Much of the training for our AmeriCorps members comes through the generosity of individuals and other non-profits who share their expertise with our staff. For example, the Social Development Commission provided training for our staff on poverty in Milwaukee. We are able to trade services with the YMCA's Sponsor-A-Scholar program; we offered an ACT workshop for a group of their sophomore students and their staff members will provide training to AmeriCorps members on mentoring techniques.

*Public schools- By working directly in our partner high schools in Milwaukee, we are able to secure a variety of in-kind resources that help us provide our services efficiently. Each high school provides our staff members with office space (including a desk, a phone, and Internet access) as well as classroom space to conduct our after-school sessions and 9th and 10th grade workshops. We are able to utilize meeting space at virtually any other time needed. In some cases, schools provide bus tokens to our students for transportation home after attending our sessions.

Narratives

2. Budget Adequacy

We are extremely proud of the outstanding results we have been able to achieve each year we have had AmeriCorps funding in Minnesota. Our programmatic results are among the best in the country. Indeed, we have won state and national awards for the quality of our work, along with national recognition in such publications as the New York Times and USA Today. We have every intention of replicating these results in Wisconsin.

However, producing these kinds of results costs money. Most of our budgeted costs are associated with providing substantial program oversight, management, and training for our AmeriCorps members. We provide a supervisor for every six to ten AmeriCorps members, as well as other senior management to ensure overall program quality remains high.

We are proud that we have demonstrated success at securing significant non-federal, non-AmeriCorps funds to support our work in Minnesota, and are confident that we will replicate this success in Wisconsin. We believe that we represent a model AmeriCorps program in terms of the results we obtain and the amount of resources we receive to meet the costs of achieving this level of quality.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

We have included an external evaluation conducted on our organization in 2005. The Wilder Foundation evaluation is included in the documents we have submitted to the State Commission in Wisconsin.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

FY 2011-2012

Narratives

Clarification Items from CNCS Program Officer for Admission Possible, AmeriCorps/Admission Possible College Preparation Program 10AC109167, Continuation Program and Budget Clarification Items: Budget clarifications also made in Budget and Budget Narrative Sections. - -

Executive Director Role: the Executive Director is responsible for all day-to-day management and operational issues, leading program development strategy, raising funds, communicating about the program, building relationships with partner organizations, and ensuring the success of the program. Executive Director supervises Program Manager and External and Operations Coordinator.

Program Manager Role: the Program Manager works with the AmeriCorps coaches in Milwaukee, supporting all aspects of programming in the Milwaukee office, including our partner high schools, our college team and our community relations team. Program Manager supervises the Program Coordinator as well as 5-8 AmeriCorps members, and is responsible for collection of program data, including trainings, documents, and files that meet AmeriCorps requirements.

Executive Director of Admission Possible Milwaukee is not listed in the National Direct grant.

Calculation that includes itemized costs for airfare, transportation, lodging, per diem, and other travel-related expenses for travel to CNCS sponsored meetings: 2 staff members attending the National Conference on Volunteering and Service. \$375 for registration + 260 for airfare + 365 for hotels = \$1000 x 2 staff.

Itemized costs for Member travel to MN: Not all AmeriCorps members travel to Minnesota for orientation. Calculation includes 15 members who require mission specific training provided by Admission Possible's National Office. We have also not included per diem costs for members in this

Narratives

'travel' section; rather, they are included in section IG labeled "Member pre-service training costs."

15 members x \$112.83 per member = \$1,692

Cost per member = \$40 round trip Megabus ticket + \$72.83 for 4 nights lodging at local youth hostel

Itemized costs for travel for office based AmeriCorps members: Travel for office based AmeriCorps members presenting/substituting at school sites within Milwaukee or attending off-site trainings 3 average number of trips per month x 10 average miles to school, college, and training sites x \$0.50 per mile = \$15/month x 5 office based AmeriCorps members = \$75 x 10 months = \$750

Member service gear at \$115/member. Admission Possible requires members who are based in schools or serve in the high schools and colleges to wear service gear each day that they serve. 15 members meet this criteria. They are issued 3 t-shirts (\$24), 2 dress shirts (\$40) and a vest (\$30), as well as a messenger bag for daily use (\$21) = \$115/set. The 5 remaining members are not required to wear service gear each day, and are issued two t-shirts to be worn when they do serve in schools = \$16/set

School supplies totaling \$14,560- We are adjusting this line item to \$9,000 as part of the overall required budget adjustment. Includes materials that are distributed to students or are used in the school classrooms. This would include any practice materials, teaching aids, or other curricular tools, as well as occasional incentives or rewards for student participation. \$40/month x 10 months x 15 members = \$4,500. This also includes any technology supplements such as flash drives, CDs, or other tools utilized by coaches, as well as the database costs to track program information. \$100 x 15 coaches = \$1,500; database costs, \$3,000.

General office supplies to support program activities include all materials used in mission specific

Narratives

member trainings, letterhead for student letters of recommendation, envelopes for student college and scholarship applications, and supplies for organizing and storing student files and reports. This category of supplies includes any materials that are not attributable to a specific school site, but are used in overall programmatic efforts--everything from copy paper to easel paper for trainings to thank-you notes. These supplies are used at an average cost of \$750/month.

Included in member training expenses - Pre-service training expenses -- \$101 per member X 20 members. 3 hired trainers x \$100 per trainer, member meals during orientation in MN (15 members x \$20/day x 5 days), rental fees for 2 training spaces x \$110 per space

Training during the service year - \$115 per member x 20 members

Cardinal Stritch University Leadership Program training sessions. Eight 4 hour long sessions planned and lead by University staff and focusing on service and leadership, conflict resolution, attitude and perspective in service, and life long service. \$2,300 = cost of university staff time.

AmeriCorps member recognition costs at \$161 per member. AC Member recognition - \$161 per AmeriCorps member per service year includes a mid-term retreat, end of term of service celebration, reflection pieces, buttons to acknowledge a great week, photo and picture frame for each member at end of term of service, printed and bound Great Stories book for all 20 members, and blanket or backpack for members who exceed goals during program year. Expenses are distributed throughout the year to ensure high morale and excellent member retention.

Desired grant award start date and member enrollment period start date: Grant award start date and member enrollment period start date of 8/21/2011 is confirmed.

Narratives

FY 2010-2011

Clarification Items from CNCS Program Officer for Admission Possible, AmeriCorps/Admission Possible College Preparation Program 10AC109167, Continuation Budget Clarification Items: Supplies-Bound curriculum and Kaplan materials for use by AmeriCorps members and program staff, worksheets and handouts for academic year for 200 students: \$6196 Grantee share, \$0 CNCS share -- Kaplan books at \$45 per student x 90 students, + \$25 per bound curriculum x 14 copies, + printing of individual handouts and worksheets for 150 students (\$1796) = \$6196 General Office printing- Event memos produced in house for volunteer events and practice ACTs and campus visits, thank you letters to school and college staff, general use for planning sessions, internal, and external meetings: \$2874 Grantee share, \$0 CNCS share -- printing of \$150 per year x 3 Leadership Team members, + printing of \$90 per year x 20 AmeriCorps members, + printing of approx. \$25 per event x 25 events = \$2874 Other- Office phone line charges. Program related calls from general office phones, Program related phone use - \$5414 Grantee share, \$0 CNCS share. \$360 average monthly phone bill for 8 members of team located in office x 12 months = \$4320, + cell phone use for Executive Director and Communications and Operations Coordinator at \$91 per month x 12 months = \$5414 Information Technology - 17% of organization-wide technology costs. 90% of which are used by AmeriCorps members and Program staff. Covers laptop, printer, and server maintenance and support for all Milwaukee team members at \$630 per month, and internet Connectivity for Milwaukee members at \$315 per month. AC Member recognition - \$156 per AmeriCorps member per service year includes end of term of service celebration, reflection pieces, buttons to acknowledge a great week, photo and picture frame for each member at end of term of service, printed and bound Great Stories book for all 20 members, and blanket or backpack for members who exceed goals during program year. Programmatic Clarification Items: 08/31/2011 is correct end date for all Admission Possible AmeriCorps members. Provide the rationale for the increased MSY cost of \$155 per member and increase in Corporation share in the budget. We are proposing to serve an additional 60 student next year, even in these difficult economic times. Because private sector

Narratives

funding is tight, we are requesting additional Corporation funding at a rate of \$155 per member to help support this growth in the number of students served. We are proud of our ability to serve additional students in the coming year, even in the face of an overall decline in our budget. While the Corporation share of the budget is increased over last year, it is still well over the required match for an organization of our size; furthermore, we are redoubling our efforts in seeking private sector support, and are working to shift that ratio of support over the next 12-18 months as the economy recovers. Furthermore, Admission Possible is continuing to adhere to our policy of not including in-kind donations as part of our match as many other organizations do, but only counting as match the hard donations we receive to support our efforts. Criminal History Check Requirement: Admission Possible will use Verified Credentials for background checks for all AmeriCorps members. We have reviewed the criminal background check requirements provided by CNCS and ensured that the checks conducted by this agency meet Corporation requirements. Performance Measurement: i. SAA Characteristics: -- selected Urban ii. Select "not opting in" to the national performance measures. -- Not Opting In selected for Education. Additional Items for Clarification - 5/17/10 Please make the following changes directly in the application budget and budget narrative in eGrants: * Staff Travel -- Adjust mileage reimbursement rate to \$0.50 for all travel. - adjustment made * Member Travel -- Adjust mileage reimbursement rate to \$0.50 for all travel. - adjustment made * Other -- Provide cost basis for rent: Rent and associated parking = \$800 for office space and 668.75 for required parking per month = \$17,625

Continuation Changes

We have included an external evaluation conducted on our organization in 2005. The Wilder Foundation evaluation is included in the documents we have submitted to the State Commission in Wisconsin.

2009-2010 (Year 2) Continuation Changes:

Narratives

- Kate Lundeen's title changed from Branch Leader to Executive Director.
- The number of students Admission Possible has assisted in getting in to college increased to 2300.
- Admission Possible received two national awards and was recognized by President Obama as an innovative non-profit organization.
- We have grown from serving 50 students at two Milwaukee schools to serving 140 students at four schools.
- We have secured funding from several foundations.
- This year we received 324 applications for 72 AmeriCorps positions in the Twin Cities and Milwaukee, including 23 members returning for a second term.
- The Chief Operating Officer was added to the narrative.
- Kelly Schaer was hired as the Program Manager of Admission Possible Greater Milwaukee.
- Our Milwaukee Advisory Board has nearly doubled.
- Executive Director Kate Lundeen has become a member of Future Milwaukee. We are lead planners of College Explosion in Milwaukee. We became a member of the Wisconsin Non-Profits Association.
- Last year Admission Possible Greater Milwaukee received \$14,655 in in-kind contributions from local businesses and community organizations.

2010-2011 (Year 3) Continuation Changes:

Changes to Rationale and Approach

- Admission Possible college coaches now provide services to 2750 program alums nationwide.
- College coaches in Milwaukee are working 514 college students.
- We have updated our performance measures and are improving the average test score of 125 low income high school juniors and helping at least 75 low income seniors gain admission to college.
- Admission Possible Milwaukee has grown in the last year from serving 140 students at four schools to

Narratives

serving 245 students at seven schools.

-The number of students Admission Possible has assisted in getting in to college increased to 3000 nationwide.

-Admission Possible Milwaukee has now served nearly 300 students.

-Admission Possible students in Milwaukee saw their ACT scores increase 17% from the baseline test administered in October, to their scores on the official test administration.

-The first group of seniors has graduated from our program in Milwaukee. 94% of the students from the class of 2010 were admitted to college, earning a total of \$170,200 in scholarships, an average of \$3,200 per student.

Changes to Organizational Capability

-After four years with Admission Possible, Sara Burns has moved on to another organization. Her position has been filled by Hannah Wallisch.

-Hannah Wallisch, External Relations and Operations Coordinator: Hannah earned her Bachelor's degree in English from St. Olaf College. Prior to joining Admission Possible, Hannah served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at America SCORES Milwaukee, and later worked in development and marketing for a local arts organization, Danceworks.

-Our Milwaukee-based leadership team has added a position, growing from 3 team members to 4. This summer, we added a Program Coordinator to our staff to help manage our AmeriCorps team. The Program Coordinator is responsible for directly supervising 6-8 Corps members, conducting member evaluation and trainings, helping lead member recruitment and orientation, and for ongoing communication with Corps members. He assists in preparing all training sessions, service projects, recognition activities, and other events and in preparing reports, correspondence, and other paperwork required to maintain our AmeriCorps grants.

-Jarett Fields has been hired as our Program Coordinator. Jarett earned his first master's degree from

Narratives

UCLA and his second Master of Art's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he worked with recruitment programs for diverse students. He has over six years experience helping low-income, first generation, and underrepresented students gain admission to college.

-Admission Possible has successfully managed an AmeriCorps grant for the past nine years.

-Since our last continuation proposal, Admission Possible has established a national office to oversee operations in all existing sites, and to help replicate our model in new locations. This office is responsible for providing administrative support and program oversight to the team in Milwaukee, including financial services and grant management support.

-There are two new members to the Milwaukee Advisory Board: Megan Bern, Godfrey and Khan, LLC; Dick Seesel, Retailing in Focus, LLC. La Toya Sykes is no longer on the Board.

Changes to Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

-JUSTIFICATION FOR COST INCREASE: We are requesting an increase in funding per MSY, from \$13,000 to \$13,300 per member. This funding increase is premised largely on the fact that in the coming year, we will serve a greater number of students, and each member will be serving an increased number of students--for example, each high school coach will increase from working with approximately 30 students in FY10-11 to 35 students in FY11-12. The increased cost of serving these additional students (additional curriculum and instructional materials, busing costs, mailing materials, etc.) averages approximately \$150 per student, or \$750 per coach. Of that, we anticipate funding 60% of that increase from private funders, and 40%, or \$300, with Corporation resources.

-Last year, Admission Possible Milwaukee raised \$712,799 in private funding (\$471,000 from corporations, \$225,298 from foundations, and \$16,501 from individuals). Admission Possible Milwaukee also received \$12,897 in in-kind contributions from local businesses and community organizations.

Narratives

Changes to Performance Measures:

- The ACT/SAT Score Increase performance measure has been increased from a 9% score increase average to 10%.
- We have updated the ACT/SAT Score Increase performance measure from 75 high school juniors served to 125.
- We have updated the College Admittance for Low-Income Students performance measure from 50 high school seniors served to 75.

In response to feedback from a June 24, 2010 Site Monitoring Visit, Admission Possible has increased attention to the member eligibility forms and enrollment documentation. All 2010-2011 members completed and signed enrollment documents on or before their enrollment date.

Conflict Resolution training has been added to on-going civic engagement trainings on the program training calendar.

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

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

Priority Areas

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

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 20

Service Categories

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Afterschool Programs | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Secondary Education | Primary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mentoring | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |

ACT/SAT Test Preparation

Service Category: Secondary Education

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

AmeriCorps members will provide intensive ACT test preparation to at least 125 low-income high school students for approximately 15 weeks.

Results

Result: Output

At least 125 high school juniors will participate in ACT or SAT test preparation courses twice per week over the course of four months.

Indicator: serving students

Target: 125 juniors will receive ACT test preparation services, including opportunities for 4 practice exams.

Target Value: 125

Instruments: Attendance books and the program database.

Result: Output

PM Statement: Students will participate in ACT or SAT test preparation twice a week for approximately 15 weeks. 125 juniors will receive ACT test preparation services, including opportunities for 4 practice exams.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

The scores of students on the ACT or SAT will increase, thereby improving the students' chances of earning college admission.

Indicator: improved test scores

Target: Corps members will provide intensive ACT test preparation to at least 125 high school juniors, resulting in an average score increase of 10% for these 125 students on the final test administration when compared to their original baseline score.

Target Value: 10%

Instruments: ACT test scores

PM Statement: Corps members will provide intensive ACT or SAT test preparation to at least 125 high school juniors at partner public high schools in the greater Milwaukee area. This will result in an average score increase of 10% on the official test administration when compared to the original baseline score.

Prev. Yrs. Data

College Admission for Low-Income Students

Service Category: Secondary Education

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Our AmeriCorps members will work with students in groups of 8-15 to provide intensive assistance in applying to college.

Results

Result: Output

The students we serve will identify a list of colleges to which they will apply.

Indicator: List of schools

Target: 75 students will develop college application plans.

Target Value: 75

Instruments: College application log and program database

PM Statement: We will work with a minimum of 75 seniors who will develop college application plans.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

The students we serve will apply to college.

Indicator: College application log and program database

Target: 75 low-income high school students will apply to at least one college or university.

Target Value: 75

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Instruments: Application log and program database

PM Statement: 75 low-income high school students served by Admission Possible will apply to at least one college or university.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: End Outcome

Admission Possible seniors gain acceptance to college.

Indicator: College Acceptance Letters

Target: At least 70 low income students served will be admitted to at least one college.

Target Value: 70

Instruments: College application tracking sheet and program database

PM Statement: Corps members will provide intensive assistance in applying to colleges and universities to at least 75 low-income high school seniors at partner public high schools in the greater Milwaukee metropolitan area. This will result in at least 70 seniors being admitted to college.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Financial Aid for Low-Income Students

Service Category: Afterschool Programs

Measure Category: Needs and Service Activities

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Our AmeriCorps members will work with students in groups of 8-15 to provide intensive assistance in applying for financial aid and scholarships.

Results

Result: Output

The students will identify appropriate scholarships.

Indicator: Scholarship target list

Target: 75 low income seniors will develop college funding strategy plans.

Target Value: 75

Instruments: Scholarship database

PM Statement: At least 75 Admission Possible low income seniors will develop college funding strategy plans.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: End Outcome

The students we serve will win a scholarship dollars to help pay for their college costs.

Indicator: Scholarship award letters

Target: 75 students will win in total \$37,500 in scholarship dollars.

Target Value: 75

Instruments: Scholarship database

PM Statement: We will work with at least 75 students to help them apply for financial aid and scholarships. These students will win in total \$37,500 in scholarship dollars.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Result: Intermediate Outcome

The students we serve will apply for scholarships.

Indicator: Scholarship database

Target: At least 75 students will apply for at least one scholarship.

Target Value: 75

Instruments: Scholarship database

PM Statement: We will work with at least 75 low income high school students who will apply for at least one scholarship.

Prev. Yrs. Data

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Sent

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable