

Narratives

Executive Summary

City of Dubuque oversees the Partners in Learning AmeriCorps Program which focuses on education to improve academic performance and engagement of families which includes recruiting and supporting volunteers. In cooperation with Dubuque Schools, members provide academic support to students K-12 during and after school. Downtown neighborhood non-profit organizations utilize members year-round to create safe learning environments and engage families in meaningful ways to support their children.

Rationale and Approach

Every year, the federally mandated No Child Left Behind initiative requires schools and districts to maintain a certain percentage of proficient students in the math and reading sections of the tests; that percentage is the annual yearly progress. Students are considered to be proficient when they rank in the 41st percentile or above. A school district is called a District in Need of Assistance (DINA) if it doesn't meet the annual yearly progress for two years. In 2007-2008 Dubuque Community School District was put on the warning or "watch" list. In 2008-2009 and again on 2009-2010 the Dubuque Community School District received identification as a DINA. If a school has not met the required trajectory they are identified as a School In Need of Assistance (SINA). The Dubuque Schools with SINA designation in 2009-2010 include four elementary schools plus two middle schools, and two high schools. The schools identified on "watch" are given a warning indicator that student proficiency is below the required trajectory. These "watch" identified Dubuque schools in 2009-2010 included four additional elementary schools and one middle school. Only five elementary schools in Dubuque have not received a SINA notification. One major criterion for deciding on member placement is Title 1 eligible students and proficiency in reading and math as noted by the School In Need of Assistance student achievement.

Narratives

City of Dubuque has experienced a major shift in school accommodations. Because of economics, Holy Family Catholic Schools has closed six elementary schools. These private school students are now enrolled as public students in the Dubuque Community School District. This has meant an additional influx of students into the public schools; translated into larger class sizes and public school buildings that are over maximum capacity. The Dubuque Community School District worked on two reading goals during the 2009-2010 school year. The first goal stated that at least 85% of all students in grades 2, 3, and 4 will perform at proficient level or above on the spring Basic Reading Inventory and the district did not meet this goal for all grade levels. The district's second goal indicated an increase in the percentage of students in grades 3-4-5, 6-7-8 and 11 performing at the proficient performance level as measured by the reading comprehension subtest of the Iowa Test Basic Skills/Iowa Test Educational Development. The district did not meet its goal for all grade spans.

The City of Dubuque is projected to experience a 46.4% increase in its population from 2000 to 2030 according to Census predictions. Dubuque population was 89,232 in 2000 and increased to 93,072 in 2009. From 2000 to 2009 the minority population has grown by a total of 5,097 individuals which includes: African American 115.4%; Hispanic 65.6%; Multi-Racial 56.3%; Asian/Pacific Islander 33.7% and American Indian 22.8%. Minority youth in Dubuque County numbered 1,235 in 2000 and this is projected to increase to 1,544 by 2020. On November 5, 2010 a total of 1,314 minority students were identified by the Dubuque Community School District Enrollment Summary. The student population and the race of these 1,314 students are American Indian or Alaskan Native 27; Hispanic or Latino 268; Asian/Pacific Islander 270; African American 749 students. Six elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools are given priority consideration for member placement since understanding language is key to reading and school success. Also on November 5, 2010 a total of 167 students were receiving English Language Learners (ELL) services with over 50% in

Narratives

kindergarten through third grade classrooms. Early interventions are needed in these grades to ensure student success. A unique factor in the Dubuque community is the increased Marshallese population categorized as Pacific Islanders in data. The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Australia. In 1986 the United States established a treaty that allows the Marshallese to immigrate to the United States, but they can receive no federal assistance such as Food Stamps. These families settle in the downtown neighborhoods in multiple rental housing. School staff struggle to meet language barriers. The English Language Learners (ELL) program show the following percentages receiving services with Marshallese 71 or 42.5%, Spanish 56 or 33.5%, and other languages 24% including Albanian, Arabian, Bosnian, Chinese, Danish, Filipino, French, Hindu, Persian, Russian, Tagalog, Telugu, Urdu, and Vietnamese. In addition, Dubuque's economy is changing from a manufacturing to a service based economy. The traditional urban downtown neighborhoods have and continue to serve as a "port-of-entry" for many new families and residents moving into Dubuque. These downtown neighborhoods contain a mix of housing, primarily rent-occupied, small to modest scale businesses, and limited green/recreational areas. The 2000 Census divided the City of Dubuque into 18 census tracts. Seven tracts are located downtown and receive academic support and are provided safe places through supervision from AmeriCorps members. These seven city tracts contain lower income populations and relatively large concentrations of racial/ethnic minorities as compared to the rest of the city. All but two of these tracts had a greater number of households receiving public assistance income than the city-wide average of 3.0% of all households. Statistics also indicate that African American and Hispanic households are more likely than white households to fall below the 30% Median Family Income Standard. They also have a low home ownership rate with approximately 35% owners and 65% renters. Based on the 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census the owner-to-renter ratio for the entire City of Dubuque was the reverse with 73% owners and 27% renters.

Narratives

While single family detached houses are the predominant type of housing structure in this neighborhood, most are used as rental properties or converted to multiple rental units. Approximately 150 of the rental units are used for Section 8 housing and the downtown neighborhoods have the City's oldest housing. Also noteworthy is that four of the downtown elementary schools experienced 31% mobility rate during the 2007-2008 school year, compared to the district average of 14%.

Individuals in these categories include the most economically depressed and usually those in the most desperate need of social and housing services, thus targeting these downtown areas for increased and continued assistance. Because eligibility for free and reduced-price school meals is an annual measure, it is a good indicator of the economic well-being of children in the community. Four thousand four hundred forty two students in Dubuque received free and reduced-price lunches during the 2009-2010 school year. School percentages ranged from 86% to 26% of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches. Seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools have 33% to 90% of their students receiving free and reduced-price meals. These schools provide another factor for consideration for AmeriCorps member placement.

Cited in the Dubuque Community School District's 2007/2008 Annual Progress Report, "Student achievement is never going to significantly improve until attention is directed to the root causes of low achievement--failing families in a low-wage economy." Past AmeriCorps grants for Partners in Learning have focused on children and their educational needs; now we need to expand to a more comprehensive approach. Due to recent economic conditions, as well as the existing cycle of poverty in downtown Dubuque, we must go further than just in-school and after-school supports. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus grant funds allowed us to start working on neighborhood outreach to help with the challenges brought on by these changes. For example, an AmeriCorps Member was placed with the City of Dubuque Housing and Community Development

Narratives

Department to work with an initiative entitled Getting Ahead. Based on Ruby Payne's work this program is designed to help low-income families create a more stable life by learning the hidden rules of middle class and the expectations of other social classes. With the assistance of the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning members, downtown schools and non-profit organizations can continue to re-establish programs and opportunities for greater parental involvement in their children's education and foster neighborhood revitalization efforts. For example, the Multicultural Family Center has received additional AmeriCorps members to provide cultural outreach and has created a neighborhood volunteer coordinator position. In 2009-2010 the Center had an African American, Marshallese, and Hispanic AmeriCorps cultural liaison who worked specifically to increase their minority usage as well as promote cross cultural understanding. The Multicultural Family Center has specific cultural celebrations such as Juneteenth and Dia de la Raza, but the Center has also seen families from all cultural groups attend the monthly family literacy nights. These outreach efforts are becoming consistent positive influences within the distressed downtown neighborhoods.

Members Roles and Responsibilities: The Partners in Learning Program continues to be multi-faceted to address an at-risk, diverse population and build upon the strengths of youth, families and the community by bringing together resources from across the Dubuque community. The Partners in Learning Program is ready to utilize 1 full-time, 16 half-time, 20 quarter-time, and 11 minimum time AmeriCorps members. School-placed members address academic support while other AmeriCorps members address family and neighborhood outreach. All eleven minimum time AmeriCorps members provide summer programming. Member slots are divided dependent on economic, language, academic and other risk factors to 14 schools, 5 youth serving organizations, and 5 neighborhood non-profit organizations. To address poor academic performance, AmeriCorps members will continue to provide in-school, before school and after-school academic mentoring and

Narratives

summer learning opportunities. In-school and after school academic support provided by members may be one-on-one or small groups K-12 and may happen within the classroom or in a separate quiet space. Students will be assigned to a member by their teacher who has determined the student is in need of additional support. Academic assistance ranges from study help with math facts and spelling words to specialized one-on-one support to make a concept clearer or correct past errors. This can include engagement of the whole class or small groups. The actual length of the session varies by school, setting, and student needs/abilities/age. Members reinforce and practice with students what the teacher has taught using the same type of activities. Academic mentoring activities are conducted as part of the school district's implementation of No Child Left Behind. Planning at the school level occurs weekly with the teacher for the members to individualize strategies to assist their assigned students. All members in the Program have a high school diploma and the majority are college or graduate students. Members document all academic activities, including the process and progress of each session. The outcomes of academic support are tracked via a survey of teachers and members regarding reading and math academic skills, as well as behavioral skill changes. Students are grouped by age and developmental level so activities can be appropriately targeted. During summer and after school, members provide hands-on learning through cultural enrichment activities such as music, dance, drama, and art; recreational activities are structured to develop social skills and provide safe learning environments. Five minimum time AmeriCorps members receive their living allowance from the City of Dubuque Leisure Services. These members are placed downtown during the summer at school playgrounds and neighborhood parks where youth have few supervised options. They provide week day programming from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and 6 to 9 p.m. for eight weeks. Four members also staff a week long summer Adventure Day Camp where youth participate for eight weeks in high ropes challenge activities and are taken canoeing and spelunking.

Narratives

AmeriCorps Member Selection, Training & Supervision: Partners in Learning depends on its partners to help in the recruitment as well as the training of new members. AmeriCorps placements are listed on the local Access Dubuque job website. Other sources of member recruitment include the Volunteer Iowa on-line recruitment site, cooperation with other Iowa state AmeriCorps programs, contacts provided by current and past members, family members of students served by AmeriCorps, and contacts with the Dubuque Human Rights Commission and targeted minority populations. Dubuque serves as a regional educational center and has three accredited four-year colleges, a satellite campus for a regional community college, and a seminary and Bible College. These educational institutions have assisted the Program Director in recruitment and retention of members. Local colleges have offered credit to students, and housing at no-cost to college students during summer and holiday breaks. Summer recruitment efforts include e-mail messages to local college students and current member contacts. An annual news article assists in reaching a wide audience of age groups and backgrounds, as do speaking engagements at local service clubs and contacts made by current staff, committees and members. All recruitment and marketing materials have inclusive statements such as "people from diverse backgrounds and individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply." Reasonable accommodations are made to assure access and support to all applicants and members. Evaluation of the accessibility of all sites has been completed and recommendations have been made in accordance with compliance. All interviews, training, and required group activities are held at accessible sites.

A mix of members from various religious, ethnic, age, and gender groups results in an enriched experience for youth and families. For the past few years, the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning has been successful in placing Spanish, Marshallese, and African American AmeriCorps members as well as members with disabilities and individuals who live in the targeted neighborhoods. Beyond

Narratives

recruiting within the community, partnerships with colleges provide access to diversity and those seeking education and social work careers. Recruitment focuses on selecting members with skills that match our focus areas: academic teaching skills especially reading and math, ability to recruit, manage, and work with volunteers, able to creatively present learning activities, able to develop activities and work from a curriculum, sensitivity to developmental needs of children, and a strong appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism. Cultural and recreational activities require members who have the ability to lead groups of youth and tailor activities to different ages, skills, and abilities while working from a curriculum and collaborate with staff to develop activities for families. Members with specific skills in dance, music, drama, art, and recreation are channeled to those areas. Additionally, it is expected that members are responsible individuals who successfully complete a state and local background check, are interested in service to others, have strong interest in working with the targeted students, are committed to building upon their personal strengths as well as the strengths of others, and possess a desire to work toward self-development. Since members will be role models, selection criteria include professionalism, punctuality, flexibility, and willingness to follow direction from the site supervisors and Program Director. All potential members submit an application and complete an interview with the Program Director. After a successful initial interview, prospective members are given placement descriptions, mandatory training dates and service, as well as enrollment paperwork. Upon demonstrating a commitment to providing academic mentoring and/or providing cultural and recreational enrichment activities to the target population and expressing a commitment to the goals of AmeriCorps service, the prospective member is invited to a placement fair. At the fair, similar to a job fair, members can meet and interview with a number of site supervisors. The prospective AmeriCorps members have an opportunity to select three or four sites with which to interview. All site supervisors attend the placement fair with their school counselor or principal; organizations attend with their executive directors. This is their opportunity to select the

Narratives

best members to fit their site and service needs. Site supervisors can see the array of skilled members and this increases the likelihood that strong placements will be made. Both the prospective members and site supervisors leave the placement fair after turning in their 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice. The AmeriCorps Program Director and the Dubuque Community Schools Student Services Director review needs and determines placement of members at school sites. Factors such as free and reduced-price school meal statistics, identified English Language Learners, as well as Title 1 reading needs are considered in the placement decisions. Non-profit organizations placement is done cooperatively with the site supervisor and/or organization's executive director and the Program Director. Emphasis is given to selecting matches that will be a "win-win" for both the member and the site considering their selection requests as well as member's gifts and talents. For example, one prospective AmeriCorps Member from the Marshall Islands was a recent high school graduate seeking the education award so she could attend college. This member was placed at an elementary school that had a significant number of Marshallese students. The principal told the Program Director how the eyes of the Marshallese students beamed when the new member was introduced as an AmeriCorps placed in service at the school. The English Language Learner (ELL) staff work in multiple schools; the AmeriCorps member also attended additional schools with the ELL staff to assist in translating to parents in their own language during parent teacher conferences.

The Program Director meets with site supervisors, principals/organization directors, and attends staff meetings to introduce the AmeriCorps program. During this meeting the role of the member and the role of the site supervisor are discussed. Data collection procedures are explained and training is provided for teachers who will submit outcome data and to site supervisors who oversee the documentation of member activities and time logs. Prior to beginning service at their placement site, members complete a comprehensive orientation that includes understanding what it means to be an

Narratives

AmeriCorps member; this includes Rights/Responsibilities, Code of Conduct, Prohibited Activities, Drug-free Workplace Act, Grievance Procedures, Suspension/Termination, and Sexual Harassment/Discrimination. Members also receive training in CPR and First Aid, conflict management, appropriate discipline with students, team work, working with volunteers, and motivating self and others. Members are trained in all the reporting tools and instruments including OnCorps. Members complete an initial Civic Engagement questionnaire. At their exit interview, members complete the same post questionnaire that tests their knowledge, attitude and skills in civic engagement from the beginning of service to the end. In 2009-2010, members showed a 95% increase in civic responsibility and this was reflected in their intent and commitment to lifelong volunteer service.

Upon reaching their placement site, members receive orientation and training that is specific to that site. For example: City of Dubuque Leisure Services orients members on playground equipment, interventions, weekly goal setting and events. Beyond the initial training, additional training is provided during the school year and summer. Those who will be academic mentors receive additional training from the school district providing curriculum support skills specific to the five components identified by the National Reading Panel. AmeriCorps members are placed with 24 different sites which include 14 school sites, 5 youth serving organizations, and 5 neighborhood non-profit organizations. Last year site supervisors at these sites provided 2,485 hours of supervision for a total hourly contribution of \$69,099 to the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning Program. The Program Director utilizes frequent emails, site visits, and monthly training sessions for opportunities to communicate with members about their service. At mid-terms site supervisors are involved with the Program Director and members to reflect on the first months of service and plans for their remaining time. Issues that would enhance the members support are addressed during this mid-term

Narratives

evaluation. Team development, volunteer recruitment, management skills, and personal reflection are strengthened during monthly training sessions and community service projects. These training sessions and community service projects are attended by the Program Director and give opportunity for dialog with other members, organizations, and community volunteers. Members receive disability awareness training that communicates the Program's sensitivity and willingness to make reasonable accommodations. The Program Director provides a comfortable environment with open, clear, consistent communication so issues are addressed. The Program seeks to make reasonable accommodations through community resources, supplies affordable within the budget and funding requested from the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. Each site supervisor receives training from the Program Director about the experience of having a member and providing mentor support to assist member development. The Program Director is in regular contact with site supervisors through emails, site visits and phone calls.

Outcome Performance Measures: The overall goal of the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning Program is for every child to be successful in school and reading at grade level with parental and/or community participation and investment. This educational focus will use the National Performance Measures 1, 2 & 5 to show improved academic performance for the number of students who start and complete an AmeriCorps education program. For grades K-12th AmeriCorps members will provide academic support during school and after school. Thirty-three AmeriCorps members will be in-school academic support for 3,400 students at nine public elementary schools, three Middle Schools, and two High Schools. Twelve AmeriCorps members will provide after-school academic enrichment which includes homework help with 300 students at Audubon, Prescott, Marshall, Fulton, Irving, and Lincoln Elementary Schools, and Washington, Roosevelt, and Jefferson Middle Schools plus the Multicultural Family Center. Summer activities will be provided to K-6th students. Activities will be designed to

Narratives

develop social and academic development during the school year and the summer enrichment programs. Sixty percent of the students (N=550) who complete the academic support program, for whom data is collected, will improve or maintain in their performance of reading and math based on the criteria of "no improvement, maintained, improved slightly or significant improvement." Five education award only positions will show the continuation of sustainability as partners will be paying for living allowance stipends. In addition, AmeriCorps members will recruit and support 500+ volunteers with a goal of 6,000 hours of service.

Volunteer Generation: Dubuque is a great place to live because of the contributions of many volunteers. Volunteers are sought through various avenues and drawn from a pool of high school and college students, retirees, business partners and local convents and church agencies. The Dubuque Mentoring Partnership, a collaborative effort of agencies and organizations, started in April 2005. The Program Director was one of the initial organizers for this initiative. Due to these efforts, the number of youth with one-on-one mentors was at an all time high of 1,731 for the year 2009. During these difficult and changing times volunteers have been the key to sustaining local nonprofits and providing a huge community resource. The Multicultural Family Center, started as a partnership between AmeriCorps and the City of Dubuque, is now in its fifth successful year of operation. At the Multicultural Family Center during 2009-2010 volunteers logged 3,005 hours reaching over 1,700 non-duplicated registered contacts. These volunteers included general volunteers who come for special events such as culture days to other individuals who come weekly to help students with homework. Other volunteers assist in teaching Spanish or help Spanish speaking individuals to learn English. Technical computer volunteers assist in teaching computer basics or explain how to do college research on the computer.

Narratives

Volunteer recruitment is facilitated by members in the form of public service announcements, postings at area colleges and engagement of service organizations or faith/church communities. Volunteers work beside AmeriCorps members during the three mandatory AmeriCorps community service learning projects -- (October Make a Difference Day, January Martin Luther King Day, and April Global Youth Service Day). Other major service/sites where volunteers serve include: Dubuque Community Schools, Multicultural Family Center, Operation New View, Crescent Community Health Center, Washington Neighborhood Development Corporation Eat-n-Greet, Jackson Park Concerts, and Dubuque 2.0 Sustainability efforts. Members not only recruit community volunteers but train, monitor, and serve as role models at their perspective sites. During 2009-2010 program year, 898 community volunteers were recruited and trained to provide 5,149 hours of service. This was a major increase from previous years and was in part due to the non-profit capacity building made possible by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funding. For example, one neighborhood outreach site was able to have an AmeriCorps member whose primary service was to engage other volunteers and that site recruited 123 volunteers who logged 3,005 service hours.

As the volunteer service grows, recognition has increased. This started with two official volunteer recognitions and continues with ongoing quarterly recognitions. The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps members have an opportunity to recognize those who volunteer side-by-side with them and it also gives everyone an opportunity to receive a thank-you while reflecting on their service. Volunteers are playing a vital role in making a difference in our community as the AmeriCorps members continue to reach out and engage volunteers. The children, youth, and families they serve need more stable influences in their lives; so if volunteers can serve more consistently that is a desirable trend. Next year's goal is to have volunteers serve more hours per volunteer while still reaching the goal of 6,000 service hours.

Narratives

Partnerships and Collaborations: The AmeriCorps Partners in Learning Program is probably best known in Dubuque for its many successful partnerships. The successful partnerships starts with Dubuque's education institutions of Clarke University, Emmaus Bible College, Loras College, Northeast Iowa Community College, University of Dubuque, and Wartburg Seminary who provide recruitment, training and other educational resources. Another important partnership is the placements that provide daily supervision at 14 schools, 5 youth serving organizations, and 5 neighborhood non-profit organizations.

One example of a successful partnership and collaboration is the utilization of neighborhood schools and parks in conjunction with the City Leisure Services Department to develop summer playground and recreational programs. Another documented partnership is with the Dubuque Police, who in 2008 responded to an average of 6.4 service calls per park for all 30 city parks. In comparison, parks in the targeted downtown area reported higher numbers -- Jackson fielded 30 calls while Comiskey Park fielded 31 calls for service. Community-oriented police, who are dispatched bicycle police officers, work with AmeriCorps members who provide supervision, recreational, and educational activities from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and 6 to 9 p.m. during the summer months. Nine parks and playground sites are located in the downtown area and represent over 50% of the City of Dubuque Leisure Services playground programs. When AmeriCorps members provided summer supervision at these targeted downtown areas, the bicycle police reported that their calls reduced by one-third. Also noteworthy is three playground locations offer a free lunch program for children via a partnership with the Boys' and Girls' Club of Greater Dubuque, Summer School District Food Service Program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. AmeriCorps members are trained in food service and serve lunch to children each Monday through Friday for 10 weeks during the summer. This was started in 2008 because of the concern for those students receiving free or reduced meals who, during the

Narratives

summer, lost their access to a school provided daily lunch. By working with existing organizations and schools the AmeriCorps members can continue to develop solutions to the neighborhood's key issues in a focused manner to minimize duplication, maximize effectiveness, and encourage the sharing of resources.

The Washington Neighborhood Plan: Community Assessment & Revitalization Strategies prepared by the Center for Neighborhood Technology & Teska Associates consultants who reported to the Dubuque City Council on April 20, 2009 listed three strategies for revitalization. AmeriCorps members are involved in each of these strategies and the current and future site partners include:

#1 Expand youth activities that meet the interests and needs of children of all ages and keep them engaged and active. Partners and community stakeholders include Boys & Girls Club, City of Dubuque Leisure Services, Dubuque Community School District, Every Child - Every Promise, Four Mounds, Holy Family Catholic Schools, Multicultural Family Center, and Dubuque Community Y

#2 Enhance neighborhood communications to ensure residents are aware of programs. These partners and community stakeholders include City of Dubuque Neighborhood Development Specialist, Crescent Community Health Center, Downtown Neighborhood Association, North End Neighborhood Association, East Central Intergovernmental Association, Operation New View, Visiting Nurse Association, Washington Neighborhood Development Corporation, Maria House and Teresa Shelter for homeless residents.

#3 Encourage greater parent/adult involvement in the community as they engage in volunteer service, particularly with youth and family activities. See partners and stakeholders listed above.

Sustainability: As the net of partners and collaboration with area organizations grows wider, the increase in diversity of funding and revenue sources, which includes other public and private funding

Narratives

streams, has increased. We continue to increase effectiveness and expand the number of committed volunteer hours. This has allowed the AmeriCorps program to grow in its capacity to provide services. Each partner hosting an AmeriCorps member provides site supervision which had an in-kind value of \$69,099 last program year. Cash match from sites has been increased from 15 to 20% and each year the private financial support is increased from businesses and additional partners. Funding comes to the AmeriCorps program through its partners and includes \$79,000 in cash match. Some cash match funds from Leisure Services, Carnegie-Stout Public Library, and neighborhood associations support member positions through the City of Dubuque's budget. Schools have used a complex mix of grants, categorical funding streams and Parent Teacher Association raised funds to support their members. The Dubuque Community Y charges fees for their after-school and non-school day programming to fund their members, but also offers a number of scholarships. The Multicultural Family Center has grown from 700 to 6,200 feet space serving over 1,700 individuals offering 162 programs and local fund-raising of \$50,000. AmeriCorps members have staffed the Center with only one or two other paid positions, recruited and trained volunteers, and served as neighborhood and/or cultural outreach liaisons to families and children in the downtown neighborhoods. After only one year of operation in the new larger location, the Multicultural Family Center is serving as a model program for other cities as they navigate the issues that surround having new and diverse families coming to Midwest states.

To increase long term sustainability, efforts are being made to collaborate with the area college work study programs and other non-profit community agencies that target vulnerable youth. The four colleges (Clarke University, Emmaus Bible College, Loras College, and University of Dubuque), Wartburg Seminary and Northeast Iowa Community College have become a strong source of member recruitment by offering college credit and allowing the term of service to be considered an internship or practicum experience. School counselors, teachers and administrators, the American

Narratives

Red Cross, and local college staff provide elements of training. The ability to offer education awards provides superior incentives to members. The Partners in Learning program and other community partners often collaborate in writing supporting grants to further expand and maintain services. A neighborhood association in a low-income census tract writes for 4 separate city grants annually to access \$8,000 to support member activities at 3 schools and 2 playgrounds.

Organizational Capability

In order to increase resources and sustainability for the Partners in Learning AmeriCorps program a variety of community partners are utilized. The partners include the City of Dubuque for grant administration, personnel, and fiscal responsibilities; Dubuque Community School staff for member training, educational resources and placement sites; and neighborhood non-profit organizations for diversity and family resources, programming, and vision. The City of Dubuque is a municipal corporation governed by an elected mayor and a six-member council. The City Council reviews the grant and budget documents each year with the AmeriCorps staff and City Manager. City department managers who are involved in the management of the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning Program are: Michael VanMilligen, City Manager; Randall Peck, Personnel Manager; Kenneth TeKippe, Finance Director and Marie Ware, Leisure Services Director. The City of Dubuque has a number of federal grant awards, including HUD, and in Fiscal Year 2010 successfully managed twenty five million dollars of federal funds. Marie Ware oversees the activities of the AmeriCorps Program Director and members. She currently manages the Leisure Services Department which has 33 full-time, 159 part-time/seasonal employees, and a variety of volunteers serving in many capacities. The operating budget of the Leisure Service Department is over \$5 million. Marie has been involved in grant writing and has been the successful recipient of over \$2.5 million in grants. She has been directly or indirectly involved with grant award management for over twenty years for three cities and a non-profit agency. The grants Marie managed included local, state and federal funding. Kenneth TeKippe, City

Narratives

Finance Director, oversees the accounting and fiscal management. Ken's expertise has contributed to multiple prestigious honors and accomplishments of the City. In 2010 the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada presented the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award to the City of Dubuque and City staff for meeting the highest principles of governance and budgeting. The City has received this award for five consecutive years. In addition, the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting was awarded to the City for twenty-two consecutive years. Recently, the America's Promise rewarded our community/city partnership with the prestigious title of one of the 100 Best Communities for Youth. City of Dubuque Mayor Roy Buol accepted this honor on Thursday, November 11, 2010, noting that this was the third time it has been received. The "100 Best" designation recognizes communities that make youth a priority by implementing programs that help keep children in school and prepare them for college and the modern work force.

Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) has been an eager and engaged partner since the Program's existence. Dubuque School administrators and staff will continue to provide some of the member training, educational curriculum, and resources. By nature of their mission, Dubuque Community School District has a long history of collaboration and administering programs in partnership with other organizations while addressing the issues of at-risk children, youth and families. Shirley Horstman, Student Services Director, is involved in placement and program decisions. The Dubuque Community School District provides the majority of cash match for the Program. This has been increased each year as word of the Program's excellent reputation has spread; and school principals request more members as the need for assistance continues to rise with more and more at-risk students in the classrooms. The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps Program Director along with many community partners and organizations, is focused on making a stronger,

Narratives

more sustainable structure that will continue to provide a premier program and excellent services to community youth and families. As the Program moves forward, the Program Director will continue to focus efforts to engage new partners especially in the areas of diversity and underserved or disadvantaged populations. Linkages to the colleges, experience working with college students of all ages, experience as a returning adult student and connections in the art and service community are important skills for the Program Director. Penny Ehlinger has been the Program Director for the past ten years and is currently transferring her responsibilities to a new Program Director, Deb Bell. Deb has professional experience as a teacher, counselor, human resource manager, and public relations coordinator. Her most recent position was as the Dubuque Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Director. Deb's role with RSVP allowed her to work with over 30 area non-profits and recruit, manage and orient over 350 volunteers. To ensure continued sound AmeriCorps program results the Partners in Learning Program will draw on the expertise of each of these partners and the dynamic leadership of its Program Director.

All members receive a living allowance which is at the 80/20 cost share with CNCS and partners. In addition, for the last five years, the Corporation has provided support to the Program through webinars, training, technical assistance, monitoring and support of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. Two thirds of our total funding has been provided by the Corporation for program operation. The outcomes of this collaboration are also ensuring program sustainability. The Program Director provides yearly orientation training to site supervisors at a two hour meeting that includes distribution and discussion of a Site Supervisor Manual as well as meetings with prospective members. The Program Director also is available each fall to attend teacher in-service days in order to answer any questions and give feedback. Ongoing support is provided throughout the year in areas such as member scheduling, training, mediation, and conflict management. With the new Program

Narratives

Design, sites and site supervisors are required to assist in recruitment and increase their contributions to training of members. The Program Director and other partner organizations provide initial and ongoing member training. Staff as well as resources and non-financial support are utilized from the Dubuque Community Schools, City of Dubuque, local non-profit agencies and organizations as well as collaboration in grant writing with these partners. In 2009-2010 the site supervisors provided 2,485 hours of supervision for a total hourly contribution of \$69,099 to the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning Program. The site supervisor's commitment and cash match funding from partners will continue to strengthen the Program and thereby provide outstanding academic supports and neighborhood outreach. The Program has had high enrollment and retention rates over all the years in operation. For the year 2009, recruitment was 100% successful and retention was at 94%. Retention losses have been due to pregnancy, child care concerns, and other family issues. Cost per MSY has been consistently held below the suggested figure. However, due to increases in health insurance, workman's compensation, retirement benefits, living allowance stipend, and the price of criminal background checks, the cost will increase. This will still be under the recommended allowance of \$13,300. The Partners in Learning Program is part of the City of Dubuque Leisure Service Department budget which has an operating budget, not including capital projects, of \$6.6 million and the AmeriCorps grant is .04% of this budget. Sources of organizational funding for the Leisure Service Department budget include property taxes, leases, rental, user fees, concession income, donations, and grants.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

The MSY is \$12,671. Each partner pays approximately \$3 per member hour as cash match for member placement. These major sources include City of Dubuque and Dubuque Community Schools. This match is approximately \$79,000 for this grant year for grantee living allowance and member support costs. Teachers and other professionals share their expertise through supervision and in-kind

Narratives

training for member development. In addition all administrative costs received from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) are put back into the personnel and member support costs. The local program partner will provide in-kind support for the project through program and fiscal management as well as site supervision projected at \$50,239. The local sustainability continues to be increased by the addition of 5 members whose living stipend is fully paid for by the supervision site. The total grant match to \$144,512 or grantee share at 41% with total budget of \$355,099. The Program has been successful in securing community support and has obtaining local grants. For example, the Dubuque Racing Association grant has purchased program supplies and equipment that has amounted to approximately \$10,000 yearly for five years. These grants have purchased office equipment such as a computer, copy machine, fax and laser printer. Funds have been received through neighborhood grants or in cooperation with the Multicultural Family Center. The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps Program and other community partners continue to collaborate to write supporting grants to further expand programs and maintain services. The City of Dubuque is providing personnel, budget, financial and program administration as in kind services through City of Dubuque Leisure Services and Finance Departments. Clarke University office space has been secured to assist the Program Director in recruitment, training, and accessibility to potential members. The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps Program has and will continue to build support as part of its community strengthening efforts. The Program currently meets its non-federal support match requirement through funds provided by partners - schools, city, and downtown neighborhood non-profit organizations. All the funds noted in the budget as available to this program are secured. Outreach speaking engagements and a successful track record have increased visibility of the program and AmeriCorps is a well-respected entity in the Dubuque community. This grant has a broader impact without a major increase in funding.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Narratives

The Partners in Learning AmeriCorps Program completes a number of self-evaluations and continuous improvement processes. In addition to regularly scheduled on-site conferences and monitoring activities noted previously, the Program Director surveys members and site supervisors for feedback and uses this information to make the program even more effective and efficient. At the conclusion of mandatory trainings and other sponsored trainings, members complete a critique/suggestion sheet to be referred to and used for future improvements. At mandatory exit interviews, members are required to submit a portfolio that documents and causes them to reflect on what they received as a benefit of their service and what they feel that the children and families received. There has been a recurring theme during these exit interviews. Many members report that volunteer service will be a lifelong commitment as a result of their AmeriCorps experience. In addition, members always comment that their service has changed their life -- either by a revelation of the career they want to pursue or by experiencing profound moments while working with families and children. This data is reported in year-end outcomes. In addition, answers to the Civic Engagement Survey questions regarding their likelihood of participating in future community service are tallied and reported. They are also asked what aspects of their AmeriCorps service had the most impact on their skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes about civic engagement. In December 2010, past members from a 10 year study returned a questionnaire that addressed three areas: What volunteer service has the member done thus far; what type of community service is the member presently doing; and what was the most important skill they learned from their service and are still using. Members who participated in the first and second grant years reported that they were still doing at least 4 hours weekly of community service. Feedback for the Program is also received through administration of site surveys and through interactions with family members, e.g. family events noted earlier. The program has tracked outcomes and process data since inception per the tools and processes previously mentioned. The Program has attended ongoing trainings through the

Narratives

Corporation for National and Community Service and the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. The Program continues to refine and strengthen the program objectives, outcome measures and data collections tools. During this three year funding cycle, the AmeriCorps Partners in Learning will pilot and then revise methodology to measure family engagement with 50+ families who live in the targeted downtown neighborhood. The goal will be to access those students receiving academic support during school and from the neighborhood outreach to document that the strategies of family involvement is affecting school academic achievement.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

Issue #5: Clarify that members are not displacing any staff or volunteers that would normally be hired within the school system.

Currently the school district does not employ part-time staff to work exclusively with students one on one with academic mentoring, nor do they plan to hire staff to do this due to budgetary reasons. Volunteers who serve in the schools do so as classroom volunteers to assist the teachers with their needs. This could be supervising a small group, cutting out shapes for activities, hanging pictures on the wall, etc.. Regular classroom/parent volunteers are not utilized or trained in one-to-one academic mentoring.

Issue #6: Clarify why the percentage of 60% was established as a measurement and provide the data/criteria used to formulate this percentage. Clarify how the target for the participants who complete the target has been set also at 60% and what level of participation is required to be counted as a participant who completed.

Narratives

The 60% is based off of actual percentages from previous years. Members collect data on all students they serve. Some students may only receive help once or twice from a member, this student is considered as being served but not completing the program. Students who have been served by an AmeriCorps member at least once per week for 12 weeks is considered completing the program. Of those students who complete the program we are expecting to see a positive difference in 60% of those students.

Continuation Changes

NA

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"/> Environmental Stewardship |
| <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"/> Healthy Futures |
| <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"/> 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 16.62

Service Categories

Other Education

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Members will provide academic mentoring to students K-12.

Result: Output

Result.

4,000 students at nine public elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools will receive services.

This will be achieved through in school academic mentoring by Members. There will also be after school academic enrichment by Members that will include homework help for 300 students at six elementary schools, three middle schools and the Multicultural Family Center.

Indicator: ED1: Students who start in an AC ED program.

Target :Students enrolled in K-12 who will receive in school and after school academic mentoring from

Members.

Target Value: 3700

Instruments: Attendance logs and registration sign-up sheets provided by and submitted by Members.

PM Statement: 36 Members will provide 3400 K-12 students with academic mentoring during school, and 12 Members will provide 300 students with after school academic enrichment as reported on biweekly attendance logs.

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Members will provide in school and after school academic support to students K-12 in 20 minutes sessions three times per week.

Result: Output

Result.

Students K-12 who were provided in school or after school services from Members will complete the academic mentoring program.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED2: Number of students who complete an AC ED program.

Target :K-12 Students who were provided in school or after school services from Members and for whom

data is collected, will complete the academic mentoring program.

Target Value: 550

Instruments: Attendance and outcome logs provided by Members.

PM Statement: 60% of K-12 students who were provided in school or after school services from Members and for whom data is collected, will complete the academic mentoring program.

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

National Performance Measures

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

Members will help students maintain enrollment in and succeed in school by providing academic mentoring and academic enrichment.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

K-12 students provided academic mentoring by Members, and for whom data is collected, will improve or maintain in their academic performance in reading and math.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED5: Students w / improved academic performance.

Target :60% of students who participated and received Member services and for whom data is collected, will improve or maintain in their performance of reading and math.

Target Value: 550

Instruments: Teacher and Member year end evaluations of performance based on the criteria of "no improvement, maintained, improved slightly or significant improvement."

PM Statement: 60% of students who participated and received services from Members, and for whom data is collected, will improve or maintain in their academic performance of reading and math based on teacher and Member year end evaluations.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Sent

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable