

## PART I - FACE SHEET

<b>APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE</b>		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction	
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to conform to the Corporation's eGrants System)			
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):		3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:  24-JAN-11	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:
2b. APPLICATION ID:  11AC125632		4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:  09ACHMN0010003
<b>5. APPLICATION INFORMATION</b>			
LEGAL NAME: Minnesota Education Corps  DUNS NUMBER: 962455965		NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):  NAME: Sadiann O'Connor  TELEPHONE NUMBER: (651) 251-9100  FAX NUMBER:  INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: soconnor@mnedc.org	
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 2400 Park Ave Minneapolis MN 55404 - 3713 County:			
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):  272413473		7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit  7b.	
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).  <input type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>  A. AUGMENTATION        B. BUDGET REVISION  C. NO COST EXTENSION    D. OTHER (specify below):		9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: <b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>	
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:94.006 10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State		11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:  Minnesota Reading Corps - Metro	
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):  The metro area includes the following nine counties: Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Scott, Ramsey, and Washington		11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):	
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 08/01/11      END DATE: 07/31/12		14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant <u>MN 005</u> b.Program <u>MN 005</u>	
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: <u>3</u>		16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 4,225,000.00	<input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:  DATE:  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372	
b. APPLICANT	\$ 3,059,428.00		
c. STATE	\$ 0.00		
d. LOCAL	\$ 0.00		
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00		
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00		
g. TOTAL	\$ 7,284,428.00		
17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO			
18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.			
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:  Susan Saunders		b. TITLE:	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:  (651) 645-2277 204
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED:  05/26/11	

## Narratives

### Executive Summary

The vision of Minnesota Reading Corps is that all children will become proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade. Rigorously trained members work with children from age three to grade three who are struggling in reading. Using the latest research on reading interventions and assessment, AmeriCorps members provide tutoring to give students the extra boost they need to become successful readers.

### Rationale and Approach

#### INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) is an AmeriCorps program designed to bring effective, research-based, data-driven, individualized literacy interventions together with the resources and infrastructure necessary to reach thousands of children across the state needing targeted -- not just extra -- tutoring to become successful readers.

The MRC originated out of a successful alliance of leading Minnesota literacy organizations including Head Start, the St. Croix River Education District, Education Evolving, and the program's fiscal host, the Minnesota Literacy Council, as well as early childhood education experts from the University of MN, the Minneapolis Public Schools and the University of Oregon. The team of experts was brought together by state legislative leader Alice Seagren whose simultaneous service as a board member for Minnesota's national service commission (ServeMinnesota) and role as chair of the K-12 finance committee sparked a new opportunity for crafting a strategy to tackle the state's persistent high rates of early literacy failure. Researchers had long decried a gap between literacy science and the capacity of Minnesota's schools to effectively use the research and tools that were available and proven to provide struggling future and young readers the best opportunity, within the shortest amount of time, to secure proficient skills. Positioned at the cross-section of national service, academics, and the state education system and its practitioners, then-Representative Seagren (currently the state's Education Commissioner) recognized the unique potential for the expandable people power of AmeriCorps to serve as the heretofore elusive vehicle for implementing the science of how children learn to read on a large and unprecedented scale.

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In 2003, the concept successfully attracted state legislative financial support and the MRC was formed as a localized pilot literacy initiative. In 2007, after three years of remarkable results, the Governor and the legislature formally identified the MRC as a new state program to promote literacy achievement and approved a separate appropriation of \$2 million to support program expansion to reach 15,000 children statewide over a two year period. Now, in 2009, the Greater Twin Cities United Way is proposing a partnership where, with this proposal's success, they would invest in supporting the MRC to go to scale in Minneapolis, St. Paul and the surrounding 9 county metro area.

Scaling the program up within these geographic boundaries would infuse the MRC's effective model within those communities where the state's most concentrated population of children struggling with literacy resides. Of the estimated 75,000 children from age 3 to grade 3 in Minnesota who are at risk for failing the state's 3rd grade literacy test, more than half (approximately 42,000) live in one of the 54 school districts in the 9-county metro area. Some districts such as Minneapolis and St. Paul have widespread need across most, if not all, of their schools. Other districts -- particularly in the first ring suburbs -- have smaller pockets of students who need the help of well-trained and supported AmeriCorps members.

The aim of geographically intensifying MRC resources would be to galvanize a tipping point whereby sufficient numbers of participating metro area schools and early childhood programs succeed in leveraging a broad based shift from repeated literacy failure, to a new experience of and belief in measurable progress and success. Over a three year period, the MRC proposes to build the capacity of over 150 Pre-K and K-3 sites and their staff in the 9-county area to integrate and utilize research-based literacy strategies. This program scale will reach over 24,000 (or 57%) metro area children currently at risk for reading failure and its many consequences.

### COMPELLING NEED

Rationale

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From preschool through 3rd grade, children learn to read. From 3rd grade forward, students "read to learn". This time sensitive window presents either an opportunity to build a foundation for a lifetime, or establishes a tenacious deficit strongly linked to lifelong negative consequences. Evidence indicates that if children are not proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade, they begin to become "in-school drop outs" as early as 4th grade (Paige, 2005). As noted by MRC's evaluation director, "Once a child starts kindergarten, they have 595 days to learn to read by the end of 3rd grade -- the further behind they are when they start kindergarten, and the longer they stay behind, the greater the odds are that they won't accomplish this goal." Reading failure is also linked to broader negative social outcomes, including teen pregnancy, substance abuse, delinquency and criminal activity (Talla, 2003). With research demonstrating that 95% of all children have the capacity to learn to read proficiently, and five years of impressive MRC results, we know that reducing the likelihood of these outcomes is achievable.

### Needs Assessment

The MRC has clearly defined those children who benefit most working with its members and program. Prior to refining and implementing its model, the MRC surveyed literacy experts, organizations, and Pre-K and elementary schools, to identify AmeriCorps' optimal role in addressing illiteracy. This broad-based input was pivotal in defining the program's target constituency and pinpointed unmet needs within Minnesota's educational system. A key finding was that large numbers of children do not meet the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) standards for reading proficiency; however, their scores do not meet the criteria making them eligible to receive assistance from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Title I tutors or special education/learning disabilities teachers. These children "fall between the cracks" and are typically assisted only through whatever extra support individual teachers manage to rally or directly provide. Unfortunately, research confirms that children who start out with substandard literacy skills are very unlikely to achieve future reading competency without targeted intervention. MRC's research revealed that any 'extra help' that is provided rarely aligns with individualized

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assessment and is almost never accompanied by ongoing progress monitoring to demonstrate whether interventions were working or should be altered.

The children MRC has identified for participation have the capacity to learn to read at grade level but experience more prolonged and intense literacy struggles because the system, and the staff within it, is unequipped to provide timely and effective data-driven intervention. Classroom teachers, regardless of their skill level and motivation, are simply unable to spend one-on-one time with each student who needs additional help but does not qualify for and receive special services. This is where AmeriCorps members are a powerfully effective means for meeting the early literacy needs of Minnesota's children. MRC members with intensive training in interventions are coached by literacy experts to work one-on-one and/or in small groups to isolate specific skill challenges and to tailor their tutoring to effectively build the skill(s) needed by each child to become a successful reader. Members are effective because their tutoring is aligned with Curriculum Based Measurement tools that provide ongoing data that tell teachers and literacy coaches whether or not the member interventions are making a difference. MRC was designed from the ground up to bring into educational settings the tools, resources, training, and experience needed to create a delivery system capable of administering evidence-based literacy interventions to address a systemic gap that too often traps capable children who might otherwise experience success.

### Documentation

Further analysis of the MCA-II 2008 results illustrate the magnitude of need concentrated within the geographic region targeted by the proposed Greater Twin Cities MRC program. Almost one in four, or 23% of the 9 county metro area's 3rd graders failed to demonstrate grade level reading skills. For the two most populous school districts in the Twin Cities, the results are most grave. The St Paul School District (Ramsey County) reported a failure rate of 39%, and the Minneapolis School District (Hennepin

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County) reported that 47%, nearly half of those who took the test, did not meet 3rd grade reading proficiency standards. For the remaining targeted counties that include first ring suburbs, MRC will serve identified pockets of communities where failure rates as well as racial and economic demographics increasingly parallel those of the inner cities.

Tremendous racial and socio-economic inequities are clearly at play in the attainment of literacy skills by Minnesota's children. For example, 70% of Minneapolis and 52% of St. Paul third grade students with limited English proficiency scored below grade level reading on the MCA-II in 2008. Of children qualifying for free or reduced lunch, 63% of the Minneapolis children and 49% of St. Paul children failed to pass the MCA-II in 2008. In recognition of this achievement gap, MRC will prioritize metro area sites characterized by high concentrations of poverty, diversity, and/or recent waves of immigrants, and which have disproportionately higher rates of children in need of MRC intervention.

### MEMBER ACTIVITIES

198 full-time, 64 part-time and 20 Education Award Greater Twin Cities MRC AmeriCorps members will reach a minimum of 7,652 Pre-K through 3rd grade metro area children at-risk of literacy failure.

The MRC program model is to partner with school districts and pre-school agencies to place trained and supported AC members in early childhood education, Head Start, and K-3 classrooms. There, members provide intensive, research-based tutoring to children age 3 to grade 3 and, as the program develops in each site, bring community volunteers and parents/families into the fold to multiply the program's reach and effectiveness. Members will serve in one of three member roles and engage in common and specific activities to meet program goals.

The following program components are common to all MRC sites:

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-Members along with their site-based supervisor (who serves as an internal literacy coach) receive intensive up-front and ongoing training to collect benchmark data, monitor student progress and implement research-based literacy interventions.

-Members and Internal Coaches receive monthly coaching from literacy experts (Master Coaches) to tailor interventions for each child based on the data collected on key literacy measures. Master Coaches also observe the members and Internal Coaches use of interventions and assessment to ensure fidelity.

-Members recruit and manage community volunteers to expand the reach of each site.

-Members implement activities to involve families in helping their children become proficient readers.

\*Pre-K Tutors: 46 FT and 10 PT and 20 Ed Award members will serve in preschool classrooms supporting one class of between 17- 20 children each year. The 20 full-time Education Award members are existing Head Start and other pre-school classroom teachers or aides who serve children participating in MRC. Ed Award members work daily within their current classroom and spend an additional 3-5 hours a week beyond their standard work day enhancing their classroom skills through MRC coaching and trainings, as well as implementing new literacy interventions in their classrooms. All Pre-K literacy tutor members perform the following specific activities:

-Create literacy rich environments by setting up and updating 5 classroom centers to make play more meaningful through integrating reading, writing, and talking.

-Implement a "5 Day Read Aloud" using dialogic reading techniques to expand vocabulary, phonological awareness and letter knowledge by reading the same book for 5 days.

-Provide tailored relationship based interventions to small groups of children needing focused time on specific skills such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, alphabetic principles, conversation, and book/print concepts.

-Implement activities to make writing meaningful for young children.

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\*K-3 members: 134 FT and 50 PT members will serve individually or in teams of up to three within elementary schools. Each FT member tutors a total of 25-40 children during the course of the school year. K-3 literacy tutor members perform the following specific activities:

- Provide a minimum of 60 minutes of individualized research-based literacy interventions per child per week.

- Collect weekly fluency measures on children tutored. Children graduate from the MRC on a rolling basis when they learn the literacy skills required to "catch-up" with their peers and are followed to ensure they are re-enrolled if they do not stay on track to become successful readers by 3rd grade.

In addition to literacy tutor members, the MRC model also includes two additional member roles:

\*Volunteer Coordinator (VC) 16 (12 FT/4 PT) members will be placed at select MRC school sites. VCs build the capacity of multiple sites to manage volunteer tutors by recruiting and supervising community volunteers, delivering volunteer orientation and training, coordinating materials, activities and tutoring logs, and creating weekly lesson plans to maximize volunteer contributions. VC members also recruit episodic volunteers to participate in metro-area wide events that promote awareness of literacy issues and support MRC sites.

\*Family Liaison (FL) 6 FT members will be placed at district offices and will serve multiple sites. Family Liaison, a new member role for the 09-10 programs, has emerged as a continuous improvement innovation. MRC has always integrated the best practice of family involvement and members have successfully implemented multiple family literacy activities. Five years experience revealed that the work of bridging literacy in the classroom to literacy in the home would benefit from having positions exclusively focused on this goal vs. having it as an additional literacy tutor responsibility. FLs will ensure full implementation of the following family involvement components:

\*Outreach: Sending an introductory letter explaining the role of MRC at the site, their child's



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participation, and how family can assist their child throughout the tutoring process.

\*Orientation Sessions: FLs help sites coordinate and deliver a structured orientation for families that provides visually engaging information about the program and ideas and resources for literacy activities that families can do at home with their children.

\*Ongoing Communication: Where school district/program policies allow, members share literacy assessment scores through letters, parent conferences, and/or parent activity nights. Scores are shared to: 1) celebrate child growth 2) provide objective information about literacy skills 3) set goals with parents to help improve their child's literacy skills, and 4) tailor simple home-based literacy activities to help reinforce tutoring and/or classroom lessons.

\*Family Education: FL's will organize family training on two literacy interventions for use at home -- Repeated and Duet Reading. Pre-K families will have training opportunities on dialogic reading.

Finally, all MRC members plan and participate in area-wide and local service projects advancing literacy, and individually design and lead 5 civic engagement activities to fully develop their own lifelong ethic of service.

Our FT/PT model allows MRC to appropriately assign members based on the level of site need and school scheduling. For example, often a combined FT/PT is the optimal caseload match. The PT slot also increases our ability to attract especially high caliber members, such as students in teacher preparation programs.

To maximize every participating child's literacy skills, all members receive significant training before and during their year of service and well-supported site-level supervision (see Member Outcomes). A unique program management and member development feature of the MRC is that through Master Coaches or VC/LC mentors, each member is paired with an expert in their activity area to augment site-

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level supervision. As members work to implement their training knowledge, they receive real-time feedback from leading practitioners about their developing skills to ensure fidelity, and to benefit from an ongoing 'external' source of expertise and support for problem-solving or brainstorming. Coach and mentor involvement also further strengthens MRC ties to varied institutions and organizations that have a strong stake in improving the metro area.

The MRC has an appropriate system in place to ensure that members understand and abide by the rules about prohibited service activities, beginning with training on prohibitions at the mandatory member orientation. All members sign a contract that outlines rules and prohibitions. Staff regularly reviews timesheets to verify that all reported hours are allowable and comply with prohibited service rules. Sites also receive training and a site supervisor manual addressing these rules.

Each MRC program component and member activity represents the best practices of outstanding research-based literacy programs nationwide. However, what ultimately makes our program work is its delivery system. Whereas the MRC is determinedly data-driven and even high-tech in its design, at its core, the intervention is very much human. What really makes the science and systems effective lies in all that members do to forge consistent, caring relationships with the children they encourage, cajole, challenge and believe in, side-by-side, week in and week out. Time and again, teachers and parents provide testimony underscoring children's motivation to engage with their members and move forward in their reading.

### MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

MRC's focus on results means measurement is built into everyday practice of members and the students they work with. MRC's end outcomes include:

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\*Increasing skills of 1,292 Pre-K students in 3 of the 5 building block literacy skills from fall to spring.

\*80% of students who participate and graduate from MRC will demonstrate reading proficiency on Minnesota's 3rd grade MCA- II.

\*Encouraging family involvement in each participating child's education by communicating with families, providing literacy activities at 2 school events, and training in either dialogic reading (Pre-K), duet reading or repeated reading interventions (K-3).

\*Participating in five civic engagement activities throughout the year.

\*Mobilizing 168 tutors who will commit 60 minutes weekly during the school year, and 650 episodic volunteers who will help increase awareness of childhood literacy issues and donations of additional resources such as books or take-home materials/activities, and provide guest tutoring.

### EVALUATION TOOLS

MRC uses three tools to collect data on children's progress in demonstrating key literacy skills. This data is immediately and graphically available to members and their sites through a web-based data collection system, AIMSweb, so that adjustments can be made to the interventions being used with individual children. Data from all tools is assessed on a quarterly basis using a "dashboard" reporting system.

\*Pre-K: The Individual Growth and Development Indicators or IGDIs literacy assessments measure literacy outcomes for 3 & 4 yr. olds. After an initial reliability check, members administer IGDI's fall/winter/spring to establish benchmarks and track progress. Members consult with Master Coaches

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to analyze the data, make instructional decisions for children needing extra member support, and to set classroom goals. Final IGDI scores measure improvement in critical literacy skills and compare each child's results to benchmarks correlated with 1st and 3rd grade reading scores. The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) (Smith, Dickenson, et al, 2002) tool is also used to inventory strengths and areas of need in the MRC members' classroom. The tool is completed in the fall and spring. Results provide an objective report about what is needed to design a more literacy-rich classroom. Members implement improvements such as setting up stations to practice specific literacy skills, adding more books, or more visible literacy props.

\*K-3: To measure K-3 literacy outcomes, members conduct one-on-one tutoring sessions based on results from benchmark testing completed 3x/yr. The general outcome measures contain elements of reading that precede reading connected text named Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), (Good, et al, 2002) and connected text reading is measured by oral reading fluency (R-CBM) for the end of 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades (Fuchs & Deno, 1991). Weekly, members use a progress monitoring system with one-minute standardized tests. Results are entered into AIMSweb which produces performance charts used to fine-tune weekly tutoring.

\*Volunteer Mobilization: VCs use sign-in sheets to track weekly and episodic volunteer hours, and input this data into a web based database (OnCorps) with a description of the service provided/number of children served.

\*Family Involvement: An online database tracks activities including family communications, and the number of family events, families attending events, and family members trained in the reading interventions.

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### PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

MRC's growth, results, and appeal as a partner to multiple public/private entities is rooted in its rigorous self assessment and improvement plan. To measure other aspects of success and to identify improvement needs, MRC uses a variety of program evaluation methods. 1) Site Visits: fall & spring, to ensure member is meeting program requirements and receiving internal coach support. 2) Literacy Coaching Sessions: Master Coaches monitor sites by monthly meetings with internal coaches and members to discuss caseloads and conduct fidelity checks. Coaches directly observe members performing assessments or interventions, rate consistency with the prescribed approach, and provide immediate feedback on member performance, and any needed adjustments. 3) Surveys: mid-year & end-of-year surveys are conducted with members, internal coaches, and Master Coaches. Survey results inform which sites are performing as expected, which sites may need additional support, and highlight program areas needing attention. 4) Dashboard Reporting System: starting this January, MRC is rolling out new quarterly management or "dashboard" reports for sites and regions to give program managers and members "on the front lines" comprehensive data indicating what is working/what needs adjusting to better deliver services. Objective data will be captured from AIMSweb and the OnCorps database which tracks children served, number of children meeting targets, number of volunteers recruited and hours served, and family involvement numbers. All survey findings will also be included. 5) Member Meetings: members are encouraged to contact program staff as needed. In addition, reflection sessions at each training surface challenges and successes. 6) Evaluation Report: a mid-year and annual evaluation report allows MRC and all constituents to look at the whole program and identify potential performance gaps.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Greater Twin Cities United Way has identified the MRC as their key strategic partner to pursue their recently announced goal to increase the percent of students from low-income families reading at grade

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level by the end of 3rd grade to 80% by 2012. This goal reflects an intensive community outreach process that included surveys of Twin Cities residents, clients of funded agencies, nonprofit executive directors, dialogues with youth and donor focus groups, town hall meetings with educators, consultation with topic experts and area foundations, and participation in a "Mind the Gap" project led by CEO's of Twin Cities Businesses. Community findings were reviewed against an extensive body of literacy research including: MN Depts. of Educ. & Health, the Univ. of MN, the Centers for Disease Control, the Brookings Institution, and an analysis of government funding.

State and United Way support for MRC's implementation has shifted our program scale from a school by school approach to a district level coordinated strategy. For example, it is now St. Paul's school district leadership requesting that the MRC grow from its 10 AC members in 10 schools to 93 members in 34 schools over the next 3 years. The Greater Twin Cities United Way representing many community partners will continue to be a primary stakeholder and partner in taking the MRC to scale within the 9 county metro region. For example, United Way staff will be part of the site selection process in the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Bloomington school districts for 2009-2010 and will collaborate with MRC on metro-area marketing and fundraising. As results continue to demonstrate success, the United Way will reach out to leadership in other metro area school districts to offer the United Way/MRC partnership as a vehicle for their communities to ensure children become successful readers by 3rd grade.

### RELATIONSHIP TO NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

In addition to the MRC, The MLC currently manages two other CNCS-funded literacy-focused programs, AC\*VISTA and Summer Reads VISTA. AC program staff collaborate and share resources on a daily basis, including training, recruitment, management, troubleshooting, and literacy expertise. MLC sponsors 40 AC\*VISTA members assigned to literacy projects statewide in child and adult serving organizations. Through Summer Reads VISTA, MLC places 70 members who serve 8 weeks primarily in

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Minneapolis and St. Paul summer schools -- many of which participate in MRC during the school year. By placing Summer Reads VISTA's in MRC sites we ensure that children continue to receive individual/small group tutoring.

Joint recruitment efforts are conducted between MRC, AC\*VISTA and Summer Reads programs, offering the benefit of attracting more applicants via synchronized outreach and providing applicants with three national service options, each with its own niche and prospective fit.

MRC currently partners with Volunteers of America-Minnesota an initiative of the CNCS-funded Experience Corps (EC) program. In three sites, MRC Volunteer Coordinators have trained EC volunteers to tutor children using two MRC reading interventions. The partnership will expand next year with the EC program active in at least two St. Paul MRC schools next year. We are also partnering to engage more ECs as episodic volunteers.

The MRC also collaborates with other AC programs, including offering an MLK Day rally and mini-conference, and jointly planning various community service projects and training opportunities.

### REPLICATION

MRC is infinitely replicable -- offering a cost-effective way for systems to deliver the individualized and differentiated instruction that is not only effective, but also efficient - reducing the time it takes for a child to acquire required skills. The success of the Washington Reading Corps (WRC) informed MRC's model which replicates the WRC's integration of AC service as a strategy for states to extend the capacity of their educational system to make substantial reductions in early childhood illiteracy. The plausibility of this ambition has brought tremendous momentum to the program's growth and appeal, attracting for example, two national corporations, Target and Opus, which are funding MRC to develop a process to support national replication.

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The MRC is designed to build a seamless system of literacy acquisition from age 3 to grade 3 that is correlated with standardized testing required by the No Child Left Behind Act. The necessary components are documented for replication, including:

\*Literacy interventions consistent with the "5 Big Ideas of Literacy".

\*A data collection system allowing for statewide aggregation of data and progress monitoring data to inform instruction for individual children.

\*A quality control system to ensure fidelity of implementation.

\*Training modules for members, site supervisors, community volunteers, and families.

\*Brochures and marketing materials.

\*A model of creating sustainability through state government and philanthropy.

### Organizational Capability

#### \*\*SOUND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Minnesota Literacy Council (MLC) is a nonprofit that has been dedicated to improving literacy across Minnesota for 36 years. Literacy services for adults, at-risk children, native-English speakers and recent immigrants are offered. 31 full-time and 15 part-time employees (6 administrative and 40 programmatic) provide programming at the main office hub and five metro-based learning centers. The annual budget is \$9,036,523 (78% Government Grants, 5% Corporate and Foundation Grants, 2% program service fees, 13% pass-through and in-kind contributions). MLC has a long history of successfully managing federal grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and currently manages three federal CNCS program grants. Today, MLC's programs and services reach more than 100,000 citizens every year.

Children's Programming: Early Literacy and Families program (ELF) provides home visiting and preschool services. Last year 616 volunteers were trained to tutor children with below grade level



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literacy skills. 40 AC\*VISTA members recruited 7,374 community volunteers who tutored 21,549 children and 5,460 adults statewide. 70 Summer Reads Vistas served more than 7,754 at-risk, K-3 children.

Adult Programming: ESL/Literacy instruction is provided at five MLC learning centers offering Adult Basic Education classes; teachers and literacy volunteers serve more than 75,000 adults statewide. In 2008 MLC trained 1,900 volunteer tutors and maintained an active literacy hotline & web site. MLC was invited to participate in a nation wide pilot program to expand online training courses via an interactive "Learner Web" for adult students. 53% of all MLC adult learners improved at least one level on a standardized test, exceeding state standards.

This programmatic success relies upon sound fiscal management. MLC prepares and maintains all financial reports in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-122 Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations. Audits (Financial Audit and Single Audit) are performed annually by external auditors with no reported audit findings to date.

### MULTIPLE SITES

MRC's Site Management plan reflects years of lessons learned about operating effectively across multiple sites. Each site applies to MRC by completing an RFP that outlines how they will fulfill the following: 1) Use of a data-based problem solving model of literacy instruction. 2) Integration of the AmeriCorps member with the classroom teacher or designated staff with reading expertise. 3) Creation of a classroom setting (Pre-K sites only). 4) Process for K-3 children to "graduate" from the program, and, if necessary, be identified to re-enter the program. 5) Process for identifying students that meet MRC criteria: K-3 students below target scores for their grade level but not receiving additional services such as Special Ed. Pre-K children with assessments indicating they are at 50% of the spring target. 6)

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Capacity for children to participate in at least 2 tutoring sessions per week totaling a minimum of 60 minutes. 7) Identification of teacher(s) who will perform Internal Coach duties, thus decreasing the need for external Master Coaches over time. 8) Willingness to include trained community volunteers in the implementation of the MRC model.

A selection committee comprised of MRC program and ServeMN staff and Master Coaches review applications and recommend sites to the Leadership Team. Site selection criteria include: level of need based on school district MCA II literacy results, poverty level/achievement gap, evidence of ability to provide sufficient member supervision and support, and evidence that the site fully supports the literacy model and will implement it appropriately.

Once the site is accepted, expectations are clearly outlined in a site agreement which is signed by site administrator and the site supervisor/Internal Coach. Beyond the formal agreement, MRC's strategies for ensuring a high level of consistency among the sites in terms of both service quality and connection to the program mission include: 1) 3-day Institute the outset of the service year builds a common vision and techniques for advancing literacy. 2) MRC program staff visit each site twice a year to assess program implementation and make adjustments as needed. 3) Master Coaches conduct site visits 10x/yr. for 1st year sites, 5 times for 2nd year sites, and 2x/yr. for 3rd year sites. These visits support high levels of program fidelity by the members and Internal Coaches; Master Coaches directly observe the members working with children, score the quality of their work, and provide them with feedback to improve their performance. 4) MRC will use a monthly performance "dashboard" to report how well sites are meeting their targets in areas such as member retention, number of students served, graduation rates, and site staff satisfaction. 5) MRC is launching an intranet site this year to facilitate member connections across sites and to share "best practices."

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### ADMINISTRATIVE PARTNERS

MLC's 14-member board of directors representing various organizations within the for-profit, non-profit and public sectors take an active role in strategic planning, financial oversight, fundraising, and advocacy. 100% of its members contribute financially. The staff is led by Executive Director, Eric Nesheim, a 17-year MLC employee with extensive program and management experience.

MRC is an alliance among four partner organizations; each play a specific role in ensuring program success:

\*ServeMinnesota (MN Commission for AC state programs) provides policy direction, designs improvements to quality assurance systems, secures the program's financial resources and is accountable to state and private funders for program results.

\*The MLC serves as fiscal host and provides recruitment and day-to-day member management. It also coordinates the recruitment and selection of MRC's Pre-K and K-3 sites.

\*St. Croix River Education District provides training and support on assessment tools and leads the program's annual evaluation.

\*Center for Learning Solutions delivers member training on literacy interventions and provides ongoing expert coaching to members and internal coaches.

### KEY STAFF

\*Steve Struthers (ServeMN VP of Strategy and Results Management) has a BS in Political Science and an M.S. in Sociology. Steve develops and strengthens the performance management systems to continually monitor and improve results across all program dimensions, and leads the alliance's strategic planning efforts. Previously, he spent 15 years as a national management consultant to government organizations.

\*Sheila Piippo (MLC National Service Program Director) has a BS in Psychology and an M.Ed. Sheila

## Narratives

has worked in youth development for over 14 years and brings deep experience in school-based programming. Sheila provides leadership and supervision of the staff, and oversees MRC's statewide expansion.

\*Kate Horst (Pre-K Master Coach Coordinator) has a BS in Elementary Ed., Minor in Early Childhood Ed. & Early Childhood Family Education License. Kate is the author and trainer of: SEEDS of Emergent Literacy for: 3-5 Educators; Early Literacy for Infant-Toddler Teachers; Early Literacy Coaching; Minor Parents; and Parents.

\*Cheryl Reid (K-3 Master Coach Coordinator) is a nationally certified School Psychologist working for the Mpls. Public Schools since 1995. She's worked with multiple sites in Mpls., providing consultation, intervention and assessment for PreK-12th grade students.

Both Cheryl and Kate are responsible for recruiting Master Coaches and matching them with members to support delivery of appropriate literacy interventions.

\*Lorien Parsons (Training Coordinator) has a M.Ed. Lorien co-authored the journal article, Practical Applications of Response-to-Intervention Research. Along with MRC training coordination responsibilities, Lorien is a school psychologist for the Mpls. Public Schools.

\*Christine Fankhanel (Metro Regional Program Coordinator) has a BA in English and a Communications minor, and previously served as an AC\*VISTA. She supervises 3 Program Associates (PA) responsible for a cohort of 60 members each. PAs coordinate non-literacy trainings, monitor data collection, and support member development.

\*Anna Peters (Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator) has a BA in Psychology and was an English teacher in Prague and Madrid. Anna develops and implements the statewide recruitment plan.

\*Deb Holbrook (Fiscal Manager) earned a BS in Accounting and has 20 years of for-profit and non-profit finance and accounting experience. Deb manages federal, state and foundation grants and provides financial reports to varied constituents. She also prepares work papers and reports annually for both the standard and A-133 federal audits.

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\*Kerry Bollman (MRC Evaluation Director) has a Masters in School Psychology & is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist, Reading Center Director and Academic Collaborative Planner for the St. Croix River Education District.

The MRC alliance formed several teams -- each including various staff members above- to enhance decision-making and review program performance: Leadership Team meets monthly to review program performance and to set strategic direction; Training & Development designs & conducts MRC training for members and Internal Coaches; Literacy Team provides expert-level oversight of instructional implementation; Evaluation Team includes 5 nationally regarded practitioners and PhDs in literacy research and assessment who design and manage program evaluation and data analysis.

### PLAN FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

MLC's current strategic plan runs through the 2008-09 fiscal year, ending July 2009. Board and senior staff are currently creating the next strategic plan. An MLC goal is to increase the awareness of literacy issues for both children and adults throughout the state. By expanding MRC's services into the 9-county metro area, MLC will be able to intensify its ability to address and raise awareness about literacy needs in more communities -- most particularly within first ring suburbs.

Competent, motivated employees are critical to carrying out MLC's mission. To help nurture and retain talent, MLC designed a collaborative performance review process that provides: relevant feedback on past performance; a focus on for future performance; and mentoring to encourage professional and organizational growth. MLC's performance review process components are: 1) Job Descriptions, 2) Work Plans, 3) Informal Performance Reviews, 4) Improvement Plans, and 5) Formal Performance Reviews.

## Narratives

### PLAN FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

MRC's a technical assistance plan addresses needs in three areas: (1) Continual vigilance to ensure our literacy interventions reflect the latest expert findings; (2) Implementing quality assurance systems as an early warning system of issues that require staff attention; and (3) Managing an HR system for recruitment that efficiently processes over 1,000 member applications each year. The plan includes contracting with the Center for Learning Solutions to annually review research findings to determine if any literacy interventions need updating, and working with ServeMN's V.P. of Strategy and Results Mgt. and the MRC Leadership team to regularly review performance data and problem solve program-wide and site issues as they arise.

\*\*Sound Record of Accomplishment as an Organization

### VOLUNTEER GENERATION AND SUPPORT

MLC's commitment to literacy volunteers began with its founding in 1972. MLC currently provides volunteer recruitment, placement and management services to a network of nearly 100 volunteer-based Adult Basic Educ. programs. In addition, MLC's Volunteer Outreach Coordinator provides pre-service and ongoing volunteer trainings, including: English as a Second Language, children's literacy strategies, Adult Basic Education, and citizenship. MLC also provides in-service workshops, online tutor tips, best practices workbooks, and other resources to support volunteers' one-to-one work with students. MLC takes pride in having provided its network of children and adult organizations a total of 9,274 highly trained, well qualified volunteer tutors last year.

### ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

MLC is committed to increasing literacy throughout MN through active community leadership; staff at all levels currently participate in over 20 boards, committees, or community groups. For example,

## Narratives

MLC's participation with the St. Paul Schools Foundation tutoring initiative (representing 12 agencies), led to district relationships that have opened doors for significant MRC expansion into St. Paul schools. MLC's role as a founding member of the St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium has also laid the groundwork for the greater metro area MRC initiative. Over the years, MLC staff members have been recognized for professional excellence by multiple state and national education organizations, including being named the state's top adult literacy program for superior program quality and excellent student achievement in 2005. The agency also became MN's first program to receive national accreditation from ProLiteracy America.

### MATCHING RESOURCES

Our current program requires a 30% match but will achieve an actual match of 37%. MRC's focus on results and alignment with the state's vision to eradicate illiteracy makes it an attractive public and private investment. Over the first 6 years, the state has contributed \$2.6 million and the private sector \$1,701,000. Our 15 member Business Advisory Committee formed in 2005 has facilitated strong relationships with the philanthropic community with outstanding results. In the past two years alone, MRC's private support has grown from \$330,000 in 07-08 to \$751,000. Even given current budget cuts, the leveraging power of AC, and MRC's compelling outcomes, is generating promising conversations with the Governor's office to increase state support from our \$1 million annual appropriation to \$1.5 million. Private fundraising and Business Committee efforts for the MRC will match state monies with \$1 million annually from the private sector.

\*\*Success in Securing Community Support

### COLLABORATION

Partners increasing MRC's quality and reach include: (1) The Minnesota Response to Intervention

## Narratives

Center (RtI). RtI is a growing national education innovation integrating assessment, intervention and prevention to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. The MN RtI Center trains and supports schools to adopt this new instructional model. MRC has become featured in their outreach and education activities as an effective way to implement RtI literacy-based strategies for the cohort of children MRC targets. MRC prioritizes RtI-connected sites because members have been especially effective in those settings. (2) The Center for Learning Solutions is a new umbrella organization housing MRC's literacy training and coaching resources. Initially MRC separately contracted with each Master Coach. Program growth led to managing over 30 literacy experts. The Center centralizes this function and facilitates cross-sharing of lessons learned and effective practices/resources. (3) The Head Start Association invites MRC to make annual presentations to all of their Education Coordinators to share results and promote participation in the MRC amongst all their members. Participating as an education award only member expands the capacity of Head Start Agencies to meet Head Start legislation requirements for pre-school staff education levels while at the same time supports existing staff to acquire skills to implement research based literacy practices in their classroom.

### LOCAL FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

The largest source of private funds in support of this geographic region is expected to be the United Way at approximately \$500,000/year. The second largest source is the Target Foundation's investment of \$150,000/year to fund a first time effort to link MRC children from Pre-K to K-3 programs in the Minneapolis and St. Paul School Districts. As the Target partnership unfolds they expect to expand their support to include books, school supplies, etc.

ServeMN has also developed a prototype for securing financial support at the local level that allows individuals and/or businesses to sponsor children, classrooms, or schools that participate in the MRC.



## Narratives

The McKnight Foundation has requested a proposal to use their foundation dollars as matching dollars to stimulate individual giving. Our goal is to build a base of 300 individual donors that contribute \$200,000 on an annual basis. This individual giving program will provide sustainability as foundation support decreases over time.

### WIDE RANGE OF STAKEHOLDERS

MRC's work is aligned with diverse community stakeholders passionate about reaching children early to reverse MN's achievement gap, including: Head Start Agencies, pre-schools, child care centers, elementary schools, district administrators, civic groups, policy makers, businesses, volunteers and families. Viewing MRC as a permanent part of ensuring MN's children become successful readers, the State Legislature not only created the MRC as a separate program but has continued to maintain and increase its funding. MRC's Business Leadership Committee invests in the MRC to prepare the literate future workforce upon which they depend. Their financial investment is augmented by promoting MRC through articles and letters to the editor, serving as public and political advocates, providing legislative testimony and communicating the program's value to local representatives. This last year, district leadership from two of the state's largest school districts formally identified MRC as a resource they want available to every child in their district who fits the criteria.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

#### DIVERSE NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT

The MRC is designed to attract diverse sources of non-federal cash support. To date, we have received contributions from 20 private foundations, 10 corporations, and over 20 individuals. This is in addition to funding from the Greater Twin Cities United Way and the state legislature. Systems are in place to expand funding sources and to increase amounts contributed. In addition to cash, service sites contribute a significant in-kind match, including the time of Internal Coaches --estimated at \$3,000/AC member.

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### DECREASED RELIANCE ON FEDERAL SUPPORT

Despite MRC's rigorous standards we are able to administer the program at CNCS's required cost of \$12,600 average/MSY. Private and state funding allows us to cover the costs of specialized training, on-going coaching and comprehensive evaluation. MRC is on target to continue to meet the match that will be required over the next three years.

### BUDGET ADEQUACY

MRC's total annual budget is \$5,083,650. This includes a federal share of \$3,150,000 and a grantee share of \$1,933,650. The budget provides adequate support, ensuring the right mix of senior leadership combined with direct service staff to ensure effective program implementation. It also includes carefully crafted estimates of the amount of literacy coaching, training and evaluation that is required to fully implement the MRC model, thus achieving the desired outcomes for children.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

#### ENHANCED EVALUATION PLAN

MRC positioned assessment and evaluation as a program cornerstone from the start. Well-vetted tools and systems generate measurable results, track progress, and identify areas for improvement. To ensure objectivity, an external evaluation is conducted every 3rd year with the next external evaluation scheduled for the 09-10 program year.

With five years of program implementation experience to draw upon, this fall, the MRC again convened top literacy researchers and program experts to review the evaluation design from the micro level of site implementation, to the macro level of statewide data analysis and reporting. Input from this thorough review improved upon the original evaluation design, culminating in a more powerful and streamlined

## Narratives

evaluation approach. With the revised evaluation design, all evaluation inquiry, data, and information will now feed into addressing whether all MRC program operations are fully aligned to capture information to monitor the following key areas:

\*Are the outcomes for educational settings indicating that the MRC results in the needed systems change to permanently adopt a research-based, data-driven, problem solving model of helping children become proficient readers?

\*Are children's outcomes demonstrating that our performance targets for individual children do accurately predict passing the MCA-II test of 3rd grade reading proficiency?

\*Are the MRC measures of implementation fidelity ensuring high quality implementation at all service sites?

\*Are MRC results demonstrating that it is meeting its goal of building a permanent infrastructure for the state that closes the achievement gap for the group of children successfully served by the MRC?

\*Is the MRC consistently incorporating new research into its model so that children served continue to benefit from state of the art research findings?

\*Are AC member outcomes demonstrating that their experience has a positive influence on their own career development and life long ethic of service?

The methods for evaluating progress are built into the practice of the MRC members and are designed to provide ongoing feedback on a regular basis to guide the interventions used with each participating child. Quarterly Dashboard Reports (site- and region-specific) are generated and reviewed by program staff and sites to assist in making mid-year program adjustments. A year end report guides continuous improvement for the subsequent year.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

## Narratives

### Clarification Summary

Clarification Response 2011, Part 2

BUDGET Clarification Response 2011, Part 2

Budget Clarification Item:

Section 1I: Other

\*Please explain how in-kind occupancy cost for classroom tutoring space is calculated.

The in-kind occupancy cost for each site is calculated based on a standard school district formula. Each school district determines their standard occupancy formula and sites submit monthly reports based on their district's formula. The standard rate includes space, computer use, technology, copies, and supplies. In order to include the in-kind occupancy for all 217 sites in this line item, we averaged their standard rates.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE Clarification Response 2011, Part 2

\*An explanation was also provided in the performance measure screen.

Children are chosen to participate in Minnesota Reading Corps if they are at risk to not reach proficiency on the state assessment in third grade. Benchmark scores for early literacy have been correlated to the state assessment down to the kindergarten level.

Minnesota Reading Corps measures improved academic performance by examining if a child meets expected grade-level growth for one year's time. The output measuring the number of children who

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successfully complete an AmeriCorps tutoring program is less than the intermediate outcome because many of the children start far from target. These children are partially proficient but they are at the bottom of the range. While enrolled, they show steep progress therefore achieving more than a year's growth in a year's time, however, because they started so low even with significant growth they are still below target. Because they did not reach the spring target correlated to the state assessment, they are not exited from the program.

### FY2011 CLARIFICATION RESPONSE

Start Date and Member Enrollment Period: The start date for the grant is August 1, 2011. The member enrollment period also begins on August 1, 2011.

### BUDGET Clarification Items:

#### \*Section 1A: Personnel

In the clarification summary, please provide a breakdown of FTE's for each staff member allocated to the MRC and MRC-metro grants to ensure that no individual's time is allocated more than 100% across both budgets.

#### Program Directors

1 FTE Program Director- 54% Metro, 46% Greater MN

1 FTE Deputy Director- 25% Metro, 15% Greater MN, 60% Math Corps

#### Program Managers

1 FTE Metro Region- 100% Metro

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1 FTE Central Region- 100% Greater MN

1 FTE Central Region- 10% Greater MN, 90% Math Corps

1 FTE Northwest Region- 100% Greater MN

1 FTE Northcentral Region- 100% Greater MN

1 FTE Southwest Region- 100% Greater MN

### Program Coordinators

1 FTE Metro Region- 100% Metro

1 FTE Metro Region- 100% Metro

1 FTE Metro Region- 100% Metro

1 FTE Metro Region- 100% Metro

1 FTE Metro Region- 100% Metro

1 FTE Metro Region- 75% Metro, 25% Math Corps

### Member Support/Outreach

1 FTE Prgm Asst (Central Region)- 75% Greater MN, 25% Math Corps

1 FTE Member Specialist- 49% Metro, 41% Greater MN, 10% Math Corps

1 FTE Recruitment and Outreach- 49% Metro, 41% Greater MN, 10% Math Corps

### Administrative Staff

1 FTE Operations Manager- 47% Metro, 28% Greater MN, 25% Admin

1 FTE Finance Director- 100% Admin

1 FTE Accountant- 100% Admin

1 FTE Executive Director- 100% Admin

.5 FTE HR Director- 100% Admin

## Narratives

\*Section 1C: Travel- Provide budget details of trip and calculations for staff travel

-Revised in budget narrative

\*Sect. 1E: Supplies- Itemize costs for each line item over \$1,000 and provide calculations.

-Revised in budget narrative

\*Section 1G: Training- Please itemize costs for statewide institute and mid-year conference.

-Revised in budget narrative

For literacy trainings, specify the number of trainers and the number of days. -Revised in budget narrative

The supplemental trainings provide professional development in the areas of cultural competency, behavior management, civic engagement and Life After AmeriCorps. These topics are not the direct literacy interventions but are needed to conduct successful tutoring session and a successful completion of the member's year of service.

\*Section 1I: Other- The number of background checks budgeted does not match the number of slots requested. Please revise. Explain the difference between the two line items for occupancy and provide calculations for Occupancy, Occupational/supplies, and software subscriptions.

-Revised in budget narrative

PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATION:

## Narratives

1. The program has indicated that it will serve both rural and urban areas. Please clarify which regions served by this grant are rural.

The rural areas served in this grant are located within the nine-county metro region. The rural communities are approximately 50 miles from the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. This would include the communities such as Delano, Hutchinson, St. Michael-Albertville, and New Prague.

2. Please verify that criminal history checks will be conducted on all members, employees and other individuals as described.

Minnesota Reading Corps is working with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to conduct the FBI fingerprint background check and a state registry check for all staff and AmeriCorps members. The program will conduct the NSOPR for all staff and AmeriCorps members.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES CLARIFICATION:

\*Please review all your performance measures and determine if any changes are needed to reflect the funding and MSY amount specified above. If any changes are needed, please make the changes in the performance measures in eGrants.

-Adjustments have been made to reflect 325 MSY's

\*K-3 Literacy Tutoring- The application narrative states that the program opted into the national performance measures pilot last year but national measures are not included in the application. Is the program opting out this year? Please explain.



## Narratives

The program will be using the national performance measures to report progress. The adjustments have been made in e-grants.

\*Explain why only 5391 of 8525 students are expected to complete the program.

Reading Corps enrolls elementary-aged students on a rolling basis. As students meet their targets and successfully exit from the program, new students are brought into the program. Therefore, not all students are ready to exit at the end of the program year. In addition, the exit rates in the large urban school districts are longer than what we see in greater Minnesota. The percentage of English Language Learners and percentage of students farther from target are much higher and therefore those students need services for a longer period of time.

\*Pre-K Literacy Tutoring- Explain why only 1927 of 3211 students are expected to complete the program.

In the Pre-K program, there needs to be both a fall and spring assessment score in order to measure successful completion of the program. Mobility and absences greatly impacts this number. In addition, the assessment window is only two weeks. If a student is absent and unable to take the assessment the student is not counted as a successful exit from the program even though they may have been served nearly the entire year.

FY10 CLARIFICATION RESPONSE

## Narratives

### FY10 BUDGET CLARIFICATION RESPONSE

1. Personnel Expenses: Roles of key staff identified in the narrative do not match the staff roles in the budget narrative. Please clarify the roles of individuals included in the budget.

The narrative only discussed key staff. Some of those identified in the narrative are consultants and two are part of indirect costs. In addition there is a Statewide Program Manager who develops systems and procedures to ensure the program is being implemented consistently across the state; 5 Program Associates who provide technical assistance and support for sites and members; 2 Administrative Assistants who manage member documents and coordinate all logistics for all trainings. Finally, there is an in-kind donation of time from site supervisors and internal coaches.

2. Personnel Fringe Benefits: Benefits are calculated against the CNCS share only. Please clarify why benefits are not calculated against total personnel expenses.

Site supervisors and internal coaches enter their in-kind hours into the OnCorps system. This system asks for a "fully loaded rate" with which to value the in-kind. So since we do not have a salary/fringe break-out for these in-kind amounts, the full amount is entered in the salary section.

3. Supplies: Explain and itemize "member file supplies." Explain the need for five replacement computers. Please breakout/detail the costs in 3 line items: Occupancy (\$40,024), Postage (\$18,824) and Occupancy/Supplies (\$153,070).

Member file supplies - file folders with dividers to organize member documents -- one for each member. Replacement computers -- current computers for staff who have been with the program for awhile are more than 4 years old.

Occupancy -- detail added to budget narrative. In addition here is an excerpt from our Cost Policy Statement to explain the allocation of these costs:

## Narratives

### Supplies and Material

To the maximum extent possible, office supplies and materials are charged directly to the program which uses the supplies and materials. Joint costs that are shared between programs are pooled together and allocated back to programs based on the number of hours charged to a particular program or indirect activity on the timesheets.

### Occupancy Expenses (Rent, Utilities, Phone)

The lease for MLC's main office space provides for equal monthly payments during the term of the lease. Utility charges are paid monthly. Phone expense is a flat rate with no additional charges for long distance.

MLC has determined that the most equitable and cost effective way to allocate these costs is based on the number of hours main office staff charged to direct programs and indirect activities on timesheets.

Ex. Monthly rent is \$10,000

	Federal programs	Non-Federal Programs	Indirect
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# hours reported	500	750	250
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% of total	33%	50%	17%
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Total Rent	\$3,300	\$5,000	\$1,700
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Postage/Printing -- reduced expenses; detail in budget narrative.

Occupancy/supplies in-kind -- space, computer and supplies are provided by the school sites -- 330 sites

X \$600/ea

## Narratives

4. Explain the role and provide justification for "temporary staff for new year start up."

There is quite a bit of short-term work involved with starting and exiting members. The short-term nature of the work does not warrant hiring year-long staff. We will use a temp service for these short-term staffing needs.

5. Member Support: Explain why health care is only budgeted for 65% of full time members.

This is historically the percentage of members who have applied for health care coverage. The budget has been changed to reflect 100% of full time members.

6. Please break out the costs in the Recruitment materials line item.

Corrected in budget narrative.

7. Source of Funds: Please include an explanation of all match under this section. The applicant is

requesting \$2.5 million yet the source of match funds only totals \$59,157. Corrected in budget narrative

8. Provide justification for increased cost per MSY. Include an explanation of whether the proposed expansion will create economies of scale that might lower the cost per MSY.

Member allowances increased by \$400/MSY; member health care is projected to increase by \$60/MSY.

Economies of scale - part of the role of the administrative assistants is to create efficiencies in the member registration process and in member management which will lower the cost per MSY in the future.

### Continuation Changes

#### YEAR 3 CHANGES

Minnesota Reading Corps currently has 325 MSYs serving in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. We are requesting an additional 150 MSYs (bringing us to a total of 475 MSYs) to better meet the need of this

## Narratives

region.

### JUSTIFICATION FOR EXPANSION TO NEW SITE LOCATIONS

We are requesting an expansion to meet the need and demand from Minneapolis Public Schools, the Head Start program in Ramsey County, and other schools within the Twin Cities metro area.

We anticipate a significant expansion within Minneapolis Public Schools, which is one of the largest school district in Minnesota with a high percentage of low-income students who are performing poorly on the 3rd grade state-mandated reading test (MCA-II). Last year only 53.8% of its 3rd graders were proficient on the MCA-II, compared to 76.3% in the rest of Minnesota. This fall, the newly hired superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools announced her desire to have the Reading Corps program in all 39 elementary schools in the district in 2011-12. We currently have 37 AmeriCorps members placed in 22 elementary schools who will provide tutoring to approximately 900 students. To better meet the literacy needs of students in Minneapolis Public Schools, we estimate placing approximately 100 AmeriCorps members who would tutor approximately 2500 students. Additionally, the superintendent has also outlined her strategic initiatives for the district, one of which includes providing intense early literacy intervention for kindergarten students. To support this initiative, we plan to award the district with literacy tutors who would have a specific focus on tutoring kindergarten students. The tutors would provide each kindergarten student with a “double-dosage” of tutoring each day using research-based interventions that are tailored for kindergarten students. We are seeing positive preliminary results in the pilot of this position in other school districts. Nearly all of the 335 kindergarten students receiving tutoring from a Kindergarten-Focused Literacy Tutor scored a 0 on the fall assessment, which illustrates the high need for intense, early intervention. By the end of November, 45% percent of these students had already hit the winter benchmark target, which means that they have caught up to their peers and are on track to pass the 3rd grade MCA-II. These students are experiencing

## Narratives

rapid growth in their skills, not only did the students quickly reach the fall target (target score =10), but have also already reached the winter target (winter target = 21). This is also significant because without the Kindergarten-Focused Literacy Tutor, the earliest that any of these students would have received one-on-one tutoring would have been in January and would have lost critical instructional time. Finally, we have been working closely with Target Corporation as the funder for this expansion.

A second anticipated area of expansion is within the Head Start program in Ramsey county, where we currently do not have any Reading Corps members placed. The Head Start program enrolls approximately 1,300 low-income 3-and 4-year-olds in 11 locations. We are confident these students would benefit from the additional literacy support from Reading Corps. In a matched sample study completed in the neighboring Head Start program in Minneapolis, our results showed that Head Start students who participated in Reading Corps had a literacy score of 127.6 on the Beginning Kindergarten Assessment compared to 91.9 for students who did NOT participate in Reading Corps.

Finally, we are experiencing an increased demand from schools requesting Reading Corps members. We have nearly a 100% retention rate of our current sites, while we continue to receive requests from new sites each year. Last year we were only able to award 63% of the MSYs (325 of 518) that were requested from schools.

### ACTIVITIES OF EXPANSION MEMBERS

With the increase, we expect that 518 members will be able to reach a minimum of 11,500 students who are risk of literacy failure. The break-down of members by position includes: K-3 Literacy Tutors (297 full-time, 44 part-time), PreK Literacy Tutors (99 full-time, 30 part-time), PreK Education Award-only Tutors (28 full-time, 12 part-time), Family Literacy Members (4 full-time), and Volunteer Coordinators (4 full-time).

## Narratives

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO SUPPORT EXPANSION

The program has had significant growth each year and the infrastructure can sustain another expansion. Two new program staff will be hired to provide support to the additional members.

### JUSTIFICATION FOR AN INCREASE IN COST PER MSY

The increased cost per MSY is a result of the \$300 increase to the minimum living allowance.

### RETENTION

We currently have a 95% retention rate in this grant. In the 2009-10 program year, we had a 86% retention rate in this grant. Based on exiting trends from previous years, we are able to forecast that we are on a trajectory to achieve a 90% retention rate this year. We have isolated the primary reasons that members exit the program early and are implementing strategies to circumvent these early exits. One of these reasons is that members were unable to complete all of the program requirements (primarily hours) by their end date. One of the strategies we are implementing to address this issue is more closely monitoring member's progress each month. Each month a report is produced that groups members into categories (on target, close to target, and far from target) based on their ability to successfully complete their service hours by their end date. Program staff can then focus their energy into providing the most intense support to members who fall into the "far from target" category. Another reason members were exiting early was due to disciplinary action. One of the strategies being implemented to address this issue is strengthening the relationship and communication between the master coaches (who is a literacy expert that we contract with to regularly visit the site) and program staff to better deal with any issues that arise at the site. We devoted time during our annual All-Staff Meeting in the spring to build these relationships and discuss how communication could be strengthened to better support our sites and members. Master coaches and program staff are working more closely together this year

## Narratives

to better support our sites and members.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The targets for the performance measures were adjusted to reflect the increased number of members and a change in exit criteria.

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### YEAR 2 CHANGES

Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) currently has 174 MSY's serving the nine county Twin Cities metro area. (144 in our Competitive Award and 30 MSY's from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). We are requesting to incorporate our ARRA members as well as an additional 151 MSY's to bring us to a total of 325 MSY's to serve this region. Currently there are 174 MSY's serving 5,200 children in 86 sites. Current reading proficiency data indicates that 42,000 children "age 3 to grade 3" in this region that are in need of additional literacy tutoring if they are to become proficient readers. By increasing to 325 MSY's, MRC could serve 9,500 children in 200 sites.

### CHANGES IN MEMBER ACTIVITIES

With the increase, 246 full-time, 90 part-time and 35 Education Award Greater Twin Cities MRC AmeriCorps members will reach a minimum of 9,500 Pre-K through 3rd grade metro area children at-risk of literacy failure.

Pre-K Tutors: 65 FT and 30 PT and 35 Ed Award members will serve in preschool classrooms



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supporting one class of between 20- 23 children each year.

K-3 members: 176 FT and 60 PT members will serve individually or in teams of up to three within elementary schools. Each FT member tutors a total of 20-30 children during the course of the school year.

The number of volunteer coordinators has been adjusted in order to meet the increased demand of the schools for literacy tutors. There will be 6 FT volunteer coordinators placed in select MRC school sites.

The number of family liaison positions has also been adjusted based on what we learned during the pilot year. We will be placing 4 FT family liaisons in the Bloomington and St. Paul school districts.

### CHANGES IN MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

MRC's focus on results means measurement is built into everyday practice of members and the students they work with. With the expansion of members the MRC's end outcomes include:

\*Increasing skills of 3,000 Pre-K students in 3 of the 5 building block literacy skills from fall to spring.

\*80% of students who participate and graduate from MRC will demonstrate reading proficiency on Minnesota's 3rd grade MCA- II.

### CHANGES IN VOLUNTEER MOBILIZATION

Six full-time volunteer coordinators will recruit and manage a minimum of 420 volunteers who complete 1,860 hours of service. On-going literacy tutors volunteer a minimum of one hour/week for 25 weeks. Episodic volunteers supplement these efforts by participating in one-time events at the site.

## Narratives

### RECRUITMENT

In 2009-10, enhanced recruitment strategies supported MRC to meet its goal of filling 100% of its member slots. As of January 19, 2010, MRC is on track to meet recruitment goals for next year with 113 applications already submitted from individuals interested in becoming an MRC member in the Twin Cities metro to be supported by this grant.

### RETENTION

The overall retention rate for the Minnesota Reading Corps program is 93%. Member surveys indicate high satisfaction with the level of training and support provided by the program which are positive influences on retention. Consistently, the most common causes for MRC member attrition include illness, the need to care for family members, or lucrative job offers. We continue to strive for 100% retention, working proactively to improve upon the quality of member experiences within the program's control. For example, this year MRC staff noted the Ohio Commission's new civic engagement strategies that were being credited with improving member satisfaction and service completion. MRC sought out training and is now working to integrate Ohio's curriculum to implement the best in national service practices that reinforce member retention. In addition to maintaining strong communication with sites and members, MRC's Dashboard Monitoring System serves as an additional 'early warning' mechanism to program staff by providing real-time data that indicates if members are falling behind in hours. Program staff respond proactively, and work with sites and members to problem-solve barriers to satisfactory service such as childcare or transportation issues.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURE CHANGES

Minnesota Reading Corps will be using the national performance measure in the education priority area. The measures we will be using include: the number of students who start in an AmeriCorps education

## Narratives

program, the number of students who complete participation in an AmeriCorps education program, and the number of students with improved academic performance.

ServeMinnesota, the state commission for national and community service, has discontinued the use of their statewide common performance measures- volunteer mobilization and civic engagement. Our program has removed these measures from the performance measure section of this continuation grant.

## 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 checked="" 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"/> |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas      317

### Service Categories

School Readiness/Head Start/Early Childhood Education

Tutoring and Child (Elementary) Literacy

## National Performance Measures

**Priority Area: Education**

### Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Members provide a minimum of 60 minutes per week of individualized research-based literacy interventions for each of the children in the program. Members collect weekly fluency measures on the children being tutored. Children "graduate" from the program on a rolling basis when they demonstrate - through the weekly progress monitoring assessments - that they have acquired the literacy skills required to 'catch-up' with their grade-level peers.

### Result: Output

Result.

Students complete participation from Reading Corps when they demonstrate that they have scored 3-5 data points above their aim line on the AIMSWeb weekly progress monitoring assessments and have reached the next benchmark target. The target score is correlated to achieving proficiency on the statewide reading assessment in the third grade.

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

Target : The number of students who complete the AmeriCorps education program.

Target Value: 2800

Instruments: AIMSWeb database and OnCorps database tutor logs.

PM Statement: 2,800 students will complete participation in an AmeriCorps education program.

### Result: Output

Result.

K-3 students will receive a minimum of 60 minutes weekly of individualized research-based literacy interventions.

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

Target : The number of students who start to receive weekly individualized research-based literacy interventions.

Target Value: 5600

Instruments: AIMSWeb database and OnCorps database tutor logs.

PM Statement: 5,600 students will receive weekly individualized research-based literacy interventions.

### Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Minnesota Reading Corps measures improved academic performance by examining if a child meets expected grade-level growth for one year's time. The output measuring the number of children who successfully complete an AmeriCorps tutoring program is less than the intermediate outcome because many of the children start far from target. These children are partially proficient but they are at the bottom of the range. While enrolled, they show steep progress therefore achieving more than a year's growth in a year's time, however, because they

## National Performance Measures

### Result.

started so low even with significant growth they are still below target. Because they did not reach the spring target correlated to the state assessment, they are not exited from the program.

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

Target : Number of students with improved academic performance

Target Value: 4200

Instruments: AIMSweb database and OnCorps database tutor logs

PM Statement: 4,200 students will have improved academic performance shown by growth rates that exceed a rate year's growth in one year's time.

### Priority Area: Education

#### Strategy to Achieve Results

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

AmeriCorps members will serve daily in Head Start and pre-school classrooms to build children's literacy skills.

Members will use the Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) along with assessments of letter names and letter sounds. These assessments will measure student knowledge in five key literacy areas to monitor students' progress and readiness for kindergarten.

#### Result: Intermediate Outcome

##### Result.

Members will conduct benchmark assessments (fall, winter, spring) with pre-school children in order to measure effectiveness of school readiness interventions. Three-year-olds will show growth on 2 out of 3 measures and 4-year-olds will show growth on 3 out of 5 measures on the Individual Growth and Development Indicators.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED24: Children demonstrating gains in literacy skills.

Target : The number of children who demonstrate gains in school readiness in terms of literacy skills.

Target Value: 1310

Instruments: Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs), AIMSweb Letter Sounds and Letter Names

PM Statement: 1,310 Pre-K children will make growth (on 2 out of 3 measures for 3-year-olds and 3 out of 5 measures for 4-year-olds) on the Individual Growth and Development Indicators.

#### Result: Output

##### Result.

The number of children who complete participation in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program.

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

Target : 1,456 children will complete participation in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program.

Target Value: 1456

Instruments: Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs), AIMSweb Letter Sounds and Letter Names

PM Statement: 1,456 students have a fall and spring assessment score (on three measures for 3-year-olds and five measures for 4-year-olds) indicating full participation in the AmeriCorps early childhood education program.

## National Performance Measures

### Result: Output

#### Result.

The number of children who start in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program.

Indicator: ED20: Children starting in an early childhood education program.

Target : 2600 PreK students will start in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program.

Target Value: 2600

Instruments: Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs), AIMSweb Letter Sounds and Letter Names

PM Statement: 2,600 PreK students will start in an AmeriCorps early childhood education program.

## Required Documents

**Document Name**

**Status**

Evaluation

Already on File at CNCS

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable