

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps Project will build on the extensive, collaborative connections of United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI) to enhance a pipeline of high-quality in and out-of-school time education programs, from birth through middle school. AmeriCorps members will support parents with early literacy activities, provide tutoring in schools and community centers, and recruit quality volunteers, to help empower schools and neighborhoods to reduce an educational achievement gap.

Rationale and Approach

THE PROBLEM

The future for children in low-income families in Cedar Rapids, Iowa is troubling. A persistent achievement gap between low-income students and their higher income peers, specifically in early literacy skills and reading proficiency rates, indicates that disparities in early learning persist throughout childhood. Gaps in achievement contribute to a rising high school drop-out rate, which directly conflicts with future job demands: it is predicted that 73% of all local replacement and new jobs will require education beyond a high school diploma (Skills 2010 Technology Corridor Report). For every child to succeed, regardless of their socio-economic background, the Cedar Rapids community must assist children and families who struggle with achievement.

Low-income families in Cedar Rapids are straining to be resilient in the face of several challenges. The historic 2008 flood in Cedar Rapids alone caused over \$5 billion in damage and affected ten square miles of the city -- including an estimated 18,623 people who lived in the flood-impacted area, which mostly consisted of low-income housing. Based on the history of similar disasters, it is expected to take 10 years for the area to recover. The Cedar Rapids Community School District also sustained over \$33.5 million in flood damage. Six district facilities were flooded, and an estimated 1,834 students

Narratives

were flood-affected.

The economic downturn has also exacerbated local human needs. United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI) 211 statistics reveal increased needs for: food, housing, utility arrears, and health insurance. The number of single female householders continues to grow in Linn County, which includes the city of Cedar Rapids (American Community Survey, 2007-09). There are currently over 4,000 single-parent headed households in Linn and surrounding counties who do not earn a wage sufficient to support basic needs. (Ditsler & Pearson, *The Cost of Living in Iowa*, Jan. 2008.)

For children raised in these low-income homes, disparities in learning begin to emerge as early as 9 months, and the gap continues to widen as they grow older (ChildTrends Report, June 2009). There is a clear achievement gap in Linn and surrounding counties between low-income students, defined throughout this grant as those who qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRLP), and higher-income students before children even enter school. Only 50% of low-income kindergartners are proficient in early literacy skills, in contrast to 72% of their higher-income peers (Iowa Department of Education: Basic Educational Data Survey, Address and Enrollment files, 2009).

Unfortunately, 73% of Americans wrongly believe that if children enter kindergarten unprepared, they will catch up in elementary school. ("Survey Reveals Americans Unaware of Long-Term Consequences Preschool Children Face Without Early Literacy Skills," Sept. 2009). Instead, research has shown that the longer a parent waits to help a struggling reader, the harder it will be for the child to read at grade level. As they enter elementary school, many low-income students never catch up to their peers -- and the percentage of low-income students in the Cedar Rapids School District has continued to grow: 33% of elementary students qualified for FRLP in the 2001-02 school year; over

Narratives

50% (approximately 3,700 children) qualify in 2010-11 (Iowa Department of Ed). Data from the Cedar Rapids School District from the 09-10 school year indicate that 64% of low-income fourth graders were proficient in reading, compared to 86% of higher income students. This gap remains in middle school: 54% of low-income students were proficient in 8th grade reading, compared to 85% of their higher-income classmates. The gap also persists in high school: 62% of low-income students were proficient in 11th grade reading, compared to 89% of higher-income students. (Iowa Department of Ed.)

To address these gaps, interventions must start early in children's lives. Research has shown that 44 of 50 students who were poor readers at the end of first grade remained poor readers at the end of fourth grade. (Juel, *Journal of Educational Psychology* 80, no. 4 (1988): 437-447.) As poor readers enter middle school, they are more likely to fail courses and to eventually drop out of school (Jerald, *Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System*, June 2006).

The rising high school drop-out rate in Cedar Rapids is also a cause for concern: although the graduation rate for all of Iowa was 87% in 2009, it was only 80% for Cedar Rapids. This is down from 93% in 2005. Graduation rates for minority students are even more worrisome. The graduation rate for African American students was 66% in 2009, a percentage that has continued to drop, down from 87% in 2005. (Iowa Department of Ed.) This trend is clearly headed in the wrong direction: in the 04-05 school year, 146 students dropped out of the Cedar Rapids School District. By the 08-09 school year, the drop-out rate more than doubled, to 306 students. (Iowa Department of Ed. calculations, based on 08-09 published data.)

Narratives

These individuals who drop out of high school are more likely to be unemployed, to earn low wages, and to end up on welfare or in prison (Levin, Belfield, Muennig, Rouse: The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children, January 2007). By failing to address reading problems early, communities miss the opportunity to address issues before they become much more difficult and costly to confront. The National Research Council asserts that "academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of third grade. A person who is not at least a moderately skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school." (Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, 1998.)

The Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps program will address the achievement gap and rising drop-out rates in part by connecting members to targeted schools, with both low reading proficiency rates and high percentages of low-income students enrolled. Priority placement will be in Title One eligible schools. These schools include: Grant Wood, Johnson and Polk Elementary schools, and McKinley Middle School.

This school year, 55% of students at Grant Wood, 80% of students at Johnson, and 90% of students at Polk Elementary Schools qualify for FRLP. 53% of students at McKinley Middle School qualify for FRLP. Low-income students report low reading proficiency rates at each of these schools. At Grant Wood Elementary, 57% of low-income fourth graders are proficient in reading; only 53% of low-income students are proficient at Johnson, and at Polk, 65% of low-income fourth graders are proficient in reading. At McKinley Middle School, slightly over half (54%) of low-income students scored proficient on the 8th grade reading test.

Narratives

These students will not be ready to enter or succeed in high school. They are more likely to continue to fall behind and drop out of school, unprepared for a workforce that will increasingly demand education. However, there are proven ways AmeriCorps members can provide answers to this problem.

THE SOLUTION

Working to ensure that every child succeeds will require a collaborative, multi-school and agency effort. United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI) is in an ideal position to successfully incorporate AmeriCorps members across schools and organizations. UWECI is in its 96th year of service and currently collaborates with more than 80 nonprofit agencies, schools, organized labor, government, neighborhood associations, and faith-based organizations. UWECI currently has two AmeriCorps*VISTAs on staff and is familiar with national service programs, including the difference between VISTA and AmeriCorps*State functions.

UWECI has already convened a number of collaborative community groups, which have examined the Cedar Rapids community's current needs and strengths regarding services for young children and their parents. Based on their input, the following evidence-based strategies have been identified to meet the community's needs: 1) Play & Learn of East Central Iowa, a parent education program; 2) Multi-pronged early literacy education efforts; 3) Tutoring and quality out-of-school time programs to increase social and academic skills, specifically including reading abilities; and 4) Support for youth with disabilities.

The Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps Program is requesting 10 full-time, year-long member slots, which are best suited for year-round engagement with youth. The AmeriCorps members will provide

Narratives

vital service to the above four strategies, and will be directly aligned with the AmeriCorps mission of meeting pressing and unmet needs through service -- specifically through programs that improve academic outcomes for children.

1) Play & Learn of East Central Iowa

In the first year of the Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps Program, UWECI anticipates two AmeriCorps members will serve in the Play and Learn program. This program provides free weekly facilitated 90 minute play group sessions for parents or caregivers of children from birth to five years old. The program is held year-round, and is led by professionals trained in early childhood development and parent education. The goal is to help children grow in a safe, nurturing environment, receiving high quality care that will prepare them to succeed in school.

Play & Learn sessions provide parents and caregivers with education on all aspects of child development: language and early literacy development, social-emotional behaviors, cognitive skills, health and nutrition, physical development, and home safety. Facilitators educate parents and caregivers in an informal setting on how children learn through play, and model skills to assist in their child's development.

The AmeriCorps members will be trained in Play and Learn 101. Members will assemble Play and Learn materials, and will recruit volunteers; both members and volunteers will assist in group facilitation, preparation, set-up and clean up of the weekly sessions. Members will also perform outreach to low-income populations, to increase the attendance and impact of this program, as well as track attendance, participation and survey results.

Narratives

The Play & Learn program is proven to be effective at supporting early learning. Play & Learn of East Central Iowa was launched in collaboration with Kaleidoscope Play & Learn, which has been operating successful programs in the Seattle area for over a decade. Kaleidoscope has conducted outcomes evaluations since 2006, with compelling results: caregivers report significant positive change, including changing what they do to support early learning, such as reading and talking more often with children, and helping children learn new skills (e.g., counting, learning colors).

UWECI launched Play and Learn in Cedar Rapids in the fall of 2010 at three sites, and it has already been extremely popular. In the three months the program has been running, 94 adults and 125 children have attended. The program will be able to expand to eight sites next year, including in rural areas, with the help of AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they recruit.

2) Early Literacy Education Program

One AmeriCorps member will serve in the Early Literacy Program. In early 2010, UWECI began convening a local group of experts, including a speech-language pathologist, early literacy curriculum consultant and two librarians, and will officially launch this program in the summer of 2011. The program goal is to ensure children are ready to read when they enter school by distributing books and learning material kits, offering free early literacy instruction sessions for parents, and increasing community outreach about early language development.

This AmeriCorps member will help develop print resources and the Early Literacy Program website. The member will also be involved in community outreach and will recruit volunteers to help conduct training sessions with parents and young children. The AmeriCorps member, local librarians, early childhood program professionals and volunteers will be trained on effective early literacy instruction

Narratives

practices with parents, based on a new curriculum released by the American Library Association. The member will assist in facilitating parent group instruction sessions year-round, so that more parents understand how to encourage the development of language and literacy skills in their children.

The AmeriCorps member will also assemble and deliver learning material kits to educational groups and parents, select and order books, as well as assist with book distributions in WIC clinics.

Approximately 5,000 young children and their families, currently enrolled in the WIC program in Linn County, will receive books and opportunities for instruction. This distribution is aimed at addressing the disadvantage of children who are raised in families who do not or cannot provide a literacy-rich environment.

3) Tutoring and out-of-school time programs to increase social and academic skills

Four AmeriCorps members will serve as tutors and will assist with out-of-school time programs.

During the school year, each member will spend approximately 50% of their time at a partner school, and approximately 50% of their time at either the Jane Boyd Community House or The Bridge, two community centers that provide out-of-school-time programming and operate under Four Oaks, a state-wide non-profit organization. During the summer, the members will spend 100% of their time at Jane Boyd and The Bridge. Both centers provide transportation from Cedar Rapids schools. School year programming runs from 2:30 to 6:00 p.m.; when school is not in session, the centers provide extended programming, including meals.

AmeriCorps members will be trained in effective, research-based tutoring techniques, and will be placed as tutors in Grant Wood, Johnson, and Polk Elementary schools, and McKinley Middle School. These schools have both low reading proficiency rates and high percentages of low-income students.

Narratives

Members will work with school staff to provide one-on-one tutoring that corresponds with school curriculum, and will also assist in small group academic activities. Members will recruit additional volunteer tutors to increase the number of youth served.

UWECI is confident the AmeriCorps members placed in these roles will be effective. Structured tutoring provides extra help during school time, enables teachers to better tailor instruction to meet children's needs, and reduces instructional group size. Trained, consistent, one-on-one tutors who work with school staff to coordinate their sessions have also been proven to help improve reading skills.

AmeriCorps members will also provide support to out-of-school time programs at the Jane Boyd Community House and The Bridge. Because Jane Boyd and The Bridge provide programs for children who attend the four AmeriCorps site schools, the AmeriCorps members will be able to work with the same students both in school and out of school, providing a stable link of support.

AmeriCorps members at Jane Boyd and The Bridge will serve as tutors and classroom assistants, working both individually and in small groups of students. Members will also have the opportunity to lead student activities. At Jane Boyd, members will support several youth programs, including the after-school enrichment program, which provides tutoring and homework help, as well as healthy cooking classes and programs that explore performing and visual art. Members at both Jane Boyd and The Bridge will also assist the "Read Naturally" program, which utilizes a nationally-recognized curriculum that helps children become better readers. Members will assist struggling readers through three research-based strategies: teaching modeling, repeated reading and progress monitoring. This program has seen results, including improved reading ability, and increases in student self-confidence

Narratives

and self-esteem. Read Naturally runs two days per week from 3 to 4pm; from 4 to 6pm, the same students participate in "Freedom Writers," a program in which the children create pieces of writing. AmeriCorps members will also be trained to assist with this program.

Members will also support the Race for Excellence Achievement Program (R.E.A.P.) at Jane Boyd. REAP is an innovative tutoring program available for kids in 1st through 6th grades. The program enhances academic skills, as well as life and character-building skills, and is structured as a formal job: children must apply and interview for the program. Upon being 'hired,' a job description is formed between the student, teachers and parents to target the student's academic needs. AmeriCorps members will serve as tutors, and will meet with their partner student three times per week. At the end of the week, students have a 'supervision' meeting with their tutors to discuss their performance, engagement and work ethic.

During the summer, members at both Jane Boyd and The Bridge will assist in full-day programming with youth. Both centers offer a Summer Day Camp that provides approximately 65 students with a structured and productive all-day option, including reading and math clubs. Participants engage in accelerated tutoring and regular trips to the public library to ensure they are prepared to begin school in the fall. In addition to academic achievement, youth will spend their summer healthy and active, through field trips, cooking and art projects.

4) Support for youth with disabilities

Three AmeriCorps members will assist The Arc of East Central Iowa, a nonprofit organization that offers programs and services to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families. The Arc recognizes that information for these individuals and caregivers is fragmented;

Narratives

programs can be difficult to access and understand. Most families need a navigator that will connect them to information that will improve their stability, self-sufficiency and coping mechanisms. Many of these families have low incomes, with less natural support and more barriers, ranging from multi-generational disabilities, language difficulties, and an unfamiliarity of community resources.

Due to budget shortages, The Arc is finding it more difficult to provide comprehensive assistance to this population, and to appropriately accommodate the large number of requests that come to the agency. When families cannot access supports and resources, there is a greater probability of family breakdown. Caregivers are stressed, miss work, and risk losing their employment if supports are not in place. In order to address this problem, The Arc will utilize three AmeriCorps members to reach out earlier to stressed families and to intervene more comprehensively. AmeriCorps members will provide depth and greater access to the family supports offered by The Arc. The AmeriCorps members will bring more families affected by disabilities into a broad "system of support," to enable their children to improve developmentally and socially.

One AmeriCorps member will be a service and support coordinator. He or she will be given family referrals and will assist those families in acquiring resources they need to become stable. The coordinator will follow up with families to provide consistent support.

A second AmeriCorps member will assist in identifying and developing parent leaders. Parent leaders are primary caregivers who have a child(ren) with disabilities, and have the willingness and capability to assist "newly identified" families. New families are typically overwhelmed and feel inadequate to address issues or find solutions. This AmeriCorps member will support parent leaders, and will match them as mentors to new families. This member will also develop and implement a family education

Narratives

and support program, and will assist in organizing events and parent/family networking activities.

A third AmeriCorps member will help create an interactive website where: a) individuals and families can access information about benefits and resources to gain more self-sufficiency, including forms and instructions, b) Arc staff can load instructions for the care of specific medical/emotional/learning challenges, c) Arc staff can download documentation forms and access FAQ's about compliance and quality assurance needs, d) trainings will be loaded, e) individuals and families will be able to "chat" and interactively communicate with other families or staff about disabilities, resources, complaints or suggestions. These efforts will ensure families throughout the area, urban and rural, have access to this information.

This AmeriCorps member will also increase family participation in online support groups, and will increase access to online forums. The AmeriCorps member will work to develop additional online trainings for families and the direct service professionals who work with them. This position will also assist in creating an electronic forum to help distribute policy alerts and informational materials.

AMERICORPS SELECTION, TRAINING & SUPERVISION

UWECI and the partners involved with Every Child Succeeds will ensure the individuals selected to be AmeriCorps members will have the appropriate qualifications, experience and skills to succeed in their roles. UWECI will also recruit and hire a Program Director (PD) by the end of June 2011, or at the earliest available date after funding awards are announced.

The PD will be responsible for coordinating a comprehensive AmeriCorps member recruitment effort. At the outset, UWECI and its partners will create detailed position descriptions for each member slot.

Narratives

UWECI will look for characteristics in applicants that include: interest or experience in education, working with youth, low-income populations and/or individuals with disabilities and their families. Members must be open-minded and able to problem solve. Specific skills needed to be successful will vary by position and include: ability to access information online, develop outlines for training, facilitate groups, and develop easily accessible web-based information. Applicants with a college degree will be considered a priority for the AmeriCorps positions, and members that will be providing tutoring must have a high school diploma.

The PD will circulate the position descriptions through email distribution lists that include: UWECI's 40 partner agencies, 250 volunteers, board and committee members, businesses, faith-based partners and service clubs. UWECI has established relationships with the Volunteer Managers/Service Learning Coordinators at the three local colleges, university and community college. Members will be recruited through college online resources, at volunteer and career fairs, and by posting flyers in common areas on college campuses. UWECI will also utilize the online AmeriCorps recruiting system, and other statewide and national recruitment websites, such as Idealist.org. UWECI will post information about AmeriCorps positions on its Facebook page and on CorridorCareers.org, the local job matching website, as well as in local newspapers. UWECI will recruit AmeriCorps members in UWECI e-newsletters that reach 9,000 individuals. These recruiting resources will increase exposure for the Every Child Succeeds program, and will reach out to a broad range of potential applicants, specifically including local residents.

UWECI and the Every Child Succeeds partners will also seek to recruit members from different ethnic and minority groups, including people with disabilities, seniors, and individuals with bilingual skills. These members will be recruited through local community diversity groups, such as Diversity Focus,

Narratives

student ethnic groups at local colleges, and events such as the Student Diversity Leadership Conference, held at Mount Mercy University. To reach those who are unemployed, UWECI will contact Work Force Development, the Kirkwood Community College Skills-to-Employment Dislocated Worker program, and other organizations that provide services to unemployed individuals. To reach the senior population, UWECI will perform outreach to RSVP volunteers and other retired groups through newsletters and flyers.

Once an individual applies for the program, there will be a thorough interview process to carefully match the most qualified applicants to each position. The interview process will include behavioral interview questions, and will require a review of the position description, and an overview of AmeriCorps requirements and conditions of service. Potential members must also pass a background check before receiving an offer to join the program. When a member receives an offer, they will sign a contract and receive an acceptance packet that will have information about orientation.

Members will be oriented to AmeriCorps and to the Cedar Rapids community during several day-long training sessions, held the first week members start. At this training, members will get to know program staff and each other. The PD will develop a complete training and orientation schedule, and will assemble program manuals for each member. This orientation will cover topics such as: an introduction to AmeriCorps, its mission and values, member benefits and rights, requirements and conditions of service, and prohibited activities. Members will receive background information on Cedar Rapids, including demographics of the individuals and families they will be serving, and information about the educational achievement gap and its long-term effect on the community.

During the initial training sessions, members will be introduced to their site supervisors and will

Narratives

confirm the schedule for their on-site orientation. Each member will receive an orientation at their placement site during their first week of service. Site supervisors will be expected to complete a checklist of orientation tasks, including: providing information about the history of the organization, policies and procedures, giving a site tour and introducing member(s) to staff. Site supervisors will review position descriptions and expectations, and will set up a weekly meeting time to discuss progress, successes and concerns. Site supervisors must create a positive and healthy work environment, with open lines of communication and opportunities for members to reflect on their service.

Site supervisors will be chosen by the host sites, and will have a clear understanding of AmeriCorps site supervisor responsibilities. Prior to the arrival of AmeriCorps members and throughout the year, the PD will work with site supervisors to administer training and information on supervising AmeriCorps members. Topics may include an overview of the AmeriCorps program, policies and procedures, staff roles, how to monitor and evaluate members, and recognizing member's unique contributions. The PD will work with site supervisors to confirm they understand the AmeriCorps program and the importance that members gain new skills and experiences during their service year.

Prior to the start of the AmeriCorps members, the PD will also work with site supervisors to develop a comprehensive training program for each member. UWECI will require that each site provide training specific to each AmeriCorps position. Site supervisors will submit a training plan and timeline to ensure that members are prepared to perform all activities they engage in during their term of service. These trainings will vary by position. Specific training topics will include: Play and Learn 101, early literacy curriculum, training on autism and behavioral disorders, orientation to HIPAA and Iowa waivers, respecting confidentiality, data base management, REAP tutor training, Read

Narratives

Naturally and Freedom Writers training, cultural competency and sensitivity to disabilities.

Members that serve as tutors will receive high-quality, research-based tutor training both before starting service and throughout the year. The training will utilize local education and/or reading specialists from the Cedar Rapids School District and/or the local Grant Wood Area Education Agency, as well as LEARNS Tutoring Resources, offered by CNCS. The tutoring curriculum will be consistent with the instructional program of the local educational agency and with the Iowa state academic content standards.

AmeriCorps members will also be part of ongoing training opportunities offered to staff at placement sites, and will be required to attend AmeriCorps trainings offered by the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service. The PD will distribute information regarding any local training offered by the Linn County Nonprofit Resource Center, Iowa State University Extension, and other local organizations. AmeriCorps members will be encouraged to attend trainings that pertain to their unique position.

UWECI will also host required, monthly all-member meetings. The PD will arrange speakers to present at these meetings. Topics covered during the year-long term will include: volunteer recruitment and management; effective meeting facilitation, conflict resolution, effective communication, project management, business writing, disaster preparedness, CPR and first aid training, and life after AmeriCorps. Members will be encouraged to suggest other training topics. Members will also be required to create professional development plans and report monthly on their progress. If members receive training at their placement site that is of interest to others, they will have the opportunity to present mini-trainings to the entire group.

Narratives

Members will be encouraged to engage in the planning and participation of national service days, including: Make a Difference Day, 9/11 National Day of Remembrance and Service, Martin Luther King Day, AmeriCorps week, and local service day events like UWECI's Day of Caring.

Members will also have guided reflection opportunities at monthly training meetings, in monthly progress reports, and in quarterly one-on-one meetings with the PD. At these meetings, members will have an opportunity to review training plans, and discuss their successes and any program concerns. The PD will create an Every Child Succeeds blog, and members will be required to contribute a blog entry bi-weekly about their experiences and what they have learned by serving in AmeriCorps.

Members will also complete a program evaluation after three months, mid-year, and at the end of their service term. This will allow the members to provide feedback on the training they have received, the support and guidance of their supervisor, and their overall service experience. Site supervisors, site staff and the PD will be responsible for providing ongoing feedback to the members. Site supervisors will evaluate members quarterly, and if necessary, will create performance action plans.

When members show strong leadership skills, site supervisors will provide opportunities for members to lead volunteers and group projects. Where applicable, members will be able to participate in board and committee meetings. This will give members a better understanding of service in leadership roles.

Site supervisors will review monthly member reports prior to their submission to the PD. Site supervisors will also provide quarterly reports to the PD that pertain to AmeriCorps measurement goals and accomplishments. The PD will communicate with site supervisors on a bi-weekly basis via telephone or by email to discuss member progress. The PD will visit host sites and meet with site supervisors face-to-face quarterly.

Narratives

Together, the PD and site supervisors will provide recognition to the AmeriCorps members throughout his or her term. Members will also participate in site staff celebrations and events.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES & VOLUNTEER GENERATION

Near the end of the three year grant cycle, UWECI and partners would like to see: Children demonstrating developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills, parents and caregivers practicing early language and literacy activities, children with improved reading and social skills through after-school enrichment programming and one-on-one tutoring, and families of individuals with developmental disabilities obtaining the resources needed to improve their child's development and increase family stability.

UWECI will measure impact by collecting data from surveys, sign-in sheets and database tracking. Performance measures will be reported on an annual basis. The performance measure targets are based on other program models and the program plans.

Two AmeriCorps members will assist with preparation, facilitation and outreach for the Play and Learn program. This program will use national performance measures ED20, ED21 and ED 23. The Play and Learn program will provide parents and informal caregivers an opportunity to practice skills to improve the development of 120 children. 60 children will complete 24 sessions during the year, and 45 children will demonstrate gains in social and emotional development, reported through parent surveys. Play and Learn set these goals by tracking the participation and results of the current program.

Narratives

Four AmeriCorps members will provide one-on-one tutoring and assist in out-of-school programs with 20 students. These programs will use national performance measures ED1, ED2 and ED5. 18 students will attend a minimum of 12 programs and/or tutor sessions to complete the education program. 18 students will show improved academic performance as a result of attending the sessions. UWECI set these targets based on current program participation, and will track results through end-of-the-year teacher surveys. UWECI will pilot this program and anticipates expanding it to serve additional schools and students.

Three AmeriCorps members placed at The Arc will connect 35 parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to services and supports. Members will build an electronic presence, and will connect 50 families to web-based parent training, support groups and resource links. 75% of the parents/caregivers of children with disabilities will report benefits for their children as a result of utilizing web-based resources.

AmeriCorps members will expand the reach and impact to the community by recruiting volunteers and with outreach activities. Depending on the site, members may interview, train, place and recognize volunteers, participate in volunteer fairs and events, and speak to community-based groups. Members will recruit, on average, 12 volunteers during their service term. This will include volunteers for partner youth programs, as well as individuals for national days of service or one-time volunteer events in the community, including AmeriCorps week.

Volunteers will meet the needs of youth by tutoring and assisting with other education activities. By continually recruiting volunteers, AmeriCorps members will help maintain a low student-to-tutor ratio, which allows students to receive more individualized attention and helps improve academic

Narratives

results. Volunteers will be placed in the four AmeriCorps site schools (Grant Wood, Johnson and Polk Elementary Schools, McKinley Middle School) and two out-of-school-time community centers (Jane Boyd Community House and The Bridge). Volunteers will be trained to provide structured tutoring and assist in out-of-school programming that enhances the academic and social skills of students. With the help of the AmeriCorps members and volunteers, more students will receive one-on-one tutoring and will participate in out-of-school programs. Students that complete in-and-out school programs will show improved academic performance.

PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

UWECI has established successful, collaborative relationships with many diverse partners on each of the four strategies outlined above. Both Play & Learn of East Central Iowa and the Early Literacy Education Program arose from research done by the UWECI Early Childhood Design Team. This includes: local early childhood experts from the Linn County Child Development Center, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, East Central Regional Library Services, Linn County Community Empowerment, and the Parent Education Consortium.

Tutoring and out-of-school time programs are the focus of several community partners. Over the past year, UWECI has convened a Ready By 21 stakeholders group of community leaders to address the future of children in Eastern Iowa. The group includes 35 individuals who represent 20 organizations, including: two area school districts, city and county departments, juvenile justice, higher education, youth development organizations, faith-based organizations and funders. This group meets monthly to discuss the best ways to remove barriers and ensure all children are ready to succeed in college, work and life.

Narratives

UWECI, Jane Boyd and the Bridge have established relationships with several of the Cedar Rapids Community Schools, including: Grant Wood, Johnson and Polk Elementary Schools, and McKinley Middle School. The Cedar Rapids Community School District, stakeholders and parents have already been holding "Community Conversation" meetings to discuss how the community can come together to reduce the achievement gap and address the rising drop-out rate. UWECI also co-chairs the Cedar Rapids Community School District Volunteer Support committee, which includes District staff and parents, and which is working to identify and address barriers in recruiting volunteers.

The fourth strategy, supporting youth with disabilities, developed as a priority from UWECI's partnership with The Arc. This relationship has been in force for 40 years, and is now focused on a joint effort to uplift ALL families who are in poverty, by helping them overcome barriers that make them unstable.

UWECI is confident the Every Child Succeeds program will be sustainable. Throughout its 96 year history, UWECI has worked hard and invested time in developing community relationships. Today, UWECI collaborates with: 24,000 donors, 578 businesses, more than 80 nonprofit agencies, schools, organized labor, government, neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations and many others. UWECI has raised over \$10 million each of the past three years; this fundraising capability and its long-standing community partnerships will enhance the sustainability and organizational capacity of an AmeriCorps program.

UWECI will work with businesses and community partners to secure cash and in-kind support to sustain the AmeriCorps program. UWECI will secure \$191,500 in cash and in-kind contributions from partners and businesses to support the Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps program.

Narratives

UWECI is also committed to supporting and promoting volunteerism. UWECI established a strong network of volunteer services through work on flood recovery, its current sponsorship of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Linn and Jones Counties, support of Leaders in Volunteerism, a group of local volunteer coordinators, and involvement with the Volunteer Centers of Iowa. This network of volunteer services and strategies, as well as community partner support, will sustain the education initiatives outlined in this application after the grant ends.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

The primary contact for the AmeriCorps grant application is Leslie Wright, Vice President of Community Building at UWECI. The secondary contact is Sue Driscoll, Volunteer Program Manager at UWECI. The AmeriCorps program will fall under the Community Building department, within Volunteer Engagement. The Community Building team at UWECI has 20+ years of experience identifying community issues, collaborating with community partners to find effective solutions, and measuring accurate results. The Vice President of Community Building will contribute 5%, and the Volunteer Program Manager will contribute approximately 10% of their time providing support to the Every Child Succeeds Program.

UWECI has experience administering federal funds through its sponsorship of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Linn and Jones Counties, which it received in July 2010. UWECI received \$24,683 in RSVP funding from CNCS during the first six months of fiscal 2011, and has applied for \$47,925 each year, with an end date of 12/31/12.

Each year, UWECI conducts an annual fundraising campaign at more than 578 companies and

Narratives

24,000 donors to raise money for partner agencies. UWECI has consistently raised over \$10 million dollars annually, and conducts an RFP process every three years to establish its partner agencies. UWECI was also the fiscal agent for the Linn Area Long Term Recovery Coalition during flood recovery.

The UWECI finance department will provide fiscal oversight of the AmeriCorps program. The department has a stringent system of checks and balances to make certain it operates in a sound fiscal manner. The operating budget and community funding decisions are reviewed and approved by several volunteer committees, including the board of directors. McGladrey & Pullen, LLP, an independent CPA firm, conducts the annual audit, which is reviewed by the volunteer audit committee and approved by the board of directors.

The Finance Manager will contribute 5% of their time and will issue all checks, manage payroll, track revenue, handle drawdown for federal dollars and submit Financial Status Reports.

Funding for the AmeriCorps program will come from: CNCS, cash and in-kind contributions from partner host sites and UWECI. In the proposed budget, CNCS will contribute 41% of the \$324,800 budget. UWECI and the partner host sites will contribute 59% of the total budget.

The proposed \$133,345 requested from CNCS represents approximately 1% of the total revenue received in the UWECI budget. The Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps program cost of \$323,800 represents 3.5% of the total UWECI operating budget (4.3% of the total support activities of the organization).

Narratives

STAFFING

UWECI staff that will lead the Every Child Succeeds program will include the AmeriCorps Program Director (PD), who will work closely with UWECI's Volunteer Program Manager, and the Vice President of the Community Building Department. UWECI will fill this position by June 2011, or as soon as possible after funding awards are announced. UWECI will hire an individual with a college degree, who will be able to successfully coordinate the Every Child Succeeds program. The PD must possess excellent organizational, written and oral communication skills, as well as strong computer, listening and project management skills. The individual will demonstrate good interpersonal and relationship building abilities.

As an employee of UWECI, the PD will follow UWECI procedures and policies, and will receive staff orientation, training and benefits. The PD will have the necessary supplies to perform job duties, including a desk, computer and phone. UWECI will provide IT support and training. The PD will be part of ongoing UWECI staff training that includes topics such as: conflict resolution, business writing, project management, effective communication, ethics and diversity.

The PD will be part of the Volunteer Engagement team and will report to the Volunteer Program Manager, who will provide direct supervision and will assist with developing budgets and strategic plans, as well as ensure CNCS requirements are being met. The PD and Volunteer Program Manager will meet weekly.

The PD will attend necessary AmeriCorps training provided by the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service and CNCS. The PD will have a clear understanding of the regulations and policies of the AmeriCorps program.

Narratives

The PD will be responsible for coordinating general training and orientation at the start of the service year, and at monthly all-member training meetings. The PD will handle overall supervision of AmeriCorps members, which will include communicating bi-weekly with site supervisors, reviewing monthly progress reports from members and quarterly reports from site supervisors, meeting individually with members on a quarterly basis, and working with the UWECI finance team to effectively manage the program budget and perform Human Resource activities.

The PD will be responsible for creating open lines of communication with placement sites, including to ensure performance measures are being properly recorded and met. This will include submitting reports to CNCS. The PD will also compile any reports necessary for the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service.

The PD will work with work with site supervisors to ensure members are provided technical assistance and training, proper orientation, and to ensure that members are integrated into the organizational culture of the service site. It is the responsibility of site supervisors to make sure that members have adequate support throughout their term. To that end, each partner site will sign a Memorandum of Understanding that documents the amount of time site supervisors must allocate to managing their member(s).

MULTI-SITE INFORMATION

The ten AmeriCorps members that comprise the Every Child Succeeds program will serve in community organizations and schools in Linn County, Iowa. Members in the Play & Learn and Early Literacy Education programs will serve at UWECI ; members involved in tutoring and out-of-school

Narratives

time programs will serve at 4 schools within the Cedar Rapids Community School District, the Jane Boyd Community House and The Bridge; members assisting children with disabilities will serve at The Arc. UWECI has been partnering with and providing funding for both Jane Boyd and The Bridge for over 40 years.

These sites incorporate AmeriCorps regulations criteria (45 CFR §2522.475) by carrying out quality and sustainable programming that has been recognized and supported by UWECI, and by exhibiting valuable community leadership that demonstrates a strong connection to the community. This will be valuable in recruiting members from among local residents. The sites have agreed to support AmeriCorps members with training, reflection and leadership opportunities, ensuring a powerful service experience for their members. Host sites will sign a written Memorandum of Understanding that states they are required to provide effective site supervision, in-kind resources and a cash match. Each site must have a volunteer management structure and capacity building abilities to support and engage AmeriCorps members. Each site will provide performance measurement data and will be involved with a thorough program evaluation process.

In addition, the program model and activities at these sites include several that receive special consideration in the selection process (45 CFR §2522.450): programs will be operated by community organizations, will serve and involve children and youth, and will address educational needs, including literacy and tutoring activities, with a focus on reading for children in third grade or younger. UWECI's sponsorship of RSVP of Linn and Jones County will also be instrumental in helping to foster opportunities for baby boomers to volunteer in the Cedar Rapids community, through tutoring and other activities with youth.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Narratives

COST EFFECTIVENESS

The Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps proposal is for ten full-time, year-long AmeriCorps positions. The CNCS cost per MSY is \$13,335. As a first year program, this amount is within the maximum allowed funding from CNCS. In addition, UWECI and partner sites will secure \$191,500 to support the costs, which represents 59% of the proposed budget. Partners involved with this proposal have committed to provide \$18,000 in cash and \$71,750 in-kind donations.

UWECI is committed to providing \$43,350 in-kind contributions that include staff support, technical assistance, supplies, occupancy and staff training. UWECI will secure \$58,400 in cash funding to support a portion of the PD salary and benefits, AmeriCorps member background checks, occupancy costs and member benefits. UWECI will also work to secure additional funding sources throughout the grant period from businesses that support the UWECI campaign and foundations, groups or organizations that have an interest in financing education initiatives.

BUDGET ADEQUACY

The PD will provide 95% of their time managing the Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps program. The balance of their time will be supporting and carrying out the mission of UWECI and the Volunteer Engagement program. The salary and benefits of the PD in the proposed budget is comparable to other coordinator positions at UWECI. The compensation and benefit programs are reviewed by the Human Resource Committee of the Board of Directors. Salary schedules for all positions are reviewed annually.

This project budget provides funds for operating costs that include: a Program Director, training, supervision and support, member travel, IT support, materials and supplies; and member benefits that

Narratives

include a sufficient living allowance, health insurance and workers compensation.

The ten member AmeriCorps team will provide direct service that will enhance a pipeline of high quality in and out-of-school education programs and improve academic outcomes for children.

UWECI supports the proposed budget and believes it is sufficient to implement the Every Child Succeeds AmeriCorps Program.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Clarification Summary

Budget Clarifications:

I.A. Site supervisors were added to the Personnel Section of the budget. Supporting documentation for the time supervisors spend on AmeriCorps Activities will be provided through time sheets.

I.A. The Program Coordinator has been changed to the Program Director.

I.A. Based on the job description, the Program Director will spend 100% of their time administering the Every Child Succeed program.

I.A. The salaries/benefits of UWECI staff that work with finance and oversight of the Every Child Succeeds program will not be used as a match in the budget.

I.B. The Program Director salary was not adjusted.

I.C. The duplicated transportation costs were removed from the budget.

I.C. The state training for members was calculated. Mileage and food are itemized.

I.C. The mileage reimbursement rate is .51 per mile. This is the same as the current federal rate.

Narratives

I.C. Mileage and food for member travel the state training is now itemized in the budget. The hotel costs were removed from the travel costs.

I.E. Members will need work space and computers to conduct service activities, such as writing reports, recruiting volunteers and interacting with clients.

I.E. The computer costs and supplies were itemized as separate line items in the budget. The computer costs are the same for members and the Program Director.

I.F. The I.T./phones line item was moved to Other Program Operating Costs. The 5.5% is charged to all departments housed at United Way. This applies to the Program Director and any members hosted at United Way. This percentage covers the cost of a staff IT person as well as the company that provides UWECE's network and support.

I.G. The staff training line item was duplicated and removed. A line item for training registration was added.

I.I. The host site supervisor cost was move to section 1-A Personnel Expenses. This is an in-kind donation from the partners involved with the program. Time sheets will be kept to verify the in-kind donation.

II.B FICA Calculation was corrected.

Programmatic Clarification Items:

1.The start date and member enrollment period will be September 1, 2011 through August 31, 2012.

Performance Measure Clarifications:

PM#1-Children Connected to Community Assets

1. There is a significant need at The Arc of East Central Iowa for additional support from AmeriCorps members. The Arc currently provides support to over 735 individuals with intellectual disabilities, a

Narratives

number that has grown 9.5% since 2008. At the same time, due to budget cuts, The Arc has reduced their number of family resource coordinators by 20%. Eight staff members each currently manage 90 individuals and families, up from 70 in 2008. This larger caseload has delayed problem solving efforts. In addition, the families The Arc serves are now presenting more complex issues, including children who have both intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. These families are also often more distant from the office, making technology an imperative assistant in information delivery. By connecting children and families to community assets, AmeriCorps members would promote timely access to services, which help prevent issues from becoming significant.

2. The performance measure was revised.

Strategy to Achieve Results:

AmeriCorps members will identify and connect parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to comprehensive services and supports that will improve their child's development.

Results:

Result: Output:

AmeriCorps member(s) serving as resource coordinators will take referrals from community sources on individuals and families affected by intellectual/related disabilities. They will conduct intakes, assess critical and intermediate needs, and create a plan of action. Parents and caregivers will complete the intake process, and begin the plan of action to qualify and access community services.

Indicator: Children who are identified as intellectually disabled or at risk of becoming disable

Target: Individuals/families who receive community services through intake/referral process

Target Value: 35

Instruments: Intake and referral forms, contact logs, formal care plans

PM Statement: Parents and caregivers will access community assets, including public benefits, peer

Narratives

supports and interventions that will improve the development of children in their care.

Result: Output:

AmeriCorps member(s) will build a comprehensive web/social networking site that will offer information, links, and connections among individuals and families who are affected by intellectual/related developmental disabilities.

Indicator: Individuals and families who access links and information regarding community resources

Target: Families who gain additional resources via electronic media

Target Value: 50

Instruments: web tracker, anecdotes, contact logs

PM Statement: Families and caregivers will gain additional support and information that will improve their ability to fully access supports that address developmental delays.

Result: Output:

An AmeriCorps member will identify and develop parent leaders that execute a defined family education/support program, and organize educational, networking and training events.

Indicator: Parent leaders will assist "new" families who are experiencing fear, isolation and apprehension in addressing the impact of having a child with intellectual/related disabilities.

Target: Families who are supported through peer/mentor (parent to parent) interaction and attend educational, networking and support events and activities

Target Value: 75

Instruments: Personal meetings, event attendance, family education program attendance, anecdotes

PM Statement: 75 families or caregivers will receive mentoring support from parent leaders, and from family education/support events and networking activities.

Narratives

PM #2-Education-Play & Learn Program

1.The target of 50% of children will complete Play & Learn sessions was based on current attendance numbers. Projections were made that at least half of the participants would attend half of the sessions offered during the course of the first year. These numbers were also based off a similar Play & Learn model in Seattle, Washington.

PM #3-Education-Tutoring

1.The target number of 20 students was based on the current capacity of the partner after school programs, and because this is a pilot program. It is expected that the number will be much higher in subsequent years.

2.The instrument for this performance measure is a teacher evaluation of students at the end of the year. Research will be done to find a non-subjective instrument that will determine if the student performance has improved.

Programmatic Clarification

1. Criminal history background checks will be conducted on all members, the program director and site supervisors in accordance with CNCS requirements. Background checks will include the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation, the National Sex Offender registry, and FBI fingerprint check, as appropriate based on federal requirements.

2. The budget was adjusted to reflect the additional background check requirements for program director and site supervisors.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

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

Priority Areas

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity | <input type="checkbox"/> 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 checked="" 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 10

Service Categories

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Afterschool Programs | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Pre-Elementary Day Care | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tutoring and Child (Elementary) Literacy | Primary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other Human Needs | Primary <input type="checkbox"/> | Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> |

Children Connected to Community Assets

Service Category: Other Human Needs

Measure Category: Not Applicable

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

AmeriCorps members will identify and connect parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to comprehensive services and supports that will improve their child's development.

Results

Result: Output

AmeriCorps member(s) serving as resource coordinators will take referrals from community sources on individuals and families affected by intellectual/related disabilities. They will conduct intakes, assess critical and intermediate needs, and create a plan of action. Parents and caregivers will complete the intake process, and begin the plan of action to qualify and access community services.

Result: Output

Indicator: Children who are identified as intellectually disabled or at risk of becoming disabled

Target: Individuals/families who receive community services through intake/referral process

Target Value: 35

Instruments: Intake forms, contact logs (database) and formal care plans

PM Statement: Parents and caregivers will access community assets, including public benefits, peer supports and interventions that will improve the development of children in their care.

Prev. Yrs. Data:

Result: Output

AmeriCorps member(s) will build a comprehensive web/social networking site that will offer information, links, and connections among individuals and families who are affected by intellectual/related developmental disabilities.

Indicator: Individuals and families who access links and information regarding community

Target: Families who gain additional resources via electronic media

Target Value: 50

Instruments: web tracker, anecdotes, contact logs

PM Statement: Families and caregivers will gain additional support and information that will improve their ability to fully access supports that address developmental delays.

Prev. Yrs. Data:

Result: Output

resources

Result: Output

An AmeriCorps member will identify and develop parent leaders that execute a defined family education/support program, and organize educational, networking and training events.

Indicator: Parent leaders will assist new families who are experiencing fear, isolation and

Target: Families who are supported through peer/mentor (parent to parent) interaction and attend educational, networking and support events and activities

Target Value: 75

Instruments: Personal meetings, event attendance, family education program attendance, anecdotes

PM Statement: 75 families or caregivers will receive mentoring support from parent leaders, and from family education/support events and networking activities.

Prev. Yrs. Data:

Result: Output

apprehension in addressing the impact of having a child with intellectual/related

Result: Output

disabilities.

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Education

Performance Measure Title: Play and Learn Program

Service Category: Pre-Elementary Day Care

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

AmeriCorps members will assist with preparation and facilitating of Play and Learn sessions to parents and informal caregivers.

Result: Output

Result.

By participating regularly in Play & Learn group sessions, parents and informal caregivers will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills to improve the development of children within their care.

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

Target :60 children will complete 24 Play & Learn sessions during the year

Target Value: 60

Instruments: Kaleidoscope Play & Learn sign-in sheet and database tracking

PM Statement: By participating regularly in Play & Learn groups, parents and informal caregivers will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills to improve the development of 60 children.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Parents and informal caregivers will have the knowledge and skills to positively impact the social and emotional development of the children in their care.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED23: Children demonstrating gains in social and emotional development.

Target :45 parents and caregivers will report an increase in behavior that they are helping the child/ren in their care get along with other children

Target Value: 45

Instruments: Kaleidoscope Network Play and Learn Caregiver Feedback Form

PM Statement: As a result of attending Play & Learn groups, 75% of parents and caregivers will report that they help the child/ren in their care get along with other children a little more or a lot more.

Result: Output

Result.

Parents and informal caregivers will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills to improve the development of the children in their care

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

Target :120 children will attend Play & Learn sessions during the year

Target Value: 120

Instruments: Kaleidoscope Play & Learn sign-in sheet

PM Statement: By participating in Play & Learn groups, parents and informal caregivers will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills to improve the development of 120 children.

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Education

Performance Measure Title: Tutoring and after-school programs

Service Category: Tutoring and Child (Elementary) Literacy

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

AmeriCorps members will provide one-on-one tutoring and assist with after-school programming.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Students will improve academic performance as a result of attending program or tutor sessions

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

Target :Number of students that show improvement in academic performance

Target Value: 18

Instruments: Teacher evaluation of students at end of year

PM Statement: 18 students will show improved academic performance as a result of attending program or tutor sessions

Result: Output

Result.

Students will attend 12 program or tutor sessions to complete an education program

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

Target :Number of students that complete 12 sessions

Target Value: 18

Instruments: Program or tutor sign in sheet

PM Statement: 18 students will attend 12 program or tutor session to complete an education program

Result: Output

Result.

Students identified by staff will participate in one-on-one tutoring and after school programs

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

Target :Number of student who start education program

Target Value: 20

Instruments: Sign in sheet and database tracking

PM Statement: 20 Students identified by staff will participate in one-on-one tutoring and after school programs

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable