

Narratives

Executive Summary

Thirteen rural Oklahoma school districts with very limited resources will be provided with AmeriCorps members to improve the academic performance of underachieving pre-k through 12th grade students in 20 schools. Members will work with students that are struggling to understand core academic concepts (especially in reading and math) offering tutoring throughout the school day. Members will also supplement summer school and enrichment programs.

Rationale and Approach

PROBLEM: Partners with Serve for Success are from a wide-spread region in rural N.W. Oklahoma that is sparsely populated and has very limited resources. The AmeriCorps members serving in these sites provide services in six counties. Partners include thirteen separate school districts: Alva Public Schools, Calumet, Canton, Chisholm Trail Technology Center, Cimarron at Lahoma, Drummond, Fairview, Geary, Kingfisher, Lomega at Loyal, Okeene, Ringwood and St. Peter and Paul Catholic Schools in Kingfisher. Enrollment in the districts range from: St. Peter and Paul Catholic Schools with 74 students in pre-k through 8th grade to Kingfisher Public Schools with 1,208 total district enrollment pre-k through 12th. The average district has an enrollment of 377 students. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, 11 out of the 12 communities in which these school districts are located are classified as rural and have a Beale Code of six or higher. These small communities do not have organizations such as United Way, YMCA or YWCA to provide programming for children and youth. These communities do not have large populations; large industries or businesses that provide employee volunteer programs.

Each district's state report card based on Stanford-9 Achievement test and the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests indicates that our partner school districts have 1st through 3rd graders that need reading and remediation. Our partner districts noted an average of 26.58% of students need reading remediation with the highest listed at 62%. These state reports also indicate that all of our listed

Narratives

districts were below the state average on achievement test scores in reading and math for various grade levels. Oklahoma is forty-ninth in the nation with per pupil spending. The Oklahoma State Department of Education projects schools will suffer another 5%-30% cut for the 2011-2012 school year. Rural Oklahoma schools have suffered three severe budget cuts in the last eight years and anticipate another big hit for the 2011-2012 school year. One such example is Okeene Public Schools. Eight years ago Okeene lost \$185, 000, which was ten percent of their budget. Three years later they lost \$283,000 which was 11.5% of their budget. This same district suffered another \$249,000 cut in 2010 or an average of \$795 per student. As a result, almost all of our partner school districts have been forced to cut teachers and/or staff due to budget cuts. Class sizes have been growing continually since the start of our program in 2003. Classrooms that once consisted of twelve to fifteen students per class now consist of at least twenty-five students per class. One teacher is expected to teach and carry the work load of what belonged to two individuals a few years ago. For example, Saints Peter and Paul teachers now have combined grade classrooms: first and second grade students are in the same classroom taught by one teacher! Under such conditions, classroom teachers are finding it even more difficult to give their students with diverse learning needs the one-on-one attention needed.

Although, our communities are very small (8 have populations under 700 people) you will find diversity from community to community. In these communities populations are small. Ringwood, Kingfisher and Okeene have the largest growing Hispanic populations. Many parents are unable to help their children with homework due to language barriers. Therefore, districts also are challenged with the need to educate students who speak little or no English.

Districts struggle with high dropout rates and poor attendance. The state dropout rate is 12.4% and our partner districts often have even higher rates. For example, Canton Public Schools reported a 19.2% dropout rate while Drummond reported 22 %. Therefore, as expected, many of these communities have a high rate of individuals that have a less than 12th grade education. The state

Narratives

average of individuals that have a less than 12th grade education is 19%. Census data reports on our partner communities, again show the even higher rates; Canton with 23%, Geary with 24%, Okeene with 20%, Fairview with 22% and Ringwood with 24%. Parents with less than 12th grade educations are more likely to have difficulty helping with homework and less likely to provide academic support. This increases the likelihood that their children will also not complete high school and will experience limited economic opportunities later in life.

In addition to the impact that the lack of resources has on rural schools, there are no after school or summer programs available to students in these remote areas. "Rural Kids Count Book" research documents that enriched childhoods have a positive effect on health and achievements as adults. However, students in our partner communities have minimal access to opportunities for positive interaction with adults and other children.

Why help the students in rural Oklahoma? Drop-out rates, language barriers, budget cuts and large class sizes have drastically impaired the academic achievement of students in each district. This means that the urgency to provide students with academic support is vital.

SOLUTION: AMERICORPS MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: The National Education Association Dropout Action Plan states "that the best way to reduce dropout rate is to make sure that students receive individual attention in safe schools in small classes, before and after school tutoring and to act early with strong elementary programs." This is exactly what we do through SFS with the service of AmeriCorps members.

Due to lack of funds and other community resources in these small, rural areas, AmeriCorps members provide one-on-one and small group tutoring for students during and after school that is not feasible otherwise. Members also provide enrichment activities along with tutoring during the summer to provide positive, educational opportunities not otherwise available.

Educated individuals willing to lead and serve these communities are essential to their survival. The

Narratives

future of our world depends on the success and education of the students of today. SFS partners all agree that there are a multitude of concerns for each school district. These concerns or areas of need vary from student to student, district to district and from year to year. SFS targets pre-k through 12th grade students that are performing below grade level, failing subjects, are below their expected level in a subject or that struggle to understand various concepts, especially in the core subjects of reading and math. SFS allows each site annually to determine their greatest areas of student need and then utilize AmeriCorps members to help address those needs. For example, Canton Schools might place members with students in grades three through five where reading proficiency is the greatest identified need while Okeene Schools place members in pre-k through 1st grade to enhance the early childhood learning curve.

Forty-one AmeriCorps members serve August through June in 13 school districts at 20 sites. There are 31 full, 4 part time members, 3 quarter time members (2 of which are education award only slots) and 3 (education award only) minimum time members that serve an 11 month contract. Eight additional 300 hour summer members will serve a two month (May and June) contract. The total number of members assigned per site is based on the size and need of the district. The slot type is also based on district needs. For example: Alva utilizes part time positions as their members are generally students who also attend college classes. They have found college students to be an excellent applicant pool for locating high quality tutors. Members serve 175 school days and 5 days per week throughout the school year and 5 days a week during the month of June. A typical full time member serves 43 hours per week and a part time member serves 22 hours per week tutoring and assisting in the classroom along with before and after school time. Members either tutor within the classroom, or in an area designated for one-on-one or small group work.

Quarter time members and minimum time members generally serve 2 hours during the regular school day, after school and during the month of June. This allows for one-on-one tutor help during

Narratives

school hours and for additional help for sites that have extensive afterschool and summer programs.

Each district assigns teachers to assist members with curriculum, along with specific instructions for tutoring individual students and member supervision. Members are available every school day for students who need extra one-on-one help separate from the larger class. One-on-one assistance provides those who are at risk of falling behind and those with poor attendance to improve academically, as well as gain confidence and self-esteem. For example, members might listen to a student practice oral reading, read to non-readers, tutor students using site work, or practice math facts and other skills that need much repetition to master. When needed, members provide additional assistance to students with English as a second language (ESL) by providing homework assistance and additional language practice.

During a typical day, a member will tutor ten to twelve students. Members also observe and assist in critical subject area classes such as math and English. The member has the opportunity to hear the teacher explain the lesson and thus becomes familiar with the material so that he/she may effectively assist students after the lesson, during school or during the after school sessions. On average, members work with individual students two to three days a week for 15 to 30 minutes per day. The time varies according to the age level and attention span of the student.

SFS AmeriCorps members are contracted to serve through the month of June. Members provide or supplement summer school programs throughout the month of June. As many children need an extra educational boost with supplemental reading programs in the summer to keep them on track academically. SFS partners have found member service critical to their ability to offer these needed programs. The summer programs provide a variety of supervised activities to provide hands-on learning as well as keep young people busy and out of trouble. A variety of activities such as fishing, arts and crafts, and food-nutrition are incorporated in our summer programs. During a typical summer program day, summer school goes from 9am till noon. Members are assisted with

Narratives

identifying appropriate activities and lessons by teachers responsible for the summer school program.

The groups of students rotate from class to class to different members or teachers. During the afternoon, (1pm-4pm) students participate in enrichment or recreational activities. Members are responsible for planning and providing small group enrichment activities such as arts and crafts, health and fitness, and fixing and eating nutritious snacks. Members recruit outside volunteers to lead various enrichment projects while they provide whatever assistance is needed.

In addition to their tutoring and summer program responsibilities, members also are responsible for recruiting community and student volunteers to participate in at least one service project. Examples of past student service projects include reading to the elderly and cleaning playgrounds and parks. Members are also required to attend at least one local government meeting and participate in at least one program related service project themselves during the service year.

AMERICORPS MEMBER SELECTION, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION: SFS actively seeks individuals from each partner community or surrounding communities with various ages, backgrounds, abilities and skills as members. Detailed service descriptions for each position are developed by each of our thirteen school districts before member recruitment begins. These service descriptions include specific qualifications, roles and responsibilities, member slot type and the term of service needed for each position. All prospective members must have a high school diploma or higher level of education in order to meet AmeriCorps requirements for tutoring program participation. We also screen members for self-motivation, the ability to work independently and prior experience working with children. We continually strive to place members that show a potential to utilize the education award either by furthering their education, transferring their education award or paying toward a student loan.

Actively recruiting members from the respective communities in which they serve has made a strong positive impact on our member retention and overall dedication to the program. SFS uses a

Narratives

multi-faceted recruitment strategy to identify a pool of qualified applicants for the program.

Recruitment is conducted in each of the partner communities, through newspaper articles and ads, school and program websites, distribution of flyers and pamphlets and through the guidance offices at local high schools and colleges. In addition, partners, members, and program staff visit civic clubs to further publicize service opportunities. Current and alumni members also are encouraged to let people know about SFS AmeriCorps - word of mouth has been a great recruitment tool.

The vast majority of our recruitment and interviews take place between March and May. SFS staff works diligently with each site to make certain they have quality applicants in place prior to pre-service training in August.

AmeriCorps applications go through an initial screening process conducted by each partner site. Candidates identified as meeting service requirements are then interviewed by both SFS staff and at least one site official. The interview is used not only to screen applicants but also to insure each applicant understands the details and commitments involved with serving as an AmeriCorps member.

Prospective members receive both verbal and written details regarding AmeriCorps service. National Sex Offender Public Registry checks are performed on shortlisted applicants. Background checks are performed for all selected applicants prior to service. Program staff is responsible for ensuring that all required documentation and paperwork is in place prior to placement including proof of citizenship/legal residence in the United States.

Six days of pre-service training for members starts the first day of August. The three main focus areas we offer are (1) AmeriCorps and program rules and requirements. (2) tutoring and educational assistance strategies, and (3) leadership and other basic life skills.

The AmeriCorps and program orientation component includes extensive explanation of benefits, prohibited activities, and accurate completion a contract and necessary forms. Members are trained on how to fill out on-line time sheets, student tutor logs, and volunteer log sheets. Members also

Narratives

review and receive a written manual that contains all policies and procedures concerning their AmeriCorps service along with specific school district guidelines. Past AmeriCorps members are utilized to present training such as: "Organizational Tips, as well as, The Aspects Involved with Serving along Side a Multitude of Personalities."

Members are required to complete eighteen hours of tutoring skills training using research based materials and trainers based on "The Five Basic Components of Reading" using the guidelines from the Literacy First Program, "Hands on Math" using the KESAM program by NCLB, "Learning Styles and Modalities" by ILSR and the "Ages and Stages of Development" by CDI. Members are required to pass a tutoring skills proficiency test prior to beginning their service as a tutor. We also provide workshops on general classroom management, discipline, tips for dealing with behavioral issues and reporting abuse during pre-service training.

Members receive leadership and team building training using a variety of games and interactive activities to build a sense of belonging and create a strong cohesive corps. The members in turn take these skills and activities and share them the students in which they serve.

During pre-service training, we provide CPR and first aid training for all members who are not currently certified and implement at least one service project. Past projects include creating tie blankets for foster children and neck coolers for soldiers. We have seen firsthand when members spend time together on service projects and in training sessions how this develops a sense of belonging and pride in contributing as an individual. During pre-service training members are given a multitude of ideas and instructions about working with students on service learning projects. Members are expected to develop a citizenship project in which students have an opportunity to serve as volunteers.

After pre-service training, members report to their assigned site before the school year begins. There they receive school-specific training from teachers, administrators and other staff. These sessions are designed to familiarize the members with the district and the school, the staff and their roles, as well

Narratives

as, to provide additional skill-building to insure their success in working with underachieving students.

Topics include how to handle confidentiality with student information (including grades and test scores), fire, tornado and lock down procedures, dress codes, and basic school/district policies and procedures.

During the school year, members attend one to two additional professional development sessions offered by the school district or state department of education alongside staff and teachers.

Additionally, members are assigned mentors at their respective site, such as a reading specialist who instructs and provides tips to help members better address individual student needs based on ability.

Program staff provides group training sessions at each individual site in September to further practice and reinforce the proper way to fill out time sheets, tutor tracking forms and the importance of collecting pre-test data. We host a training session in November if pre-service member surveys note any specific needs or requests. On-going member needs assessment and communication allows program staff to identify additional training topics to provide during the program year.

In late January or early February, members receive seven hours of training from program staff on how to plan and implement summer recreational and enrichment programs. Members attend a full day training session in March on how to collect and record post-test data and finalize tutor records.

In May we offer sessions on "Life after AmeriCorps," future career planning, guidance for using the education award, eligibility for additional terms of service and additional reflections and sharing experiences from their service. In addition to our pre-service training service project, one of the thirteen school districts is selected and AmeriCorps members and staff work together on a project designed to enhance one of the school's physical environment. This is a way for us to give back to our districts involved with the program, as well as, give the members an opportunity to serve in a different capacity than tutoring.

For our 9 summer only (300 hour) members, we host four days of pre-service training in May. This

Narratives

training includes: reading, math, learning styles, ages and stages, confidentiality, discipline, CPR and first aid, games and activities as well as an opportunity to participate in a service project.

Each school site has at least one site supervisor who is responsible for day-to-day member monitoring that also serves as an advocate and advisor. Careful consideration is given to the selection of site supervisors. SFS staff works with the school administration to select the most qualified and helpful site supervisors. Over the years, we have experienced low turnover among site supervisors. Our supervisors are very dedicated to the program as they see firsthand every day the value members bring to their school.

We provide site supervisor trainings at least three times a year. At least one training session for site supervisors includes administration, staff and teachers at each respective site which focuses on AmeriCorps and member service requirements. Topics include the objectives of Serve for Success, what AmeriCorps members can and cannot do, how to check and approve time sheets, member support, evaluations, and interview status updates.

SFS staff conduct site visits at least once a month to every site to monitor the proper use of members, progress toward meeting objectives and to provide each member and supervisor with support to help insure a successful service term. Site supervisors receive timely updates by program staff on events, program changes, or other topics during site visits and through emails, phone calls, and/or letters. Program staff is readily available by phone and email to answer questions as they arise and provide any needed ongoing support between visits. Site visits also allow program staff to build and maintain close relationships and open communication with members. We have found this makes it easier for members to report if they are not being utilized according to guidelines or ask for help with other site or personal issues. As need or concerns arise, we will take immediate action to understand the situation and then address the problem or concern. Each school is very open to program staff site visits and we regularly observe members performing their service duties. In

Narratives

between site visits, we also communicate with the members via emails, texts, letters and phone calls to provide updates and support.

Evaluations are completed on each member at least three times a year by both the site supervisor and the SFS staff. After the evaluations are completed, the site supervisor sits down one-on-one with the members to review results and develop a tailored improvement plan, if needed.

OUTCOMES: SFS is opting to participate in the National Performance Measurement Pilot using CNCS identified outputs and outcomes for education programs. Over the course of the next three years, members will track and record tutor sessions they provide daily for each individual student, record pre and post test data to note improvement in academic performance for tutored students. We will track and report accurately on national performance measure ED1 the total number of students that receive AmeriCorps tutoring assistance, as well as the number of tutoring sessions received per student. Tracking the number of sessions allows us to determine output measure ED2 or those students that are tutored on a consistent basis of thirty-five or more times during the school year (i.e. "successful completion of the program"). We anticipate members will tutor at least 500 pre-k to grade twelve students during each program year with 300 of those students receiving consistent ongoing tutoring. The national performance measure intermediate outcome we are measuring is ED5 - the number of consistently tutored students that increase their academic performance in tutored subjects. Our target is that 78% of the 300 consistently tutored students will show improved academic performance in at least one tutored subject. Academic performance changes will be measured using various standardized pre and post testing tools. Each school district already utilizes at least one of the CNCS/Project Star recommended pre and post test instruments. We have secured permission from each school district through their site contract, to obtain test score information. With the help of teachers and staff, members will record pre and post test information for the students whom they provide 35 or more tutoring sessions. For the past several years we have used a research based

Narratives

teacher survey developed by "Project Star" to show the increase in student academic performance in tutored subjects. On average over the past three years, each year we have tutored approximately 300 students on a consistent basis with 78% increasing their academic performance. We used prior results and our anticipated number of members and slot types to determine our output and intermediate outcome targets for the upcoming three year grant cycle.

Staff continually monitors and works with each site to make certain that members are serving a reasonable number of students on a consistent basis and are tutoring at the desired intensity according to age level. We report on progress through a quarterly report to the Oklahoma Community Service Commission. We also share our progress with members and site supervisors on an ongoing basis and with our board, partner school districts, and other community stakeholders through an annual newsletter.

VOLUNTEER GENERATION: SFS members are responsible for student and community volunteer recruitment, identifying service and enrichment projects, and developing and overseeing the projects. Last year members recruited 289 volunteers who served 1025 hours. Members recruit and organize students from their school sites to be involved in at least one service learning project during the year that will enable student volunteers with the opportunity to grow as citizens. Members identify unmet needs in their communities and then recruit the student volunteers to help design and participate in a service project to meet one of the needs. Past student service projects have included such activities as making cards at Christmas for the elderly or for soldiers, reading at nursing homes or with younger students, picking up trash and helping with a Habitat for Humanity project.

Members also recruit both individual community volunteers and agencies to provide enrichment and recreational activities for after school and summer programs. For example, members have recruited and organized adult enrichment volunteers through Red Cross, Oklahoma Wildlife Department, County Health Departments and County Extension Offices to provide age-appropriate

Narratives

first aid training, fishing, and consumer education. Members also recruit many local professionals and other residents to provide other enrichment and learning opportunities for students such as dental programs, cooking workshops, storm safety, and sewing classes.

PARTNERSHIP: Currently we have 13 school district partners and all are committed for next year. Our partners include: Alva Public Schools, Cimarron, Canton, Calumet, Chisholm Trail Technology Center, Drummond, Fairview, Geary, Kingfisher, Lomega, Okeene, Ringwood and St. Peter and Paul School in Kingfisher. Each partner is required to make a written commitment to the program through a "Memorandum of Agreement" This agreement assures member, program and cash match support. Each partner cooperatively provides support, supervision and guidance to the members and is very much an integral part of the overall success of the program. Appointed representatives from each school district determine the district slot requests and approve the cash match increases prior to grant submission each year.

In addition to our school district partners, SFS has many other community partners that provide in-kind and other support. For example, the Blaine County Health Department provides instructors for CPR and First Aid certification for our members at no cost. Okeene has various community groups that help provide meals for members during training due to the scarce number of food vendors in the community. Communities have opened libraries to be utilized for summer reading programs. Each community actively assists the program by offering other available resources as parks, pools and meeting places at minimal or at no cost.

SUSTAINABILITY: SFS has a multifaceted sustainability strategy that includes partnering with other community organizations, diversifying our resource base by drawing on financial and in-kind resources from a range of local organizations - both past supporters and through new connections. We also engage community residents as volunteers within our programs, actively work to increase our visibility in the community, and share the positive results of our members' service on student

Narratives

academic performance with our stakeholders.

The small, rural, financially challenged districts SFS partners have come up with many creative ways to share or co-op services to make the most of their limited budgets in order to meet student needs, including their participation in AmeriCorps. Districts are eager to partner with SFS because it provides needed assistance and services for their underperforming students that would otherwise not be available and for a minimal cost. None of these small school districts could afford to meet the cash match necessary to maintain an AmeriCorps grant on their own. However, by working together through SFS, opportunities that were previously lacking are now possible. These districts have pooled together district dollars and in-kind support to sustain a program for the past eight years. Several other school administrators have contacted us after visiting with one of our current partners to see how their district can join and benefit from the SFS program. Due to its effectiveness, the Serve for Success model has been replicated by a program near Tulsa that also services small, rural school districts in that area.

The rural communities in which we serve each has seen first-hand the advantages of extra support for students. Because of the high visibility and appreciation for the academic support service our members provide, part of our sustainability strategy has been to secure funds from a wide variety of sources ranging from the local barber to gas and utility companies. We had nearly \$19,000.00 in donations from over forty entities in 2008. We have since not solicited cash funds from a variety of sources since the districts agreed to provide the necessary cash match. However, we continue to engage these other community stakeholders in other ways, such as volunteering with our afterschool and summer enrichment activities as volunteers or in-kind supporters, as part of our sustainability for the longer-term. For example we engage churches, community organizations, and private citizens in support of our summer programs. They provide financial and in-kind contributions such as snacks and materials, and/or community volunteers that enhance each summer program.

Narratives

We also continually search for additional sources of support from each local community as well as from a broader spectrum such as grants, foundations and large corporations. Through the education of others about the impact of our program and volunteer recruitment we hope to expand and continue providing educational benefits of students in rural Oklahoma.

MULTI-SITE PROGRAMS: We have a multi-site program with members serving in 20 schools within 13 school districts in 6 counties in northwest Oklahoma. Current and proposed partner districts include: Alva, Cimarron, Canton, Calumet, Drummond, Fairview, Geary, Kingfisher, Lomega, Okeene and Ringwood Public Schools as well as St. Peter and Paul School in Kingfisher and Chisholm Trail Technology Center.

School administrators or teachers from each of these districts serve on an advisory committee to help us design, monitor and update the SFS Program. Our twenty proposed school sites are already successfully engaged in the program and have expressed their commitment to remain involved for the next grant cycle. All have successfully met past match requirements and successfully supported their members.

Each site is monitored by program staff on an ongoing basis through monthly site visits. During the site visit, staff speak with both school staff and members observe member service, and review required documentation. We complete a compliance form during each visit to document that the site is providing adequate member supervision and support, member service is as described in the service description and follows all AmeriCorps regulations, sites are up to date on cash match payments and adequately documenting in-kind contributions, and any other concerns. If issues are identified, we take immediate action to rectify the situation working with the school site, and district administration, as necessary. Program staff communicates with site and members using a variety of means between site visits also to insure things are running smoothly.

Site compliance forms are reviewed annually by the advisory committee. The committee then

Narratives

recommends continuation or discontinuation based on the documented information and then reports their decisions to each school district. If a site does not stay in compliance, even with instruction and assistance from staff, they will be eliminated as a partner with SFS.

We are open to adding new sites as our budget and slot configurations allow. A selection committee comprised of Okeene School board members, SFS staff and at least two partner administrators reviews requests from additional school sites wishing to participate. Prospective sites must complete an application which details student and community needs, how they will support and supervise the number of requested members, and demonstrates their ability to meet the cash match and other AmeriCorps and program requirements. Once accepted, sites sign a Memorandum of Agreement or contract which details the specifics of program expectations and requirements.

In 2011-2012, partner districts will contribute \$5,562 for each full time member, \$2,862 for part time members, \$1,512 per quarter time member and \$1,162 for minimum time members. In addition to providing cash match, partner districts are very engaged in insuring the program runs smoothly. They participate in recruitment, interview, and selection process of members, conduct outreach and distribute promotional materials and applications, ongoing consultation, support, supervision, additional training and advice for members, provide travel reimbursement to members for travel to program sponsored training events. The partner school districts provide the funds, supplies, curricula and other learning materials necessary for members to tutor and provide enrichment activities. Each site provides documentation, test results and other pertinent information to provide evidence for performance measures.

TUTORING PROGRAMS: As a tutoring program, it is extremely important SFS provide exceptional tutor training so that members are well equipped to offer effective one-on-one and small group tutoring to underperforming students. We expect all members have at least a high school diploma, have acceptable background and sex offender checks and participate in at least eighteen hours of

Narratives

training yearly by specialized trainers using research based "Five Basic Components of Reading, KESAM math program, Learning Styles and Modalities and Ages and Stages of Development."

Training topics include phonemic awareness, phonics instructions, fluency, and text comprehension, confidentiality, auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning, math instruction and activities, reporting abuse, age appropriate indicator and discipline. After training, members are required to pass a proficiency skill test prior to serving as a tutor. The bulk of tutor training takes place each August prior to member placement at each site or within the first two months of service if a member has a later start date. Additional tutor trainings sessions are offered throughout the service year.

Once at their assigned school, members receive additional site-specific training. These sessions are designed to familiarize the members with the site and to further hone skills needed to support student learning and achieve their service objectives. Serve for Success partner school districts have provided members with the additional professional development sessions throughout the year that are also offered to their teachers and staff. Members receive additional instruction on how to handle confidentiality with student information, including grades and test scores. Members are set up with experts, contacts and support at each respective site, such as a reading specialist who instructs and provides tips to members that help them address individual student needs based on each student's ability level. Each host site has at least one site supervisor (generally the building principal) who is responsible for the day to day monitoring of members at their sites. Site supervisors serve as our members' advocates and advisors. Each classroom teacher is responsible for providing the member with instructions, activities and support for each student or group of students the members serves from that respective classroom. Giving members a network of individuals at their site to help and guide them is essential to their success.

ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION: SFS has been able to maintain a 100% enrollment rate since the beginning of the program. As needed, when we have been unable to fill a full time slot, we have

Narratives

converted that slot to a part time or minimum time position to continue to provide partner sites with members to service their individual needs.

We also had a 100% retention rate during our last program year (2009-2010). Key aspects of member retention for our program includes careful screening and selection of members, provision of high quality pre-service and ongoing training as well as superior site supervisor and program support for members.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND: The SFS/AmeriCorps program has been supported and managed successfully by the Okeene School District for the past six years. The legal applicant (Okeene Public Schools) operates a yearly budget of just over three million dollars. Last year, 12% of this budget came from CNCS. Okeene has received AmeriCorps funding, for the last six years and Okeene successfully manages seven separate funds. Therefore, Okeene Public Schools has extensive experience with the policies and procedures necessary to manage CNCS and other federal funds. Serve for Success has continually remained within budget limits of the grant. Okeene Public School is governed by a board of (5) elected members and has a state-mandated checks and balance system in place to protect funds and staff. The board and administration oversee the SFS/AmeriCorps program. Okeene Schools provides the AmeriCorps grant with support and management through administrative in-kind that includes, office space for staff, a bookkeeper and payroll clerk, treasurer and an oversight administrator. The grant provides two full time staff to oversee programmatic and budget aspects of the grant. All of the program and school staff has provided grant oversight since its beginning.

Okeene Public Schools serves as the intermediary for 13 school districts (including Okeene Public Schools). Each of these school districts along with Okeene Public Schools all provide a cash match per member. We have a projected grantee share of \$345,392 with 56% coming from cash match, 23%

Narratives

from in-kind contributions from Okeene Schools and 21% from each additional partnering school district. Basically the total of our cash match comes from each partner's cash match contribution. Each year the cash match has increased and partners have all determined the benefit is well worth the increase. All partners have agreed to the \$162 increase per member in cash match required for the upcoming year. Serve for Success has consistently met our overall budget match. This past grant year (2009-2010) we were required to have a 30% match and we had a 36.33% match.

STAFFING: Kim Wardlaw is the full time director. Mrs. Wardlaw has been serving in this capacity since she was hired in July of 2002 to establish the program. She oversees the budget and manages the program goals. Prior to serving as Director, she served as a classroom teacher for 17 years. She has served as an educator within two of our partnering districts and is very familiar working with teachers and administrators. She oversees half of the sites and members, completes quarterly and monthly financial reports, as well as, performance measurement reports. Mrs. Wardlaw's education background also enables her to provide a portion of our tutor training and she is a readily available tutor resource for members and sites.

Becky Bedwell, was part time co-director with SFS for the first three years; this is her sixth year serving as full time co-director. Previously, she was a 4-H Youth Educator for 15 years. Mrs. Bedwell's experiences with both 4-H and Community Leadership Programs provide us with many valuable resources for training members. She is responsible for planning and scheduling instructors for member training, member's monthly paperwork and oversees half the sites and members. Both Wardlaw and Bedwell work very effectively together to oversee and to make certain that the program, sites and members are in compliance with all federal grant guidelines and that members and sites have a high quality experience with AmeriCorps.

Both staff members plan to remain with the program for the next 3 year grant cycle. All staff positions are reviewed and hired through the Okeene School Board.

Narratives

Our accounting and bookkeeping staff is provided by the grantee. Kristi Kraft the district finance officer has 16 years of bookkeeping and accounting experience and works closely with the director and co-director to assure project activities are within our budget limitations. Kristi and board-appointed Treasurer, Kerry Westfahl, work closely with staff to make certain all expenditures and receivables are coded correctly and that monthly financial statements are completed efficiently and in a timely manner. Kristi stays current with all the new fiscal rules and regulations by attending trainings at least quarterly. Ron Pittman, Okeene Public School Superintendent has 26 years with the Okeene Public School district and provides administrative and staff over site for our program.

Both Wardlaw and Bedwell attend all meetings offered by the State Commission. Our Oklahoma Commission is readily available to assist us with whatever we might need. In March of 2010, we attended the Southwest Custer meeting, where we were updated on AmeriCorps changes such as members 55 years or older earning an educational award that can be transferred to a child or grandchild and learned some great new training ideas to use with members. We most recently attended a training session for Oklahoma AmeriCorps directors on October 19, 2010 sponsored by the Oklahoma Community Service Commission.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: SFS was created with a planning grant and has existed for six years with an actual program. Since the beginning we have increased from four (4) partnering school districts to (13) thirteen. SFS is located in six counties in northwest Oklahoma. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, 11 out of the 12 communities in which these school districts are located are classified as rural communities and have a Beale Code of six or higher. Resources in our service areas are very limited. If fortunate, each community has one small family owned grocery store, one small convenient store, one gas station, and one post office. Public transportation is nonexistent in each of these communities. In the majority of these communities, there are no movie theatres, skating rinks or other recreational facilities in the entire county.

Narratives

Each school site experienced an increase in the free and reduced lunch count this year with an average increase of three percent. The percentage of disadvantaged children on free and reduced lunches was already at a high level with the mean being at 73%.

The major economy downslide that the east and west coast experienced two year ago reached Oklahoma this past year. The Diamondback Correctional Facility located in Blaine County closed causing a loss of 300 jobs. United States Gypsum closed their wall board division. This caused a job loss of 50 position or 22% of their workforce. Utility companies (such as Cimarron Electric) have placed hiring freezes and are not replacing employees that leave or retire.

SFS is located in an area where there are very limited big businesses or industries that can help financially. Our communities are scare with philanthropic and corporate resources. We had nearly \$19,000.00 in donations in 2008, (which averaged \$100 each) that came from forty-four entities mostly small businesses, individuals and churches. The largest donation came from Chesapeake Oil and was \$5000. Many of the individual business and corporation charitable donations are spread thin. This is due to the support they already give to their local communities and schools not just the economic downfall.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

COST EFFECTIVENESS: SFS has a total budget request of \$801,377 with \$345,392 as grantee share and 455,985 as the CNCS share. According to the match guidelines we will be in our seventh year and required to match 38% and have a cost per member of \$13,300 per MSY or less. With the proposed budget, we will have a cost per member of \$12,624 and an overall match of 43%.

All current partners have agreed to their cash match contributions for the next grant period. We have continually been able to secure our cash match from our school district partners. There will be a \$162 increase in the cost per member for the upcoming grant year. The school sites will contribute \$5,562 per full time member, \$2,862 per part time, \$1,512 for each quarter time and \$1,162 per

Narratives

minimum time member. Alva Schools will contribute \$28,134, CTTC \$5,562, Cimarron \$7,886, Drummond \$12,636, Fairview \$30,134, Ringwood \$16,686, Okeene \$15,772, Kingfisher \$22,248 and Calumet-Canton-Geary-St. P&P-Lomega all with \$11, 124. This is a total of \$194, 678. Each site will supply members with office supplies and computer/internet use. This will be an in-kind contribution of \$72,380 based on an average of 35 full and part time members at a cost of \$188 per month for eleven months. Okeene Schools will provide in-kind cost of \$7,589 for staff medical insurance along with \$70,781 through the federally approved indirect cost rate. All cash and in-kind totals bring us to \$345,428 which is slightly above the needed match of \$345,392. We have consistently met our or exceeded our overall budget match.

CURRENT GRANTEE: Our proposed budget exceeds our 38% required match and is below the cost per member of \$13,300. The budget has a cost per MSY of \$12,624 and with an overall match of 43% which will help us move forward to the next level at year eight which we will need to meet a 42% match. We have increased the cash match contribution \$162 per member and sites expect a similar increase the following two years. Sites have always been vested and generous by supplying members with needed materials to support their service through AmeriCorps and help us track in-kind support.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: While we are operating in a resource scarce region, unless unforeseen additional circumstances arise, we fully expect to be able to raise the required match moving forward as we have already secured the necessary commitments of cash and in-kind support from all school district partners.

BUDGET ADEQUACY: Our budget has been designed and proven effective over the past 8 years in supporting our program design. The cash match each partner school district provides helps assure each site is vested financially along with programmatically. The budget has been designed to adequately cover member costs, staff expenses, staff training and tech support, staff travel for site visits and interviews, supplies and additional operating costs. We provide an adequate training budget

Narratives

to support members and our budget is designed to provide supplies for two service projects in which members participate as a corps. Each respective site also provides transportation or cost reimbursement for members to travel to Okeene for program-sponsored training sessions. Each site also provides members with supplies and materials needed for their service such as general office supplies, computer access and internet use to record time and service activities. These supplies are tracked and recorded as in-kind in the grant budget. The budget support advertisement cost for recruitment of members and background checks. The budget also allows for an independent evaluation.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

The external evaluations have been sent to the Corporation as stated by the application directions. The program remains committed to conducting future independent evaluations to document the impact of member service and continuous improvement.

Amendment Justification

Not Applicable.

Clarification Summary

Okeene Public School, Serve for Success

Budget Clarification Items:

1. C. Cost Calculation for CNCS sponsored meetings: One to two trainings per year. Registration for two staff members \$150 each, Airfare for two staff \$350 each, meals \$116 each, Collectively: lodging for up to 4 nights \$556, airport parking \$30, cab fare to and from airport to meeting site, \$90, mileage to and from airport \$92. (The stated changes have also been added to Budget Narrative)
1. E. Please provide additional detail of what is included in the in-kind costs of supplies. There is an in-kind cost for computer, internet and printer use for members to record time, and for reporting required by program and tutoring needs. This cost includes \$150 per month per member for 11

Narratives

months. This is based on 3 hours of computer use at \$30 per hour, \$40 a month internet fee and \$20 worth of printer use that includes ink. (The stated changes have been added to the Budget Narrative based on 36 members for 11 months of service)

There is an in-kind cost for office and tutor supplies used by member that includes copies, paper, pencils, paper clips staples and such. This cost is set at \$30 a month per member for 11 months. This includes 100 copies per month at .25 cents per copy and \$5 per month for various supplies such as pencils, staples, paper clips and markers. (The stated changes have been added to the Budget Narrative based on 36 members for 11 months of service)

1. H. Evaluation Costs: A yearly outside evaluation will be conducted to evaluate the impact of the Serve for Success program. Since we have multi-site programs we have and will continue to study the impact of AmeriCorps tutors on student academic improvement at the various sites. We are researching how each program is similar, how each differs and have been sharing strategies that allows are sites to have a means in which they can review and gain insight into each unique program and share best practices. We have a budget of \$400 total for up to forty hours of research and documentation at \$10 per hour to cover the cost of an outside evaluation.

1. I. Criminal History Checks: Criminal history checks will be conducted for all Serve for Success members and staff that will include: FBI fingerprint check, state registry checks and a national sex offender registry since all serve vulnerable populations. We have adjusted our budget to include \$73 per person. This includes: \$58 processing fee for FBI check and the state registry. There is a \$15 per person fee for fingerprint cards. This will include up to 42 background checks for prospective and returning applicants along with two staff members. This would be 44 @ \$73 each for a total of \$3,212.00. (The stated changes have also been added to Budget Narrative)

Section II

A. Living Allowance: Adjustments were made in the Budget Narrative relative to the MSY

Narratives

recommendation of 30.8 and the budget amount of \$390,181.00. The budget has been adjusted to \$390,180 CNCS Share, \$339,224 Grantee share with a total of \$ \$729,404. We request 30.69 MSYs. The adjusted budget is still well below the \$13,300 allowable cost per member and is at a 47% match. Our required match is 38%. We have requested 27 full time members, 6 part time members, 1 quarter time member and 2 minimum time members. (The living allowance budget amounts were adjusted accordingly to the above stated slots.)

B. Member Support Costs: Adjustments were made in the Budget Narrative according to the adjust slot count.

Section III

A. Corporation Fixed Percentage: Adjustments were made in the Budget Narrative based on the adjusted budget figures.

Source of Funds

The Budget Narrative has been revised to include each sites cash and in-kind match. This includes a cash match of \$6,300.00 per full time member, \$3,150.00 per full time member and \$1575.00 per quarter-time members. This is a \$738.00 increase per member as stated in the grant, however, sites have agreed to this increase in cash match.

Programmatic Clarification Items:

* Please clarify why only some quarter time and minimum time members will receive a living allowance.

In the revised budget, the MSYs include 27 full time members, 6 part time members, 1 quarter time member and 2 minimum time members for a total of 36 members. All members will receive a living allowance. To accommodate the reduction in the budget and MSYs the education award only slots were eliminated and along with a few other slot reductions in accordance to our advisory committee recommendations.

Narratives

* Please provide assurance the proposed tutoring program meets all requirements of tutoring.

All members that serve as tutors must have at least a high school diploma and have clear background checks. All members must meet the Oklahoma State required Paraprofessional qualifications.

(Individuals must have an associate's degree, passed 48 plus hours of college courses, or they must pass the Paraprofessional exam.) Those that serve upper level math students must be proficient in upper level math skills. All members must complete at least 18 hours of high quality, research-based pre-service training that pertains to literacy and math skills. The training sessions are conducted by teaching professionals based on the 'Literacy First Reading Program' and 'Kindergarten - Eighth grade Scholars Appreciating Mathematics' (KESAM) math program by 'No Child Left Behind.' All tutors are mentored, instructed and supervised by educational professionals at each site. These districts help identify underachieving students and provide members with small group and one-on-one tutoring time during school hours and through after school programs. Each site has educators that pre and post test students in reading and math and Serve for Success has written permission to obtain this information for each student that is tutored by AmeriCorps members.

Members that tutor students are provided with research based state adopted district-approved curriculum that also meets the requirements in the Serve America Act. Each classroom teacher guides and instructs the tutors with daily and weekly curriculum for each individual student. The reading and math activities are based on each student's individual needs and achievement level.

*Please describe how members will be afforded opportunities to intentionally reflect on their service in order to lead to post-term ethic of service and commitment to civic engagement.

Serve for Success members have the opportunity to reflect on service and civic engagement through reflection logs on our on-line tool "OnCorps". During trainings sessions throughout the service year,

Narratives

we specifically set aside time for members to share their experiences and future plans. We share many of the member reflections through newsletters and web sites and are included in recruitment flyers. This allows members, site supervisors and others to see and share in the members' experiences on a regular basis. Members complete a retrospective survey at the end of each service year that allows them the opportunity to reflect on subjects such as their gained knowledge of community needs, their willingness to assist others, their willingness to participate in community projects or other such ways in which they can give back to their communities.

* Please describe if and how the program will engage community volunteers in opportunities that directly contributes to the identified community need of improving academic achievement in schools. AmeriCorps members with Serve for Success do not recruit volunteers that directly tutor individual students. Members recruit and provide students with opportunities for to serve as volunteers through service learning projects. Members also recruit community volunteers that provide group activities that enhance their individuality and broaden their math and reading skill through activities such as cooking, sewing, art, physical fitness, safety and first aid training. These volunteers are recruited to provide enrichment for afterschool and summer programs. The members provide academic math and reading practice for the students throughout the summer programs with guidance from site designated professional educators.

*Serve for Success requests a start date of 08/01/2011

Performance Measure Clarification Items

1. Please revise the intermediate outcome target value to 234, to reflect the Performance Measure statement indication that 78% of the 300 students that complete the program will have improved

Narratives

academic performance in the tutored areas. (The stated change was corrected in the Performance measure in e-grants)

2. Indicate in the Intermediate Outcome the amount of the increase in academic achievement for the students included in the measure (ex.234 students will improve academic performance in at least one tutored area by at least 5 percentage points as measured by standardized tests). (The stated change was corrected in the Performance measure in e-grants)

3. Please provide and explanation of why only 41 of the 49 members are represented in the measure and if the program is planning to track the impact of the other 8 members, especially those focusing on educational enrichment activities during the summer.

In the revised Budget and Performance Measure all 36 members are included. Due to budget restraints, our advisor committee voted to eliminate the eight minimum time members that were utilized in the summer and not included in the performance measure.

4. Note the performance measure target numbers may need to be re-calculated to align with about funding and MSY recommendations. The performance measure target numbers now include the 36 members requested.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

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

Priority Areas

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

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 29.18

Service Categories

- Afterschool Programs
- Tutoring and Child (Elementary) Literacy
- Training and Technical Assistance

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Education

Strategy to Achieve Results

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

Thirty-six AmeriCorps members, in collaboration with classroom teachers in 20 schools in 13 partnering districts will identify pre-k through grade 12 students underperforming in core academic subjects such as reading and math. Identified students will receive one-on-one and small group tutoring from members under teacher supervision three or more days per week before, during and after school hours for approximately 2 hours a week with a goal of at least 35 sessions attended.

Result: Output

Result.

Identified students will complete at least 35 one-on-one and small group tutor sessions in core academic subjects from AmeriCorps members throughout the year.

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

Target : Three hundred students will complete at least 35 one-on-one and small group tutor sessions in core academic subjects from AmeriCorps members throughout the year.

Target Value: 300

Instruments: Monthly Serve for Success on-line Tutor records.

PM Statement: Three hundred students will complete at least 35 one-on-one and small group tutor session from AmeriCorps members throughout the year.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Students have improved academic performance in tutored subjects.

Indicator: (PRIORITY) ED5: Students with improved academic performance.

Target : Two-hundred thirty-four students that are consistently tutored will have improved academic performance in at least one tutored subject by at least 5 percentage points as measured by standardized test.

Target Value: 234

Instruments: Pre and post test instruments/standardized tests including (STAR Reading, STAR Math, BEAR, Key Math, End of Instruction Exams and Criteria and Reference tests.)

PM Statement: Seventy-eight percent of 300 students will have improved academic performance in tutored areas.

Result: Output

Result.

Identified students will receive one-on-one and small group tutoring in core academic subjects.

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

Target : Five hundred students will begin tutoring with AmeriCorps members.

Target Value: 500

National Performance Measures

Result.

Instruments: Monthly Serve for Success on-line Tutor records.

PM Statement: Five hundred students will receive one-on-one and small group tutoring in core academic subjects.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Already on File at CNCS

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable