APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application [X]   Non-Construction

2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS): 03/27/12	**3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:**	**STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:**
2b. APPLICATION ID: 12SI138281	**4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:** 03/27/12	**FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:** 12SIHMN001

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: Greater Twin Cities United Way

DUNS NUMBER: 070268800

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):
404 South Eighth Street
Minneapolis MN 55404 - 1084
County:

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):

NAME: Meghan E. Barp

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (612) 340-7631

FAX NUMBER:

INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: barpm@unitedwaytwincities.org

6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):
411973442

7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:
7a. Non-Profit
7b. Local Affiliate of National Organization

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

[X] NEW   [ ] NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE

[ ] CONTINUATION   [ ] AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): [ ] [ ]

A. AUGMENTATION   B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION   D. OTHER *(specify below):*

9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:

Corporation for National and Community Service

10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.019

10b. TITLE: Social Innovation Fund

11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:

Greater Twin Cities United Way Social Innovation Fund

11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):
SIF - Issue Area Youth

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):

Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/15/12   END DATE: 09/14/16

14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant [MN 005]   b.Program [MN 005]

15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: [1]

a. FEDERAL	$ 2,000,000.00
b. APPLICANT	$ 4,200,000.00
c. STATE	$ 0.00
d. LOCAL	$ 0.00
e. OTHER	$ 0.00
f. PROGRAM INCOME	$ 0.00
g. TOTAL	$ 6,200,000.00

16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?

[ ] YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:

DATE:

[X] NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?
[ ] YES   if "Yes," attach an explanation.   [X] NO

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Meghan E. Barp	b. TITLE:	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (612) 340-7631
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 07/06/12

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Executive Summary

TITLE: Greater Twin Cities United Way/Twin Cities STRIVE Alliance Social Innovation Fund.

BASIC INFORMATION: Greater Twin Cities United Way (GTCUW) awards $60M annually in competitive grants to more than 180 organizations. SIF FOCUS: The Alliance SIF will be issued-based.

PRIORITY ISSUE AREA: Youth development (closing academic achievement gaps). Goals are: improving kindergarten readiness, 3rd-grade reading proficiency, 9th-grade readiness for upper-level math, four-year high school graduation, and postsecondary enrollment among low-income students. Subgrants will fund services to 1,500 to 2,000 students annually.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES: By the end of the grant period, for each socio-economic, racial/ethnic, and linguistic group served by subgrantees, the gap between baseline and 100% proficiency will be reduced by half in each of the five goal areas.

GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS: The core cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul (expansion to first-ring suburbs and beyond planned based on future funding).

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS: the University of Minnesota Center for Research and Educational Improvement (the contracted evaluation partner), Wilder Research (data systems development), and issue-area experts who serve on Improvement Networks.

AMOUNT REQUESTED: $1M a year for 5 years. MATCH SOURCES: Commitments of at least

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$100K from St. Paul Foundation, University of Minnesota Foundation, Bush Foundation, and GTCUW; a $100K-$150K pledge from General Mills Foundation; and a commitment of $50K+ from The Minneapolis Foundation. Additional commitments from Cargill, 3M, Target Corporation, and the Minnesota Vikings are anticipated.

2012 PRIORITY: GTCUW awards $60M annually through an open, competitive process; has extensive relationships with education and evaluation experts; and a has successful history of analyzing evidence of effectiveness for programs, determining best-practice strategies, and providing support to expand or replicate services.

OVERVIEW: The Alliance SIF will: 1) develop a strong portfolio of replicable, evidence-based programs; 2) build subgrantee and network capacity to grow program impact and evidence of effectiveness and provide a platform for expansion and replication of effective solutions; and 3). create a value-added system of technical assistance, data-sharing, and peer-to-peer support.

NEEDS: In Minneapolis and Saint Paul, almost a quarter of residents of all ages and a third of children under 18 live in poverty. The vast majority of children in poverty are children of color. Alarming achievement gaps exist between white students and students of color and between middle-to-upper-income students and students in poverty. The Alliance will reduce gaps by supporting promising programs aimed at improving outcomes at critical points on the educational continuum.

THEORY OF CHANGE: The Theory of Collective Impact, which posits that "a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common vision, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually-reinforcing activities among all

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participants" can lead to innovative solutions for formerly intractable social problems.

PORTFOLIO SELECTION: Develop RFPs; solicit, accept, and review applications; make funding decisions based on established applicant criteria and a tiered scoring rubric; disseminate and track funds; refine goals and progress indicators; monitor performance and compliance; work with subgrantees not reaching performance goals; and report on results.

EVALUATION: Conduct a quasi-experimental design at the portfolio level to ensure overall initiative progress and at the program level to ensure subgrantees reach a moderate evidence level by the end of the funding period. Interim progress indicators will be established for each subgrantee.

GROWTH OF SUBGRANTEES: Issue-specific Improvement Networks will help subgrantees identify, adopt and scale effective practices and guide each subgrantee in creating and implementing plans for growing impact.

EXPERIENCE/EXPERTISE: A strong history of competitive grantmaking and supporting grantee program growth; existing structures for sharing best-practices and outcomes; experience managing complex evaluations and using evidence in decision-making; experience setting and implementing goals; and strong internal programmatic and financial management structures, staff, and procedures to support subgrantees.

Program Design

On behalf of its collaborative partners, Greater Twin Cities United Way (GTCUW) requests $1 million a year for a five year period from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to support the Twin Cities' STRIVE Alliance, a collective impact initiative designed to transform the

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landscape of strategies aimed at improving educational outcomes for low-income Twin Cities children and youth at risk for academic failure. With CNCS grant funds, the STRIVE Alliance will establish a Social Innovation Fund to:

1) develop a strong portfolio of replicable, evidence-based programs designed to improve kindergarten readiness, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 9th grade readiness for upper-level math, four-year graduation rates, and college enrollment rates for between 1,500 and 2,000 low-income youth;

2) build subgrantee and network capacity to grow program impact, strengthen programs' evidence of effectiveness, and provide a platform for expansion and replication of effective solutions; and

3). create a value-added system of technical assistance, data-sharing, and peer-to-peer support that will drive subgrantee success and sustain the improvements beyond the term of the CNCS grant award.

The Alliance plans to allocate 80% ($800,000) of the requested CNCS grant to subgrants. Key STRIVE Alliance partners will match the requested $1 million annually with an equivalent amount of private support. Thirty percent ($300,000) of matching funds will go to subgrantees and 70% will be used to accelerate development of the Alliance's infrastructure.

A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

TARGET COMMUNITY: The Twin Cities metropolitan area, a seven-county region in Central Minnesota with just under 3 million residents, has at its core the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul,

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two distinctly urban cities with racially-, ethnically-, and linguistically diverse populations. Saint Paul is home to both the largest urban Hmong population in the world and sizable Somali and Chicano/Latino communities. Minneapolis has welcomed immigrants from Somalia, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and other countries. Like many large urban centers across the nation, the Twin Cities face inner-city challenges -- including significant pockets of poverty, particularly within communities of color, and alarming disparities between demographic groups in levels of education and unemployment, access to housing and health care, exposure to crime and violence, and representation in the criminal justice system.

Census Bureau data from 2010 highlights the region's growing economic disparities: In the two core cities, almost a quarter of residents of all ages and almost a third of children under age 18 now live at or below the federal poverty line, up 30% from just a decade ago. Child poverty is extremely disproportionate: of the young people under age 18 in living in poverty, more than four times as many are children of color than are White children. While the decline in the economic status of the cities' poorest individuals and families may improve as the overall economy grows, the diversification of the state's population is expected to continue: in the next 30 years, the number of Black, Hispanic and Asian Minnesotans is projected to double. It is critical that children both have access to high-quality education and experience the kind of academic success that will ensure positive life outcomes.

TARGET ISSUE AND NEEDS: The Twin Cities metropolitan area has historically been one of the nation's most racially-homogeneous, economically-prosperous, and educationally-successful regions. Students in the Twin Cities -- the majority of whom, until the 1990s, were White -- have, on average, far outperformed national norms on measures of academic achievement from early childhood through postsecondary education.

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Over the past two decades, both the state and the metropolitan area have become more racially diverse; that change has happened rapidly in the core urban cities: today, 15% of residents in the state are people of color, up from just 5% in 1990. Recent demographic data shows that 40% of all Minneapolis residents and 52% of children under age 18 are people of color; in Saint Paul, 45% of residents and 57% of children under age 18 are people of color. While increasing diversity has brought new dynamism and energy to the Twin Cities, it has also created new challenges, as the region has experienced growing disparities in educational success and economic prosperity between the mostly middle-to-upper-income White community and communities of color, in which poverty is widespread.

These economic disparities are mirrored by disparities in educational attainment, evident in Minnesota's academic achievement gap between White students and students of color. Not only is this gap among the largest in the country, overall academic performance for low-income students and students of color is lower in Minnesota than it is in other states. Although the broader community was slow to accept accountability for these achievement and opportunity gaps, that picture has changed: in the past five years, multiple efforts targeted to address disparities in educational attainment and life outcomes for low-income children have been launched across the Twin Cities. Recent efforts include three federally-funded initiatives that target children and families in areas of extreme poverty, the Northside Achievement Zone, the Saint Paul Promise neighborhood, and the University of Minnesota's Child-Parent Center partnership. Privately-funded efforts include literacy initiatives spearheaded by GTCUW, Target Corporation, and the McKnight Foundation; college-readiness efforts funded by the 3M and Travelers Foundations; and scores of other programs explicitly focused on closing the gap.

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While many of these programs employ evidence-based strategies, experience demonstrates that without a way to align and coordinate strategies, share lessons learned, and expand programs proven effective, these efforts are unlikely to have significant, widespread, and sustained impact. Consequently, in spring 2011, leaders from the Twin Cities' African-American Leadership Forum began exploring ways to create an effective coordinating framework for promising programs, looking intently at Cincinnati's STRIVE model, forming a working group to determine the model's potential for success in the Twin Cities, and inviting other leaders from business, philanthropic, and civic organizations across the region to review the group's findings and recommendations.

The outcome of this work is the Twin Cities STRIVE Alliance (the Alliance), an early-childhood-to-early-employment initiative to ensure that all children get the support they need, from birth through college graduation, to succeed in school, in careers, and in life. Phase One of the Alliance's long-term strategy is to establish a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) to proactively identify, select, and support local subgrantees engaged in evidence-based youth development practices; help subgrantees strengthen their practices and their evidence base to grow their impact in the community; and identify and coordinate appropriate measurement tools and progress benchmarks to evaluate the success of efforts at both the program and system levels. Funding from CNCS will significantly boost these efforts by substantially augmenting funds targeted to struggling low-income children and youth, both accelerating the Alliance's early impact and increasing its chances for long-term success.

The CNCS Social Innovation Fund offers a well-timed opportunity for Twin Cities leaders to take advantage of a constellation of events that include rapidly-changing demographics, significant public and private investments, and an energized base of knowledgeable partners who possess a strong

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capacity to develop and apply a new understanding about "what works" to help members of low-income communities build pathways out of poverty. The Twin Cities are at a critical juncture: awareness of the achievement gap and the region's growing demographic diversity have combined to create strong community momentum. The work of the Alliance offers enormous opportunity for the Twin Cities to grow promising, innovative community-based solutions that have the potential to achieve significant impact in the region, in the state, and across the country.   GTCUW is well-positioned to weave together its policy-level leadership with its demonstrated success in supporting program-level innovation to maximize impact. GTCUW plays a unique, uniting role in the community and has an unparalleled capacity to bring together diverse individuals and groups in this collective impact enterprise. With SIF funds, GTCUW will be able to leverage and maximize the nearly $90M of federal funds that will flow into the state over the next five years dedicated to improving outcomes for low-income children and families in our region.

Research shows that children's earliest experiences and environments set the stage for future success in school and life, particularly in literacy development. Early experiences influence brain development, establishing the neural connections that provide the foundation for language, reasoning, problem solving, social skills, behavior and emotional health (School Readiness Indicators Initiative, 2005). Children who arrive in kindergarten ready for school have a better foundation for academic success throughout their educational experience.

Research also shows that to succeed in school, children must able to read proficiently by the end of third grade. Third-grade reading proficiency prepares students for the more complex learning tasks they will face in fourth grade and beyond; children who miss that benchmark typically never catch up, remaining poor readers the rest of their lives (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Jacob and Ludwig,

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2009). Poor readers are far more likely than proficient readers to end up unemployed, on public assistance, as single parents, or in prison (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007).

As critical as reading is to elementary and secondary success, mastery of upper-level math skills is critical to success in college and careers. Participation in advanced coursework increases the likelihood a student will graduate from high school, and each additional upper-level math successfully completed by high school students increases the odds two and a half times that they will earn a bachelor's degree (Roper, 2008). Today, a high school diploma is critical to young adults' ability to secure living wage employment: the average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was $17,299, compared to $26,933 for a high school graduate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Young people without a school diploma are far more likely than graduates to spend their lives periodically unemployed, on government assistance, or cycling in and out of the prison system (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009).

A college education is also increasingly important for success in the 21st Century labor force. According to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2008), by 2018, more than six in 10 jobs will require some sort of postsecondary education. During the recent economic downturn, the unemployment rate for those without a college degree has been more than double the rate for those with a degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Over their lifetimes, those with a bachelor's degree earn $1 million more than those with only a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau).

The Alliance is designed to reduce educational disparities and has set five goals that target critical points on the educational continuum: improving kindergarten readiness, 3rd-grade reading proficiency, 9th-grade readiness for upper-level math, four-year high school graduation, and

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postsecondary enrollment among Twin Cities low-income children.

STATISTICS ON NEEDS IN THE TARGET GROUP: Minnesota generally ranks high in national ratings of overall academic achievement for students from preschool through college graduation, including ranking 8th of all states on EdWeek's 2012 Quality Counts "Chance-for-Success Index," which captures the importance of education over a person's lifetime. On the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment of Minnesota ranked second in the nation on 4th-grade reading performance, third in 4th-grade math, and ninth in 8th-grade reading.

These overall high academic achievement rankings, however, conceal significant achievement gaps between Minnesota's White students and their Black and Latino peers. On the NAEP assessment of 4th-grade reading proficiency, Minnesota had the eighth-largest gap in the nation between Latino and White students (29 points), the ninth-largest gap between Black students and White students (30 points), and the tenth-largest gap between low-income students and middle-to-upper income students (29 points). Not only is the achievement gap between students of color and White students in Minnesota larger than the gap in other states, Minnesota students of color score below their same-group peers in many other states. On the 2009 NAEP reading exam, for example, Black 4th-graders in Minnesota scored lower than their counterparts in Texas and Georgia and Latino students in Minnesota performed significantly below Latino students in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia and Mississippi.

These gaps are also evident on state assessments of academic proficiency in both reading and math. In 2011, 63% of the state's White students at all grade levels met proficiency benchmarks in math on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, while only 54% of Asian students, 38% of low-income

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students, 32% of Latino students, 29% of Black students, and 26% of English Language Learners (ELLs) did. Statistics were similarly disparate in reading for all groups. Graduation rates also vary widely among different racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic groups. Across the state, about 83% of White students graduate in four years, compared with 70% of Asian students, 56% of low-income students, 49% of Latino students and ELL students; and 47% of Black students. These statewide gaps are magnified in the core urban cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the two largest school districts in Minnesota, where achievement gaps are even higher than the state-level gaps at every point along the educational continuum, as indicated below (all data from 2011, unless otherwise noted).

(a). GAPS IN KINDERGARTEN READINESS: In Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), the percentages of children meeting school-readiness benchmarks on the Beginning Kindergarten Assessment, are (in descending order): White, 94%; Asian, 70%; Black, 67%, and Latino, 36%. Official MPS disaggregated data for low-income and ELL children is currently unavailable, but informal reports indicate similar gaps for these groups as well. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) does not currently administer a kindergarten assessment, but results from formative assessments show that low-come children, children of color, and ELL have similar gaps in the literacy and numeracy skills that indicate kindergarten readiness.

(b). GAPS IN 3rd-GRADE READING PROFICIENCY: In MPS, the percentages of students scoring proficient in state assessments of reading at the end of 3rd grade are: White, 87%; Asian, 61%; Black, 45%, low-income, 42%; Latino, 37%; and ELL, 34%. In SPPS, the percentages are: White, 83%; Latino, 51%; Asian, 51%; low-income, 49%; Black, 49%, ELL, 48 %.

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(c). GAPS IN 9th-GRADE READINESS FOR UPPER-LEVEL MATH. In MPS, the percentage of students meeting benchmarks on state assessment of 8th-grade math proficiency (indicating readiness for upper-level math in 9th grade) are: White, 68%; Asian, 38%; Latino, 23%; low-income, 20%; Black, 18%; and ELL, 15%. In SPPS, the percentages are: White, 63%; Asian, 41%; low-income, 27%; ELL, 25%; Latino, 25%; and Black, 20%.

(d). GAPS IN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES. In MPS, the percentages of students who graduated high school in four years are: White, 70%; Asian, 64%; and ELL, 44%; low-income, 40%; Black, 39%; and Latino, 37%. In SPPS, the percentages are: White, 63%; Asian, 41%; low-income, 27%; ELL, 25%; Latino, 25%; and Black, 20%.

(e). GAPS IN POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT RATES (2010 data). In MPS, the percentages of students who enrolled in postsecondary settings are: White, 76%; Asian, 75%; Black, 62%, low-income, 60% and Latino, 48% (a separate ELL breakout is unavailable). In SPPS, the percentages are: White, 72%; Black, 70%; Asian, 66%; low-income, 63%; Latino, 51%; and ELL, 50%.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES: The Alliance has set five visionary goals for closing these achievement gaps over the long term: every student in the region will a). enter kindergarten ready for school, b). read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade, c). enter high school ready for upper-level math; d). graduate from high school in four years, and e). enroll in a postsecondary program in the year following high-school graduation.

As the initial step toward this long-term vision for academic success, Alliance leadership has set ambitious, yet achievable, measureable outcomes for these goals over the next five years. These

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outcomes align with the state's overall goals for reducing the achievement gap, which were articulated in Minnesota's recent waiver of No Child Left Behind accountability requirements: BY THE END OF THE FIVE-YEAR GRANT PERIOD, FOR EACH SOCIO-ECONOMIC, RACIAL/ETHNIC, AND LINGUISTIC GROUP SERVED BY SUBGRANTEES, THE GAP BETWEEN CURRENT PROFICIENCY MEASURES AS LISTED IN ITEMS (a) through (e) ABOVE AND 100% PROFICIENCY WILL BE REDUCED BY HALF.

For example, as indicated in paragraph (a), in 2011, 89% of White MPS children and 43% of Latino MPS children entered school meeting kindergarten-ready benchmarks on the Beginning Kindergarten Assessment. Among subgrantees targeting kindergarten readiness in MPS schools, by the end of the five-year project, 94.5% of White children and 71.5% of Latino children at schools served by subgrantees will meet benchmarks. Similar gains will be made for the other subgroups listed. The Alliance and its evaluation partner will work with subgrantees to develop intermediate outcome measures for each year of the project period to track the degree of progress toward reaching improvement benchmarks.

ABILITY TO SUPPORT PROPOSED APPROACH. With its strong, clearly articulated vision and the deep commitment of the partners, the Alliance has already accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, and created a strong foundation for the initiative's ongoing success. To date, Alliance partners have:

(a). created the framework for a decision-making group, the Executive Committee, charged with providing ongoing leadership for the project, leveraging community resources and removing political and logistical roadblocks, and generating community support for long-term sustainability;

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(b). articulated a collective vision, established common goals, and set overall shared objectives and indicators of progress for Phase One;

(c). secured at least $550,000 in commitments of ongoing financial support from key partners for Phase One;

(d). created the underlying structure for the cross-sector Improvement Networks to work with Alliance leadership and programs in a continuous feedback loop; and

(e). established strong relationships with nationally-known evaluation partners for the SIF to analyze the strength of program evidence, develop a system for collecting and analyzing portfolio and program-specific data, and help programs design evaluation plans to strengthen their evidence of effectiveness, grow their impact, and support expansion or replication for Phase One strategies.

The strength of this initial foundation combined with GTCUW's capacity to support social change programs and the expertise of the partners who will guide the Improvement Networks creates an environment in which the likelihood of success in achieving projected outcomes is high.

THEORY OF CHANGE: Despite many targeted efforts over the past decade, progress toward closing educational achievement gaps in Minnesota has been limited. While individual schools in the community and in the state -- primarily though not exclusively at the elementary level -- have made major progress toward closing achievement gaps, replication of those efforts has been limited. Clearly a new course is needed to make meaningful and sustainable change. The Alliance takes a significantly

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new approach to the problem using the tenets of the Theory of Collective Impact, the game-changing concept articulated by researchers John Kania and Mark Kramer.

According their research, transformation does not result from the independent work of individual organizations -- which may create isolated impact for specific individuals or groups but no broad scale changes for the larger community. Transformation results from the collective action of committed leaders dedicated to "a common agenda for solving a specific social problem." Successful collective impact initiatives require "a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common vision, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually-reinforcing activities among all participants." (Kania and Kramer, 2011). By focusing the entire community on a single set of goals, measured in the same way, and guided by research about the kinds of strategies that work to improve outcomes in struggling communities, the Alliance will not only identify the most promising practices in the area but also help determine which of the strategies being used are actually driving improvement.

TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT WILL BE INVESTED IN: Through its SIF, the Alliance will provide subgrants to competitively-selected, education-focused youth development organizations serving children living in poverty, in alignment with the Alliance's five key goals. During Phase One, this SIF will target Minneapolis and Saint Paul, expanding in future years to encompass first-ring suburbs that face similar educational challenges and seeking additional funding for this work from other sources. As the Alliance demonstrates success and increases its capacity to support meaningful educational improvement over time, participation will be open to additional suburban communities that commit to the partnership's goals, values and processes.

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VALUE ADDED ACTIVIITIES: The Alliance will assess each subgrantee's need for capacity-building support and technical assistance during the application and site visit process, with ongoing assessment occurring throughout the project. The Alliance will provide three kinds of capacity building and technical assistance activities, based assessed needs: group work, tailored one-on-one supports, and area-specific support through Improvement Networks.

Group work occur in quarterly subgrantee meetings focused on best practices and peer-to-peer support and in workshops on topics that support assessed needs, such as evaluation, data collection and use, and other areas that improve subgrantee capacity. Workshops may be conducted by GTCUW, by Alliance partners, or by contracted experts.

Tailored one-on-one support will be provided by alliance staff or external partners and designed to build capacity and address identified gaps. This individual technical assistance may focus on specific program-level evaluation design and data collection, leadership development, strategic planning, or other topics. Fundraising technical assistance, as needed, will help subgrantees identify and craft a compelling approach to potential funders to secure required matching funds and help ensure program sustainability.

Improvement Networks targeted to subgrantees' specific goals areas will be led by experts in those areas and will guide each subgrantee in setting up systems for improving outcomes, developing strong evidence, and creating and implementing detailed plans for growing impact during the period of the grant.

B. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

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1). SUBGRANTEE SELECTION

PROFILE: Subgrantees eligible to apply for a Phase One Alliance SIF subgrant must: (a). be tax exempt; (b). serve low-income communities (at or below 200% of the federal poverty level); (c). serve residents of Minneapolis or Saint Paul; (d). target one or more of the five Alliance goals; (e). provide a dollar-for-dollar cash match and secure 50% of the match funds by the time of application; (f). use the Alliance's contracted evaluation partner for their program evaluation and budget sufficient funds to support the proposed SIF evaluation model; and (g). not use Alliance funds for the same activities being supported by other federal innovation funds.

COMPETITIVE SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMELINE: For more than ten years, Greater Twin Cities United Way has run an open and competitive process for all the programs funded in its portfolio. This process will guide the Alliance SIF subgrantee selection, including:

(a). REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (released upon award announcement, September 2012). In summer 2012, the Alliance will develop an RFP that clearly articulates eligibility guidelines and outlines the application process and all requirements. At the same time, a scoring rubric will be created. When the award is announced, the Alliance will immediately send the RFP to all currently-funded partners as well as to a broad network of other organizations, using diverse social media platforms and other tools to further publicize the availability of the RFP. Links to the RFP will be posted on GTCUW's main website and its on-line community forum. The Alliance will also develop its own website to support the initiative and subgrant process, including an online application.

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(b). REVIEW PROCESS (Mid-October 2012). The application review process will take approximately eight weeks. All applications will be reviewed by a panel that includes: 1). GTCUW Director of Education, Meghan Barp, who has more than 10 years of experience developing, managing, and growing impact for youth development and education programs; 2). the contracted evaluation partner, a nationally-recognized consultant who will provide expertise regarding each applicant's proposed outcomes, strength of evidence, and capacity to participate in a quasi-experimental study to strengthen evidence; 3). local education experts selected from among the individuals identified to participate in Improvement Networks; and 4). at least one person with expertise specific to the area addressed by the proposed program (e.g., improving kindergarten readiness or increasing high school graduation rates). GTCUW will provide training for panel members on its scoring rubric to help ensure inter-rater reliability.

(c). SITE VISITS (Mid-November 2012). Members of the Review Team will conduct site visits with the highest-ranking applicants. Site visits will focus on each organization's capacity to meet proposed outcomes, participate in the evaluation process to strengthen evidence, and engage in continuous improvement and growth of impact efforts.

(d). PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS (Mid-December 2012). The Review Team will make recommendations to the Alliance leadership time regarding the portfolio of subgrantees, taking into consideration each applicant's strength of evidence and promise for replication or expansion and organizational capacity; the potential for the portfolio to collectively impact priority outcomes and inform the sector on best practices and impact; the diversity of the portfolio geographically, by issue area, and by priority outcome; and the level of evidence for each program.

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(e). PORTFOLIO SELECTION (January to Mid-February 2013). Portfolio recommendations will be given to the Alliance's leadership team in January, with final selections made by mid-February.

(f). AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS (Mid-February to Early March 2013). GTCUW may work with subgrantees to adjust scope of services and outcomes as needed to ensure that they align with the grant award.

DETERMINING A STRONG FIT FOR THE THEORY OF CHANGE: The Alliance will select applicants that are a strong fit within the collective impact framework, as determined by their ability to:

a). demonstrate at least a preliminary level of evidence of effectiveness with the target population for the program being proposed;

b). commit to working with the evaluation partner to establish a quasi-experimental design to reach moderate evidence levels;

c). commit to participate in an appropriate Alliance Improvement Network to design and implement plans for continuous improvement, strengthening the evidence base, and growing impact;

d). commit to participate in knowledge sharing through the Improvement Network process and other avenues; and

e). articulate an achievable plan for sustainability.

ASSESSING APPLICANTS FOR READINESS AND CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAM GROWTH AND EVALUATION PLANS: The Alliance will assess applicants' capacity to implement program growth and evaluation plans based on the following characteristics:

a). programmatic alignment with Alliance goals and outcomes;

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b). demonstrated ability to deliver services, measure progress, and meet targets;

c). the strength of evidence of the program's effectiveness;

d). past achievement of continuous improvements in service delivery;

e). evidence of effective coordination with other services in the community;

f). capacity to meet GTCUW's funding requirements;

g). proof of fiscally sound operations; and h). the intention and capacity to participate in the proposed quasi-experimental evaluation.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF AWARDS: The Alliance anticipates granting up to 11 awards between $100,000 and $200,000 annually each. BASIS FOR AWARDS: Subgrantees will be selected based on their final scores on the rubric, and award levels will be based on strength of evidence: Subgrantees with preliminary evidence will receive between $100,000 and $125,000; those with moderate evidence will receive between $125,000 and $175,000; and those with strong evidence will receive $175,000 to $200,000.

HOW LEVELS OF EVIDENCE WILL BE REVIEWED: Working in partnership with the contracted evaluation expert, Alliance staff will analyze all subgrantee programs on the basis of these criteria and the strength of their evidence to determine the extent to which each is situated for growth. The evaluation expert is part of the review team and will work with other team members as they read and score proposals. The scoring rubric will include a tiered system of points awarded based on each program's level of evidence and incorporate all stated criteria, including each applicant's readiness and capacity to implement a program growth plan and a rigorous evaluation plan. More points will be awarded for programs with stronger evidence, greater evaluation rigor, and higher levels of expressed commitment to continuous improvement and growth of impact.

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2). PROPOSAL FOR EVALUATION

The Alliance has received a commitment from the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) to serve as the evaluation consultant for its SIF efforts. CAREI has extensive experience in the design of evaluations assessing the effectiveness of education program across the birth-to-college spectrum, including experimental and quasi-experimental studies; randomized controlled, multisite trials; and studies focused on linking educational strategies to improved student outcomes.

CAREI Director Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom and Associate Director Dr. Michael Michlin will lead the evaluation team and support the Alliance in other ways, including serving on proposal review teams to analyze applicants' strength of evidence, helping subgrantees set up the data systems necessary to support the quasi-experimental evaluation design, and providing training to subgrantees in using evidence to inform improvement and grow impact.

MATURITY OF PROGRAM MODELS TO BE EVALUATED: Together with CAREI, the Alliance will develop an overall evaluation strategy for the subgrantee portfolio that reflects the key outcomes and levels of evidence their subgrantees are expected to achieve and includes a timetable, budget, and methodology for coordinating all stakeholders and required evaluation activities. Based on GTCUW's current education portfolio, analysis of programs in the area, and input from key stakeholders, Alliance leadership anticipates that most subgrantees will have preliminary levels of evidence.

ENSURING MODELS ACHIEVE MODERATE EVIDENCE: The Alliance and CAREI will jointly

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work with subgrantees to establish a quasi-experimental outcomes-based evaluation model that links

program strategies to projected outcomes and to broader community outcomes. The Alliance will

focus on evidence and evaluation at both the subgrantee level and portfolio level. At the subgrantee

level, the focus will be on designing an evaluation plan and internal systems to gather evidence to

demonstrate effectiveness, using data to inform program-level decision-making for improvement, and

developing at least strong evidence of effectiveness at the end of the five-year period. At the portfolio

level, the focus will be on consistency of data across programs to track progress toward outcomes

initiative-wide in order to identify promising practices and create accountability.

ASSESSING NEED FOR AND PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. The Alliance will assess

each subgrantee's need for technical assistance based on a review of the applicant's proposal,

information gathered from the site visit, consultation with partners who have knowledge of the

program, and ongoing conversations with the program's leadership. Based on this input Alliance staff

will determine each subgrantee's ability to deliver and measure outcome indicators and meet targets;

to participate in ongoing evaluation of the program and strengthen evidence of the program's

effectiveness; to achieve continuous improvements in service delivery; and to meet Alliance

requirements for data collection.

CAREI will help subgrantees develop, implement, and use results from individual evaluation plans

based on the overall quasi-experimental evaluation design to ensure that each subgrantee can

demonstrate at least moderate levels of evidence by the end of the five-year grant period. The Alliance

will work with CNCS to gain approval for these plans prior to implementation, report progress and

results to CNCS, and collaborate with CNCS to review and strengthen strategies and plans and ensure

appropriate implementation and reporting of each plan. Technical assistance for evaluation efforts will

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also be provided.

CAREI will also collaborate with Wilder Research, the consultant with which the Alliance has contracted to create the data system that will monitor progress within and across programs. Wilder Research has been spearheading the development of such systems for other local initiatives, including the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood. The Alliance data system will be integrated with this larger, region-wide data system, which is used by multiple stakeholders in the community and will continue to grow as a regional clearinghouse through which programs and organizations will share data.

The Alliance data system will build upon and integrate with these other efforts and include both outcome indicators showing progress toward goals and objectives and process indicators that track how many students, families, and educators are being served and how participants and providers view the quality of the services. This information will help the Alliance's Executive Committee, Executive Director, and other stakeholders monitor the progress and effectiveness of Alliance efforts over time.

ESTIMATED BUDGET FOR EVALUATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES. The total current costs for evaluation-related activities are estimated at $372,000 for the five year period.

YEAR ONE: $74,400, which includes personnel costs for CAREI Director Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom at 0.1 FTE x $106,672 annual salary plus fringe benefits at 36%; CAREI Associate Director Dr. Michael Michlin at 0.33 FTE x $79,308 annual salary plus fringe benefits at 36%; and a graduate Research Assistant at 0.05 FTE x $36,237 annual salary, plus fringe benefits at 91%. Other costs include supplies and equipment at $1,200; transcription at $2,088; mileage and travel at $2,000; and administrative overhead at 20% of direct costs.

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YEAR TWO: Same as Year One.

YEAR THREE: $74,400, which includes personnel costs for CAREI Director Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom at 0.1 FTE x $106,672 annual salary plus a 2% salary increase and fringe benefits at 36%; CAREI Associate Director Dr. Michael Michlin at 0.33 FTE x $79,308 annual salary plus a 2% salary increase and fringe benefits at 36%; and a graduate Research Assistant at 0.05 FTE x $36,237 annual salary plus a 2% salary increase and fringe benefits at 91%. Other costs include supplies and equipment at $700; transcription at $2,000; mileage and travel at $1,500; and administrative overhead at 20% of direct costs.

YEAR FOUR: Same as Year Three.

YEAR Five: Same as Year Four, with an additional salary increase of 2% and a decrease in supplies and equipment to $200, rather than $700.

Additional costs for CAREI's subgrantee-level evaluation and participation in Improvement Networks will be determined as those plans are developed as outlined in section III-D, under the heading PLAN FOR DEVELOPING SUBGRANTEE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS.

3). PROPOSAL FOR GROWING SUBGRANTEE IMPACT

THEORY OR APPROACH TO GROWING EFFECTIVE SUBGRANTEE PROGRAM MODELS: According to Kania and Kramer (2011), the success of Collective Impact initiatives comes from the

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joint actions of diverse stakeholders united towards common goals and employing common measures of success. "The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually-reinforcing plan of action." For collective efforts to succeed, individual efforts must align with and fully support an overarching plan. To maximize effectiveness, all participants must continuously improve the quality of their programs, grow their impact, and share lessons learned.

ASSESSING SUBGRANTEE CAPACITY FOR GROWTH. The Alliance will select applicants that have a strong capacity for growth as determined by each subgrantee's:

a). current level of evaluation work, which must demonstrate at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness with the target population for the program being proposed;

b). use of evaluation results to drive program improvements;

c). internal management capacity, which must be able to support -- or develop the strength to support -- the data collection needed for the propose quasi-experimental evaluation design to reach moderate evidence levels;

d). enthusiasm for working with Improvement Networks to design and implement plans for continuous improvement, strengthening the evidence base, and growing impact;

d). commitment to Improvement Networks as an effective means of sharing lessons; and

e). ability to achieve program sustainability.

HOW EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS WILL BE USED. In partnership with CAREI, Alliance staff will analyze all subgrantee programs on the basis of these criteria and the strength of their evidence to determine the extent to which each is situated for growth. Subgrantees with strong evidence of impact will be required to develop more ambitious growth plans, including higher growth targets, than

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subgrantees with preliminary evidence.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT GROWTH. To expand or replicate promising programs, the Alliance will provide technical assistance to subgrantees in several important areas: responding to the RFP, including at least one workshop session related specifically to program effectiveness, continuous improvement, and growth of impact; developing and implementing evaluations that increase their strength of evidence of program effectiveness; setting up systems to support accurate, timely data collection and reporting; and creating plans for growth of impact . These plans will articulate: a). how growth is connected to each subgrantee's plan to improve its level of evidence; b). the estimated number of additional people expected to benefit annually from each subgrantee's program growth; c). the strategies each subgrantee will employ to generate growth in the number of people affected, whether by expanding services at current locations; by replicating a program model to additional locations, or by streamlining processes, creating efficiencies, using technology more effectively, or other methods not related to physical expansion; d). the specific services, including training and technical assistance, the Alliance will provide to each subgrantees to facilitate the planned growth; and e). how the Alliance will track and assess actual growth of impact as measured compared to the estimates included in the subgrantees plan.

The Alliance's primary method of support for creating growth of impact plans is the Improvement Networks structure. Improvement Networks are issue-focused groups led by experts that are designed to help subgrantees continually identify, adopt and scale practices that improve student outcomes. Improvement Networks increase awareness and collaboration across boundaries and support knowledge-sharing and advance social innovation. Improvement Network experts will work with subgrantees to identify and support what works and to redesign or discontinue what doesn't.

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With support from CAREI and the partners participating in the area-specific Improvement Networks, the Alliance will guide each subgrantee in creating and implementing a detailed plan for growing impact during the period of the grant. Plans for growth of impact will be tiered according to the level of evidence the subgrantee established during the application: the ambitiousness of projected growth will match the subgrantees' level of evidence, from preliminary to strong.

Using a formal quality improvement process, Improvement Network experts will work collaboratively with CAREI staff to guide each subgrantee through a set of strategies designed to ensure ongoing enhancement of quality. Information gleaned from this process will form the basis of the subgrantee's growth of impact plan. Each Improvement Network will use the Alliance's common data collection and analysis system to identify and improve practices consistently over time and will work with subgrantees to create action plans for identified best-practice strategies.

In Phase One, Improvement Networks will likely include:

(a). an Age 3 to Grade 3 Literacy Network for programs proposing to advance efforts to align the development of literacy skills across early childhood programs and elementary schools;

(b). an Accelerating Struggling Students Network for programs proposing to increase skills levels elementary and secondary students who are one or more grade levels behind in reading and math and support on-time high school graduation;

(c). an Out-of-School Time (OST) Network for programs proposing to increase the amount and quality of learning activities that take place beyond school hours and align OST activities with school-day learning;

(d). a Parent Engagement Network for programs proposing to help increase parents' capacity to

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effectively support their children's academic success from early childhood through postsecondary education; and

(e). a Postsecondary Success Network for programs proposing to help students access postsecondary degree and/or credential programs.

The Alliance will convene specific networks for Phase One based on the goals and focus areas of the subgrantees in the initial SIF portfolio; in coming years, other networks will be added to support future subgrantees.

Organizational Capability

A HISTORY OF COMPETITIVE GRANTMAKING

The largest non-governmental funder of health and human services in Minnesota, GTCUW employs an open and competitive process to collectively engage partners in addressing the persistent challenges of social inequity. Today, GTCUW awards nearly $60 million annually in competitive grants to more than 180 organizations, including approximately $20 million in education awards that support both individual programs and systems-change and innovation efforts.

Program support has funded programs such as:

a). the Childcare Accreditation Program, which directly addresses the kindergarten readiness gap in the community by increasing the quality of early care for 18,000 children living in poverty;

b). the Parent Liaisons program in high-needs public schools in a first-ring suburb, through which bilingual parent liaisons address obstacles for parents of limited means; and

c). the Metro Alliance for Healthy Families, which provides regular home visits to low-income, highly challenged, first-time parents.

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Systems change and innovation awards have included high-level evaluation projects, such as:

a). over $3 million targeted to the state Accreditation Facilitation Project's efforts to enroll and accredit 350 low-income child care centers over the next four years;

b). support for research and programming related promising practices to address pathways out of poverty, such as Minneapolis' Northside Achievement Zone and Saint Paul's Promise Neighborhood;

c). founding support for the Start Early Funders Coalition, which works to ensure that every child in Minnesota is prepared for school and lifelong success;

d). support for a high-level evaluation of GTCUW's Reading by 3rd Grade initiative, through which GTCUW is also providing technical assistance to ensure that grantees have the capacity to use evaluation outcomes to build program impact;

e). support for the development of a citywide data system for Saint Paul's "Sprockets" out-of-school-time (OST) programming network and

f). support for Youthprise, a local intermediary working to increase the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of OST opportunities.

CAPACITY TO UNDERTAKE SUBGRANT SELECTION PROCESS. GTCUW has a well-developed and successful competitive grantmaking process that fully articulates not only grantee selection criteria for each competition, but also the processes the GTCUW follows to: develop and disseminate RFPs; solicit and accept applications; make funding decisions; make award offers; disseminate and track funds; communicate with subgrantees; collect agreements and compliance information; develop goals and outcomes; collect performance data and monitor performance; work with subgrantees not reaching performance goals; and report on results on both a program- and system-wide basis.

The Subgrantee Selection section outlines that process in detail, although it contains the

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enhancements to the process that will be implemented through the Alliance. The SIF process outlined

earlier adds rigor through: a). the tiered weighting of strength of evidence; b). the requirement for

participation in the quasi-experimental evaluation; c). the requirement for participation in

Improvement Networks; and d). the requirement for a dollar-for-dollar match.

This strong foundation of experience in awarding grants through an open, transparent, competitive

process -- together with GTCUW's extensive relationships with local and national education and

evaluation experts -- puts the Alliance in a strong position to successfully undertake the more rigorous

subgrant selection process outlined in this proposal.

B. EXPERIENCE GROWING PROGRAM IMPACT

Greater Twin Cities United Way has demonstrated success supporting grantee program growth by

working independently and with contracted partners to analyze evidence of effectiveness for

programs, determine best-practice strategies, and provide support to expand or replicate services. In

2008, based on analysis of achievement data and research into promising practices, and after a two-

year pilot conducted in partnership with the Bloomington Public Schools (BPS) and Saint Paul Public

Schools (SPPS), GTCUW implemented Reading by Third Grade, an age three to grade three initiative

to identify and support local best-practice literacy-focused programs through an open and competitive

process.

This initiative helped Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) -- an AmeriCorps program that provides

highly-trained literacy tutors for children struggling with emergent literacy skills and grade-level

reading -- scale its model to every elementary school in those two districts and evaluate the program's

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impact on student reading achievement. GTCUW also provided strategic guidance in implementing the rollout, including problem-solving and support about effective ways to collect reliable data and use that data to guide program design and implementation. MRC is now beginning to replicate its model in other states and GTCUW is support replications by helping MRC problem-solve the logistics of the national rollout and working with United Ways across the country to help MRC secure local funding and support.

GTCUW also had strong success increasing the impact of several organizations through its recent and extensive analysis of Return on Investment for jobs programs in its Basic Needs Portfolio. This analysis, which measured not only job placements and wages, but also reduction in access to welfare benefits and decreases in incarceration, been particularly helpful with MN FastTRAC, a local consortium that funds several nonprofit job development organizations. GTCUW has worked to create strategies that FastTRAC organizations can use to train staff, develop consistency of services, and build better partnerships with community colleges for job-connected career paths and has created a Fast Track curriculum based on these strategies GTCUW is now working with several state agencies to develop other curricula that compliments the Fast Track curriculum.

RESOURCES TO ASSIST WITH SUBGRANTEE GROWTH. GTCUW has a strong structure in place through which it provides extensive support for its current grantees. This structure includes quarterly grantee meetings for sharing best practices and developing peer to peer support and relationships with local experts to provide one-on-one capacity building activities that address identified gaps. Capacity-building relationships include a partnership with the Saint Paul Public School Foundation to provide one-on-one assistance to grantees targeting GTCUW's Reading by 3rd Grade goal and a partnership local experts in the field of youth and community development to work with grantees targeting

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GTCUW's Out-of-School-Time goal to assess program quality features and create customized action plans to enhance their programs.

This work is supported internally by GTCUW's education teams, which help identify needs and challenges. Other resources include GTCUW's Community Impact Teams, which help ensure that grantees have the capacity to successfully meet the requirements of funding. The Alliance will leverage this existing structure, building on nationally-recognized research about best practices and local assessment of effective strategies to guide subgrantees in growing their impact.

CAPTURING AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES. The Alliance will capture and share best practices through Improvement Networks as well as through a variety of other avenues that build on GTCUW 's existing processes. These other avenues include annual reports, quarterly grantee meetings, the main GTCUW website, and the UnitedFrontMN.org on-line community forum, which connects community leaders, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders in addressing human services issues in Minnesota.

Members of GTCUW's Knowledge Management team work with local partners to evaluate program results, and determine which programs and strategies are creating the greatest impact in the community. GTCUW distills these best practices and key learning about both successes and failures and reports out through bi-annual program updates sent to funders, subgrantees, community partners, and other stakeholders. GTCUW's annual report includes a community scorecard, which measures outcomes against organizational goals and highlights best-practices. Information about best practices is also provided at community forums and events convened to bring grantmakers and the greater community together on emerging issues.

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C. EVALUATION EXPERIENCE

Greater Twin Cities United Way has extensive experience in managing and supporting evaluations of program models, both independently and in partnership with external experts. Internal efforts include annual reports that measure realized versus projected outcomes; increased success in collecting data in partnership with state and local government entities; long-standing relationships with partners to support effective collection of outcome information (including grants to increase technology capacity for tracking outcomes); and demonstrated success in measuring Return on Investment for its employment area, with plans to expand analysis to other areas.

For more comprehensive evaluations, GTCUW partners with external evaluation experts such as Child Trends, Wilder Research, and CAREI, which have the capacity to manage complex data analyses and experience designing and implementing rigorous evaluation studies. For example, GTCUW is working with national evaluation experts Child Trends to evaluate a local pilot of Minnesota's Parent Aware tiered quality rating system for childcare providers. The evaluation is designed to determine the correlation between the quality tiers and improved child outcome and to inform planning for the next phase of roll-out, which will be supported by Minnesota's recently-awarded federal Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge grant. GTCUW provided financial support to the childcare providers in this pilot project and helped manage the contracts and partnerships required to conduct the evaluation effectively and efficiently, including ensuring grantee data collection met a high enough standard that the evaluation could accurately determine program effectiveness and impact.

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USING EVIDENCE TO MAKE INVESTMENT DECISIONS. GTCUW uses evidence and evaluation results in decision-making strategies in three primary ways:

(a). Analyzing information about grantee funding trends, outcomes, and effectiveness helps GTCUW determine not only whether resources are being targeted where they are most needed but also whether they are having the expected results, in order to determine whether changes in investment goals or strategies are needed. For example, GTCUW recently conducted an extensive analysis of Return on Investment for jobs programs in its Basic Needs Portfolio. This analysis looked at outcomes for 20,000 participants in GTCUW -funded programs and measured not only job placements and wages, but also reduction in access to welfare benefits and decreases in incarceration, and other indicators. The ROI analysis has resulted in shifts at both the portfolio and program level. At the portfolio level, GTCUW has begun investing more in skills-based employment models that focus on job-connected training that moves participants into living-wage employment. At the program level, GTCUW has helped shift grantees' evaluation focus from numbers served to participant outcomes, driving programs to target efficiency and effectiveness as they work to increase the number participants who are placed in living-wage jobs and retain those jobs over time. This shift has helped GTCUW way be more effective in its grantmaking and has helped grantees provide more effective services.

(b). After decisions about investment strategies have been made, but before releasing RFPs to support work in the areas of investment, GTCUW analyzes evidence and results -- from both its own grantees and the work of other programs locally and nationally -- to inform the design of that investment. This work helps GTCUW determine achievable targets for the investment and articulate appropriate benchmarks and measures of success for grantees. GTCUW invites current grantees to participate in

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this process.

(c). GTCUW uses results to guide its development of technical assistance and support partnerships, looking at areas of success and failure -- both for individual grantees and across its portfolio --to determine general community gaps in capacity that need to be addressed.

USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE SUBGRANTEE PERFORMANCE. GTCUW currently works with grantees in its Education portfolio to help them use evidence of effectiveness to improve the performance of their programs based on information gathered from the Knowledge Management team or from evaluations conducted by external partners. For example, GTCUW's Childcare Accreditation Program works with child care centers to get them nationally-accredited and to help them gain higher ratings from the state's Parent Aware tiered childcare quality improvement system.

To improve program quality, GTCUW and its partners -- including the Parent Aware for School Readiness organization, the Accreditation Facilitation Project, and the Child Care Resource & Referral Network -- not only provide funding, but also offer: a). needs assessments; b). onsite consultation that includes goal-setting, mentoring, monitoring of progress toward goals, and supports for ongoing improvement; and c). multiple training sessions that focus on the accreditation process and Parent Aware requirements, best-practices for quality improvement, peer support, and online training for ongoing quality improvement.

Through this process, GTCUW helps grantees succeed and holds them accountable for progress toward accreditation and quality standards.

GTCUW is also helping employment organizations funded within its Basic Needs portfolio develop

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more effective systems to track outcomes and data. In partnership with the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development, GTCUW is working build more comprehensive data-tracking system, move grantees onto the system, and train them to use it effectively. This system, the statewide Workforce One database, tracks an extensive level of detail on each program and participant, including individual demographic data, such as age, race, sex, and ethnicity; other relevant data, such as education level, felony records, and public assistance enrollment; activity-related benchmarks, such as training completion, certifications awarded, and work experience; and service outcomes, such as job placements and wages. This longitudinal database also tracks long-term job retention and increases outcome measures over time.

Using a more comprehensive system of data tracking will help move all grantees away from basis analysis of effectiveness solely on numbers served and services provided to a more sophisticated analysis of what works to improve participant outcomes. Over the next five years, GTCUW plans to transfer every subgrantee in its employment portfolio into the system and provide the training they need to use the data to improve program performance.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND STAFF SKILL TO ADHERE TO EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS. GTCUW's Knowledge Management Team has strong capacity and experience developing and implementing evaluation plans and analyzing and reporting on outcome data. Because of the team's expertise, GTCUW has become much more sophisticated in the way program are evaluated, significantly increasing the focus on accountability, results, and outcomes in grantmaking, and employing a Logic Model to evaluate funded programs, which defines inputs, outputs, and anticipated outcomes to assess the effectiveness of grantees.

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Through the Alliance SIF, GTCUW will increase the rigor of evaluations for all subgrants and further develop its capacity -- and the capacity of its subgrantees -- to implement evaluation designs that will produce moderate or strong levels of evidence. In order to help increase GTCUW's capacity in this area, the Alliance will contract with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) for evaluation of SIF efforts and for capacity-building support, including working with GTCUW to enhance its internal capacity to adhere to evaluation requirements. The proposed Alliance project offers a well-timed opportunity to work with an experienced evaluation partner to develop the systems and relationships to ensure that GTCUW can support evaluations of its subgrantees that develop stronger levels of evidence of program effectiveness and help programs growth the impact of their programs.

D. ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROGRAM SUPPORT AND OVERSIGHT

EXPERIENCE SETTING AND IMPLEMENTING GOALS WITH GRANTEES. GTCUW has extensive experience setting and implementing goals with the 180 community-based non-profit organization in its Education, Basic Needs, and Health portfolios. Beginning with its RFP process, GTCUW identifies and articulates impact goals for effecting change and provides technical support during the RFP process to help applicants determine the extent to which their work aligns with those goals. After awards are made, GTCUW staff work with programs to further clarify understanding about each organization's capacity to achieve intended results, ensure that proposed services fully align with outcome expectations, and adjust goals and outcome measures as needed. In addition, GTCUW provides ongoing capacity building support and technical assistance for subgrantees in monitoring progress toward goals and in making needed improvements when programs miss progress benchmarks.

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GTCUW also works with grantees to problem-solve around challenges that impede progress toward goals. Success in this area results from the trust built with grantees, so that program staff are willing to honestly discuss challenges and share those things that are not working well, so that the program can address challenges and improve.

For example, GTCUW funds a local community center that provides multiple programs to meet the needs of low-income individuals and families in the area, providing significant investment in its Early Learning and Reading by Third Grade programs. This organization has a long history serving its community, staff are well-liked, and the organization is a respected voice for the community. However, after reviewing data on progress toward goals, GTCUW discovered that the funded programs were not having their intended impact. Sites visits revealed multiple issues for the programs, including over-enrollment, excessive child-to-staff ratios, and lack of fidelity of implementation for program models. GTCUW staff and contracted partners worked with the organization to help them develop the systems and strategies necessary to improve program quality. This process included redefining objectives in the short term to eventually reach long term goals as well as developing an action plan that included staff restructuring, new staff recruitment, professional development on the use of evaluation data to drive program improvement, work to align curriculum for Out-of-School-Time activities with school day learning, and connections with similar organizations to provide leadership mentoring.

QUALIFIED ROSTER OF STAFF TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAM. The Executive Committee that guides the Alliance comprises representatives of the region's leading philanthropic, corporate, educational, civic, and nonprofit organizations. Now led by two co-chairs -- Dr. Eric Kaler, President

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of the University of Minnesota, and Kim Nelson, Senior Vice President for External Relations at General Mills and President of the General Mills Foundation -- the group has worked to lay the foundation for success.

The group's work to date has incorporated the five key components identified in Kania and Kramer's research on collective impact:

(a). Strategic Cross-Sector Leadership: the Executive Committee that guides the Alliance includes key decision-makers from Greater Twin Cities United Way; General Mills and Target Corporations; the Itasca Project; the Bush, Minneapolis, and St. Paul Foundations; the University of Minnesota; and Wilder Research.

(b). Common Goals and Shared Indicators of Success: The Alliance Executive Committee established five key preliminary goals and related measurable objectives, described in subsection A, below, and is working with CAREI to further refine those goals and objectives.

(c). Effective Data Systems to Measure Progress: The Alliance has a commitment from Wilder Research to work with CAREI to develop and implement an effective, easy-to-use data system to monitor progress within and across programs.

(d). Expertise to Drive Quality Improvement: The Alliance has well-established relationships with potential partners to lead key Improvement Networks.

(e). High Quality Partnership Staff: The Alliance has designed an effective staffing and management structure, including job descriptions, qualification requirements for all positions, and a hiring timeline.

The GTCUW staff and consultants instrumental in implementing proposed Alliance activities include:

(a). Elise Wiener, GTCUW Controller. Wiener holds an active CPA license, a B.S. in Accounting and has 29 years' experience in nonprofit and for-profit accounting, auditing, and financial management.

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She will manage financial operations for the Alliance, including ensuring compliance with all aspects of federal grant awards.

(b). Meghan Barp, GTCUW Director of Education. Barp has an M.A. in International Studies, a B.A. in Human Development, a Certificate in Non-Profit Management for Youth Development Organizations, and more than 10 years' experience managing or directing youth development and education impact programs. She will provide strategic oversight of Alliance implementation and consult with the ED moving forward.

(c). CAREI, the project evaluation consultant, has extensive experience in the design of evaluations assessing the effectiveness of education program across the birth-to-college spectrum, including developing experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation studies.

(d). Wilder Research, the research organization that will build the data collection system, has extensive experience creating data collection and analysis tools for nonprofit organizations and multi-group initiatives, which include the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood.

PLAN TO BUILD SUBGRANTEE CAPACITY. Each subgrantee's need for capacity-building support will be assessed during the application and site visit process, with ongoing assessment during throughout the project as Alliance staff and Improvement Network leaders work with subgrantees on an individual and group basis. Depending on individual subgrantee needs, capacity-building may on focus leadership development and strategic planning; community collaboration; developing internal financial management, personnel management, or data-management systems; developing program-level evaluation and data collection plans; federal grant compliance; or other topics.

The Alliance will support subgrantees in multiple ways, including through quarterly subgrantee meetings focused on sharing best practices and providing peer-to-peer support. CAREI will work with

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the Alliance to provide capacity building for subgrantees data collection and evaluation efforts, helping subgrantees set up or improve both internal data systems and their use of data. Alliance staff will also contract with external partners that provide direct one-on-one capacity building to identify and address gaps. In addition, each subgrantee will receive significant, ongoing support for capacity building through participation in an Improvement Network, which will be led by a group of leaders with specific expertise in the subgrantee's targeted goal area(s). Improvement networks will both work to build general capacity for success, and will guide each subgrantee in setting up systems for improving outcomes, developing strong evidence, and creating and implementing detailed plans for growing impact during the period of the grant.

EXPERIENCE OPERATING COMPARABLE PROGRAMS. Greater Twin Cities United Way has a deep and well-established history of investing in high-quality programs that address issues related to children and youth. As part of its strategic plan for education, GTCUW has established a "Continuum of Education," prioritizing programs from pre-natal through high school graduation to meet the most pressing needs of children and families living in poverty.

For over ten years, GTCUW has been committed to an outcome- and results-driven approach to its grantmaking, ensuring that strong research and evaluation plans are established as part of the Request for Proposals and application process prior to making funding decisions. This approach is driven by GTCUW's strategic plan, which sets rigorous goals to create pathways out of poverty for children and families living at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines.

In education, four goals drive GTCUW's current work and strategic outcome indicators:

1). children are prepared for Kindergarten through participation in high quality childcare programs;

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2). parents are able to support age-appropriate physical, cognitive, and social-emotional and support their children's academic success in school through access to home visiting and parent education programming;

3). students are reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade through participations in programs that effectively support the continuum of literacy development; and

4). youth have access to quality out-of-school time programs that expose them to a wide array of academic and enrichment activities to prepare them for high school graduation and post-secondary attainment.

In each goal area, GTCUW's rigorous outcome indicators are rooted in best practices to ensure that funding supports programs of the highest possible quality. In 2010, programs in GTCUW's education portfolio served over 45,000 students and their families living in poverty in the 9-county region. CNCS support will enable GTCUW and its partners to not only expand the number of children served, but also to significantly improve the quality of those services, identify the specific program strategies that results in improved outcomes for children, and increase subgrantees' capacity to further expand and replicate the strategies that work.

GTCUW not only sets ambitious goals and rigorous outcome indicators, but also supports grantees in meeting those goals. A dedicated Community Impact (CI) education team works with grantees in each specific goal area (for example, Early Learning, Reading by 3rd Grade, or Out of School Time) to ensure that programs are implemented with fidelity and meet the requirements specified in the grant agreement. The CI Team provides training and technical assistance to grantees as needed to help them achieve proposed results.

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For example, in 2009, GTCUW commissioned Wilder Research to complete a three-year evaluation of how well the organization met its parent education goal through the funded programs. This evaluation was designed to help GTCUW better understand: 1). the extent to which parents participating in funded programs demonstrated improved interactions with their children, 2). how often parents connected with recommended community resources, and 3). the extent to which children participating in funded programs demonstrated improved age-appropriate social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, and physical skills and behaviors. The final report, published in February 2012, revealed that after spending three months in a targeted parenting program, parents knowledge and behaviors in parenting skills and access to needed resources increased from 40% to over 80%, demonstrated through multiple benchmarks.

PLAN FOR DEVELOPING SUBGRANTEE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS:

CAREI's evaluation of the Alliance initiative is an intricate combination of traditional external evaluation activities and technical assistance to both the Alliance and the subgrantees. Descriptions of CAREI's evaluation roles and technical assistance are provided in multiple sections of this proposal, and include participating in the subgrantee selection process, providing technical assistance to subgrantees to support growth and build subgrantee capacity, and supporting Wilder Research's development of the proposed data system.

The Alliance SIF anticipates granting up to 11 subgrants to applicants that have demonstrated at least preliminary evidence of effectiveness and that agree to develop a quasi-experimental design evaluation with appropriate internal and external validity in alignment with the overarching design of the portfolio-wide evaluation, in order to reach a moderate evidence level by the end of the funding

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period.

Depending on the awarded subgrantee model, CAREI evaluators envision establishing control groups for the quasi-experimental designs in one or both of two ways. First, control groups could comprise an equivalent external matched group of children in a parallel context (e.g., same school and grade level) not receiving the treatment of the subgrantee's program. Second, control groups could comprise internal groups of children made up of staggered treatment start times. For example, the control group for treatment group A would be treatment group B, which begins treatment six months after group A. In the real school and out-of-school settings the subgrantees work, randomized control studies are simply not feasible. Control groups constructed in these ways in quasi-experimental designs will provide the strongest evidence achievable to demonstrate causation.

CAREI evaluators will work with each subgrantee to select and/or design appropriate performance measures for their program model. This process will be implemented through a learning collaboration among the evaluators, the subgrantee staff, and the appropriate Improvement Network leader(s). Because subgrantees must be delivering research-based programs and have already achieved at least the preliminary evidence level, subgrantee staff will already be gathering data from some set of performance measures beyond those routinely gathered by schools. Further, the Improvement Network expert will bring deep knowledge of the program area -- for example, early literacy -- and of a set of valid performance indicators. CAREI will add the design, data gathering, and analysis mindset and skills as well as valid process measures. CAREI will also keep track of the development of the shared performance indicators across the subgrantees in the portfolio.

The overarching specific question the evaluation intends to answer for the subgrantees is: To what

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extent has the subgrantees' efforts reduced the educational achievement and opportunity gaps by the end of three (or five) years? Major sub-questions for the subgrantees include: To what extent have the subgrantees grown as data driven and action-oriented collaborations? Which of the practices and strategies are the most promising and cost-effective and actually drive the improvements being seen?

The overarching specific questions the evaluation intends to answer for the Alliance are 1) Has the Alliance developed a strong portfolio of replicable, evidence-based programs designed to improve school readiness, increase academic achievement, and ensure college success? Has the Alliance built capacity at program and network levels, creating a sustainable system for expanding and replicating successful programs in the portfolio? Major sub-questions for the Alliance include: To what extent has the Alliance developed an ongoing approach to collective impact? To what extent has the Alliance utilized a quality improvement process to provide a roadmap for all stakeholders to follow? How has the Alliance supported local subgrantees? How has the Alliance helped subgrantees strengthen their practices and their evidence base in order to grow their impact in the community? To what extent has the Alliance grown the impact of the subgrantees' programs? To what extent has the Alliance established a strong evidence base for other programs seeking to replicate efforts?

A detailed evaluation plan for the Alliance is not possible at this stage as the final organizational infrastructure of the Alliance will not be in place until the beginning of the 2012-13 school year. Even so, it is clear that answering the Alliance evaluation questions and sub-questions will involve extensive interviews with all members of the Executive Committee, the Strategic Advisory Committee, the Alliance Executive Director, the Data Manager, the Financial Grants Manager, the Director of Operations and Quality Improvement, and the experts in the Improvement Networks along with the members of the organizational infrastructures of the subgrantees.

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EXPERIENCE MONITORING SUBGRANTEES FOR SITE COMPLIANCE. GTCUW has an established process to monitor all current grantees for site compliance; the Alliance will use the same process to monitor subgrantees for the proposed SIF. In addition to addressing compliance oversight during training and capacity building opportunities, GTCUW staff will conduct site visits twice annually with each subgrantee. The purpose of the visits will be to ensure that programs are implemented with fidelity from both a programmatic and a financial perspective. GTCUW will use the rubric developed during the Request for Proposals process as a tool to guide the site visits and provide ongoing feedback on continuous improvement to subgrantees. As needed, staff will provide additional, tailored technical assistance to subgrantees requiring additional assistance. Site compliance visits will be supported by the Senior Program Manager as well as by the Financial Grants Manager, and in coordination with GTCUW's Community Impact Director and Controller to ensure full compliance.

PLAN FOR SUBGRANTEE MONITORING. In addition to monitoring site compliance, GTCUW and Alliance staff will monitor the general programmatic performance of all subgrantees on a continual basis. Above and beyond the required quarterly and annual reports required by Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), subgrantees will be expected to adhere to GTCUW reporting requirements related to both agency-wide and program-specific service and outcome data. This reporting includes annual agency reports, board of director updates, compliance and budget reporting, and regular information about the overall financial health of the organization. GTCUW staff will partner with an external agency to review financial audits of partner agencies to ensure compliance with both GTCUW and CNCS requirements. Subgrantees deemed out of compliance will be placed on a conditional funding plan with targeted assistance until they are able to meet requirements. Subgrantees still unable to meet compliance requirements may have their funding

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suspended or terminated.

PROPOSED APPROACH TO ACCOUNTABILITY. GTCUW raises funds annually through a variety of public and private sources to support its work, and consequently, has established processes and procedures for reporting on progress and results in a transparent, timely manner. GTCUW publishes an annual community scorecard to demonstrate ongoing progress in meeting goals and outcomes. The organization also has rigorous internal systems and procedures related to risk management, regulatory compliance, and financial management to ensure goals are set and met for both current grantees and for GTCUW itself. With CNCS support, GTCUW will hire additional staff resources to build the capacity to provide full accountability for the Alliance SIF.

E. ABILITY TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND OVERSIGHT

EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY TO MANAGE THE SIF GRANT PROGRAM. GTCUW has a strong team of 12 financial professionals and associates with a proven track record in providing solid financial management and accounting, managing grants at both the intermediary and subgrantee level. This experience provides a strong foundation for GTCUW to expand its capacity sufficiently to successfully execute financial management of the Alliance grant and financial oversight of the subgrantees.

GTCUW already has well-established internal controls, policies, and procedures to manage over $60 million in annual subgrants. GTCUW's Finance Team will work with a consultant, as described below, to set up the necessary compliance systems, policies, and procedures for successful management of a federal grant and staff a new Alliance Financial Grants Manager position, to be hired in summer

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2012. GTCUW uses the Microsoft Dynamics accounting system, which has strong controls and reporting capabilities. Reports are readily available to provide monthly, quarterly, and annual financial information, as well as special reports as needed for grantors. The system tracks budgeted vs. actual expenses, year-to-date expenses, and variances. The system is flexible and reports will be available to track grant expenditures over the life of the Alliance grant, not just by fiscal year. GTCUW uses ADP to manage its payroll function; that system can be used to track time and effort specifically for the Alliance.

GTCUW has strong existing internal controls, including checks and balances to ensure that only authorized payments are issued, cash receipts are deposited in a timely way and applied to the appropriate program, all balance sheet accounts are reconciled monthly, revenue and expense reports are prepared in a timely way, and variances reviewed and explained. GTCUW has an annual budget of nearly $90 million, of which nearly $60 million is expended on subgrants to organizations working to address the local community's most pressing social needs. While the $1 million requested would not substantially increase GTCUW's financial resources, it would provide a timely catalyst to significantly advance the collective impact work in which GTCUW and its partners have engaged over the past 12 months.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING PLAN. Overall guidance for the Alliance is provided by the Executive Committee, which meets at least quarterly. The Committee's work will be informed and supported by a Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) that will meet bi-monthly and will provide input and feedback regarding goals, measures, benchmarks, and progress. The SAC will comprise approximately 40 community leaders with deep understanding of current community needs and assets.

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The Executive Committee will directly supervise the full-time Alliance Executive Director (ED), who will implement all aspects of the Alliance framework, including the proposed Social Innovation Fund. The ED will oversee the work of the partnership, including such functions as engagement of partner organizations and management of the governance structure, identification of community level outcomes and priority strategies to make desired improvements and the creation of networks around each priority strategy. The ED will be responsible for overall performance management and strategic planning and will serve as an ex officio member of Board of Directors.

Other Alliance staff to be hired include:

a). a full-time Alliance Director of Operations for Quality Improvement responsible for managing the quality improvement process used throughout the partnership's work, in particular the work of the Improvement Networks, managing the consultants and in-kind experts who facilitate various network activities, and providing training on quality improvement processes to participants in every level of the partnership;

b). a full-time Alliance Senior Program Manager responsible for project oversight;

c). a full-time Alliance Financial Grants Manager responsible for day-to-day management for grant-funded operations, including internal and external financial reporting and tracking and ensuring financial compliance by GTCUW and each subgrantee; and

d). a full-time Alliance Administrative Assistant responsible for providing logistical support to the entire partnership; managing initial engagement with the public; and assisting with maintenance of the Alliance web site and other communications vehicles.

The final organizational infrastructure of the Alliance will be in place by the beginning of the 2012-13 school year.

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ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS. GTCUW is committed to ensuring full compliance with federal grants to meet the multiple, complex monitoring responsibilities associated with a federal award, which include a range of oversight duties, including ensuring each subgrantee's compliance with extensive federal grant requirements. Because the Alliance's partners know that this capacity is necessary to the success of collective impact efforts in the community, GTCUW has engaged the services of CliftonLarsonAllen, one of the nation's top 10 certified public accounting and management firms, with extensive experience with management of federal funds. CliftonLarsonAllen analyzed GTCUW's current capacity and readiness for federal grant administration and developed a plan to create the capacity to ensure compliance with complex federal requirements. This plan outlines the necessary steps for GTCUW to bring in-house the capacity to manage federal grants on an ongoing basis. Those steps include:

(1). Developing the systems necessary to comply with federal regulations, including multiple OMB guidelines that describe standards for financial management systems, compliance requirements, cost principles for nonprofit organizations, and acceptable costs and contributions. At a minimum, that system will provide for detailed budget preparation with proposed costs based on actual historical cost data; identification of costs (budgeted costs and actual expenses) by project/grant; identification of expenditures as direct, indirect, and unallowable; complete and accurate financial reports (including balance sheets and income statements); maintenance of adequate source documentation (purchase orders, invoices, canceled checks); and maintenance of adequate documentation to support cost sharing. The Alliance will consult with CliftonLarsonAllen, as needed, as it develops the systems, policies, and procedures to support full federal compliance monitoring.

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(2). Hiring and training a highly-qualified Financial Grants Manager whose responsibility will be to monitor compliance for the subgrantees of the Alliance and manage the day to day financial grant management operations, including internal and external reporting. Under the direction of the Controller, this individual will establish the accounting system, policies, and procedures to ensure full compliance with the federal award and OMB guidelines. The Financial Grants Manager will have at least a four-year degree in accounting from an accredited institution and three to five years of experience, including experience with nonprofit organizations and federal grants management.

F. STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Strategic Leadership Group that came together in 2011 is committed to working collectively to identify, support, and expand effective, achievable, ways to begin to close the achievement gap and improve student performance and life prospects for low-income youth and youth of color in the Twin Cities region. This group had identified subgranting as one of the key strategies through which this work should happen over the long term, and the group is committed to implementing the proposed framework whether or not CNCS Social Investment Funds are received. This broad-based, cross-sector collaborative has widespread support among organizations throughout the region, committed to the vision of collective impact.

Through its work, the Alliance will extend, enhance, and align with other significant efforts to improve educational achievement and life outcomes for children and youth, including other local early-childhood-to-early-employment efforts and a range of initiatives targeted to kindergarten readiness, 3rd-grade reading proficiency, and college readiness. The CNCS grant would significantly accelerate the pace at which the Alliance can work to leverage the extensive resources being invested

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in the community through these initiatives, particularly the three high-profile federal-funded

partnership projects: (a). Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), the collaborative organization that

works to prepare children in economically-struggling North Minneapolis to graduate from high school

ready for college, which was recently awarded a $28 million federal Promise Neighborhoods grant to

strengthen its cradle-to-career pathway for children. (b). The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood, a

collective early-childhood-to-early-employment effort in the city's "Frogtown" and Summit-

University neighborhood to ensure all children succeed in school, which was a 2010 recipient of a

$500,000 federal Promise Neighborhoods planning grant.

(c). The University of Minnesota's newly-established multi-state Child-Parent Center (CPC)

partnership program, launched with a $15 million award from the federal Investing in Innovations

(i3) program, which provides intensive and continuous educational and family-support services for

pre-kindergarten to third-grade children in low-income families and high-poverty neighborhoods in

Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois. CNCS funding would provide a well-timed spark to propel the

Alliance forward in its efforts to ensure these initiatives work in concert to more effectively achieve

their aims in the community and create lasting impact and change.

The Alliance will also work with multiple other initiatives as well, establishing a region-wide system to

align goals and strategies; share best-practice strategies and lessons learned; effectively support

evaluation of program models, increase the rigor of evidence for programs, and grow impact.

This alignment will extend the effect and sustainability of these endeavors, which include:

(a). the McKnight Foundation's Partnership with the Urban Education Institute at the University of

Chicago to fund, provide technical support to, and share models of success from promising school-

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based initiatives to improve early literacy in the Twin Cities.

(b). Target Corporation's Partnership with Minnesota Center for Reading Research (MCRR) on the Pathways to Reading Excellence in School Sites (PRESS) Initiative to bring rich educational literacy and reading comprehension resources to help students at six Minneapolis public schools achieve literacy success.

(c). GTCUW's Early Literacy Initiative and other early learning efforts, through which GTCUW invests more than $3 million annually in programs focused on school readiness and 3rd-grade reading proficiency.

(d). Minnesota's work to strengthen its Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for early learning programs, which will be significantly enhanced through the state's recent $45 million award through the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

(e). Travelers Foundation's work with Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) Foundation to increase the college readiness of low-income SPPS students of color by expanding access to and providing support for students enrolling in honors-level coursework through the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program in all district junior and senior high schools.

Through the new RFP process being designed for the Alliance framework, GTCUW and its partners are embedding requirements for evaluation, rigorous evidence, and plans for growth of impact into the selection process for grantees. This process will become the standard mode of business for the organization over the long term. As a result, funding decisions will be driven by an assessment of potential subgrantee's commitment to the mission and vision of the collective impact model as well as their capacity to implement the kinds of evaluation, strengthening of evidence, and growth of impact required to transform the landscape of strategies aimed at improving educational outcomes for the children and youth at greatest risk for academic failure.

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Budget/Cost Effectiveness

A. BUDGET JUSTIFICATION: Greater Twin Cities United Way is requesting $1 million each year
for five years from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and will match the
CNCS grant with $1 million annually in private funds, bringing the funds dedicated to Phase One
implementation of Twin Cities STRIVE Alliance to a total of $2 million a year. GTCUW staff and the
Alliance partners are confident that the proposed budget accurately reflects the true costs related to
creating the systems necessary to fully implement the Phase One plan, distribute subgrants efficiently
and effectively, provide all proposed capacity-building support and technical assistance, and develop
and implement the high-level evaluation required to enable subgrantees to develop strong evidence of
effectiveness, improve their practice, grow their impact, and support expansion or replication of
successful strategies.

The single-largest category of expenditure for the Alliance SIF will be subgrants, which comprise 80%
of the CNCS request ($800,000 out of $1 million) and represents 55% of the total budget including
matching funds ($1.1 million out of $2 million). The second-largest category of expenditure will be the
personnel needed to develop and implement all Alliance systems and processes, including managing
the subgrant award process and providing ongoing support for subgrantees. At a total of $564,510
annually ($453,600 in salaries and $110,910 in fringe), this category represents 28.2% of the total
combined budget. Personnel supported through the grant will include:

a). A full-time Alliance Executive Director (ED), with an annual salary of $150,000 plus benefits. The
ED, who is responsible for overall performance management, strategic planning, and relationship
building, will be the public face of the Alliance and is critical to the Alliance's long-term success and
sustainability in the community;

b). A full-time Alliance Director of Operations for Quality Improvement, with an annual salary of

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$115,000 plus benefits. This position will be responsible for managing the quality improvement

process used throughout the partnership's work, in particular the work of the Improvement Networks,

managing the consultants and in-kind experts who facilitate various network activities, and providing

training on quality improvement processes to participants in every level of the partnership. The

Improvement Networks are the heart of the Alliance's effort to identify promising practices, grow

program impact, and lay the foundation for program expansion and replication of successful

strategies.

c). A full-time Alliance Senior Program Manager, with annual salary of $65,000 plus fringe benefits.

This position will be responsible for project oversight and making sure that the day-to-day aspects of

the initiative run according to plan.

d). A full-time Alliance Financial Grants Manager, with an annual salary of $60,000 plus fringe

benefits. This position will be responsible for day-to-day financial management of grant-funded

operations and subgrant programs, including internal and external financial reporting and tracking

and ensuring financial compliance by GTCUW. This position is critical to building and managing the

complex internal GTCUW systems needed to successfully meet federal financial compliance and

reporting requirements for each subgrantee and for GTCUW itself.

e). A full-time Alliance Administrative Assistant, with an annual salary of $45,000 plus fringe

benefits. This position will be responsible for providing extensive logistical support to the entire

partnership, including managing initial engagement with the public to publicize the Alliance initiative

and the SIF Request for Proposal. He or she will also provide all ongoing administrative support and

assist with maintenance of the Alliance web site and other communications vehicles.

In addition, GTCUW staff with direct responsibilities for Alliance activities will have a portion of their

salary funded through the SIF grant, including the GTCUW Director of Community Impact and

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GTCUW Controller (totaling $18,600, plus related fringe benefits). These positions will ensure clean integration of the SIF project with current GTCUW policies and procedures related to finance and program development and management.

The third-largest category of expenditures is contractual expenses with the consultants who will support Phase One implementation, including development of the software systems necessary to create a sustainable infrastructure and support subgrantees. At a total of $265,000, this category represents 13.3% of the overall budget. Consultant services will include:

a). the design and implementation of the rigorous, quasi-experimental evaluation described in the project narrative, budgeted at $74,400 annually (Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement) paired with $64,600 dedicated to subgrantee level evaluation capacity-building, totalling $140,000;

b). the development and integration of the proposed data system described in the project narrative that will be capable of tracking extensive child- and program-level data and providing accessible reports of progress toward benchmarks and goals, budgeted at $100,000 (Wilder Research); and

c). contracts for experts to provide capacity-building support and technical assistance for subgrantees to help them improve systems and programs, implement evaluation plans to strengthen evidence of effectiveness, develop and implement growth of impact plans, and support expansion or replication of effective strategies, budgeted at $25,000 ($250/day for 100 days).

Other budgeted expenses include staff travel to attend required national meetings related to SIF (three staff at $4,500), local mileage reimbursements for staff attending SIF-related meetings ($528); the purchase of five laptop computers for staff critical to the success of the Alliance ($13,750); RFP and training materials to ensure the successful roll-out of the RFP and training and support materials for

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subgrantees ($7,450); general office-related expenses, including telephone, office space, technology support for grant staff, and criminal background checks ($29,262); and A-133 audit fees ($15,000).

B. MATCH SOURCE AND CAPACITY: Greater Twin Cities United Way has secured over 55% of matching sources for the SIF, including commitments of at least $100K from St. Paul Foundation, University of Minnesota Foundation, and Bush Foundation; a commitment from General Mills Foundation at an anticipated level of $100K to $150K (the final funding amount will be announced after the Foundation's April board meeting); GTCUW's own commitment of $100K; and a commitment of at least $50K from The Minneapolis Foundation. Additionally, the Alliance anticipates funding commitments from Cargill, 3M, Target Corporation, and the Minnesota Vikings; letters of commitment from these organizations will be secured in the next few weeks. The Alliance anticipates matching dollars to exceed the 1:1 match requirement.

GTCUW is committed to ensuring that subgrantees are successful in securing their match and fundraising technical assistance will be provided as needed to help subgrantees identify and craft a compelling approach to potential funders to secure the second half of the required matching funds and to help ensure program sustainability for the subgrantees.

Clarification Summary

PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES FOR CLARIFICATION

1. Please identify the members of the STRIVE Alliance and describe the roles they are likely to play in the SIF program. Also, please identify all members of the Executive Committee and describe how key governance decisions are made, especially regarding which organizations in the STRIVE Alliance play what roles and how resources are allocated among them.

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Since Greater Twin Cities United Way (GTCUW) submitted its SIF application in March, local stakeholders have built significant momentum around and made substantial progress toward launching the Twin Cities STRIVE Alliance. GTCUW has emerged as the lead anchor organization for Alliance efforts, partnering with two additional institutions to ensure best practices in research, outcome assessment, and community partnerships: Wilder Research (Wilder), a non-profit organization that combines direct service, research, and community development to address community needs; and Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (MMEP), a nonprofit collaborative that seeks to increase the academic success of Students of Color and American Indian Students in Minnesota schools, colleges, and universities.

In addition to these anchor partners, an extensive network of key civic, business, education, philanthropy, and non-profit leaders in the community, has committed to the STRIVE Alliance, including:

* Greater Twin Cities United Way;

* University of Minnesota;

* General Mills;

* Wilder Research;

* Minnesota Minority Education Partnership;

* Minneapolis Foundation;

* Target Corporation;

* Minnesota Philanthropy Partners;

* 3M;

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* The Bush Foundation;

* The Minneapolis and St. Paul Federations of Teachers;

* The Minneapolis Foundation;

* Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and Saint Paul Mayor

Chris Coleman;

* Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva and Minneapolis Public Schools

Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson.

Each Alliance member is committing extensive expertise and many are also contributing substantial

funding to ensure that the STRIVE Alliance is implemented effectively and sustainably.

The Alliance is currently led by an Executive Committee that comprises:

*   Dr. Eric Kaler, President of the University of Minnesota (co-chair);

* Kim Nelson, Vice President, General Mills (co-chair);

* Dr. Robert Jones, Executive Vice President, University of Minnesota;

* Sarah Caruso, President and CEO of Greater Twin Cities United Way;

* Frank Forsberg, Senior Vice President of Systems Change and Innovation, Greater Twin Cities

United Way;

* Paul Mettessich, Executive Director, Wilder Research (the research arm of the Amherst H. Wilder

Foundation);

* Carlos Mariani, Executive Director, Minnesota Minority Education Partnership;

* Reba Dominski, Director of Community Relations, Target Corporation.

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The role of the Executive Committee is to act as a board of directors for the Twin Cities STRIVE Alliance, providing leadership and guidance both for Alliance staff and for the expansion and sustainability of Alliance efforts in the Twin Cities. The Executive Committee is responsible for hiring and overseeing the work of the Alliance Executive Director and for approving key recommendations from Alliance staff, including subgrantee funding recommendations. Co-chairs Dr. Kaler and Ms. Nelson are currently leading efforts to create a set of foundational documents to serve as a roadmap for success. These documents include a Memorandum of Understanding for the anchor organizations and by-laws that fully articulate the Alliance's governance structure and decision-making process. Additional members of the executive committee will be recruited as the Alliance evolves to ensure that the collaboration engages as broad a spectrum of local leaders as possible. GTCUW is also leading efforts to meet with key community stakeholders over the next two months to provide transparent communication regarding the STRIVE Alliance and open opportunities for the community to take on leadership roles in ensuring the success of the Alliance.

The Executive Committee has formed four strategic, temporary sub-committees to launch the STRIVE Alliance in the fall:

* Communications and Branding team: led by co-chair Kim Nelson of General Mills, this team is responsible for further refining the communications plan and making a recommendation on branding for the STRIVE Alliance.

* Community Engagement team: led by Frank Forsberg of GTCUW, this team is responsible for identifying key stakeholders and executing outreach to engage them in the STRIVE Alliance; the team is working to organize diverse communities in the Twin Cities at the grassroots level to identify needs

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and best-practice strategies for improving outcomes for young people of color.

* Network Design and Process Improvement team: led by Cheryl Mayberry (an executive consultant), this team is responsible for identifying priority strategies and recommending the corresponding networks, decision making processes, and leaders. Improvement Networks are responsible for ensuring that all subgrantees consistently use outcome data and other input to inform best practices as related to each of the five outcome areas identified in the initial grant proposal (kindergarten readiness, 3rd-grade reading proficiency, 9th-grade readiness for upper-level math, four-year high school graduation, and postsecondary enrollment).

* Goals and Measures: led by Paul Mattessich of Wilder Research, this team is responsible for defining the goals, benchmarks, and outcome measurement for STRIVE Alliance efforts, and will ensure that all evaluation plans and data-collection and data-analysis structures, including the SIF evaluation that will be conducted by the University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) -- are as fully-developed as possible prior to the subgrantee selection process.

2. Please explain the formal role(s) the GTCUW plays with respect to the STRIVE Alliance. What are the financial implications?

GTCUW serves as the primary anchor for the Alliance, providing significant assistance that includes not only in-kind leadership and structural support but also significant cash contributions.

In spring of this year, Greater Twin Cities United Way applied to the Executive Committee to serve as the anchor organization for the STRIVE Alliance. The committee chose GTCUW as the anchor

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because of the organization's long-standing, neutral, and effective role as a convener of diverse

stakeholders committed to results-oriented services. As one of the premier United Ways in the nation,

GTCUW is a well-known brand in the community, with both a solid reputation for excellence and the

scope, experience, and established networks that enable it to manage complex, purpose-driven projects

and programs in an effective and efficient manner. GTCUW has proven success in bringing together

cross-sector teams to address common goals and achieve results.

Committee members believe that GTCUW has the expertise and structures needed both to guide the

STRIVE Alliance through the launch phase and the initial subgrantee application round and to

provide continuous support for the Alliance once its own management and governance structure are

firmly in place. While many organizations in the Twin Cities have solid in experience in one or two

areas critical to the success of the Alliance, GTCUW stands alone as an entity with expertise in every

arena, including:

* competitive grantmaking;

* relationships with a wide array of education and evaluation experts;

* demonstrated success providing technical assistance and support to grantee programs;

* experience managing and supporting outcome evaluations and data-based decision-making; and

* extensive program- and financial-management systems, which are currently being enhanced to

enable tracking and reporting for federal grants.

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The financial implications of GTCUW's role center on the in-kind and cash contributions GTCUW will make to support the project over the long term. GTCUW is committed to providing this high level of support for at least three years and is in the process of conducting a full analysis of the associated costs, which the Board of Directors understands are substantial. Early, conservative estimates of these contributions total $175,000 annually, and include:

* The time senior and director level leaders are dedicating to the launch and implementation process, including hiring Alliance staff, refining and tailoring the initial RFP and scoring rubric, publicizing the RFP, and supporting the subgrantee review and selection process.

* The build-out of the office space that GTCUW will provide to house Alliance staff, as well as the human resources and information technology services that GTCUW will provide to support Alliance staff.

* Overall financial management of the SIF subgrants, including engaging CliftonLarsonAllen to help GTCUW staff develop the internal systems needed to effectively receive, track, and report on federal grants.

* The knowledge management support GTCUW will provide to Alliance staff and external evaluation partners in tracking and reporting on outcome data at the system and individual subgrantee levels.

* The cash contribution of $100,000 GTCUW is providing from its education budget as part of the required match for the STRIVE Alliance. GTCUW is evaluating is current internal budgets to

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determine the extent to which it can dedicate further financial resources and is examining the

possibility of contributing up to an additional $250,000.

In addition, GTCUW invests $20MM annually in programs directly related to Alliance goals and

objectives. Working as part of the Alliance will enable GTCUW to leverage that significant community

investment to increase its social impact.

3. Please articulate the timeline by which you would hire your program staff, prepare your RFP, and

complete a high quality selection process within six months. Also, please clarify how the STRIVE

Alliance executive committee will efficiently serve as preliminary executors of the grant program until

the staff is hired.

The search for an Executive Director is currently underway with the Chandler Group, a national

executive search firm. It is expected that the Executive Director will be selected by late August or early

September. Alliance program staff will be hired as soon as possible after the Executive Director is on

board. Job descriptions for all key staff positions have been developed and are ready to be released as

soon as the Executive Director is hired. GTCUW has an extensive network through which it can help

the Alliance rapidly recruit and hire all proposed staff members. The Executive Committee expects all

key Alliance staff to be on board by mid-December and fully participate in reviewing portfolio

recommendations (see timeline below).

With logistical, technological, and human resources support from GTCUW, the Executive Committee

has the capacity to serve as executors of the grant program until Alliance staff members are in place.

GTCUW will provide substantial support and guidance both during the initial subgrantee selection

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process as Alliance staff members come on board and throughout the SIF grant period. GTCUW has a long and well-respected grant-making track record that includes an open and competitive outcomes-based RFP process for all the programs funded in its portfolio. GTCUW is committed to using this experience to ensure that a rigorous process guides Alliance subgrantee selections and enables the review team to make well-informed funding decisions regarding "best in class" programs in each of the five proposed outcome areas. Staff is currently updating its standard RFP template to align with the NCSA and the SIF NOFA, and other relevant federal requirements to ensure that applicants fully understand what is required of SIF subgrantees.

The Alliance SIF subgrantee selection process is designed to be completed within six months of CNCS award announcements, as follows:

August 2012: A team comprising Executive Committee members, GTCUW staff, and, if possible, the new Executive Director, will finalize the RFP and scoring rubric based on GTCUW's current best-practice templates and processes, in alignment with the requirements of SIF NOFA.

Late August 2012: The RFP will be sent both to all currently-funded GTCUW partners and to a broad network of other statewide and national organizations with the potential to meet the needs of the local community and advance the goals of the STRIVE Alliance. Links to the RFP will be posted on GTCUW's main website and its online community forum and all Executive Committee members and Alliance partners will be urged to send the announcement to their own networks. GTCUW will expand its existing electronic grants-management system to enable SIF applicants to complete proposals online.

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Mid-October 2012: Applications will be reviewed by a team that includes the Alliance Executive Director, GTCUW's Director of Education, the contracted evaluation partner, and local education experts selected from among the individuals identified to participate in Alliance Improvement Networks. The review process will follow SIF requirements, as well as GTCUW's thorough and rigorous best-practices process, which includes both review of the proposal and a site-visit with potential candidates.

Mid-November 2012: Members of the Review Team will conduct site visits with the highest-ranking applicants.

Mid-December 2012: The Review Team will make recommendations to the Alliance Executive Committee and Alliance staff for the portfolio of subgrantees. Recommendations will balance applicant strength of evidence, promise for replication or expansion, and organizational capacity; potential to impact priority outcomes and inform best practices; and the diversity of the portfolio geographically, by issue area, and by priority outcome.

February 2013: The Review Team will present recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval.

March 2013: The Alliance will announce subgrantees awards; Alliance and GTCUW staff will work with subgrantees as needed to adjust their proposed scope of services and outcomes, and work with CAREI and CNCS staff to design and approve evaluation plans.

4. Please clarify your intended approach to selecting a portfolio of subgrantees that will systematically

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contribute towards achievement of the five identified outcome measures. Do you have a targeted mix of services or programs or are you intending to select the best of any type? For example, if the majority of highly-regarded subgrant applicants are solely focused on kindergarten readiness, will you select them and, if so, what will the effect be on your ability to achieve progress towards the other measures? Also, how will the distribution of successful applicants among these five outcome measures (or potential imbalanced distribution) affect the successful implementation of the proposed Improvement Networks?

The Alliance is committed to ensuring effective grantmaking along the continuum of services and intends to distribute funds from early childhood through college, as defined by the five outcome areas. The Alliance's intent is to select organizations that have a significant track record in in each of the five outcome areas and that are highly capable of delivering results in those areas. GTCUW and the Executive Committee are confident that, with strong outreach to the extensive network of effective local programs that exist across the continuum of services for young people, the team will be able to attract and ultimately fund "best in class" programs that meet intended goals in each of the five areas.

The Twin Cities are blessed with a wealth of dedicated and results-oriented agencies working to meet local community needs and GTCUW has a strong understanding of the mission and capacity of these diverse organizations. GTCUW and the Alliance as a whole will actively pursue multiple channels to encourage applications from organizations across the youth-development spectrum.

The goal for the STRIVE Alliance SIF is to have at least one subgrantee in each of the five areas and to have diversity in both geography and target communities. If necessary, the number of subgrantees in any one area will be capped to ensure that no area is unrepresented. Because of the strength of

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many individual organizations and the collective breadth of expertise they represent, it is unlikely that the Alliance would be unable to secure solid applicants from each of the five outcome areas.

The Alliance is in the process of developing and prioritizing the work of its Improvement Networks and will ensure that networks are convened in each of the five outcome areas so that every subgrantee can be assigned to a network that will support its efforts. The efforts of specific Improvement Networks will be significantly accelerated with SIF funds.

5. You note in your subgrantee selection criteria that to be eligible, an organization must "serve residents of Minneapolis or Saint Paul." Must they already be present in these cities or are you intending to consider new organizations that may have compelling track records elsewhere and are ready to replicate in these cities? If not, what is your rationale for confining your search to local organizations?

With one of the strongest non-profit sectors in the country, GTCUW and the STRIVE Alliance Executive Committee are united in their belief that the area's diverse community-based organizations have individual and collective strengths that enable them not only to accurately identify the root causes of community needs but also to deliver quality services that effectively address those needs and deliver results. In addition, GTCUW has a unique vantage point as a current funder of many of these potential subgrantees and convener of partnerships with myriad other organizations. Given both the Corporation's desire to use Intermediary organizations to re-grant funds to affect change in local communities and GTCUW's strong infrastructure and experience working with local organizations, it makes sense that the focus of the selection process would be on organizations with a history and track record of providing services within GTCUW's identified service area. The RFP will be released widely

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to organizations throughout the Twin Cities and will extend beyond GTCUW's current portfolio to attract new organizations with compelling track records and innovative ideas.

Additionally, given the rigorous requirements of taking on a federal grant such as SIF, the focus on awarding funds to locally-based organizations will enable the Alliance to more effectively manage those funds and ensure results. Opening the process to national partners would be feasible once the Alliance infrastructure is well-established and processes are firmly in place to ensure quality and results.

6. Who will actually make the final decisions regarding subgrant awards and through what process? If the STRIVE Alliance's "leadership team" is involved (and is different from the "executive committee,") please describe the members and their respective roles.

The "leadership team" is the STRIVE Alliance Executive Committee, whose members and roles were described in the answer to Programmatic Issues Question 1. As indicated in the answer to Question 3, a Review Team will review all applications and make subgrantee recommendations. The composition of this team also described. Although this team is responsible for reviewing all application and making portfolio recommendations, final subgrant award decisions will be voted on by the Executive Committee, with guidance from GTCUW senior leadership and the STRIVE Alliance Executive Director. The Alliance's review process, which was also described in the answer to Question 3, is consistent with and draws upon GTCUW's long-standing and rigorous best-practices process for making funding decisions.

7. Please clarify the proposed intent to leverage partnerships with i3-funded Child-Parent Center

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program at the University of Minnesota. Please confirm that the application is not proposing to invest in duplicative programmatic elements that are being supported by other federal innovation funds.

The proposed SIF initiative will not duplicate federally-funded innovation efforts. Rather, this initiative will create a synergy that results from the very specific leadership role GTCUW plays in coordinating and aligning efforts. As both a financial contributor and thought partner in these multiple federal efforts, GTCUW has a unique vantage point that enables it to ensure the effective use of the nearly $90MM that is flowing in to the state of Minnesota over the next five years via the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, Investing in Innovation (i3), and Promise Neighborhoods funds. To that end, GTCUW has engaged Laurie Davis of Advance Consulting (a respected education expert and primary author of Minnesota's successful Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application) to coordinate the work of local federal innovation grant recipients, promote communication and transparency, and ensure that the initiatives are implemented with fidelity and integrity. Davis regularly convenes grant recipients -- including the University of Minnesota's Child-Parent Center -- and works with them directly to ensure their efforts complement and enhance, rather than duplicate, each other. This coordination focuses on aligning outcome measures and evaluation tools and on leveraging shared resources whenever possible.

In addition, GTCUW is currently designing a public website (www.unitedfrontmn.org) to keep the general public up to speed on the coordination and progress of these efforts and to provide a space for feedback. If GTCUW should be awarded a SIF grant, these funds would be included in the alignment efforts underway.

This unprecedented confluence of federal funding aimed at addressing long-standing discrepancies in

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the life outcomes of young people in poverty represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for local organizations to work together toward common goals in new and effective ways. Funding from the CNCS SIF offers an unparalleled opportunity for GTCUW and the STRIVE Alliance to work with stakeholders across the Twin Cities to seize the moment and effect real and lasting change.

8. You indicate that Phase One of your longer-term STRIVE Alliance project will begin with the SIF and will initially focus on Minneapolis and St. Paul. Can you please clarify what is included in Phase One and how it relates to other phases, including relevant timeframes? Is there more to Phase One than the SIF program?

The STRIVE Alliance leaders have been deeply thoughtful regarding the best approach to implementing the Alliance in a way that will reap long-term benefits and ensure long-term sustainability. A key consideration for the Alliance is the fact that the core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul face the most significant urban challenges in the state: together the two school districts that serve these cities educate the vast majority of Minnesota's children of color and low-income children. If we can move the dial on the achievement gap in Minneapolis and St. Paul, that would change the educational landscape for the entire state.

Although the need is greatest in the urban core, however, many suburbs -- particularly those in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area --increasingly face similar poverty-related struggles. After lengthy consideration, Alliance leaders determined to make an initial push in the core cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and strategically expand to the cities' first-ring suburbs in subsequent years. This phased effort will enable the Alliance to focus its initial work while it builds a strong infrastructure and gains broad support.

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The initial focus, referred to as "Phase One," will occur during the first three years of Alliance operation, which coincides with the time period covered by the anticipated SIF grant. SIF funding would significantly accelerate the pace and scope of the Phase One work. Even in the absence of a SIF grant, however, the partners will move forward with Phase One implementation, albeit more slowly and with a slightly less ambitious scope of services.

The STRIVE Alliance will begin to explore avenues for expansion in Years Two and Three to set the stage for implementation of programming in first-ring suburbs following the grant period. Even before official expansion efforts are implemented, however, the Alliance with share outcome results and best-practice strategies with other Minnesota communities on an ongoing basis.

9. What role does the STRIVE Network play in this project?

The Alliance has worked closely with Jeff Edmondson and the STRIVE Network during the past 18 months of planning. Mr. Edmondson has served as a key consultant to these local efforts and will continue to provide support, guidance, and feedback both as the Twin Cities STRIVE Alliance is launched and during its formative years. Alliance leaders have reaped significant benefits from working with Mr. Edmonson and incorporating his input regarding national best practices and potential implementation challenges into local plans, such as staffing and accountability structures for engaging partners in the work. This deep collaboration has also provided Mr. Edmonson with insight regarding the potential effectiveness of the STRIVE Alliance's local approach. He not only has expressed multiple times that the Alliance's process represents the most thoughtful development of a STRIVE-like framework he has witness in the country, but also has been working closely with

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Alliance leaders take these local best practices regarding development and share them with other communities around the country as they plan for implementation of similar efforts. In addition, Mr. Edmondson has been strategic in connecting Alliance leaders with additional resources around capacity-building and effective implementation.

In addition to consulting with Jeff Edmonson, Alliance leaders have also reached out to multiple colleagues nationally, including other organizations with STRIVE-like frameworks, current SIF grantees, and other United Ways that are implementing similar efforts successfully. Alliance leaders strongly believe that this kind of national collaboration is key to the success of the local initiative. The Alliance is a member of the national Cradle to Career Network and is connecting with other communities taking on similar work as a way to develop new and innovative tools and learn additional lessons on how to expedite our efforts to build civic infrastructure.

EVALUATION ISSUES FOR CLARIFICATION

1. Please clarify the funding mechanism for subgrantee evaluations that will achieve moderate levels of evidence by the end of their five year grant period. Please distinguish between the evaluation efforts that CAREI will conduct on behalf of the STRIVE Alliance and the efforts it will undertake to plan and implement QED evaluations on behalf of the (up to) 11 subgrantees.

As noted in the grant application, CAREI's evaluation of the Alliance initiative is an intricate combination of two elements: a). traditional external evaluation activities at the system and individual program level and b). technical assistance to both the Alliance (to support its ability to assess the level of evidence community organizations have achieved for their programs when they

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apply to become subgrantees) and the subgrantees themselves (to ensure that they are able to follow through effectively on all required evaluation activities to ensure that they are able to improve their level of evidence and to ensure that the overall evaluation maintains validity). CAREI will conduct a centralized evaluation at the portfolio level to ensure that Alliance efforts have measurable impact across all outcome areas and will also work with subgrantees to conduct their individual evaluations. GTCUW has consulted with current SIF grantees about the need to develop and the feasibility of implementing a two-tiered evaluation. These grantees have underscored the importance of evaluation at two levels: 1). subgrantee-level evaluation, which will help organizations achieve moderate levels of evidence to show that their programs have positive impact on outcomes among their participants and provide important information to help them grow their impact and 2). systems-level evaluation, which will help the STRIVE Alliance assess the impact of its overall strategies and mix of subgrantees in achieving community-wide impact.

Funding for subgrantee evaluations will be provided in two ways: some funds will be available for subgrantee evaluation through the STRIVE Alliance SIF subgrants; the balance of funds will come from the matching funds subgrantees will be required to provide. Subgrantees will be obligated to designate a portion of their match funding to evaluation (this requirement will be clearly stated in the RFP). All subgrantees will work directly with CAREI as their external evaluation consultant for SIF-funded programs. All subgrantees will also join an Improvement Network in their area of programmatic focus; these networks are dedicated to rigorous capacity-building and development of best practices to ensure that subgrantees sufficient support to achieve moderate levels of evidence. The goal is to ensure that subgrantees not only designate sufficient funds for evaluation, but fully embrace and participate in the evaluation process, viewing the resulting information as crucial to increasing their understanding of the extent to which their programs and strategies are truly resulting in the

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kinds of outcomes they expect.

2. Please elaborate on why the application asserts that a randomized controlled trial is an inappropriate evaluation design.

The University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) will serve as the evaluation consultant for the Alliance's SIF efforts. CAREI has extensive experience in designing and implementing evaluations that assess the effectiveness of education programs across the birth-to-college spectrum, including experimental and quasi-experimental studies and randomized controlled, multisite trials. Based on this extensive experience, CAREI has proposed a quasi-experimental design for its evaluation of SIF activities.

Quasi-experimental research designs share many similarities with the traditional experimental design or randomized controlled trial, but they specifically lack the element of random assignment to treatment or control. Instead, quasi-experimental designs can sometimes allow the researcher to control the assignment to the treatment, but using some criterion other than random assignment, or sometimes afford the researcher no control over assignment to treatment.

Given the nature of the services that would be funded through STRIVE Alliance, a quasi-experimental evaluation is as close as it is possible to get to a randomized control trial. Unlike in medical or other scientific trials, treatment groups (those to whom services are provided) and control groups (who do not receive services) in school or community-based service settings typically cannot be randomized. In schools, legal, political, and ethical concerns prevent randomly assigning some students to programs or classrooms implementing innovative strategies and denying these strategies to other students. In

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community-based organizations, out-of-school-time programs are usually selected by the participants themselves or by their families. Because of this self-selection, these participants do not represent a random cross-section of potential participants.

Conducting a quasi-experimental study will enable CAREI to create control groups through mechanisms other than random assignment and provide a research design that is as close to a randomized trial as is possible within most school and social service settings. Quasi-experimental studies can provide moderate levels of evidence, when conducted with a sufficient sample size and statistical power on groups that are representative of the target population as a whole. Quasi-experimental studies can also support the development of strong evidence when more than one well-designed and well-implemented study demonstrates the effectiveness of the practice, strategy, or program studied.

CAREI's ultimate design of the evaluation for the SIF portfolio and for individual subgrantees will be completed based on the mix of organizations selected through the subgrantee selection process. Based on the mix of subgrantees and the services they provide, the CAREI's evaluation could match a particular subgrantee's treatment group with:

* A control group of similar individuals not receiving any services;

* A control group of similar individuals receiving similar but not identical services (either another program within the same organization or a program provided through another organization); or

* A control group of similar individuals receiving the same services from the same organization, but

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with a "staggered start" (services begin at a later time). Multiple staggered-start groups could be created.

CAREI, GTCUW, and Alliance staff will work with subgrantees to establish appropriate control groups. Intermediate outcome measures to track progress toward improvement benchmarks will be established for each subgrantee. The goal is to have an evaluation with as much internal and external validity as possible given the constraints of the environment in which subgrantees operate.

BUDGET ISSUES FOR CLARIFICATION

Please answer the following questions in your clarifications narrative or make the changes requested below directly in the application budget section in eGrants.

1. Please clarify your estimated costs for subgrantee assessment and capacity building activities and evaluation activities. Please confirm that the listed cost is intended to cover consultants for both capacity building and compliance monitoring (with CliftonLarsonAllen) and that it is adequate to achieve your stated objectives.

The Alliance currently has $25K of anticipated SIF funds allocated for assessment and capacity-building activities. This amount covers contracts for expert consultants to work directly with subgrantees to help them improve systems and programs, implement their evaluation plans to strengthen evidence of effectiveness, develop and implement their growth of impact plans, and support the expansion or replication of effective strategies. This work is budgeted at $250/day for 100 days of assistance to the selected subgrantees.

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In addition to this amount, assessment and capacity-building efforts will be supported by GTCUW's significant in-kind contribution of staff time (as outlined in Question 2 of the Programmatic Issues section), by Alliance staff assessment and capacity-building activities, and by the Improvement Networks process.

Evaluation activities at the portfolio level will be provided through the $140K allocation and, as indicated in Question 1 of the Evaluation Issues section, funding for subgrantee evaluations will be provided through the STRIVE Alliance SIF subgrants and from the matching funds subgrantees will be required to provide.

Compliance monitoring abilities are being built in house through GTCUW's work with CliftonAllenLarson and will be provided in-kind by GTCUW.

Alliance leaders are confident that the budgeted amounts are sufficient to meet the stated objectives given GTCUW's long-term track record in implementing this work and the substantial network of resources that available to support this initiative.

j2. Your application narrative indicates that the first year evaluation budget will be $74,400 while your budget narrative has evaluation costs listed at $140,000. Please clarify.

The difference in the amounts was an oversight; total cost for the evaluation will be $140,000. The original evaluation budget narrative should have included the additional $65,600 that will be used to provide additional and specific evaluation capacity building to subgrantees. This additional amount

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was incorporated into the full budget entered into the CNCS online application, but did not get

reflected in the original evaluation budget narrative. The amount allocated to specific subgrantees

from the $65,600 will be determined by the needs of each subgrantee. All subgrantees will be

expected to provide additional dollars to support evaluation activities related to SIF funding.

As described in the evaluation budget narrative, the $74,400 represents the amount of funding that

will be allocated to CAREI. Combined with the $65,600 directed to subgrantees, the total evaluation

costs come to $140,000.

3. You indicate that only 30% of your matched funds will be distributed to subgrantees. What is the

rationale for this relatively small portion?

The STRIVE Alliance is committed to long-term strategies that will ensure positive and lasting results

for the Twin Cities community. At this point in the development of the Alliance, significant funds are

needed to build an effective, sustainable infrastructure that will enable the STRIVE Alliance to

effectively implement its strategies. Alliance leaders believe that, to develop a system that is both

capable of delivering immediate results and growing to meet broader community-wide needs, a

majority of current matching funds must be allocated to create this infrastructure. The long-term plan

includes significant additional fundraising efforts over the next three years to support growth and

expansions. As the infrastructure is strengthened, the Alliance will be able to shift the funding balance

and allocate the majority of funds to subgrantees.

As noted earlier, GTCUW is evaluating its internal budgets to determine the extent to which it can

dedicate additional financial resources directly to the subgrantees to increase that percentage, with the

possibility of adding an additional $250,000. We also anticipate further adjustments in subsequent

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years to be able to ensure additional funds are allocated for subgranting purposes. GTCUW also

recognizes the significant opportunity of leveraging and realigning significant existing and new dollars

in future years because of the SIF grant.

4. Please clarify the roles of the proposed STRIVE Alliance Director of Operations for Quality

Improvement and the STRIVE Alliance Senior Program Manager. Please explain the sustainability of

the STRIVE Alliance given that two of the new positions are funded solely by CNCS funds.

During conversations with other current SIF grantees, it became evident that, given the rigorous

reporting requirements of SIF and the need to coordinate the efforts of the multiple partners involved,

it is critical to have a position that is responsible for the day-to-day management of the SIF grant. The

Alliance Senior Program Manager will provide that management, reporting to GTCUW's Director of

Education and working in partnership with the STRIVE Alliance Executive Director.

The Director of Operations for Quality Improvement will work in partnership with the Senior

Program Manager; this position will be responsible for managing the quality improvement process

used throughout the partnership's work, in particular the work of the Improvement Networks. This

position will also manage the consultants and in-kind experts who facilitate various network activities

and provide training on quality improvement processes to participants in every level of the

partnership.

GTCUW and the partners of the Executive Committee have a long-term commitment to ensuring the

success of the STRIVE Alliance, which includes fundraising. United Way is also committed to

diversifying our fundraising strategies from federal and national partners; as we take on more of these

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grants we will assess our finance and program teams to fully accommodate the reporting standards

that come with taking on these types of funds to ensure sustainability.

5. Please elaborate on your assertion that the SIF funding would enable you to "leverage and

maximize the nearly $90 million in federal funds" coming into Minnesota over the next five years.

As mentioned in the answer to Programmatic Issue Question 7, GTCUW is playing a unique and vital

role in coordinating of all federal education innovation funds flowing into the state over the next 5

years. Minnesota is at a critical juncture with an unprecedented opportunity to weave together all of

innovation work being funded by the Obama administration. The SIF grant affords an opportunity to

maximize these efforts and benefit from the confluence of multiple funding streams. Greater Twin

Cities United Way is uniquely positioned to successfully shepherd these efforts and change life

outcomes for young people in the region.

Continuation Changes

N/A (not applicable).

Required Documents

Document Name	**Status**
Match Verification	Sent