

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Partners for Education at Berea College proposes to have 60 AmeriCorps members who will serve high school students in Clay, Knox and Perry Counties in rural Kentucky. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing attendance of high school students.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education: School Turnaround. The CNCS investment of \$867,328 will be matched with \$350,833. \$350,833 in public funding and \$0 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Partners for Education (PFE) at Berea College, and three rural Appalachian Kentucky turnaround schools: Clay County High School (CCHS), Knox Central High School (KCHS) and Perry Central High School (PCHS) - designed PartnerCorps School Turnaround, an AmeriCorps program, to improve educational outcomes by utilizing AmeriCorps Members as tutors, mentors and family connectors. Partner school leadership, including principals, counselors, and teachers as well as leadership of our current AmeriCorps program were engaged in data review including analysis of the impact of the current School Turnaround program. Students and current AmeriCorps members were engaged and instrumental in identifying current gaps in services and interventions that would appeal to students. This input was instrumental in identifying the needs to be addressed by this program. The needs identified are summarized below:

ELIGIBLE persistently low achieving schools: All our partner schools qualify as eligible schools under the School Turnaround requirements in that each have been identified by the Kentucky Department of Education as priority or focus schools in the 2014--2015 school year (<http://education.ky.gov/school/prischedrecov/Documents/List%20of%20all%20Priority%20Schools.pdf>).

NEED Under-education and Poverty: Our students families are not prepared to assist them on their educational journey, particularly when it comes to high school academics. Our region is one of the most under-educated in the nation. In Clay County, only 63.6% of adults ages 25 or older have completed high school, as compared to 83% in Kentucky and 86% in the nation, and only 9% of adults have a bachelor's degrees - compared to 22% of Kentucky and 29% of the nation. Our poverty rates (25% in Perry, 35% in Knox and 38% in Clay) are significantly higher than the state (18.8%) and nation (15.4%) (<http://www.arc.gov/data>). Coupled with the following needs, which are associated

## Narratives

with our persistently low-achieving high schools, our students have an urgent need for the interventions that will be provided by AmeriCorps members.

**NEED Attendance:** Chronically absent students are those who miss more than 10% of the days of a school year which would be 17 days of absence in Kentucky schools. Striking numbers of our students were chronically absent during the 2014-15 academic year in Clay County, 45%, and in Knox, 37%. While Perry Central's chronic absenteeism was not nearly as high as Clay and Knox, school personnel say that it is one of their biggest concerns and barriers. These chronic absenteeism rates are alarming, especially when the research on chronic absenteeism and achievement is taken into consideration.

Attendance during 9th grade is a predictor of graduation. According to research conducted by Attendance Works, only 37.8% of 9th graders who are eligible for free lunch and who are chronically absent during 9th grade graduate from high school in 4 years. ([www.attendanceworks.com](http://www.attendanceworks.com)) At CCHS alone, 41% of the 250 9th graders were chronically absent, 103 students. Of those 103 students, research suggests that only 39 will graduate from high school, losing 64 students along the way. Our AmeriCorps members will ensure we do not lose 64 students from this 9th grade class, and that we do everything within our power to reengage them and ensure they graduate from high school college ready.

**NEED Behavior:** Our part of Appalachia is known for our unique cultures and rolling landscapes, but it is also known as the nation's painkiller belt. Our war on OxyContin, has been reported nationally, has been the study of much research, and the damage has been reasonably portrayed by the television series Justified. People from all walks of life are battling addictions to pills that are perfectly legal and distributed by medical professionals, and too many of our community are losing this battle.

Pharmaceutical opioids are the primary cause of the resident drug overdose deaths. The rate of pharmaceutical opioid-caused overdose deaths at the national level in 2013 was 5.1 deaths per 100,000. Our counties' rates were exponentially higher, led by Clay County with an annual rate of 54.6 pharmaceutical opioid-caused deaths per 100,000 residents) (<http://bit.ly/1J8mVxR>). We feel the impact of the rampant substance abuse within our high schools. For example, at KCHS, during the 2014-15 academic year, there were 357 reported behavior incidents. Behavior Reporting includes all incidents of assault, violence, use of weapons, alcohol, drugs, bullying and harassment. The overwhelming majority of behavior incidents occurred with 9th and 10th graders, with the majority of all infractions being drug-related (school report card).

**NEED: Course performance.** High School students in our partner schools are performing below students in the state academically. We see this in English courses where only 45% of our students

## Narratives

were proficient in the English II end of course exam as compared to 57% of students in Kentucky. However, it is in mathematics that we see an urgent need. Only 33.5% of our students were proficient in the Algebra II end of course exam as compared to 38.2% of students in Kentucky. This same under-performance in math appear in the ACT exam which all students take in the 11th grade. Our students scored significantly lower than the state on meeting the ACT college-readiness benchmarks in math, with 26.5% of Clay students, 27.7% of Knox students, and 26.8% of Perry students meeting college readiness benchmarks in mathematics, as compared to 38.1% of Kentucky students meeting benchmark. (<https://applications.education.ky.gov/src/>)

NEED high school completion: Attendance, behavior, course completion and graduation are intertwined. Dropout rates at each of our schools is higher than the state average, with Clay at 3.4% dropout, Knox at 1.4% dropout and Perry at 1.7%, compared to the state average of 1.4%. While it is alarming enough to know that these numbers represent 28 children at CCHS, 13 children at Knox and 15 children at Perry a total of 56 children who have dropped out of these three high schools, we also know that there are alarming numbers of children in these schools who are not in school and not accounted for in the dropout rates (<https://applications.education.ky.gov/src/>).

Our THEORY OF CHANGE is that caring adults serving as mentors to students, given specific training and support, will improve students attendance, behavior, course completion and mathematics achievement. Our Theory of Change is depicted in the logic model. We use national performance measures, ED 2, the number of students who complete our CNCS program as the outcome with a goal of 2400 students completing our program, and ED 27B as the output measuring the behavior change of the number of students who improve attendance from one year to the next. Our goal is that we will have 1680 students who improve or remain stable in attendance from one academic year to the next.

AMERICORPS MEMBERS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO ADDRESS THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS. PFE at Berea College is in our third year of managing an AmeriCorps School Turnaround grant where we served Leslie and Knox County High Schools. We have seen that AmeriCorps members do address the identified needs. This is best illustrated by our AmeriCorps work at Leslie County High which has exited priority status and gives much credit to this improvement to the services and interventions provided by our AmeriCorps members. The Leslie County leadership is so convinced that the Member input is related to their improvement that they are seeking to continue the program. In addition, Knox Central has made significant gains in terms of both student attendance, where 60% of students served by AmeriCorps members improved their attendance as compared to the previous year, and in overall

## Narratives

school achievement, going an overall accountability score of 59.5 in the 18th percentile in 2013-14, to the 69th percentile in 2014-15 (<https://applications.education.ky.gov/src/Default.aspx>). The impact from our AmeriCorps School Turnaround program were so significant that we received the national Tom Harkin Best New AmeriCorps Program Design award in 2015. This program is based on our previous model with some modifications, such as a focus on math tutoring, based on our lessons learned.

In designing PartnerCorps, attention was paid to the areas where members could be most effective in filling gaps in services with a focus on evidence-informed practices. The use of members is a suitable and effective means for accomplishing objectives that we could not otherwise accomplish through existing staff and volunteers. Members will meet the identified needs by providing the following services designed to have measurable impact:

SERVICE PROVIDED = CHECK and CONNECT through MENTORING. Members will each have a caseload of high school students and every high school student will have a mentor. In low performing, high poverty schools like ours it is critical every high school student have a mentor to ensure that no student falls through the cracks and all students perform to their potential. The focus of the mentoring will be supporting the students Attendance, Behavior and Course performance (ABCs). Mentors will check on students on a daily basis and connect with students on a weekly basis, one-on-one, and more frequently in small groups, to touch base, provide input and guidance and to ensure that the student is on track with their ABCs.

SERVICE PROVIDED = IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEM. Berea College and our partner high schools have access to an Early Warning System (EWS) that provides real time information on students at risk. The early warning system serves as one CHECK members use to determine student needs. Members then meet with their students and/or their students families and/or teachers to develop intervention plans. Members will then follow up on a regular basis with the student to ensure the plan is being implemented. At regular intervals, Members will re-check the student data to determine what, if any, progress has been made, and update intervention plans as necessary.

In our rural communities, schools do not have the staff or volunteers to implement the needed interventions (CONNECT through MENTORING). For example, while schools can identify those students who are absent, there are no individuals dedicated to connecting with these students before absenteeism becomes a chronic problem. On a daily basis, Members will monitor their caseload of students who are absent and ensure a plan exists for getting missed course work and for letting the

## Narratives

student know that they are missed at school. Their proactive approach will address attendance issues immediately. Members will connect with their students who are having difficulty in courses, arrange for them to attend tutoring, and even attend sessions with them. They will continue to connect with their students to ensure they are persisting in the tutoring and that the tutoring is having the desired impact.

**SERVICE PROVIDED = CONNECT through FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:** Members will also **CONNECT** with the adult caregivers of their caseload of students. Members will develop one-on-one relationships with the caregivers of their caseload students. They will connect with these parents regularly to share the positives related to student behavior and, when necessary, work with parents to develop strategies to assist the students to improve their attendance and achievement. Working as teams, members will develop parent workshops around topics such as financial planning for college, understanding high school graduation requirements, understanding the college application process, etc. In addition, members will serve as part of the school's FAST (Families and Schools Together) team and work intensively with those families identified as having the most need.

**SERVICE PROVIDED=IN-SCHOOL TUTORING:** Members will be imbedded within Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II courses at each of our high schools. The Members will provide in-class tutoring and assistance to students during class. Members will provide the classroom teacher a critical in-class resource. Utilization of the Members will make it possible for the teacher to differentiate instruction and remain confident that all students are being assisted.

**SERVICE PROVIDED=OUT-OF-SCHOOL TUTORING:** Members will provide out-of-school tutoring to Algebra I, Geometry and II students. Homework help sessions will be scheduled before school and after school at least three times per week.

**COORDINATION BETWEEN SITES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SCALE OF THE PROJECT:** To ensure the most efficient use of time and funds, we will coordinate our services between the three schools served. Members will attend orientation and onboarding together at Berea College, where we have access to meeting space for no cost. Professional development will be scheduled in ways that bring all of the members together in a central location instead of scheduling multiple trainings at multiple events. The program will benefit from one regionally located project director and site coordinators at each school.

**ALIGNMENT WITH THE COMPERHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS.** Our AmeriCorps plan is aligned with each schools school improvement plan and will be implemented in coordination to the plan. In each school, the members' service is designed to address the following key areas:

## Narratives

1. Members will PROVIDE ONGOING MECHANISMS FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. It is critical that adult family members be engaged as educational advocates. As described above, Members will develop one-on-one relationships with the parents of their caseload students and connect students and families to needed resources.
2. Members will help to ESTABLISH A SCHOOL CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT THAT IMPROVES SCHOOL SAFETY, ATTENDANCE AND DISCIPLINE AND ADDRESSES OTHER NON-ACADEMIC FACTORS THAT IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, SUCH AS THE STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND HEALTH NEEDS. All students in these persistently low achieving schools will be assigned to an AmeriCorps members who will serve as their mentor. Universal mentoring is an essential part of our program design and has been proven to change the culture of schools. In addition to serving as mentors, members implement specific strategies to address individual student needs with a focus on social emotional needs. Members become trained to implement Respect 360, a research-informed curriculum to nurture self-respect in themselves and the students with whom they serve. Throughout their training, members also learn about their own limitations, and when and whom to refer students to for specific interventions, counseling, health care and other services.
3. Members will ACCELERATE STUDENTS ACQUISITION OF MATHEMATICS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. Members are assigned to classrooms and connect with each of their mentees during the school day through the classroom. Members serve during the class to assist students with content acquisition, organization, and assignment completion. Members work with classroom teachers closely to identify students who may need additional assistance, and work with individual and groups of students in the classroom each day. Before and after school, these same members are available to provide homework assistance to students in the math content area. Working alongside the teacher in the math classroom during the day ensures the member has heard the instruction and homework which the students have heard.
4. Members also help to INCREASE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES. Members work with student Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), to help students understand their career interest inventories, explore college options and understand the college application process, including the role of college entrance exams, college applications and financial literacy. Members help provide opportunities for students and their families to get assistance with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Additionally, members help make arrangements for, and may accompany, students and their families on college visits. Because of the mentoring relationship between the members, students

## Narratives

and their families, members are in a unique position to provide students with individualized college exploration and application assistance.

AmeriCorps Members are PARTICULARLY WELL-SUITED TO DELIVER EFFECTIVE TURNAROUND INTERVENTIONS AND TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED STUDENT OUTCOMES IN THESE SCHOOLS. The use of near peers as mentors has been shown to be an impactful practice. AmeriCorps members are especially suited to deliver effective services, as they are dedicated to providing a year of service and are passionate about helping young people. With appropriate training and support, members can be as effective as teachers and other school staff, since they have a unique level of trust and build a relationship with each student that is that of a supportive and encouraging advocate.

### EVIDENCE BASE

We have adopted and refined a research-based framework for delivering services with supporting activities that reflect generally-accepted best practices for engaging low-income and rural students. Efforts focus on identifying activities that yield the most promising results. Following an exhaustive research and literature review and with input of students, parents, educators, partners and policy-makers, we have developed PartnerCorps, a proactive response, which incorporates the following research based practices and programs:

CHECK and CONNECT: The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) identified two studies of Check & Connect that both fall within the scope of the Dropout Prevention topic area and meet WWC group design standards. Two studies meet WWC group design standards without reservations. Together, these studies included 238 students who attended Minneapolis high schools and entered the program in the beginning of ninth grade. Check & Connect was found to have positive effects on staying in school and potentially positive effects on progressing in school.

Check & Connect has two main components: Check and Connect. The Check component is designed to continually monitor student performance and progress (including the students attendance, incidence of suspensions, course grades, and credits). The Connect component involves program staff giving individualized attention to students, in partnership with other school staff, family members, and community service organizations. The components are implemented by the Check & Connect monitor, who functions as the students mentor and case worker. Monitors provide basic intervention for all students on their caseload, as well as intensive intervention for students as needed. Basic interventions involve regular structured discussions between the monitor and student at least weekly for elementary and middle school students and twice a month for high school students about their

## Narratives

progress in school and about how to resolve conflicts and cope with challenges. Intensive interventions are tailored to the specific circumstances of students and their families and the available resources of the school and program. Intensive interventions focus on problem solving (including mediation and social skills development), academic support (through homework assistance, schedule changes, and tutoring), and recreational and community service activities. The program also focuses on family outreach, with monitors expected to have frequent contact with family members. Monitors can be graduate students or community members with training in human services fields. Program coordinators, who supervise monitors, can be teachers or school psychologists.

([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/intervention\\_reports/wwc\\_checkconnect\\_050515.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/intervention_reports/wwc_checkconnect_050515.pdf))

Two studies met the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservation. Sinclair et al. (1998) conducted a randomized controlled trial that examined the effects of Check & Connect on 94 high school students in Minneapolis with learning, emotional, or behavioral disabilities during the 1994-95 school year. Students were randomly assigned at the beginning of ninth grade, with 47 students assigned to the intervention group and 47 students assigned to the comparison group. In this study, both intervention and comparison group students received Check & Connect services in seventh and eighth grade, but only intervention group students continued to receive these services in ninth grade. Student outcomes were assessed at the end of ninth grade for the entire baseline sample of 94 students.

Sinclair et al. (2005) conducted a randomized controlled trial with an analytic sample that included 144 ninth-grade students from Minneapolis public schools with emotional or behavioral disabilities, including 71 students randomly assigned to the intervention group and 73 students randomly assigned to the comparison group. In this study, intervention group students received Check & Connect services throughout high school, while the comparison group received no Check & Connect services. Student outcomes related to dropout status and high school completion were assessed following the students' fourth year in high school.

Check and Connect is essentially the backbone of our intervention, and will be implemented with fidelity in our PartnerCorps School Turnaround model. Each member will be assigned a caseload, and will monitor the students in their caseload, connect with them and their families for individualized, appropriate intervention.

Notice Priority

This application is for an AmeriCorps School Turnaround program. Each partner school meets the criteria to be included in an AmeriCorps School Turnaround project.



## **Narratives**

### Member Training

**MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE HIGH QUALITY TRAINING TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SERVICE.**

Members will receive ongoing, specific, intentional training, including a 3-day regional orientation, school specific orientation, and bi-weekly training at each service site. Training will be designed around research-informed and research-proven strategies including training related to skills and competencies needed 1) to be an effective tutor, with a focus on mathematics, 2) to be an effective mentor, with emphasis on understanding youth social/emotional development, 3) to be an effective college guide, with a focus on college planning and college fit and 4) to be an effective family connector, with a focus on financial planning for college. Training will be provided in multiple modalities and with all learning styles taken into consideration. Members who need additional individual training will receive ongoing training and support from their site coordinators and other identified

**MEMBERS WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY TRAINED TO SERVE HIGH-NEEDS STUDENTS, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LEARNERS.** Members will begin their service before the beginning of the academic year, with a 3-day orientation at Berea College. To leverage resources, we will use trainers from our schools, Berea College and our partners, with specific inclusion of trainers with experience with CNCS experience. The 3-day orientation will include information related to service and service history, prohibited activities, administrative procedures, ethics, compliance and service activity training. Additionally, members will be trained to understand school accountability, school improvement plans and their role in impacting those plans. Orientation will also include training on high-impact practices, such as specific strategies for attendance, mentoring training, leadership development, college pathways and Respect 360 influencer training. **MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS AND SCHOOL PARTNERS WILL UNDERSTAND AND ADHERE TO AMERICORPS REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING RULES REGARDING PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.** During the 3-day orientation, focus and attention will be given to our AmeriCorps handbook, which extensively details prohibited activities and the consequences of participating in prohibited activities during service hours.

**MEMBER TRAINING WILL BE COORDINATED WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND STAFF.** In addition to regional trainings, members will also be oriented to their school service site. At each school, members will be trained on school policies and procedures for both students and adults, sign-in procedures, communication procedures and expectations, confidentiality, lock-down and other emergency procedures, and school and community resources. Special emphasis will be placed on

## Narratives

positive behavior intervention, group and classroom management, and understanding student's IEP accommodations.

Additionally, school leadership will be regularly consulted to determine ongoing member training needs. During bi-weekly meetings, members at each school will meet as a school team to provide each other with support, idea-sharing, service reflection and receive ongoing training. Ongoing training will be provided by the project director and site coordinators, and will be planned around mentor and student identified needs. Respect 360 will be an ongoing part of the training, as will the opportunity for members to reflect and collaborate with one another to share ideas and effective interventions.

### Member Supervision

Upon notification of funding, Berea College will identify a project director and a site coordinator for each school. Qualifications for Project director include: a minimum of five years with grant management, familiarity with national service programs, knowledge of school turnaround best practices, extensive supervision experience and administrative experience including budget management. Our current School Turnaround Project Director has worked as an educator and grant manager, has been a principal in successful rural schools, and has provided leadership and supervision to our successful school turnaround grant for these past 3 years. It is expected that, if funded, our current AmeriCorps School Turnaround project director and site coordinators will continue in their roles, which would provide experience and consistency. The implementation will further benefit from the experiences we have gained over the past 3 years as a School Turnaround grantee.

PFE currently has a full-time staff member placed at the school to oversee implementation of all PFE initiatives, who will serve as site coordinators. Site coordinators are Berea College employees and serve as the daily supervisor for members placed at the school (currently approximately 20 members per high school). Site coordinators have offices within the school and meet regularly with school leadership, attend staff and faculty meetings, and provide support to both the school leadership and to the AmeriCorps members. Qualifications for site coordinator include bachelor's degree, experience with national service, supervision of members or other volunteers, and experience with educational programs serving high-risk youth. Full-time site coordinators were not in our original design for our current School Turnaround grant, but through continuous improvement efforts, we realized that to be highly effective in our rural area, it is essential to have staff serve in this capacity to ensure our member supervision and success.

As the AmeriCorps member supervisors, it is essential to ensure all supervisory staff are ADEQUATELY TRAINED TO FOLLOW AMERICORPS PROGRAM REGULATIONS, PRIORITIES

## Narratives

AND EXPECTATIONS. The project director attends all state AmeriCorps trainings and meetings and brings information back to the site coordinators so they are informed. Key staff attend regional symposiums. All staff receive training on AmeriCorps regulations, priorities and expectations, including prohibited activities, and revisit regulations before making programmatic decisions, especially in terms of policies and procedures, to ensure we remain in compliance. Berea College currently hosts a VISTA project and two AmeriCorps projects. The staff for all of these programs are on the same departmental team, and meet regularly with their team lead. As a leadership team, the AmeriCorps program leadership staff meet at Berea College monthly to address any policy or procedure concerns and to share best practices from trainings and information received from our state program officer or from webinars or trainings we have attended. The team uses results-based accountability to constantly evaluate success and identify ways to improve our services to members and students.

AMERICORPS MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE HIGH QUALITY GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM THEIR SUPERVISOR TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SERVICE. Our supervision plan is woven in with our training plan. By providing daily supervision and by meeting bi-weekly as a school cadre, supervisors will know members well and will be able to appropriately mentor the members and provide individualized training as needed, and to capitalize on the member's strengths while helping them to develop in their areas of need. Supervisors are available to school leadership and staff on a daily basis in order to coordinate training and supervision of members to best help move the school out of turnaround status.

### Member experience

All members will have a meaningful service experience that produces community impact and provides members with opportunities to gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service. During recruitment and onboarding, members will understand the needs the students, families, community and schools are facing. They will further understand the relationship between the commitment the members are making and the impact their commitment can have on students, families, communities and schools. Throughout the year, the members will receive high-quality training and guidance, which will provide them with transferrable skills. It has been our experience that members have developed skills and confidence through their year of service and then have then been sought-after by schools and other employers in the region.

Our Berea staff has extensive experience mentoring, motivating and encouraging high school, college and young professional staff to serve and reflect deeply on their service. Berea staff will assist

## Narratives

members in reflecting upon their service experience. PFE at Berea college has over 140 staff who are all focused on improving rural, low-performing schools and providing educational opportunities to students. The majority of our staff are the first in their families to attend and complete college, and are also from low-income backgrounds. Through the sharing of the expertise of members of our staff community, we are able to provide our members with high-quality training and experience, and with an understanding of the importance of actively engaging in the public education system.

Members are regularly recognized for contributions at their school sites, and are recognized annually by Berea College for outstanding service. Members participate in Berea College events and trainings recognizing the importance of continued service and celebrating Berea's rich history of service.

PartnerCorps School Turnaround members will be provided with opportunities to interact with other CNCS programs serving our region including other AmeriCorps programs, VISTA and Foster Grandparents programs. Members will attend the annual swearing-in state-wide ceremony each year and will be encouraged to connect online with other AmeriCorps members serving throughout the US. It is our goal that members will connect deeply with the college's and AmeriCorps commitment to lifelong service.

### Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

During orientation, or during the official state swearing-in ceremony, all members are sworn in, and recite the AmeriCorps pledge. We recruit community dignitaries to lead the swearing-in ceremony, and to welcome members to their year of service. PFE at Berea College is committed to the service of AmeriCorps. Over the past few years, we have come to understand the need for consistency in branding and ensuring that the community understands that the members are serving through AmeriCorps. We have branded our program by using both the PFE logo and the AmeriCorps logo on our website and on service gear, which we provide to all members. We have established policies and expectations that members wear service gear each day which prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo. We have further trained members to have elevator speeches which answers the question of What do you do? and ensures that they describe themselves as AmeriCorps members serving at the school. Members and staff use the AmeriCorps logo in their email signature line, and identify their role in terms of AmeriCorps. Site Coordinators and members often attend school meetings, including faculty and staff meetings, and help to ensure the faculty, staff and community members understand the members are serving through AmeriCorps, what commitment the members have made, and how the staff and faculty can support the members to be successful in their year of service.

### Organizational Capability

## Narratives

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY:

Since the late 1800s, Berea College has partnered with the Appalachian communities to provide educational opportunities to low-income youth. PFE at Berea College leverages the colleges resources to improve educational outcomes in rural Appalachia. We work hand-in-hand with LEAs to identify needs, research based interventions and funding streams to help address those needs. For this proposal, we met with each of the schools to discuss and modify our existing program design to promote continuous improvement. Throughout the implementation of our existing grant, we continue to work hand-in-hand to ensure the success of the project.

Current PFE programs include 2 AmeriCorps and 1 AmeriCorps VISTA grant with a total of 105 AmeriCorps members. In addition to our AmeriCorps grants, we currently have 3 GEAR UP grants, i3, Promise Neighborhood, Full Service Community Schools, Upward Bound Math and Science Center, and Talent Search, with a staff of over 140 professionals living and working in 27 rural Appalachia Kentucky counties, and an annual budget in excess of 20 million dollars. Because of the successes we have had during our first grant cycle, Berea College received the 2015 Tom Harkin Excellence in AmeriCorps award for Best New Program Design for our PartnerCorps School Turnaround project and was awarded an additional 20 slots for the 2015-16 academic year to expand to a 3rd school. PFE has the organizational capacity to effectively and efficiently administer this AmeriCorps program.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PartnerCorps School Turnaround will be located within the CNCS and TRiO division of PFE. Jenny Ceesay, Team Lead for CNCS and TRiO, will serve as Principal Investigator (PI) and will devote 25% of her time to this project. As PI, her responsibilities will include articulating PartnerCorps School Turnaround's strategic direction and theory of change, facilitating the partnership between Berea College and partners, aligning the program to other initiatives, and ensuring the coordination and compliance of all Berea College national service projects.

Ms. Ceesay serves on the PFE Senior Leadership Team, provides supervision and leadership for our current AmeriCorps School Turnaround, AmeriCorps VISTA and our AmeriCorps STEM grant project directors, coordinates our sub-grantee contracts for our VISTA members, and is coordinator for the department's college work-study program. Ms. Ceesay has received training in grants management and fiscal management from CNCS and is familiar with the mission and goals of the AmeriCorps program. Ms. Ceesay has a master's degree in education with considerable experience in grants management, program design and evaluation. Ms. Ceesay's leadership position, experience and education will ensure that PartnerCorps School Turnaround seamlessly fits within our organization

## **Narratives**

and the program is implemented with fidelity.

**PROJECT DIRECTOR (100% FTE):** Rob Bowers will serve as our full-time, 12-month Project Director (PD). Mr. Bowers has over twenty years experience as teacher and principal in rural Appalachian schools. He has served as project director of our AmeriCorps School Turnaround grant since its inception and his leadership and guidance have ensured the project's success. Mr. Bowers has been extensively trained by CNCS and is an effective and proficient AmeriCorps grant manager. Our Project Director will be based in Berea and has responsibility for the leadership, guidance and management of the project, for developing and refining program operations, ensuring that objectives are met and that the program is in compliance with CNCS guidelines. The PD supervises the site coordinators, and is the lead for recruiting, providing regional training, and ensuring compliance. The PD reports to the PI. Qualifications include: a minimum of 5 years with grant management, familiarity with national service programs, knowledge of school turnaround best practices, extensive supervision experience and administrative experience including budget management. A bachelor's degree is required for this position but a master's degree is strongly preferred.

**SITE COORDINATORS (existing staff):** PFE currently has a full-time staff member placed at the school to oversee implementation of all PFE initiatives who will serve as the site coordinators. The Site coordinators serves as the daily supervisor for members placed at the school and coordinates all PFE services at the school. The site coordinator has an office within the school and meets regularly with school leadership, attends staff and faculty meetings, and provides support to both the school leadership and to the AmeriCorps members. The Site Coordinator is responsible for the daily implementation of the project, ongoing monitoring of member service hours, ongoing monitoring of data entry and data review, and member training and support.

**PROGRAM ASSOCIATE (50% FTE):** The Program Associate (PA) will be based at Berea and will provide administrative support in all recruitment activities including updating the website and social media sites. The PA is a shared position with our other national service programs and reports to the PI. The PA reviews expense reports for completion and accuracy, coordinates the purchase and dispersion of office supplies and management, and takes care of all logistics for meetings and trainings. A bachelor's degree is preferred for this position but extensive relevant experience may be substituted.

**NATIONAL SERVICE ANALYST (50% FTE)** The Analyst manages the daily flow of information to the members and assists in collecting and maintaining information to support members and to support the progress towards Performance Measures. The analyst conducts prescreens, maintains

## **Narratives**

ongoing lists of applicants, contact information, member files, enrollment, exit and other necessary paperwork. The analyst also coordinates all national service background checks and ensures compliance in record management and retention. The analyst is a shared position with our other national service programs and reports to the PI. A bachelors degree is required for this position.

### **Compliance and Accountability**

PFE at Berea College is committed to complying with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. We maintain a culture promoting stewardship and compliance to ensure funds are managed with transparency and integrity. Our commitment to compliance and accountability includes: 1) instituting and reviewing annual operational policies and procedures for purchasing, conflicts of interest and grant reconciliation; 2) providing training and offering grants management education to employees on a regular basis; and 3) conducting audits in accordance with Subpart F of 2 CFR, Part 200. Within PartnerCorps, special attention will be placed on ensuring that members and all staff and partners are aware of and compliant with prohibited activities. Not only will trainings regularly visit the topic of prohibited activities, site visits and program reviews will ensure that no Members are participating in prohibited activities. The PI regularly conducts file audits to ensure all member files are in compliance, and that all required forms are complete and maintained in member files. If instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the PI and PD work together to develop a corrective action plan and to monitor the area of concern.

The Project Director will be responsible for monitoring site compliance with fiscal and programmatic requirements. Each host school will be asked to sign off on a scope of work established by Berea College. The scope of work will clearly describe roles and responsibilities of each person involved. The PD will conduct site visits to monitor member activities and to ensure compliance with all federal and state regulations. Site Coordinators will be responsible for confirming member service hours by signing off on the member time log. Time logs will be approved by both the site coordinator and the program director.

AmeriCorps members will not duplicate, displace, or supplant volunteers, staff, and/or interns. Our program model is based on the need for additional resources in our school turnaround schools. We know the schools could not make the progress needed without the ADDITION of AmeriCorps members to their existing infrastructure. Included in our scope of work is language ensuring school principals do not use members for duties that fall under other staff or faculty members, such as substitute teaching and lunch duty. Beyond including this sort of language in our scope of work, we also ensure each LEA understands the ramifications of supplanting or not following regulations.

## Narratives

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: We have developed and implemented a continuous improvement model. Using Results-Based Accountability, we continually assess our programs effectiveness by asking specific questions to determine whether our interventions are having the desired impact.

Components of the model include the following procedures and practices:

- 1) Services will be evaluated using appropriate tools including facilitated debriefings and online surveys. Results from this continual evaluation of services will be synthesized by the project director and shared with all staff on a quarterly basis. Data will be used to refine services and service delivery.
- 2) Annually, stakeholders *¿* students, parents, staff, school personnel and partners *¿* will provide feedback on the program and its specific services. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to recommend new services and suggest services that may no longer be needed, as well as ideas for modifications of existing services. A core group of stakeholders will participate in *¿*turning the curve*¿* exercises where participants look at the trajectory of data, the story behind the data, and the partners available to identify ways to *¿*turn the curve*¿* faster for the desired result.
- 3) We will rely significantly on individual student level data. We have a partnership whereby Kentucky Department of Education, with our partner schools *¿* permission, provides us student data in a timely manner. All school partners have agreed to share data with us. Individual student data, including EPAS scores, assessment data, attendance and discipline referrals, is available. The project director will continually review student data to ensure students receive appropriate services and that services are having the desired impact.

Our current School Turnaround grant has focused exclusively on improving attendance, behavior and course completion. With this model, we have identified the additional area of mathematics achievement to be paramount to a successful school turnaround initiative. As we currently monitor student attendance on a daily, monthly and quarterly basis, members will begin to also monitor student math achievement, including using a fall, winter and spring assessment to determine student growth in mathematics.

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

COST EFFECTIVENESS: A one-year budget detailing annual expenses is included with the proposal. The project supports turnaround efforts in three high-poverty rural high schools. The cost of the program is reasonable compared to the long-lasting, systematic change expected. School Turnaround AmeriCorps applicants serving exclusively in rural schools may request up to \$15,000 cost per MSY. Our previous cost per MSY was \$15,842 as a federal direct grantee. We have decreased our cost per MSY in this application to \$14,460. All of our members will be placed within rural schools. CCHS,



## Narratives

KCHS and PCHS are all in schools identified as both rural and eligible for school turnaround AmeriCorps programs.

All costs are reasonable and linked to allowable activities under the program components. The budget is reasonable in relation to the number of students served and provides a cost-efficient solution for reducing the achievement gap of students living in poverty. The federal CNCS per student cost is less than \$362 per student, which is adequate and reasonable to ensure students receive the intensive, individualized services necessary.

The budget was prepared using Berea College's mature costing and purchasing principles. The budgeted costs do not supplant existing funding streams and the budget and cost analysis were prepared on the basis of actual costs, vendor quotes for goods or services and/or targeted research conducted for the specific purpose of effectively managing the grant budget. Detailed financial records are maintained onsite to satisfy reporting requirements and financial audits. The project budget is sufficient to implement the planned services and activities described in the project plan. The project includes support from partnering schools and community stakeholders. These collaborative efforts allow for program sustainability when federal support is no longer available.

Budgeted costs for salaries and wages are based on information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the state of Kentucky and Berea College's benchmarking process for similar positions. Fringe costs are based on Berea College's current fringe rates. Travel and training costs are based on research on the General Services Administration (GSA) website for standard rates, travel websites and on prior costs from previous travel and training events. Supplies are based on actual costs from vendors. Evaluation costs are based on proposals and quotes from vendors on similar contractual agreements from other projects. Other program costs and member support costs are based on actual vendor quotes, research specifically conducted to determine the cost or costs from similar activities conducted in other projects.

**BUDGET ADEQUACY:** The budget is submitted with detail and correct mathematical calculations. All costs are allowable, reasonable and allocable to the award. We have secured match commitments from CCHS, KCHS, PCHS, and PFE at Berea College. Additionally, throughout the grant term, we will collaborate with a diverse group of local, state and national organizations such as College for Every Student, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, and Kentucky Campus Compact to provide continuing support of the project.

The budget is designed to address gaps and weaknesses in services, infrastructures and opportunities for students living in poverty and their families. The budget is sufficient to meet the stated goals and

## Narratives

objectives and proposed costs are necessary to provide the interventions discussed in the project narrative.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

Our THEORY OF CHANGE is that caring adults serving as mentors to students, given specific training and support, will improve student's attendance, behavior, course completion and mathematics achievement. Our theory of change is based on research-informed and research-proven strategies, including CFES program components and the FAST program. It is also based on our initial 3 year AmeriCorps School Turnaround model and experience implementing the first cycle of our School Turnaround project. As described in the need and plan sections of this application, our schools are facing extraordinary attendance and mathematics achievement crisis.

AmeriCorps members are assigned caseloads of 40-50 students per member. Members are assigned to mathematics and other classrooms in which they see their caseload students. They provide in-class support as well as before and after-school tutoring and youth and family engagement activities.

Members work with each child on their caseload to monitor attendance, behavior, course completion and math achievement, and to provide appropriate interventions. Members encourage their students, on an as-needed basis, to attend before or after-school math tutoring and homework help. Members also track students services, and each time a student attends before or after-school tutoring, this service is entered into our regional database. This database will provide access to frequency and dosage information needed for our evaluation.

As a large AmeriCorps Grantee entering our 4th year of funding, our evaluation requirement is an experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation. Our outcome impact evaluation will focus on the effectiveness of the mathematics tutoring provided by our members.

Outcome of interest: The short-term outcome of our AmeriCorps School Turnaround project is that the number of students scoring at proficiency in mathematics will improve from the pre-test to the post-test. Since all of the students in any math class in our schools will have this intervention, we will use ACT achievement for our impact evaluation. In terms of access to a comparison group, the quasi-experimental study will focus specifically on the % of students who meet mathematics benchmark on the ACT test as compared to similar schools with similar demographics.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN THE STUDY:

This impact evaluation will address the following questions:

1. How does student achievement in mathematics, specifically the number of students scoring at benchmark on the ACT assessment, compare to schools with similar demographics who do not have

## Narratives

PartnerCorps AmeriCorps School Turnaround?

2. What dosage and frequency of mathematics intervention provides the desired effects?

3. What are the characteristics of an effective AmeriCorps member?

### STUDY COMPONENTS

a) Research Design: We have selected to design a quasi-experimental research study. We will collect data on two study groups: the CONTROL group of similar demographic rural schools in Kentucky, who do not have PartnerCorps AmeriCorps School turnaround, and the INTERVENTION group, the schools included in this proposal who will each have a cadre of approximately 20 AmeriCorps members per school providing intervention services. Our rationale for selecting quasi-experimental design is that it is the most reasonable for the project at this time, in both terms of access to comparison groups and cost for evaluation. It is important to serve all of the students in the school turnaround schools, in order to help students be successful and to meet the desired objectives for the whole school, which prevents us from being able to do a random assignment of students who would and who would not receive the intervention. It is important to us that we serve our students to the maximum extent possible, which would be limited in an experimental design with random assignment techniques. By comparing school level achievement, we are able to find comparison schools (for the quasi-experimental study model) who have similar demographics but who are not included in our AmeriCorps proposal. The main strength of the quasi-experimental design is that it makes efficient use of available data while also using qualitative data to determine whether there are specific characteristics of AmeriCorps members who are effective (such as expertise in the subject area or enthusiasm for teaching or learning). This will help inform us in our recruitment efforts.

b) This evaluation will strictly use mixed methods, utilizing existing quantitative data collection tools and some additional qualitative methods. Quantitative data will include school report card information reported to the Kentucky Department of Education, specifically, the number and percentage of students meeting mathematics benchmarks on the ACT. Quantitative data on frequency and duration of tutoring services as entered by members will also be used. Qualitative data will be collected by using semi-structured interviews with randomly selected students and AmeriCorps members to determine what the most effective components of tutoring are, as reported by students and members. Members will enter service data into the database on a weekly basis. School Report card data is available on an annual basis. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted bi-annually, once during the fall semester and once during the spring semester, with randomly selected participants.

## Narratives

c) To analyze quantitative data, the evaluator will conduct basic descriptive statistics and assemble a baseline performance profile for the program as a whole and for each school site. Additionally, the evaluator will identify comparison schools and establish baseline data for those comparison schools. Academic year 2015-16 assessment results may be used as the baseline data for comparison (prior to intervention).

To analyze qualitative data, the evaluator will use analytic software to code the interview data and identify relevant themes. Member tutoring logs will also be coded and analyzed for relevant themes. The evaluator will be able to cross reference student services with AmeriCorps members delivering services.

Evaluator Qualifications: Our evaluation will be led by the Project Director and an Independent Evaluator, Judy Kim, Ph.D. Dr. Kim is familiar with the School Turnaround AmeriCorps model and has experience evaluating CNCS AmeriCorps programs. In addition she has experience teaching in Kentucky's public schools, and has extensive experience as an external program evaluator for federal programs, including GEAR UP state and partnership programs and Investing in Innovation. Our evaluation effort will have two major purposes. First, it will provide our team with formative feedback, helping to shape the program as it proceeds. Second, the evaluation team will assess ways and the degree to which PartnerCorps is meeting project objectives.

ESTIMATED BUDGET: We have allotted \$5000 for our independent evaluation. We have worked with Dr. Kim many times in the past and have secured a daily rate of \$500 per day for her services for 10 days for each year of the project. It is anticipated that since most of the data will be readily available, the majority of Dr. Kim's work will be in conducting interviews and completing data analysis. Our project director will ensure the members complete their online data entry and service reports each week, which will also work to expedite the evaluation services.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

PartnerCorps School Turnaround Clarification

A. Revise Executive Summary, budget, letters and PMs. All of these have been updated in egrants.

B. Programmatic

1. Revised letters of commitment & all have been received and emailed to

## Narratives

americorpsclarifications@cns.gov

### 2. Revised Executive Summary

The executive summary has been changed in egrants to read as follows:

Partners for Education at Berea College proposes to have 93 AmeriCorps members who will serve high school students in Clay, Knox and Perry Counties in rural Kentucky. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing attendance of high school students. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education: School Turnaround. The CNCS investment of \$914,614 will be matched with \$ 335,914. \$335,914 in public funding and \$0 in private funding.

### 3. Requirements for Tutoring Programs

Our program will meet the requirements for tutoring programs with respect to tutor qualifications, training, curriculum and supervision.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** All Members, who are not a K-12 student, will have a High School diploma or its equivalent, or a higher degree. A copy of each Member's transcript will be obtained prior to their commencing services to ensure they meet this minimal qualification. As outlined in CFR 2522.910, an exception to this requirement will be the K-12 student Members that we utilize to tutor younger children, in-school or after school, as part of our structured, school-managed, cross-grade tutoring program.

Members will be selected and qualified based on established criteria. High School students will have to have passed high school math courses with a C or better. Adult members will have to have completed at least 60 hours of postsecondary education. All members must pass all criminal history checks as well as social media checks. Members must submit applications, resumes, and transcripts. Partners for Education completes a pre-screen and guides potential members through the application process. Once complete, the potential member is sent on to the project director and school personnel for review. A selection team including the project director and school personnel determine which applicants to invite for interviews, conduct the interviews and make recommendations for placement. Members receive offers of placement after all components of eligibility and application are received and after recommendation from the selection team.

**TRAINING AND CURRICULUM:** All Members serving as tutors will participate in pre- and in-service specialized training. This training will include training provided by a National Tutoring Association (NTA) certified trainer. NTA has a very strong reputation for high-quality tutor training. The National Tutoring Association uses research-informed practices to ensure tutors are prepared to

## Narratives

successfully provide interventions.

The curriculum provided by the tutor training provider includes methods for ongoing assessment. Members who tutor will use pre- and post- assessments as summative evaluations to measure student progress for reporting purposes. On an ongoing basis, members will use formative evaluations to determine whether students are making progress. Tutors will be trained to administer and interpret the ongoing assessment.

Pre-service and in-service training will include tutor certification as well as continual training by district and regional personnel to ensure members understand the academic content standards they are tutoring. Two days per month are set aside for ongoing training of members. During each training day a segment will be focused on tutor specific areas of content and practice.

**SUPERVISION:** Members are supervised by site coordinators who have training, experience, or certification that qualify them to adequately supervise tutors. All Site Coordinators will be trained by the tutoring training provider. Site Coordinators, on a monthly basis, will observe members tutoring and will provide the Member feedback to improve the tutoring practice. All high school student Members will tutor in a school-managed environment, in-school or after-school. A certified teacher or school leader will be on-site during the tutoring sessions to provide supervision and assistance.

### 4. Site Coordinators

Site Coordinators are essential to the success of the project. A one-half time Site Coordinator will be located at each partner school. The Site Coordinator will be the one-site point of contact for Members, will provide supervision of Members and will ensure the Member's service experience is meeting the expectations of the Member and of the school. Site Coordinators are Partners for Education employees and will document their time and effort on a weekly basis. Their effort will be focused on the activities described in our application. Site Coordinators will complete time and effort reports and service reports that connect their activities to their time and effort. Site Coordinators are listed as a line item in our program budget.

### 5. Cost per MSY

Upon review, we have modified our application includes 7 "no cost" MSYs. We utilize current high school seniors as Members to support students in grades 9 & 10. These Members will serve minimum time positions (300 hours) throughout the school year, approximately 10 hours each week. These Members will go through the same application process as adult members, including interviews, background checks, etc. and will receive pre- and in-service training on relevant topics, including tutor training. With this modification, our cost per MSY is now \$13,730.

## Narratives

6. Our proposed outcome is ED27B ¿Number of students in grades K-12 that participated in the mentoring or tutoring or other educational program, including CNCS-supported service learning, who demonstrated improved academic engagement.¿ Improved academic engagement is defined by CNCS as ¿A positive and significant change in one of the following student behaviors over a specific period of time. Measures of student behaviors include increased attendance, increased completion of assignments including homework, increased teacher-reported participation, decreased disciplinary referrals, decreased suspensions, decreased arrest and gang involvement, and decreased reports of substance abuse.¿

We identify attendance, course completion and behavior as significant community problems/needs. The following illustrates how our selected outcome ED27B will represent meaningful progress in address these problems/needs.

**Attendance:** Chronically absent students are those who miss more than 10% of the days of a school year ¿ which would be 17 days of absence in Kentucky schools. Striking numbers of our students were chronically absent during the 2014-15 academic year. Our schools have identified as reducing chronic absenteeism as a priority. Research tells us that our program¿s foundational practices ¿ mentoring, family engagement, tutoring ¿ will positively impact student attendance. Student attendance is the first step, and some think the most vital step, in student engagement. Attendance Works, a national clearinghouse for attendance-related research and strategies, details several studies that show the correlation between improved attendance and improved behavior and course completion, as well as improved graduation rates. We expect our program design to lead to measurable improvements in student attendance, specifically in our chronically absent numbers.

**Behavior:** The impact of the rampant substance abuse within our region is illustrated by the number of our students who are being raised by non-parent caregivers and through the behavior incidents reports recorded by our high school. Our core practices ¿ particularly mentoring and service learning¿ seek to provide our students with increased agency as well as an advocate both foundational to what the student needs to engage fully in their learning. As we increase the engagement of students we expect to see higher personal expectations for students as to their behavior. We hypothesize that this will lead to measurable improvements as measured by decreased behavior reports at the school level.

**Course performance:** High School students in our partner schools are performing below students in the state academically. We hypothesize that improved attendance and behavior will positively impact course performance. In addition, we believe that our focus on mentoring and tutoring will positively impact course performance. Our Members will provide students with the support they need to be

## Narratives

engaged academically as measured by increased completion of assignments, including homework. This increased completion of assignments and homework, coupled with the increase in attendance and behavior, will lead to measurable improvements in course performance.

It is important to note that our program design has illustrated measurable improvements in attendance, behavior and course performance in our original STA schools. Thus, we have a reasonable expectation that we will see similar improvements in this program.

### 7. Collaboration with Eligible Schools and LEAs:

Partners for Education's partnerships and connections with our partner schools and partner LEAs are broader reaching than this one project. We serve as the convener for the Promise Zone Education Working Group of which our partner schools and districts are actively engaged. We meet regularly with school leadership and district leadership to review data, at student, school and district level, and to discuss research and potential interventions to accelerate student achievement.

This project is based on this deep partnership, on a continual review of data and research and grows out of the school and district's desire to collaborate on a program focused on turning around low-performing high schools in the Promise Zone.

Specific examples of collaboration with school and district leadership during the planning process of this grant include:

**Review of Quantitative Data:** We reviewed dependable sources of archival data that measure indicators of community quality, health and well-being (for example, the Annie E. Casey Foundation KidsCount and the American Community Survey) as well as educational achievement and progress (for example, Kentucky Department of Education reports on attendance and graduation rate).

**Review of Surveys:** We reviewed reliable surveys conducted by schools (for example school climate surveys).

**Focus Groups and Meetings:** We met individually with Principals and district leaders to discuss data, research and project design. We also conducted focus groups of existing Members and principals to gather information on the current project's design and modifications necessary.

The deep engagement of school and district partners resulted in modifications of our original STA design. The most significant modification is that we have included tutoring as a key practice in this model. This was a specific modification based on our school leaders' recommendations upon reviewing data and research.

8. Members will be trained and adequately prepared for their multiple anticipated roles (tutoring, mentoring, providing college guidance, and connecting with families).



## Narratives

The power of our program design is that Members are connecting with individual students and ensuring that the student has the support, skills and connections needed to be successful in school. Members are providing the support necessary for students to thrive. This support may include tutoring, mentoring, building college pathways with the student and strengthening the connections the student's family has with school and learning.

Strong training and support is essential for Members to excel in this multi-faceted role. Partners for Education has developed an intensive 3-day pre-service training for all Members to immerse them in this role. Expert trainers from Attendance Works, Respect 360, the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, and the director of Family Engagement at Partners for Education regularly present during our pre-service training. In addition, Members participate in the Annual Partners for Education Summit where they receive training from regional and national leaders alongside the Partners for Education professional staff.

More importantly, we have two full-day training days per month to continue to build the Members's skills. Each training focusses on a competency we have identified as important for a Member. These training days also include a time that members can share challenges they are facing and get input from their co-members on ways to approach the challenge. We have found that this is an excellent way to help members reflect and support one another.

Additionally, we surround our Members with a team of professionals that can assist and guide their work. For example, our Project Director is a former school administrator with extensive experience working in rural Appalachian schools and with rural students. He coaches Members and provides them with the continual training needed. In addition, each Member is connected with a school teacher and/or counselor who is on-site and available to assist them should they need additional training and support.

9. Recruitment from geographic and demographic communities in which the program will operate. Berea College and Partners for Education is deeply entrenched in Appalachian Kentucky. We utilize our connections with Berea College alumni and supporters to recruit for positions. We find that in our community it is this word-of-mouth recruiting that is most impactful. Through our work with regional initiatives like Promise Zone and Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) we have strong connections with the community colleges and universities that serve Appalachia. We work closely with these education partners to identify recent college graduates from the Mountains that desire a service experience. Partners for Education benefits from the position of an AmeriCorps recruiting coordinator. A unique and successful recruiting strategy is our connections with retired educators

## Narratives

within Appalachian. We utilize the retired teacher organizations within each of our counties to share with retirees the opportunity to serve. We have found that many retired educators and school leaders miss the student connection and are eager to serve as a Member in a school.

On a structural basis, Partners for Education does have a full-time recruiter to support our CNCS work. We currently have a portfolio of 2 AmeriCorps and 1 AmeriCorps VISTA project, with a total of 104 members. This recruiter focusses first and foremost on recruiting members from the region and communities we serve. She meets regularly with colleges and universities within our communities and region, unemployment agencies, departments for families and children, school personnel, and other local stakeholders to engage our communities is helping to connect potential members to our programs. She attends community festivals and job fairs, and sets up information tables at local events like farmers markets to use these networks to recruit potential members. She also uses social media as a community outreach tool, promoting our programs in community specific groups.

10. Our Project Director works closely with the school Principals to develop a plan to ensure that the program seamlessly fits within the school culture and within the school's turnaround plan. An important aspect of this plan is a shared understanding between school leaders and teachers as to the role of the member. The Project Director, with assistance from the site coordinators, provides all staff and faculty an orientation to AmeriCorps during the school's pre-service days, prior to the start of the academic year. They ensure that school teachers and leaders understand allowable and non-allowable activities. They also ensure that teachers, leaders and staff understand that they should connect with the Site Coordinator in a timely manner should they have any thoughts on member performance or needs. Throughout the academic year, Site Coordinators regularly check-in with school leadership and teaching staff to ensure any member concerns and needs are addressed effectively and efficiently. They attend regularly scheduled faculty/staff meetings to check in and provide additional clarity as needed.

The Site Coordinator is the primary supervisor of the Members. They meet with each Member individually on a weekly basis, address any concerns the Member has and ensures the Members has the support they need to be successful. The Site Coordinator monitors the service hours of the Member and works with the Members to ensure that they are on track to complete their service.

11. Our cost per MSY is \$13,730. This is \$358 per student. Based on our history as an AmeriCorps School Turnaround grantee, our performance indicates that this is a good investment. One of our original 3 schools went from a SIG school to one of the top 10% of the schools in the state and exited school turnaround status. Another school which we currently serve has improved enough that they

## Narratives

are likely to exit school turnaround status within the next year. Our third school was just added this academic year so has not been with us long enough to have a vast impact.

### C. BUDGET

The budget and budget narrative were both updated in egrants. The cost per MSY was reduced to \$13,730 with a total of 67 MSYs (93 members, 60 full-time and 33 minimum-time). The total cost is now \$1,255,528 with a CNCS Share of \$914,614 or 73% and a Grantee Share of \$335,914 or 27%. The personnel and fringe sections were updated to reflect three 50% Site Coordinators to provide supervision and support to the PartnerCorps Members at Clay County High School, Knox Central High School and Perry Central High School. The supplies section was updated to include materials and fees for tutoring services. Detailed calculations were also included for the School Cadre Supplies. The Other Program Operating Costs was updated include PartnerCorps Gear for all 93 members and updated to reflect Background Checks for all 93 members and 8 staff. Member costs were updated to account for the additional 33 minimum cost members. The CCR registration is current through 6/28/2016 and will be updated prior to that date by the Grant Services Office.

### D. Performance Measures

The Performance Measure section was updated in egrants. We have made changes to the performance measures to provide clarity and detail around students who will start, complete, and improve through our services. Please see changes in Performance Measure section.

CNCS defines economically disadvantaged as: eligible for free (at or below 130% of poverty) or reduced (between 130% to 185% of poverty) lunch or enrolled in a school where the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. 100% of students at Clay County High School, Knox Central High School and Perry Central High School receive free lunch, based on community eligibility (<http://education.ky.gov/federal/scn/pages/qualifying-data.aspx>). The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a provision from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 that allows schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) with high poverty rates to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. CEP eliminates the burden of collecting household applications to determine eligibility for school meals, relying instead on information from other means-tested programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

### Clarification-Round 2

#### General Clarification

1. The applicant requested an increase in both funds and MSY during clarification as an attempt to

## Narratives

reduce cost/MSY. Only changes that do not add to the overall CNCS share can be considered. Please revise the request so that the funds requested do not exceed \$867,590. Please reduce your cost/MSY below \$14,460, if you are able. If you are not able to reduce the cost per MSY please provide an explanation. Please ensure that your budget, executive summary and performance measures align with your requested amounts.

The proposal was revised to ensure funds do not exceed \$867,590. The cost/MSY is also below \$14,460. The no cost MSYs were removed to ensure availability of match funds. Funds requested are \$867,328 and the cost/MSY is \$14,455.

### Performance Measures

1. Per the application narrative, members are engaged in multiple interventions under this program including not only attendance support but also math tutoring and connecting with families. Please adjust the number of MSY associated with the performance measure to reflect only the portion of member time devoted to improving student attendance.
2. The level of improvement demonstrated by students counted under the ED27B measure must be ambitious and meaningful. Please propose a more ambitious threshold for the amount of improvement students must demonstrate in order to be counted under this outcome measure. Please also provide a justification for why the selected threshold represents meaningful improvement.

Performance measures were updated to address clarification items 1 and 2. Performance measure ED5 was added to address academic improvement. All members will work to achieve ED1, ED2, ED27B and ED5.

### Continuation Changes

N/A

### Grant Characteristics