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Executive Summary

The Playworks National Direct AmeriCorps program proposes to have 115 full-time and 10 1-year half-time AmeriCorps members who will provide a school-wide evidence-based program designed to utilize play to create school environments with reduced bullying where students feel safe, supported and engaged in low-income schools in Milwaukee, WI; Phoenix, AZ; Twin Cities, MN; New York, NY; Newark, NJ; Portland, OR; Houston, TX; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; Indianapolis, IN; and Atlanta, GA. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for positively impacting the entire school climate to reduce bullying and create a safe environment where students will increase overall academic engagement. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 720 volunteers who will be engaged in assisting with components of the Playworks AmeriCorps program, including community engagement projects and other events. The program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$1,493,999 will be matched with \$3,928,858, \$3,157,000 in public funding and \$771,858 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. NEED:

In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) prioritized providing students with access to a well-rounded education in a safe and healthy environment free from bullying and harassment (www.ed.gov/essa). 70 to 80% of school aged students are involved in bullying at some point in their lives, and the US Department of Justice estimates a child is bullied every seven minutes (Bureau of Justice Statistics- School Crime and Safety). A large majority of these events take place on school campuses. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that nationally, between 20 and 28% of students have been bullied at least once on their school's property within the last 12 months (YRBS 2015). Even more concerning is that an estimated 81% of bullying acts are not reported to adults, indicating incidents of bullying are higher than these statistics convey (stopbullying.gov). The National Education Association estimates that 160,000 students miss school every day due to fear of being bullied (National Education Association).

Bullying has negative impacts on everyone in the school community, including victims, perpetrators, witnesses and staff. Students who are bullied are more likely to feel disconnected from school, have lower academic outcomes and attendance, are at increased risk of depression and substance abuse, and in some cases have a higher risk for suicide (Glew et al, 2005). A UCLA psychologist found that victims of bullying are less likely to raise their hand in class and complete their

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homework, and overall show higher rates of disinterest in school (Wolpert, 2011). The fear of continued victimization causes students to distance themselves from social connections and feel unsafe on campus, eventually leading to disengagement from school entirely (National Education Association). Students who bully others are more likely to feel disconnected from school, engage in violence and dropout of school early; bystanders are often more reluctant to attend school and are at increased risk for mental health disorders (stopbullying.gov). According to a 1999 Psychology study, for every bullying incident on the playground, an average of four other peers witnessed the event, creating widespread impacts for all students (O'Connell, Pepler, Craig, 1999). Furthermore, students at schools with a high number of bullying incidents may perceive that staff have little to no control and do not care about their well being (stopbullying.gov). A single bullying situation can have wide-ranging impacts on the overall climate of the school, and leave students at risk for poor school success.

Bullying is a concrete problem in the districts and cities our members serve. 11% of students in Houston reported missing school over the past 30 days due to feeling unsafe, compared with six percent of students nationally (YRBS 2015). 44% of students in Milwaukee agreed that bullying and harassment by other students was a large problem at their school (YRBS 2013), and an external report found 90% of students reported seeing at least one act of bullying (Melzer-Lange et al, 2005). Portland Public Schools' "Successful Schools Survey" found that over 20% of students report being "made fun of, insulted or called names" four or more times in the past year (PPS Survey 2015). 30% of students in Minneapolis reported they had made fun of or teased another student once or twice within the last month, and 27% of students reported they had been victims of bullying at the same rate (Minnesota Student Survey 2016). 30% of Chicago teens reported that bullying is a prevalent issue in their lives (The State of Young Chicago 2013); similarly, 25% of Indianapolis students report that they are dealing with bullying on a regular basis. The New York Post reported that 32% of bullying victims in New York City engage in self harmful behavior compared with 13% of other kids (New York Post 2012). Denver Public Schools found that only 57% of students report that other students treat each other nicely at school and only 35% do not worry about bullying behaviors.

In an attempt to address the widespread incidence and negative impacts of bullying detailed above, the ESSA requires State Education Agency (SEA) plans to include how states will help districts "address discipline, bullying and harassment, and improve school climate" (ESSA Act 2015). Each SEA plan must include how it will support local education agencies to improve school conditions for student learning, including through reducing incidences of bullying and harassment. Now more than

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ever, schools are looking to programs such as Playworks to support their efforts to reduce bullying on their campuses.

2. INTERVENTION:

Bullying prevents students from becoming academically engaged in school and has been linked to lower academic achievement and other negative health impacts. As detailed in the Need section, bullying is an ongoing and serious problem in the cities where our members serve. Bullying occurs two to three times more often at school than any other location and tends to thrive where there is the largest amount of students and the least amount of supervision (Smith, 2010), with over 70% of incidents happening on the playground (Glew, et al, 2005). Studies have confirmed that interventions that focus on improving the overall school climate are the most effective at reducing bullying incidents (Masiello & Schroeder, 2014). Furthermore, caring adults that model positive behavior mitigate negative effects of bullying and allow victims to become or remain engaged in school (Office of Juvenile Justice, 2011).

To address the growing community problem of bullying, Playworks AmeriCorps members will create school climates where it is socially unpopular to exclude or bully others, and where respect and inclusion become the social norm. Playworks places a caring adult in each partnering school who models positive behavior and creates a safe and inclusive environment. Earlier research has found that, when compared to schools not participating in Playworks, those taking part have seen: Increases in the use of positive language on school recess yards, increases in perceptions of student safety, reductions in bullying, and easier transitions to class (Fortson, James-Burdumy, et al., 2013). Recess is the central focus of the Playworks AmeriCorps model, as it is the time when bullying and conflict are most likely to occur on school campuses. Each AmeriCorps member will utilize play at their assigned low-income elementary school to create an inclusive environment where all students feel safe and engaged. Members will maintain a constant presence on the playground during recess, teaching and modeling pro-social skills such as respect, positive language, and problem solving. To reinforce the behaviors and positive culture developed during recess, members will implement additional program components emphasizing respectful social behavior throughout the day.

3. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL:

Playworks is an evidence-based program proven to reduce bullying, increase student's sense of safety, and transform elementary school climates (Mathematica 2013). The Playworks AmeriCorps

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program model provides a school-wide intervention where a caring adult models positive behavior and creates a safe and inclusive environment where students become academically engaged. The full-time Playworks program consists of five components: Recess, Junior Coach Leadership Program, Class Game Time, Sports Leagues and Community Engagement. RECESS: Recess is the central focus of the Playworks AmeriCorps model. Each AmeriCorps member will utilize play at their assigned low-income elementary school to create an inclusive environment where all students feel safe and engaged. Members will maintain a constant presence on the playground during recess, teaching and modeling pro-social skills such as respect, positive language, and problem solving. Based on the needs of the school, at some school sites this will also include before-school recess. JUNIOR COACH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: Members will facilitate a leadership development program with a group of upper elementary students, providing 45 hours of training during school-hours and through ongoing support as they become "Junior Coach" leaders. Training topics include Job Skills, Leadership, Conflict Resolution, Inclusion, Community Action and Teamwork. Junior Coaches model positive behavior, lead games, and assist with conflict resolution at recess for younger students.

CLASS GAME TIME: Members will spend time with individual classes at their assigned school to teach the games offered at recess and introduce the tenets of respect and inclusion, so students become comfortable actively participating in games with their peers. During these individual class sessions, members will serve alongside teachers to increase teacher comfort with providing additional opportunities for positive play throughout the school day. SPORTS LEAGUES: Members will also facilitate non-competitive, developmental sports leagues, encouraging participation from students who have not previously felt comfortable playing sports. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Members will work with their school administration to identify and develop one to two school events aimed at engaging families within the school community. Members will use play at these events as a catalyst for creating unique opportunities for students, parents, and teachers to build relationships and a sense of belonging within the school community. Finally, members will participate in service projects on National Days of Service, and may also participate in various weekend service projects and events throughout the larger community to support the spirit of service and bond with volunteers and AmeriCorps members in the area. Volunteers will support the program throughout the day including on the playground at recess, at our developmental sports leagues as assistant coaches, during our after school Junior Coach Leadership Program, and through supporting member Community Engagement Initiatives.

One to two AmeriCorps members in each of our regions will serve as a "peer support" member.

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Our peer support members will serve alongside other members at their school sites on a rotating basis, which is critical to program continuity. Having a trained member ready to step into a school setting allows us to have our members visit neighboring programs for peer-learning and sharing best practices without creating a gap in services at their assigned school. Our peer support members will be prepared to assume full-time duties at a school site if another member has an extended illness or exits early.

Playworks will implement a new part-time AmeriCorps program, called the Junior Coach Corps pilot, with 10 part-time members serving in 10 schools in 2017-18, allocating 5 MSY (10 1-year half-time 900 hour member slots) to this program. Members participating in this pilot (Junior Coach Coordinators) will serve in elementary schools that are not currently being reached with the Playworks AmeriCorps program. Part-time members will be on-site at their assigned schools 4-5 days per week for approximately 20 hours per week. These members will serve at their schools sites during recess, similar to full-time members. Members will also facilitate a Junior Coach Leadership Development program with a group of upper elementary students, similar to full-time members. These members will provide a leadership training for Junior Coaches for approximately 45 minutes every other week. To support programming at their schools sites, part-time members will recruit three volunteers each during their term of service.

In selecting our AmeriCorps service sites, we will pursue partnerships with priority schools as well as low-income schools where at least 50% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Currently, Playworks partners with schools where 82% is the average of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch. We anticipate that our AmeriCorps program will serve a similar population in the coming school year. We target low income schools because the need for a positive school climate program is high, but resources in both staffing and funding are non-existent. Additionally, the Junior Coach Corps pilot would allow us to serve schools that have different budget and capacity needs than that of schools where we implement the full-time AmeriCorps member program. Some of these schools have budget constraints and cannot access our full-time AmeriCorps program model, but have a higher personnel capacity to provide member support. In this model, the school fee is reduced because the member is serving fewer hours, but the school takes on more member support responsibilities. For the pilot, criteria for selection will include the ability for the school partner to identify a Recess Partner (principal or other school administrator) who will be the onsite school support person for the Junior Coach Coordinator.

The Playworks intervention follows an evidence-based theory of change, as detailed in our Logic

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Model, where members transform recess through the five components, leading to a strong recess climate and ultimately a strong school climate. Our Theory of Change is based on evidence from an external study of our program titled "Playing Fair: The Contribution of High-Functioning Recess to Overall School Climate in Low-Income Elementary Schools" (Journal of School Health, January 2015). The quasi-experimental, pre-post study utilized structured interviews, observations and teacher and student surveys in six newly implemented schools that shared similar characteristics, including a large percentage of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch, a high percentage of racial diversity and also low test scores and academic outcomes. The study concluded that students felt more included, more connected to the school and their Playworks coach, had a higher sense of belonging at school and felt more physically and emotionally safe. All evaluations included schools implementing the full Playworks model with the exception of the Community Engagement Initiative which was developed after the time of the evaluation. Playworks is submitting two studies to support the classification as "strong evidence."

The Stanford "Playing Fair" study provided the foundation for our program's Theory of Change. The Playworks Theory of Change identifies a High-Functioning Recess as key to creating a positive overall school climate. A High-Functioning Recess is achieved with three fundamental elements: a high-quality Playworks program, a strong Playworks coach, and a robust Playworks/school partnership. Playworks defines a High-Functioning Recess as one where students' pro-social skills are developed through the modeling of inclusive games and play, the promotion of positive language and behavior, and the application of simple conflict resolution skills. In addition, a High-Functioning Recess requires a safe, organized and active playground where common rules are established, boundaries are identified, transitions are effective, and a variety of physical activities are offered. The Stanford study confirmed that Playworks program supports the development of a High Functioning Recess with statistically significant differences found in teachers reporting an improved or substantial improvement in recess organization when compared to lower-functioning recesses. Once a High-Functioning Recess is created, a Positive Recess Climate can be established.

Playworks characterizes a Positive Recess Climate as one where students are: engaged in play and physical activity; enjoy recess; and initiate and sustain games. In addition, students are emotionally and physically safe at recess, with minimal conflict and bullying. A Positive Recess Climate has the power to create a Positive School Climate where students have strong social and emotional skills, are engaged in school, and experience classrooms with positive environments. Students at schools with a Positive School Climate feel a sense of belonging, are connected to adults, and have positive

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interactions with peers. Students are also engaged in school, have high attendance rates and participate strongly in class. Again, the Stanford study found statistically significant differences when comparing high functioning recesses to low-functioning recesses in multiple indicators of Positive School Climate.

Playworks intends to measure the long-term outcome of increased academic engagement in full-time members' schools through a modified version of the Social and Character Development Survey (SACD). The survey is validated to measure key indicators of engagement described in Performance Measure ED27A as increased class participation, increased attachment to school, and increased perception of school climate by using a composite engagement score. Playworks will implement the teacher-reported survey on a random sample of students at the beginning and end of each school year of the grant cycle. Due to the large number of students members work with on a daily basis, it is infeasible to have teachers complete the SACD on every student. Therefore, Playworks utilizes a sample methodology approved by CNCS which utilizes a randomized, stratified sample frame that allows for extrapolation to the larger school community. We will use Education Measures ED1 (Number of economically disadvantaged students or students with special/exceptional needs who start in a CNCS-supported education program), ED2 (Number of economically disadvantaged students or students with special/exceptional needs that completed participation in CNCS-supported K-12 education programs), and ED27A (Number of students in grades K-12 that participated in the mentoring or tutoring or other education program, including CNCS-supported service learning, who demonstrated improved academic engagement (attitudes)) to measure outputs and outcomes as detailed in the logic model. Playworks has successfully utilized ED1, ED2 and ED27A to demonstrate change in students' academic engagement levels. We intend to continue to set targets based on these prior successes. Our annual targets are as follows: ED1: 54,075, ED2: 48,668, and ED 27A: 24,334. These outcome targets are slightly higher than in previous years due to an increased average school size in schools where our members serve.

Appropriate adult supervision is crucial to the reduction of bullying and the creation of a positive school climate, but increased pressure on schools to deliver annual improvement in standardized test scores has created a concentration of financial resources on classroom staffing and instructional strategies. As a result, schools lack the capacity or staff to devote to developing a productive school climate strategy. We have found in our very successful twelve-year partnership with AmeriCorps that AmeriCorps members are ideally suited to provide this intervention. As dedicated, enthusiastic individuals who are recruited to serve in the communities where they are from, members are the

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perfect ambassadors to impact schools. Playworks AmeriCorps members will spend each school day focused on creating a positive school climate and reducing bullying, as well as deepening impact beyond the school day through community engagement.

4. EVIDENCE BASE

Playworks uses an evidence-based approach backed by an experimental study that resulted in several statistically significant findings indicating strong evidence that support causal relationships between Playworks and the intended outcomes.

In May 2013, Mathematica Policy Research in conjunction with Stanford University released the results of a randomized controlled study "Impact and Implementation Findings from an Experimental Evaluation of Playworks: Effects on School Climate, Academic Learning, Student Social Skills and Behavior" (www.mathematica-mpr.com). During the 2011 and 2012 school years, twenty-nine schools from six different cities were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Random assignment of schools helped to ensure that there were no systematic differences between the treatment and control groups' observed and unobserved characteristics and that the differences in outcomes between the two groups could be attributed solely to the effect of Playworks. To improve the statistical precision of impact estimates and reduce the chance of differences between the treatment and control groups in the characteristics of schools, random assignment was conducted within matched groups of schools that were similar in terms of observable characteristics. The impacts on students, teachers and schools were determined by comparing the average outcomes in treatment and control school using regression models that were customized to the unit of analysis. All statistically significant impacts are based on the MHT adjusted p-values. The overall design and methodology (strong internal/external validity) of this study allows the results to be generalized to schools with similar characteristics (urban, diverse, high poverty) implementing the full Playworks program.

Key statistically significant findings from the study support the Playworks Theory of Change and include: (1) Teachers in Playworks schools reported significantly LESS BULLYING and exclusionary behavior, a 43% difference in average rating scores, (2) Playworks teachers average rating of students' FEELINGS OF SAFETY at school was 20% higher than the average rating reported by teachers in control schools and (3) Teachers in Playwork schools reported spending significant less time to transition from recess to learning activities - 34% fewer minutes - showing an INCREASED READINESS TO LEARN.

Another study supporting Playworks outcomes, "Physical Activity and Positive Youth

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Development: Impact of a School-Based Program" (Journal of School Health, 2011) used a quasi-experimental design that analyzed data from 159 low-income schools from 2001-2007. Outcomes were 5th grade student scores (n=13,109) on the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), which was administered statewide. Scores from students attending schools with Playworks programming were compared to scores from students attending schools without Playworks programming. After one year of exposure to Playworks, students showed statistically significant increases in the following four protective factors: problem-solving skills, meaningful participation in school, goals and aspirations, and physical activity. All four protective factors are associated with positive social and academic outcomes. With strong design and methodology (internal/external validity), outcomes associated with this evaluation can be generalized to schools with similar characteristics implementing the full-time Playworks program.

As submitted for our CNCS evaluation requirement, the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University released the study "The Relationship between Playworks Participation and Student Attendance in Two School Districts" (<https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications>) in March 2015. The analysis utilized a longitudinal student-level attendance and demographic data from two school districts for a four-year period from 2009-10 to 2012-13. The research design included a comparison group of students in similar schools not participating in Playworks and a series of multivariate regression analysis to estimate the relationship between Playworks participation and student attendance. Participation in Playworks is associated with a very small increase in school attendance rate of approximately 0.2%, equivalent to an average increase of one-third of a school day per student per year. Aggregated to a school of 450 students, this 0.2% increase represents approximately 150 additional days of attendance among all students during the year. For students chronically absent, Playworks is associated with slightly larger increases in attendance of about 0.4%. As discussed in the evaluation, elementary school students miss school for three reasons: discretion (parent does not value attendance), barriers (transportation, health, or lack of safe routes to school) and aversion (child avoids due to unsafe feelings at school). The findings in this evaluation support the Playworks Theory of Change that by creating positive school climates students will feel safer and experience less bullying thereby reducing the aversion factors that lead to high absentee rates.

5. NOTICE PRIORITY.

Improving student engagement directly impacts academic performance which falls into the

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Education focus area. While the Playworks program does not focus solely on academic performance in STEM, it does have a significant impact on education by increasing student academic engagement. Research has identified that school engagement is an indicator of long-term academic and social outcomes. Engagement has been shown to include a student's physical and emotional safety at school as well as their overall feelings of connectedness to the school community (www.chks.wested.org). A safe school environment fosters the intellectual and social interactions that academic achievement requires. Likewise, a student who feels connected to their school community reports higher levels of interest and engagement in their academic work (National School Climate Center, www.schoolclimate.org).

In January 2014, the Department of Education (DOE) issued "Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline" to all schools. This guide emphasizes that "developing positive school climates and improving school discipline policies are critical steps to raising academic achievement." The DOE recognizes that to improve student academic performance, schools must first create spaces where students feel safe and included and, therefore, able to become academically engaged.

6. MEMBER TRAINING.

The term of service for Playworks AmeriCorps members will kick off in mid-August with an intensive two week long pre-service training. Pre-service training will begin with a day of orientation including an introduction to AmeriCorps, discussions about what it means to serve, a review of the member contract and handbook, information regarding stipends/benefits/grievance procedures, prohibited activities, and an AmeriCorps swearing in ceremony. The remaining weeks of pre-service training will focus on skill development in the areas of group management, age-appropriate games, inclusive play, Playworks curriculum, volunteer recruitment and management, and CPR/First Aid.

Playworks program staff delivers pre-service and ongoing member training. In the four weeks following pre-service, members will participate in trainings two afternoons per week and from October to June members will receive trainings a minimum of twice per month. These trainings dive deeper into program components, reflection and discussion about service, data collection, and recruiting and working with volunteers. Our program staff also ensure all members and volunteers are trained on and adhere to the prohibited activities. AmeriCorps requirements, including prohibited activities, are included in pre-service training, in the member contract that each individual is required to sign, and in continuous follow-up conversations during service site visits. Toward the end of the

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term, the Life After AmeriCorps training is led by staff and Playworks AmeriCorps alumni. Training topics include resume writing, skill assessments, employment options at Playworks, and the Education Award.

Playworks will provide part-time AmeriCorps members, Junior Coach Coordinators, with approximately 100 hours of training, including pre-service training, professional development, as well as opportunities for reflection and community building, using a combination of remote and in-person trainings. Junior Coach Coordinators will also have many opportunities to have combined trainings, community building, and reflection activities with our full-time AmeriCorps coaches. Playworks is committed to ensuring that the part-time members feel fully part of the Playworks and AmeriCorps communities.

7. MEMBER SUPERVISION.

The member supervisor, called the Program Manager, will train, support and guide the member through their term of service, and serve as the direct liaison between members and their service site. Supervisors are responsible for planning and facilitating numerous trainings, as well as reflection and community building opportunities for members. Supervisors are responsible for conducting bi-weekly site visits, one-on-one goal and objective meetings, and completing performance evaluations twice a year. Weekly site visits provide the opportunity to observe the member, give feedback and ensure members are not engaging in prohibited activities. The performance evaluations include scoring and documenting the members' growth and skills with respect to professionalism, core program components, as well as school relationships. Program Managers typically have at least two years of Playworks experience at a school site or equivalent experience in youth development, strong communication and organizational skills, a proven ability to lead, and the ability to thrive working both independently and within team settings. To ensure Program Managers are well-trained and prepared to oversee compliance with AmeriCorps regulations, we provide them with trainings designed by the national office and supported by the local program team, including trainings on AmeriCorps program management (which incorporates prohibited activities and timekeeping), and AmeriCorps policies and expectations.

Member support and supervision will be modified for Junior Coach pilot AmeriCorps members. Members will also be supervised by a Playworks Program Manager, who will do weekly check-in calls as well as monthly site visits with the member and modified performance evaluations. In addition, members will be supported by an on-site designated Recess Partner (principal or other school

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administrator). Recess Partners will receive orientation trainings from Playworks program staff at the beginning of the year on how to support the Junior Coach Coordinator. Recess Partners will also receive ongoing support from Playworks Program Managers throughout the school year. The Recess Partner will conduct weekly recess observation visits as well as weekly check-ins with the member at their school site.

8. MEMBER EXPERIENCE.

Playworks provides our members with an experience that is authentic, hands-on, meaningful, and deeply rewarding. Our members are dedicated to the schools they serve and are embedded in the school and culture. They become mentors, coaches, and role models to the children they support. Members develop skills in group management, youth development, lesson planning and facilitation -- all skills that are particularly valuable in the education field. As a result, by the end of their service, members become youth development professionals with the skills to implement high-quality programs.

Playworks strives to create a member experience that provides over 135 hours of training (100 hours for part-time members), including professional development, as well as opportunities for reflection and community building to promote a lifelong ethic of service. Members also participate in two "Service and Motivation" workshops that utilize interactive activities to focus on their service experience and their inspirations. This thoughtful way of sharing often taps into what inspires each individual and allows them to brainstorm ways to reach, motivate and inspire others in the community to engage in service. Members are given an opportunity to do reflection series where they explore fundamental questions about service, community, and leadership. The intent of these reflection series are to deepen civic engagement and add additional meaning to their service experience. Playworks additionally connects its members members to the larger AmeriCorps community by attending state commission events and service projects.

Playworks prioritizes recruiting and retaining remarkable and dedicated people. We are proud of our proven record of aggressively recruiting a diverse corps and a balance of men and women. To recruit a cohort that is representative of the communities Playworks serves, our hiring managers focus their search through posting positions in local neighborhood centers, conducting presentations and attending diversity fairs at local colleges, and running community events in neighborhoods we serve. Playworks also depends on referrals from our school and community partners. Partners include: Indiana University Purdue, Butler University, University of Georgia, Kipp Metro Atlanta, The

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Kindezi Schools, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, University of Portland, Portland Parks and Recreation, Colorado State University, Metro State University, University of Minnesota and Rutgers University. With this large network of partners, Playworks has found success in recruiting individuals with a passion for both youth development and who are service-oriented.

9. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION.

Playworks strives to develop a strong AmeriCorps identity among members. Members learn about AmeriCorps during the interview process, trainings and reflections, and practice explaining AmeriCorps to others through creating elevator pitches. Swearing-in and graduation ceremonies, special AmeriCorps attire, trainings and events also serve to impart the special nature of members' service. To make our members identifiable to the community, each member is provided an AmeriCorps gear pack containing Playworks AmeriCorps shirts, sweatshirts and pin and are required to wear the AmeriCorps logo at all times while serving. At our service sites, the AmeriCorps logo is displayed on the member's bulletin board which contains program highlights and service event information. To identify Playworks' partnership with AmeriCorps, the AmeriCorps logo is prominently displayed on our website as a national partner.

Organizational Capability

1. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING:

Founded in 1996, Playworks is a \$46.9 million organization with a 17-year track record of successfully implementing programs. Over the last twelve years, Playworks has effectively managed an AmeriCorps program through National Direct and state commission grants.

The original development of the Playworks program was in direct response to a need identified by school principals who were troubled by the chaos and disruptive behaviors on the playground. Principals expressed that these behaviors created an environment where students were not participating in healthy play and that often spilled over into the classrooms, disrupting the learning process. In 1996, Playworks founder, Jill Vialet, launched a play-based program to specifically address this situation. Since then, Playworks has worked closely with students, parents, school teachers, and principals each year to tailor and coordinate programming at each school site.

Playworks consulted with all state commissions where we propose to place national direct members. We submitted the standard Association of State Commissions form (or a state commission variation of the form) except in Oregon and Texas where we completed the required online survey which serves as their official consultation form.

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Organizationally, Playworks has a multi-tiered management structure in place to provide strong support to the Playworks AmeriCorps program. A National Board of Directors provides fiscal oversight and support to our national leadership. National leadership and key department directors include: Jill Vialet, Founder and CEO; Elizabeth Cushing, President; David Gallagher, Chief Program Officer; Tom Low, Chief Financial Officer; Eunice Dunham, Chief People Officer; Tracy Williamson Director, of Government Programs; Jennette Claassen, Director of Evaluation, and three Regional Executive Officers who directly supervise the Executive Directors in each city office. Playworks National has several departments that are trained to provide guidance to all Playworks offices with AmeriCorps grants. The departments of Government Programs, Human Resources, Evaluation, Finance, and the Impact Team support the management of our grants through facilitating trainings, meetings, audits and reporting with program staff.

Each Playworks city office is led by an Executive Director who is responsible for overall program oversight, fiscal management, day to day operations, and leadership and supervision of staff. Executive Directors come to Playworks with a minimum of five years experience in leadership and management from both the profit and non-profit sectors. Our Executive Directors are each supported by a local Board of Directors who provide leadership and counsel, monitor program operations and fiscal reports, and represent the needs and interests of the community. A team of experienced program staff in each city are trained to manage the members who will serve in their cities, including: one Program Director, one to four Program Managers, and one Program Associate. The Program Directors, who come to Playworks with an average of five years of experience in management and supervisory roles, will be responsible for general program management, will oversee member recruitment, trainings and workshops, and will directly supervise and support the Program Managers. The Program Managers will directly supervise the AmeriCorps members and the relationship with their school placement sites. Program Managers will supervise, train, support and guide the member through their term of service, ensuring AmeriCorps compliance through site visits, written objectives, and bi-annual reviews. The Program Associates will be responsible for the paperwork and administrative requirements associated with the grant, including but not limited to member: timesheet accuracy and submission, service activities, eGrants enrollment and exit, and sign-in sheets.

2. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

Playworks is dedicated to ensuring compliance with all AmeriCorps rules and regulations. Our AmeriCorps program will be monitored at both the national and local level to prevent and detect

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compliance issues. To ensure compliance at a local level, Playworks' national team will train staff in each city on compliance, including prohibited activities. Program Managers in each city will then train members and service site administrators to ensure compliance at each member service site. To safeguard against risk at each site, Program Managers will conduct site visits to assess program quality, as well as school site and member compliance. If an instance of risk is identified, Program Managers will address the issue with members and the service site staff directly, following up with documentation and additional training. To manage compliance across all service sites in each city, Program Directors will hold regular program team meetings throughout the year to discuss on-going service activities, AmeriCorps member support and development, and any challenges to be addressed. If any compliance issues are detected, Program Directors will be required to document, report, and re-train all parties involved as necessary.

Playworks has developed a School Partnership Assessment tool that is designed to 1) provide clear expectations we have for our school partners in order to achieve the outcomes within our Logic Model and to support our members 2) set and manage goals with our school partners throughout the year and 3) identifying regional and national trends. In addition, Playworks uses this tool to manage AmeriCorps-partner specific requirements, such as schools' understanding of AmeriCorps members' roles and responsibilities and using the AmeriCorps branding and logo in their schools. Playworks staff share this assessment tool when confirming new school partnerships, review it with all schools at the beginning of the school year to confirm expectations and set goals, and complete the assessment mid-year and conduct meetings with schools to provide recognition for areas of strengths and address any future goals for remainder of the year.

Our AmeriCorps program in each city will also be monitored across Playworks national organizational structure. In the national office, AmeriCorps Program Managers (ACPMs) support grant implementation and compliance. One ACPM will be assigned to manage National Direct grant implementation across our cities. Support will include monthly meetings with program staff in each city dedicated to the specifics of our AmeriCorps program, including member hours, member activities, volunteer recruitment, and ongoing projects. The ACPM will also conduct a timesheet audit and two member file audits during the year; at the beginning to make sure onboarding paperwork is complete and accurate, and after the members complete their term to ensure a proper exit. In addition, the ACPM will conduct a compliance review twice a year with the city staff that requires the Executive Directors to meet with their program staff to review and certify that specific items are in compliance, including a sample of member timesheets. If instances of risk are found, the Executive

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Director and program team will design and submit a plan to address the issue to the ACPM. Upon approval, the program staff have a designated amount of time to resolve the issue, and a follow up meeting will be held to ensure the city has resumed compliance.

Playworks' National Program, Finance, and Human Resources departments are trained in AmeriCorps requirements and support compliance. Our National Program Department conducts site visits at select sites throughout the year to observe our AmeriCorps program, give feedback for improvement, and safeguard against instances of risk. The Finance Director is responsible for all AmeriCorps grant financial reporting and attends CNCS trainings as needed. Our Human Resources Department works closely with the AmeriCorps Program Managers to stay up to date on AmeriCorps rules and regulations as they pertain to member service hours, benefits, stipends, onboarding and exiting. The Human Resources team also guides program staff with member management, including member performance improvement plans and disciplinary actions.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. COST EFFECTIVENESS:

For the proposed request of \$12,450 per MSY, Playworks will provide daily programming for approximately 54,075 children resulting in a significantly cost-effective program of \$0.56/child/day (of which we request \$0.15/child/day from AmeriCorps). This investment, less than one dollar per day per child, will provide meaningful school-wide impact by reducing bullying and exclusionary behavior and improving attention in class. While many programs serving elementary schools focus exclusively on small, designated groups of students through classroom teaching, individual tutoring and/or mentorship, Playworks' AmeriCorps program will provide a unique model that serves the entire school population in both large and small group settings. This comprehensive approach transforms the school environment allowing all students the opportunity to benefit from the Playworks program, thus achieving a very cost effective program.

As cited in the Evidence section, between 2009 and 2013, the John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University studied whether the positive outcomes of the Playworks program translate into improved school attendance (<https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications>). Key findings from the report concluded that a school's participation in Playworks is associated with approximately 150 saved attendance days among all students.

All 54,075 students at Playworks full-time AmeriCorps schools will also benefit from reclaimed teaching time. Data from the randomized controlled study conducted by Mathematica Policy

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Research shows classroom teachers at Playworks schools saved an average of 10.5 hours a year transitioning from recess to learning activities. Teachers at Playworks' schools reported that they spend 9.37 fewer hours a year addressing behavioral and disciplinary issues throughout the day, allowing for additional teaching time provided to students - adding to the overall programs' cost efficiency.

This investment will be further leveraged through our volunteer recruitment efforts, resulting in additional cost-benefit. Based on the 2015 estimated value of volunteer time of \$23.56 per hour (as calculated by the Independent Sector http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time), the estimated value of our 720 volunteers supporting our AmeriCorps program will be equivalent to over \$50,800, based on a three-hour per volunteer average, for a total of 2,160 volunteer hours. Engaging volunteers in service will provide members with additional community support to create safe school climates cost effectively.

Of the total program budget, \$5,422,857 we propose \$3,928,858 (72% of the total budget) in non-CNCS funding to successfully implement our AmeriCorps program. To raise the additional funds, Playworks will require a financial investment from our school service sites ranging from \$29,000 to \$35,000 for full-time programming and from \$12,000 to \$14,000 for part-time programming per year. These school fees totaling \$3,157,000 in non-CNCS resources will support the cost of our program. Our second source of match will come from foundation, corporate, and individual donor support. Playworks has secured \$771,858 in grants from the Colorado Health Foundation, Joseph and Vera Zilber Family Foundation, Yelp Foundation, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, and Jenesis Group to cover the remaining match.

2. BUDGET ADEQUACY:

Playworks is confident that the proposed budget presented is sufficient to fund the proposed program. The budget is based on our prior nine years of experience managing National Direct funding as well as several state AmeriCorps grants. The submitted budget has been carefully reviewed by our National Finance Director and will be sufficient to allow us to meet our desired program elements, outputs, and outcomes for our AmeriCorps program.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

EVALUATION PLAN

Playworks places a high value on continually evaluating, learning and improving our program. In May 2013, Mathematica Policy Research in conjunction with Stanford University released the

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findings from a randomized controlled study (RCT) "Impact and Implementation findings from an Experimental Evaluation of Playworks: Effects on School Climate, Academic Learning, Student Social Skills and Behavior." Several key significant findings support outcomes described in the Playworks Theory of Change.

Since the release of the RCT, Playworks has continued to build our research knowledge by pursuing several additional research questions including investigating our impact on attendance and chronic absenteeism. In March 2015, the John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University released the study, "The Relationship between Playworks Participation and Student Attendance in Two School Districts." This work further confirmed the student-level impacts indicated in our Theory of Change (TOC).

As Playworks builds our confidence that student and school level outcomes are strong, we are shifting our focus to learn more about which variables support the greatest level of change. Our TOC posits that outcomes will be met if three specific inputs are in place: (1) high quality programming, (2) a caring and consistent adult and (3) healthy school partnerships. Over the past ten years, multiple implementation evaluations have given us insight into the strength of our program components to ensure high program quality. In addition, the implementation evaluations provided tremendous awareness of how to develop and maintain healthy school partnerships. Over the course of the next grant cycle, Playworks is moving to explore how the the caring and consistent adult affects students and school-level outcomes.

The field of social and emotional competency and its role in the educational field has grown tremendously. With Playworks' evidence of supporting students growth in areas of social and emotional competency (e.g. conflict regulation, empathy), we are interested in learning more about how our works fits into a social and emotional framework and, more importantly, how our AmeriCorps members play a key role. The expanding body of research that points to social and emotional learning as a key factor in student success in school and beyond includes some initial indicators that the presence of caring, consistent adults who model social and emotional competency is a key driver in strengthening student competencies. While our past evaluation supports outcomes associated with student and school social and emotional competency, Playworks is interested in learning more about how to strengthen members' own competency and ability to transfer these skills to others on the school campus as a lever to increase student outcomes.

Outcome of interest:

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Playworks will explore two areas of interest: (1) members' social and emotional competency and (2) transference of these skills and competencies.

Research questions to be addressed by the study:

While still developing the final research questions, we are building off the following:

1) How do members increase their own social and emotional competency through participation in the Playworks training and program. What aspects of Playworks training supports development of strong social and emotional competency?

2) How are members able to transfer these skills to other adults in the school community? What are the most effective strategies that support transference?

Both of these research questions will guide Playworks in understanding more about the role social and emotional competence plays in bringing about our desired change. Through initial research, one of our hypotheses is that a big predictor of strong social and emotional outcomes for students is to have these skills modeled by adults who possess strong competencies themselves.

Study components:

Playworks is in the initial design stage of this evaluation. The field of measuring social and emotional competency in adults and the transference of these skills is rapidly growing and developing and we recognize that appropriate evaluation design is forming. Over the past 3 years Playworks has built strong partnerships with multiple research institutions and organizations working specifically on measuring social and emotional competency in students, adults and educational environments. Playworks plans to tap into these expertise communities to create a design that is embedded in strong evidence, is feasible within our context and answers our evaluation questions. We envision this evaluation taking a more exploratory approach as we begin to learn more about these outcomes.

Qualifications needed for the evaluator:

Playworks has developed relationships with organizations and research institutions who have expertise in the social and emotional field. We plan to draw on advice and recommendations from these partnerships to select a qualified evaluator. Ideally, the evaluator will cross many fields of expertise including social and emotional competence, adult learning and practice in the elementary education environment.

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The estimated budget: \$100,000

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

YEAR 1 (2017)

CLARIFICATION ITEMS

1. Please indicate which sites were included the submitted study titled: Impact and Implementation Findings from an Experimental Evaluation of Playworks: Effects on School Climate, Academic Learning, Student Social Skills and Behavior.

RESPONSE: The Playworks operating sites included in the submitted study were Playworks full-time schools in Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Oregon, California, and Colorado. At the time of the study, all operating sites, except California which was on a State AmeriCorps grant, were on our National Direct grant. Currently, Oregon and Colorado are on our National Direct application; Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania are on State AmeriCorps grants.

2. Please clearly and thoroughly indicate whether the same program model described in the submitted studies is being implemented in the sites proposed in this application and whether the pattern of outcomes described in the studies is observed at these sites.

RESPONSE: School sites in the submitted study were implementing three core components essential to the Playworks full-time model: (1) organized recess activities, (2) Junior Coach Program, and (3) Class Game Time (CGT). Full-time member school sites described in the proposed application are implementing recess activities and CGT as described in the study. In addition, proposed full-time member sites are also implementing an enhanced version of the Junior Coach program which Playworks now calls the Junior Coach Leadership Program (JCLP). The enhanced JCLP includes more training hours for Junior Coaches and a more in-depth curriculum. Full-time sites in the proposed application implement two additional components: sports leagues and community engagement initiatives (CEI). 5 slots of the 120 requested, would be part-time pilot member school sites, described in the proposed application, would implement two of the essential components:

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organized recess and Junior Coach Program

The overall design and methodology (strong internal/external validity) of the submitted study allows the outcomes to be generalized to schools with similar characteristics implementing the same model. All schools in the proposed application implementing the full-time model are similar to those in the submitted studies in terms of being located in an urban district, are Title I eligible and serve a high percentage, 50% or higher, of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Playworks continually monitors outcomes of the full-time program through school staff surveys and external studies. Outcome findings in the submitted study are consistent with observed outcomes reported by school staff and additional evaluation findings in our full-time model. Since the part-time pilot model implements only two of the essential components as well as is still in a pilot stage, Playworks anticipates similar outcomes but does not yet have evidence to confirm.

YEAR 1 (2017)

RESOLUTION ITEMS

Budget Compliance Feedback:

1.) Section I., Letter C., Staff Travel -Courtesy Reminder: Please note, the federally approved mileage rate is 53.5 cents/mile for 2017. Please update calculations to reflect the travel rate of the year in which travel would occur, as appropriate.

RESPONSE: The budget and matching funds have been revised to match the updated mileage rate of 0.535/ mile.

2.) Section II., Letter B., Member Support Costs Courtesy Reminder: State required unemployment insurance is not budgeted. Please note, programs can charge the cost of state required unemployment insurance to the budget, but only if the program operates in a state that mandates coverage for members.

RESPONSE: Playworks understands that unemployment insurance can be added to budget for states where coverage is mandated, but has determined not to include it at this time.

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3.) Section III., Source of Funds: Per application instructions, the Source of Funds section should note whether each source is "proposed" or "secured". Please note if the "School Fees" are proposed or secured.

RESPONSE: The "source of funds" section for "school fees" has been updated to "mostly secured". At this time in the year, we have signed Memorandums of Understanding for nearly all of our school partners.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics