

Eastern District Funding for Innovative Programs

Application Form

Project Title: Winnebago County AmeriCorps Connects Member – 4-H Youth and Family Outreach

Project Timeline: September 2005 – August 2006

Funding Requested: \$5,000

Project Lead/Grant Applicant: René L. Mehlberg, Winnebago County 4-H Youth Development Educator

Project Collaborator(s) (if applicable):

Situation Statement:

In Winnebago County, building civic capacity has been an identified need since 2001. One recommendation from the 2001 Local Conversation on Youth Development was “Allowing youth to be a part of the community they live in by giving them responsibility.” This need was again identified as part of the 2003 UWEX program planning process. The issue statement, “Building Civic Capacity – Enhancing Public Participation in Government and Planning” states how youth feel as part of the community. From the 2003 Search Institute Asset Survey of Oshkosh Area youth:

- 49% of youth reported that Equality and Social Justice were important in their lives
- 31% report planning and decision-making as an asset they possess
- 22% of youth feel that the community values youth (drops to 13% for 12th grade students)
- 27% feel that youth are used as resources (drops to 19% for 12th grade students).

To help meet this identified need, Winnebago County 4-H Youth Development has become a site program for AmeriCorps Connects through UW-Oshkosh Center for Career Development and Employability Training (UWO/CCDET). They are one grantee that conducts AmeriCorps programs in Wisconsin. AmeriCorps provides a place for people to volunteer their service to America. The program at UWO/CCDET, AmeriCorps Connects, is a multi-site program focused on community capacity building while developing an ethic of civic responsibility to participating members. In addition, members work to develop a culture of youth/adult partnerships through civic engagement.

Currently, Winnebago County UWEX 4-H Youth Development has a quarter-time staff member. The AmeriCorps staff member has continued the work of the previous quarter-time urban youth coordinator whose position ended in June 2004. These job responsibilities have included working with 4-H youth development efforts (community club and after school programming) at a low-income, ethnically diverse elementary school in Oshkosh. Many of the youth and families reached through these programs have been new audiences to UWEX 4-H youth development programs, and have been integrated into ongoing 4-H Youth Development programs.

The current quarter-time position is funded through county dollars. However, due to tight county budgets, funds were not able to be allocated in the 2005 budget. County dollars are available to assist the position in other areas, but not to cover staffing costs. A half-time AmeriCorps member for 2005-2006 would not only continue to meet the identified needs, but to expand programming to new audiences throughout the Fox Valley area.

Project Description:

Building Civic Capacity is one Plan of Work for this Educator. Working with the AmeriCorps Connects member is one strategy to help meet the identified need. Offering continuing programming is also a way to develop a safe, stable relationship with the youth participants at the program sites being targeted. In addition, programming could be expanded to new audiences through partnerships with other youth serving agencies.

Project Goals:

- Expand 4-H youth development programming to new audiences targeting the urban areas of Neenah- Menasha and Oshkosh
- Incorporate civic-engagement activities with on-going and new 4-H audiences for youth and adults to work together as partners
- Educate the AmeriCorps Connects member on UWEX and 4-H youth development

Expected Outcomes:

- Increase in number of youth and families reached through UWEX 4-H youth development programming
- Youth participating in civic-engagement activities report they are valuable community resources
- AmeriCorps Connects member will gain knowledge and understanding of UWEX and 4-H youth development programs

Evaluation Plan:

- Number of youth reached, specifically new youth reach
- Number of youth and adults participating in civic-engagement activities
- Narrative data (surveys, journal responses, etc.) of youth participants in 4-H programs of their experiences
- Narrative data (surveys, journal responses, etc.) of youth and adult participants in civic-engagement activities of their experiences
- Observation data by AmeriCorps member and other key individuals of participants throughout their experience

Budget:

\$5,000 Resource Management Funds would cover the site match required to fund a half-time AmeriCorps Connects member.

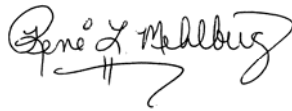
\$400 Winnebago County would assist in covering supplies and food for programs

\$200 Winnebago County 4-H Leaders' Association would also be available for supplies

Past Resource Management Fund Experience:

- On behalf of NE district 4-H youth development staff, wrote and received a grant for the first year of 4-H Winter Leadership Adventure.
- Outcomes of the project included 32 middle-school youth and 5 adults from Northeast District receiving leadership skill training. Many participants went back to their counties to implement the skills and knowledge gained. Four youth who attended served on the planning committee for the second year of camp. The camp recently completed its third year serving 45 middle school youth and 5 adults.
- This proposal is different as it addresses a specific county need, not a multi-county effort.

Signature:

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Grant Applicant/Lead

