

REQUEST FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATION CONTRACT PROPOSALS

Application period closes Friday, May 10, 2019

About RurAL CAP

The RurAL CAP AmeriCorps Program has selected Project Venture as a best practice for addressing resilience among Alaskan youth, particularly rural youth. Project Venture is an outdoor, experiential, youth development program for middle school youth which is guided by American Indian values and aimed at preventing substance abuse and promoting resilience and wellness. It uses group development processes to engage youth for the development of life skills while reinforcing traditional values such as family, service learning and appreciation of the natural world. Project Venture is the first Native American prevention program to be designated as a model program by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and the National Registry of Effective Prevention Programs.

Evaluation Purpose and Scope

The Resilient Alaska Youth Program seeks proposals from experienced researchers and evaluators for a eighteen month project to collaborate on instrument development as well as assess impact related to the key outcomes of our program: ***(1) The contractor will work with the Resilient Alaska Youth Program to refine our existing participant assessment and implementation rubric. (2) The contractor will also assess the influence our school-based programming (from classes to school-wide environmental changes) has on children's self concept as a result of participation in the program.***

Background

To guide ongoing evaluation efforts, the Resilient Alaska Youth AmeriCorps Program uses a logic model which outlines the resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes necessary for the success of the program, the logic model is included in Appendix A of the attached evaluation plan. The program's outputs are monitored through data collection from the remote sites in which the Resilient Alaska Youth AmeriCorps Members are serving. On a daily basis, members collect youth participant attendance information from their activities and record their time served. On a monthly basis, members report on participant outputs to RurAL CAP staff on a monthly reporting form. On a tri-annual basis, the program participants complete point in time surveys designed to measure enculturation and self-concept. The information is stored electronically and entered in to a database for aggregation and sharing with the evaluation team.

RurAL CAP measures short term outcomes which correspond to changes in the participant's self-concept. The survey instrument is included in Appendix B of this evaluation plan, the instruments are to be completed by participant youth three times throughout the program year. The instrument is a combination of the Big Five Indicators (BFI-10) scale as well as the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). Half of the BFI questions are negatively coded, syntax for decoding will be shared with the evaluation team.

Purpose

This evaluation will focus on the fidelity of the implementation of the Project Venture Program within the Resilient Alaska Youth AmeriCorps Program. Furthermore, to ensure that the Resilient Alaska Youth Program is accomplishing the proposed output and outcome measurements, the evaluation will investigate the program's progress towards identified goals.

Audiences and Decisions:

Results from this evaluation will be shared with the Corporation for National and Community Service during reapplication for federal funds in March, 2021. Results will also be shared with program partners, current and former AmeriCorps members, program staff, and funders to drive continuous improvement cycles and increase partner buy in for evaluation.

Questions:

This evaluation will address the following key questions:

- What was implemented?
- Is the program being implemented as planned?
- How have participants changed as a result of the program?
- What are the programmatic strengths?
- What can be strengthened in programmatic delivery?
- How can the program better collect data from dispersed and under resourced partner agencies?
- How many target age demographic youth were reached as a result of AmeriCorps member's efforts?
- How many volunteers were leveraged as a result of the program?
- What is the effect of the program on AmeriCorps Members themselves?

Methods

Youth participants in the Resilient Alaska Youth AmeriCorps Program are asked to complete three surveys over the course of the program year to measure point in time responses. The surveys are collected at three points during the program year: November 13, February 12, and July 23. The surveys are 16 questions long, designed to be completed without prompts from the administrator and use the Big Five Indicators (BFI-10) scale as well as the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). The surveys are collected by program staff via email, fax, and mail and entered in to a central data reporting system. Please see the copy of the instrument in Appendix B of this evaluation plan. The data will be coded and analyzed by program staff for annual reporting purposes and delivered to the evaluation team for further consideration. In addition to the youth surveys, the AmeriCorps Members return completed monthly reports that are also aggregated and maintained in electronic media. The reports include numeric responses to the number of clients served, the number of volunteers generated by the members, and the number of times that the members conducted youth engagement events.

The evaluation team will also conduct in person interviews, either in a group setting or individually with the AmeriCorps Members serving in the program as well as participant clients

in representative communities. The qualitative information generated from these listening sessions will be analyzed and used to make recommendations for future years.

Resilient Alaska Youth Process Evaluation

The project venture program developed a program implementation and fidelity guide (Appendix C) for organizations that are considering implementing their program. The three basic elements of a process evaluation review are the fidelity of program development, tracking the individual participation in the program, and obtaining accurate baseline outcome measurements. Through data analysis, and stakeholder interviews, the external evaluation team will analyze program fidelity with the model.

Program Development: Project Venture begins with six guiding principles. These principles structure the development of programs and activities consistent with local needs, resources and values. These guiding principles are:

1. Culture and tradition
2. Strength based approach
3. Experiential education
4. Engagement with nature
5. Service ethic
6. Connection building: family, community and culture.

Project Venture is implemented sequentially across the following program levels:

1. Classroom-based settings
2. Afterschool, community based activities
3. An intensive wilderness camp.

AmeriCorps members must be adequately trained to support these activities, and facility arrangements must be completed. The evaluators will use qualitative interviewing with program participants and AmeriCorps members as well as program data and reports to investigate program development fidelity.

Program Planning: It is important to involve the youth in every step of Project Venture program planning. A list of questions included in the Implementation Guide is a useful starting point to ensure that the program will be implemented in a manner consistent with the initial program description.

These values are described at length in the Implementation Guide, Chapter 3. They are used to structure the schedule of program activities. The extent to which these activities are consistent with the guiding principles can't be measured using an instrument called the Site Visit Observation Report. This report will be completed by the AmeriCorps Program Coordinator following each site visit. The evaluator will conduct a review of internal documents as well as qualitative interviewing with stakeholders.

Baseline Measurement: Programs that engage youth in-school, out of school (150 contact hours), and in a leadership camp experience each year are considered fidelitous to the national model. Program staff will compile reports from service sites that detail service hours, and

activities and service locations that met the minimum threshold. Compiled data will be shared with the evaluation team for review.

Outcome Indicators: The evaluation team will review collected data and analyze it to determine the number of participant youth that demonstrated an improvement in their self concept domain as a result of participation in the program.

Data Analysis: The Resilient Alaska Youth Program will use its existing data collection tools to identify how many target age demographic youth participated in the program, their frequency, and how many volunteers were leveraged as a result of the AmeriCorps Member's effort. Staff will append the collected data into Stata to analyze it and identify how many youth clients improved as a result of their participation in the program for annual program reporting purposes. The evaluation team will use all collected data as well as publicly available comparison data sets to further analyze the effect of the program on the participants.

Limitations:

The current participant survey tools do not measure participant past 30 or past 90 day substance use and track their progression during or after their participation in the program. Furthermore, the pre, mid, post survey tool is new this program year and may not capture all relevant point in time attributes of the participant youth in the program.

Deliverables

Contract deliverables include:

- Engage with RurAL CAP Project committee to set scope and timeline.
- Collaborate with Program staff and participants to further develop and strengthen a program analysis instrument; advise RurAL CAP on the data collection and analysis plan for the instrument
- Modify the existing attached evaluation plan for the project outlining data collection methods, sampling technique, evaluation approach and instruments
- Determine feasible number of matched pair study sites given project timeline and budget
- Collaborate with RurAL CAP staff to engage and coordinate with those sites that participate in the evaluation project, as well as provide necessary training for implementing the evaluation
- Collect and analyze data measuring participant
- Provide final written reports on both instrument development and use as well as evaluation findings
- Provide final presentation (in-person or virtual) to staff and key site partners
- Provide regular updates to the staff lead and project advisory committee, as agreed upon by both parties
- Submit invoices for work performed quarterly
- Obtain Institutional Review Board approval for the project, as necessary

Request for Proposals (RFP) and Project Timeline

This study will unfold according to the following two-year timeline. Specific dates are subject to modification.

- May 13, 2019: Contractors identified
- May 2019 through August 2019: Planning, design, and instrument development; identification of sites for a matched pair study the following school year.
- August 2019: Instrument completed and available to be integrated into programming for the upcoming program year
- September 5-13, 2019. Program launch training in Anchorage. Evaluator will conduct focus groups with returning AmeriCorps Members to add
- September 2019 through August 2020: Data collection and analysis
- November 2020 (negotiable): Final report and presentation

Activity	Date
Release RFP	Friday, April 5, 2019
Optional Q&A Call #1	Monday, April 15, 2019
Optional Q&A Call #2	Monday, April 22, 2019
RFP closes	Friday, May 10 2019
Respondents notified of outcome	Week May 13, 2019
Contract commencement	May 2019
Final report and presentation	November 2020

Contract Application Process and Timeline

To be considered for this contract, applicants must submit a succinct proposal that addresses the following topics, totaling no more than ten (10) single-spaced pages (excluding appendix materials).

Upon review, applicants may receive a request for additional information or for a phone interview.

A. Executive Summary

The executive summary will consist of the proposal cover letter highlighting the contents of the proposal. Please include a description of your interest in performing this evaluation, including interest in specific elements.

B. Organizational Overview

This section will include background information on the applicant's organization and should give details of organizational experience with similar projects. Provide an overview of the business or academic philosophy, values, practices, and areas of expertise and specialization that distinguish your organization from your competitors/colleagues. Include information about what your organization is best known for, the signature approach and strengths of your organization, and other information that describes your organization's unique capacity to perform this project, including the method by which your clients' needs are understood and integrated into project designs.

C. Project Staffing and Experience

This section will detail your organization's professional expertise and experience as it relates to the staff working on this specific evaluation. This section must include the proposed staffing, deployment, and

organization of personnel to be assigned to this project. Staffing changes may be made through the mutual consent of the selected contractor and RurAL CAP after the contract award.

The applicant shall provide information as to the qualifications and experience of the project staff as well as the responsibilities to be assigned to each person as follows:

1. Lead Evaluator or Researcher: Identify one (1) individual who will lead and manage the contract work. Provide details of this person's experience, education, affiliations, memberships, awards, and recognitions received for similar services. Define the percent of this person's time that will be devoted exclusively to managing the RurAL CAP project. The lead evaluator or researcher's resume should be included in the appendix.
2. Project Team: Identify by name, title and role each proposed project team member on the proposed RurAL CAP project. Include relevant experience and responsibilities to be assigned for this project.
3. Other Staff: Identify other staff member(s) who will work on the RurAL CAP evaluation, and how much time would be spent on the RurAL CAP project.

D. Technical Proposal

This section shall include, in narrative, outline, and/or graph form, the strategic plan proposed to accomplish the scope of work and address the evaluation questions. This section must provide a comprehensive narrative that sets out the proposed evaluation plan and methodology intended as well as how the methodology meets the needs of the project. The applicant must present a thorough understanding of the goals of the program and scope of the project and demonstrate an adherence to the required timeline. Please include a detailed timeline that relates to the approach that you are proposing.

E. Budgetary Proposal

This section shall outline costs associated with the proposed project. Note that the contractor will be expected to provide its own space and equipment to conduct work on the project and may be expected to cover ordinary and necessary business expenses.

1. Personnel Costs: Identify the daily rates of propose team member, distinguishing between in-house and subcontracted personnel, and calculate the total costs required to execute the proposed evaluation within the required timeline.
2. Material Production Costs: Identify all costs related to the production of materials for the evaluation project.
3. Travel Expenses: Identify all reimbursable travel expenses.
4. Institutional Indirect Cost Rates: If the organization is an academic institution, please include the organization's indirect cost rate, to which RurAL CAP would apply its indirect cost rate policy.
5. Miscellaneous Expenses: Identify all miscellaneous expenses that will be incurred in performance of this contract, not previously covered in the items listed above. Submit rates for each miscellaneous expense identified. Any costs associated with the RurAL CAP account outside the scope of this price proposal should also be listed. Detail how the expenses will be verified.

F. Appendix

As an appendix, please provide copies of up to three recent, related research projects or evaluation reports the lead contractor(s) have conducted/led, including: (A) relevant evaluation of youth

development programs, and (B) projects including relevant environmental assessment or implementation rubrics. For highly relevant projects, full reports are preferred. Otherwise, executive summaries are acceptable. Please also include the resume or curriculum vitae for the lead contractor.

Have questions? There will be two optional Q&A phone calls leading up to the proposal submission deadline. They will take place at **11 am Alaska Daylight time (4pm Eastern Time) on Monday April 15 and April 22. To join the call, dial 1-866-316-1519 participant code 15522691** For those who cannot attend, a call recording will be made available upon request.

Submit proposals via email to Eric Milliken emilliken@ruralcap.com by Friday, May 10 at 5pm AKDT. Subject line should indicate "RFP – AmeriCorps Evaluation – Contractor Name." Late submissions will not be considered. Phone interviews or additional materials may be requested with applicants prior to final selection. The candidates will be notified in May, 2019.

Selection Criteria

A contractor will be selected based on key criteria that include:

- Completeness of required proposal elements
- Demonstrated expertise in positive youth development research, analysis, and instrument development
- Demonstrated experience in rural Alaska program evaluation.
- Demonstrated experience analyzing outcomes with imperfect data sets.
- Strong experience conducting multi-site evaluations from a distance
- Clarity, rigor, and feasibility of evaluation methodology and approach
- Capacity to manage data collection across all sites, including ability to travel where necessary and to inform and train service site supervisors, school staff, and AmeriCorps members who will be involved as a study sites
- Ability to complete the evaluation project within the required timeline, as evidenced in the proposal
- Ability to obtain and manage Institutional Review Board approval for all study sites as necessary

Contract Compensation

Total funds available for the two-year contract are up to **\$35,000** (all inclusive, payable quarterly over a period of May 2019 through November 2020. Contractors from research organizations who are interested in applying existing funding to the project are welcome to include information about such opportunities in their application.

Position Classification

The position described is an independent contractor position. Employees of the contractor shall not be employees of Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.

Schedule A

INSURANCE & INDEMNIFICATION

CONTRACTOR shall comply with the provisions herein entitled, Schedule A Indemnification & Insurance. CONTRACTOR, at its sole cost, shall purchase and maintain the required insurance required with coverages, endorsements, waivers, and limits as described therein.

All insurance shall be maintained continuously during the life of the Contract. CONTRACTOR shall furnish to RurAL CAP, certificates showing the type, amount, class of operation, effective dates and dates of expiration of policies. Such evidence is to be provided by CONTRACTOR to RurAL CAP no less than ten (10) days prior to CONTRACTOR commencing work. It is understood and agreed that RurAL CAP shall be entitled to notification at least 30 days prior to the expiration of such policies. Failure by CONTRACTOR to maintain insurance coverage as agreed shall be a material breach of this Contract and will result in termination of this Contract.

RurAL CAP shall not be required to confirm that CONTRACTOR has provided evidence of coverage and/or renewals and no waiver by RurAL CAP of any of CONTRACTOR's obligations pursuant to this or any other provision of this Contract shall occur or be inferred or implied by any failure of RurAL CAP to insist upon strict performance of this or any other section of this Contract.

All insurance required to be maintained by CONTRACTOR shall be primary to any and all insurance (including self-insurance) obtained or maintained by, or otherwise available to RurAL CAP and all policies shall be endorsed accordingly. RurAL CAP's insurance shall not be called upon to contribute or participate with CONTRACTOR's insurance on any basis.

Each and every insurance policy required of CONTRACTOR shall include an insurer's waiver of subrogation rights in favor of RurAL CAP. Except for Worker's Compensation and Professional Liability, each and every insurance policy required of CONTRACTOR shall be endorsed to name RurAL CAP as Additional Insured with respect to liability arising out of CONTRACTOR's operations and/or its services hereunder.

In the event the terms of the current Contract and this Schedule A conflict, the terms of the contract shall control.

Insurance Type and Limit Requirements:

- Workers Compensation for not less than \$ 500,000.00 per occurrence
- Commercial General Liability not less than \$ 1,000,000.00 per occurrence
- Automobile Liability Insurance not less than \$ 1,000,000.00 per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage.