



AmeriCorps LEAP Initiative Guidelines and Procedures

About the LEAP Initiative

Since 1986, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) has been a catalyst for economic growth in 20 Minnesota counties. We work to build a prosperous region with vibrant communities, innovative businesses and a skilled and valued workforce. We invest in strategic efforts in **emerging business** and **emerging workforce** including early childhood initiatives.

SMIF's Emerging Workforce goals for early childhood include providing national service opportunities for individuals seeking career development and leadership experience. This donor grant program is called the AmeriCorps LEAP (Learning Early Achieves Potential) Initiative.

The LEAP Initiative provides additional human resources to early childhood programs furthering SMIF's commitment to ensuring that all young children thrive and have a healthy life of learning, achieving, and succeeding. It engages member participants in strengthening local preschool readiness objectives and building the capacity of early childhood programs through the education and engagement of more citizens in service to the early childhood movement in southern Minnesota.

Areas of Interest

SMIF invites nonprofit organizations to consider becoming an AmeriCorps LEAP Initiative Community Partner Site in one or more of the four focus areas:

1. **Direct Service to Preschool Children**
Members build early childhood assets and social/emotional school readiness competencies in preschool children ages 0-5 through 1:1 and small group activities.
2. **Parent Education**
Members will educate parents of children ages 0-5 in dialogic reading techniques for routine activity in the home for bonding and broadening school readiness skills.
3. **Citizen Awareness and Engagement**
Members will educate citizens on the importance of early childhood support and volunteer opportunities to further the early childhood movement in southern Minnesota.
4. **Youth Engagement**
Members will engage community youth in service-learning activities and one-time projects, i.e. Family Fun Nights, MLK Day, food or book drives that provide experience in making a positive difference in community.

Eligible Organizations

Your program may apply if you are:

- A 501(c) (3) nonprofit, a local unit of government, or a public school district
- Located in the 20-county area or from organizations dedicated to serving within the area.
The counties include:
Blue Earth, Brown, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Le Sueur, Martin, Mower, Nicollet, Olmsted, Rice, Sibley, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, Watonwan, and Winona.
- An organization in existence for at least one year.

SMIF Provides:

- ❑ LEAP member with a minimum of two years' post high school work or college, with a preference for college graduates in a related field of study. We select members who:
 - ❑ possess a positive attitude
 - ❑ are open to growth and new experiences
 - ❑ understand the importance of healthy social/emotional development
 - ❑ want to make a difference in the lives of families with young children and are dedicated to serving community and working as part of a team
- ❑ Monthly meetings/trainings for LEAP member on
 - ❑ strategies to increase social/emotional school readiness proficiencies
 - ❑ civic engagement
 - ❑ leadership, team building and group dynamics

Community Partner Site Provides:

- ❑ Member placement fee at following annual rate:
 - \$1,500 for full-time member required to serve 1700 hours
 - \$900 for half-time member required to serve 900 hours
 - (Value of full-time member's service is estimated at \$15,000)
- ❑ Site Supervisor to train, oversee and evaluate member
- ❑ Desk or workspace (individual or shared) for member
- ❑ Site accessibility for members with disabilities

Application Process

Applications will be selected based on your organization's eligibility and readiness to host a member. For further information or questions regarding the application, call Barbara Gunderson at 507-455-3215 or email at barbarag@smifoundation.org

Grant application deadline is May 2010.

**Return completed application form, including proposal narrative,
by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, May 3, 2010:**

Barbara Gunderson
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
PO Box 695
Owatonna, MN 55060

Funding for the AmeriCorps LEAP Initiative is provided by the Corporation for National & Community Service, ServeMN and SMIF. We are committed to recruiting and engaging individuals without regard to disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Reasonable accommodations provided upon request.

SMIF is a member of the Minnesota Council of Foundations and adheres to the Council of Foundation's Statement of Principles and Practices. SMIF's annual report is available on-line at www.smifoundation.org.