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INTRODUCTION, i3 PRIORITIES AND APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

More than 6 million youth in America suffer from a lack of college and career readiness, having failed to graduate high school, access post-secondary education or enter the workforce.ⁱ The mission of the Urban Alliance Foundation, Inc. (UA) is to empower under-resourced youth to aspire, work and succeed through paid internships, formal training, and mentorship. UA's High School Internship Program (HSIP) targets low-income high school seniors for intensive assistance that combines professional, paid internships; daily mentoring from an adult professional; case management from a dedicated UA staff member; weekly trainings focused on college and career skills; and alumni support. The HSIP's uniquely comprehensive approach has proven effective at helping at-risk youth succeed: 100% of HSIP participants graduate high school and 86% of last year's participants enrolled in post-secondary education, compared with 63% of high school graduates nationwide.ⁱⁱ UA is requesting an i3 award of \$12 million over five years to: 1) bring the HSIP model to scale in its current four regions—Washington, DC; Baltimore, MD; Chicago, IL; and Northern Virginia, 2) expand the HSIP model to an additional region, 3) conduct a second randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluation to add to the existing evidence of the efficacy of the UA program model and 4) document and disseminate learnings on closing the college- and career-readiness gap for low-income and minority youth.

i3 Priorities

Absolute Priority 3: Implementing Comprehensive High School Reform and Redesign

UA partners with more than 50 public high schools to deliver the High School Internship Program (HSIP). Each school is eligible to operate school-wide Title 1 programs or has a low-income student population of greater than 40%. Each of the LEAs with which UA partners has a reform agenda that includes increasing graduation rates and improving the means of preparing

students to enter college and the workforce by providing hands-on job experience through professional internships. For example, a key component of school reform in Chicago is Career and Technical Education (CTE), a course of study intended to “prepare students for college, advanced skills training and/or entry into the working world.”ⁱⁱⁱ UA’s HSIP allows participants to earn CTE credits toward graduation and offers Chicago Public Schools a solution that aligns seamlessly with its education reform agenda.

UA’s program includes a rigorous curriculum that links students’ work experience with classroom training on work readiness, hard and soft skills training, and support for post-secondary academic achievement. A partnership with Northern Virginia Community College allows UA to provide accelerated learning opportunities with dual enrollment coursework, so that Northern Virginia program participants graduate high school already having college experience and having earned college credit. Finally, the UA program brings businesses and post-secondary institutions into partnership with the LEAs, as employers for the student interns and participants in the curriculum. These relationships provide a clear pathway for students to follow after high school graduation, into college or employment.

In a Letter of Support provided with this application in Attachment G, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Interim CEO Jesse H. Ruiz notes that CPS selected UA’s application in a competitive review of potential i3 partnerships because:

1) [The High School Internship Program] is key to our school reform agenda; 2) their student outcomes are outstanding; 3) there is an urgent need to expand this program to meet CPS student need; and 4) evaluating and documenting their program and its outcomes will enable CPS and school systems across the country to grow and replicate this model.

In their letters of support, the other LEAs with which UA partners also noted the need for effective practices to nurture students’ life skills and readiness for college and career, and the important role the HSIP plays in the LEAs’ reform efforts to address that need.

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Improving cost effectiveness and productivity

UA’s HSIP model produces effective results for hundreds of students annually. Because it is so intensive, the model requires adequate staffing to operate a high-quality program. Fortunately, UA has identified cost-effective strategies to manage and deliver the program while maintaining high standards. While UA’s programming is delivered in four distinct geographic regions, UA’s centralized organizational structure reduces administrative duplication and provides economies of scale. Administrative, human resources, IT, accounting and other support functions are centralized at the National Office in Washington, DC and serve all of the regions, a structure that benefits the financial health of the entire organization. Without the financial burden of carrying these functions locally, regional offices can efficiently scale up, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: HSIP Projected Per-Student Costs

	Current year (2014/15)	Year 1 of i3 (2016/17)	Year 3 of i3 (2018/19) Replication 1	Year 5 of i3 (2020/21) Start-up Replication 2
Students served	371	505	635	685
Admin. cost/student	4,500	3,400	3,100	3,300
Program cost/student	13,900	12,400	12,800	13,100
Total cost/student	\$18,400	\$15,800	\$15,900	16,400

In addition, as UA continues to grow the HSIP, centralized functions and staff will provide necessary supports, resulting in a decreased cost per student. For example, with 371 youth in the HSIP this year, the total cost per intern is \$18,400, including \$7,000 for intern

wages. However, by 2018/2019, when UA serves 635 youth across 5 regions the total cost per intern will be \$15,900, representing a 14% decrease in program costs.

Despite tremendous savings in per-student costs by the end of the grant period, UA anticipates a brief rise in costs while preparing for replication to a 6th location. Start-up costs for this replication will cause the cost per student to increase temporarily to \$16,400 per intern. However, once HSIP is operating at scale in the 6th city (expected to be in 2022/23), UA projects the per-intern cost will again drop to \$15,900 or less, as the national staffing cost is shared across six regions.

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Broad adoption of effective practices

UA is committed to discovering and replicating effective practices. In addition to existing internal evaluation efforts, UA also values external evaluation and invested in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in partnership with Urban Institute (UI) in 2012. The RCT compares outcomes for treatment and control groups (1,062 youth total) on a series of indicators including college enrollment, college persistence, and achievement of professional skills. The RCT controls for all data points, including school district, neighborhood, and demographics.

[REDACTED]

With an i3 award, UA intends to conduct a second RCT to: 1) document and validate program changes made in response to the interim findings of the first RCT, 2) extend the RCT to

Chicago, Northern Virginia and an additional replication site, and 3) expand the range of the evaluation to capture data about college graduation and workforce entry rates. The findings from both the current and proposed RCTs will inform the efforts of schools and nonprofits nationwide.

Competitive Preference Priority 3: Novice applicants

Urban Alliance has never received an i3 award.

Eligibility

UA is eligible for i3 Validation funds as a 501(c)3 nonprofit working in partnership with LEAs. Letters of support from the five LEAs with which UA partners—Washington, DC, Baltimore City, Chicago, Alexandria City and Arlington Public Schools—can be found in Appendix G. During the course of the i3 grant, UA intends to add another LEA partner. In selecting the new LEA partner, UA will examine multiple factors, including the LEA’s ability to work cooperatively on tasks like student recruitment and scheduling, the presence of employers willing to sponsor and mentor student interns, and the level of need in the school(s). As described in Appendix C – Eligibility, the schools served by HSIP are high-need, drawing from economically disadvantaged communities, and HSIP participants are predominately low-income and minority. UA expects its new LEA partner to fit these characteristics.

UA’s HSIP has a 19-year track record of significantly improving student achievement for underserved youth through its program model: 100% of HSIP interns graduate from high school and last year 86% enrolled in college, compared with college enrollment rates between 39% and 57% in the areas UA serves. In addition, UA outperforms districts that track college persistence. 80% of UA alumni persist into their second year of college, whereas, their peers in DC and Chicago persisted at rates of 71% and 70% respectively.^{iv}

Core to the HSIP model are private-sector partnerships with the employers that sponsor student interns. Each employer pays a per-intern cost that covers intern salaries and a portion of UA program and administration costs. UA also raises private philanthropic dollars and will be able to demonstrate the required match.

A. SIGNIFICANCE

A.1: Development and Demonstration of Innovative Strategies

Since its inception in 1996, UA’s High School Internship Program (HSIP) has helped provide a solution to the college- and career-readiness gap for low-income students. Several key factors set the UA model apart from existing strategies:

Traditional college/career readiness internship programs	The Urban Alliance HSIP Model
Offer short-term opportunities , lasting a matter of weeks, or a single semester at most.	Provides 10-month professional experience , including full-time summer employment.
Place students directly into internships .	Requires 6 weeks of intensive pre-work training to prepare youth for success in professional settings and provides continued training in a curriculum focused on professional development and post-high school planning.
Provide little or no monetary compensation , which can exclude lower-income students who need paying jobs.	Includes up to 600 hours of paid employment . Students can earn up to \$6,000 in the 10-month program period.
Result in many students performing menial tasks rather than learning professional skills.	Provides students professional experience under the close supervision of a mentor .
May award students high school credit for participating.	Allows students in Northern Virginia to earn high school and college credit simultaneously through a unique curriculum and dual enrollment. UA will replicate this program in its other regions.
Focus on work experience and occasionally getting students into college, but support ends once the student is accepted .	Provides intensive post-high school planning process, long-term mentorship and alumni support to help students not only enter college, but graduate.

UA's HSIP marries the best practices in high school internships and college- and career-readiness programs into a unique wrap-around model that includes: professional work experience and mentoring, individualized case management, training in college and career skills, and alumni support. UA's innovative framework draws its structure from a combination of well-researched best practices. When preparing the evaluation plan for the current RCT, UA's evaluation partner, Urban Institute, performed a literature review on programs comparable to UA. Research demonstrated that mentoring programs, paid internship programs, workforce skills training programs and programs with case management all had measurable impacts on youth success. However, the HSIP appears to be the sole program that combines these components in a comprehensive manner. UA's theory of change is that this unique combination of program components leads to greater outcomes for youth.

The HSIP begins with partnering with LEAs to recruit low-income students who do not have plans for college or career. All applicants are invited to a 6-week, unpaid pre-work Training that addresses workforce readiness. Youth are selected for work based on attendance, attitude and participation during the training. Once accepted, youth are placed under the supervision of an Urban Alliance Program Coordinator (PC), who serves as a case manager and provides dedicated, one-on-one attention, ensuring that interns receive the comprehensive supports they need to succeed at work, school and home.

During the school year, each intern works part-time, 12 hours per week, at a paid internship site under the daily supervision and support of a professional mentor. On Fridays, interns attend workshops led by PCs that cover an array of work and life skills topics including college financing and workplace etiquette. After building their skills and gaining professional experience during the school year, interns transition to full-time employment, Monday-Thursday,

during the summer. The full-time schedule allows interns to immerse themselves in professional life, take on more responsibility in the work place, and hone their skills. Summer workshops focus on financial literacy, including managing a budget and building credit.

UA monitors interns' progress through a series of four skill-set evaluations—a baseline evaluation after the intern's arrival, and three subsequent evaluations in the winter, spring and summer. Evaluations focus on 20 unique skills – 10 “hard” skills and 10 “soft” skills, which interns' mentors assess on a 1–4 scale. PCs use the information to chart each intern's progress and map a course for improvement and success.

Many first-generation college students struggle and ultimately drop out of school. A 2008 study found that 43% of low-income, first generation college students had not attained a degree within six years of entering college and were no longer enrolled.^v Unlike many other internship programs, UA offers continuing support to students through its Alumni Services department. Alumni Services support is available to students upon graduation from the HSIP and provides one-on-one consultations about financial aid, college course selections, adjusting to life away from home and other issues as they arise. This assistance helps students to persist in college, despite initial adjustment struggles.

UA monitors the need for Alumni Services through the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), an organization that specializes in post-secondary enrollment verification. UA receives enrollment data from NSC for each intern cohort during both the fall and spring semesters. Alumni Coordinators follow up by phone with any alumnus from the most recent graduating class who does not have an NSC record. The calls allow Alumni Coordinators to identify why the youth did not enroll in college (e.g., finances or missed deadlines) and to check whether the

alumnus is connected through non-college pathways, including employment, technical training programs or the military.

UA is exploring additional innovative strategies to better serve youth. UA's Northern Virginia site, while small, is proving to be an incubator for innovations with national implications. UA's recent agreement with the Alexandria City Public Schools and Arlington Public Schools allows students to dual-enroll in the HSIP as a high school course that also earns course credit at Northern Virginia Community College. UA will replicate this pilot in its other regions. UA is also currently partnering with Virginia Tech to create a pilot Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program that will provide STEM-based curriculum and job placements for youth at Virginia Tech's lab facilities in Arlington. UA intends to build upon this partnership and engage other STEM companies to provide internship opportunities.

The i3 grant award will support improvements to the HSIP based on the RCT findings and other innovations, and the expansion of the HSIP within its current cities as well as to one new regional location in the next five years. The expansion, accompanied by a second RCT, will provide an opportunity for further demonstration of the effectiveness of UA's program at improving college and career readiness in the targeted group of students. The RCT will help UA isolate even more concretely the most effective elements of its program model.

A.2 Replicability of the Proposed Strategies

Demonstrated replicability and impact

UA has already replicated its success in using the HSIP to prepare underserved youth for college and career, expanding over the course of a decade from a single school in Washington, DC to a robust program that has served more than 2,000 students at more than 50 schools in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Chicago and Northern Virginia.

UA's first replication was to Baltimore in 2008 at the request of Baltimore City Schools' CEO. Lessons learned in that expansion—such as the need to assess and adapt to the unique conditions in each local environment—continue to inform UA's process for replication of the HSIP model. UA's replication process today includes significant lead time for planning, staffing and partnership building prior to the launch of a program.

Implementation in a variety of settings

UA implements HSIP in multiple geographies with differing conditions. It serves students in one of the nation's largest urban school districts (Chicago) as well as in a small, suburban school district with only one high school (Alexandria, VA). In Baltimore, most HSIP youth come from the city's high-poverty census tracts, neighborhoods with persistently high poverty rates, high segregation and low educational attainment,^{vi} while the Northern Virginia program serves students living in poverty in communities known more for wealth than need.^{vii} While a high level of standardization is necessary to preserve the integrity and the benefits of the program model, UA's replication of the HSIP in four distinct geographical areas and five school districts has proven that the program can be flexible while maintaining program quality and fidelity. For example, UA knows this model works best in places where there is a large base of employers, but that guideline leaves room for variation in the types of employers and industries. The proposed replication and comprehensive RCT will provide an opportunity to learn how this model can deliver strong outcomes for youth in yet another environment.

A.3 National Need for Solutions

Students' need for increased college and career readiness

UA's High School Internship Program is a direct response to a national college and career readiness gap, especially among low-income and minority youth. Millions of young

Americans lack the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to succeed in school or in jobs. For about 6.7 million youth,^{viii} this is because they failed to earn high school diplomas, obtain post-secondary education, or connect with the workforce. These youth lack not just the “hard” skills and knowledge that jobs require, but the “soft” skills, such as teamwork and perseverance, that make success possible.^{ix} This skills gap disproportionately affects some of the country’s most vulnerable youth. For young people of color and those in low-income families:

- The high school dropout rate is higher. In 2013 the high school dropout rates for African American and Hispanic youth were double and triple the rate of white youth (8% and 14%, respectively, compared with 4%).^x Nearly a third of youth in low-income families (29%) fail to earn a high school diploma, about three times the percentage of youth from middle-income families and six times the percentage from high-income families.
- The college attendance rate is lower. In 2013, just under 60% of African American and Hispanic youth who graduated from high school enrolled in college (White high school graduates enrolled at a rate of 67%).^{xi}
- Employment is less likely. In 2011, the rate of un- or underemployment was highest for teens (aged 16-19) who were African American (60%) or Hispanic (52%) compared to their White counterparts (35%).^{xii} Fewer than 20% of teens in low-income families are employed, compared with roughly 27% in families earning \$40,000 or more per year.

UA’s target beneficiaries are low-income high school seniors from underserved neighborhoods, who lack post-secondary plans and opportunities. UA targets vulnerable youth, ages 16-19, with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0, who are still in school and have the potential to attend college, but are at high risk of becoming disconnected from school or work after high school graduation. Typical characteristics of HSIP participants include:

- 90% self-report being on Free and Reduced-Priced Meals at schools.
- 77% live in neighborhoods with an unemployment rate greater than 10% and nearly half live in neighborhoods with poverty rates higher than 25%.
- The majority belong to traditionally underserved racial and ethnic groups such as African American (94% of Baltimore students and 85% in DC) and Hispanic (47% of Northern Virginia students and 31% in Chicago)

Without intervention and support, these youth are not only unprepared for the high-skilled job market, but will struggle to transition to adulthood by the most basic measures. Through UA's HSIP, students are more likely to become self-sufficient adults who earn a livable wage, develop employable skills, and productively contribute to society.

Despite the challenges they face, 100% of UA interns graduate from high school on-time; 90% are accepted to college; and of those enrolled, over 80% persist from year one to year two.

B. STRATEGY TO SCALE

B.1 Level of Demand

The achievement gap for college and career readiness described in Section A.3 creates pressing demand for proven solutions like the HSIP. UA works exclusively in high-poverty high schools in which the vast majority of students meet federal poverty guidelines.. UA works closely with school leadership and counselors to identify and refer students in each region who need and are ready to benefit from the HSIP.

All students who are recruited into the program are eligible to attend pre-work training, a 6-week series of unpaid workshops to prepare them for success in the professional world. Some attrition from HSIP during pre-work is expected, but there still are not enough intern sponsorships to accommodate all students who complete the training in most years. Recognizing

this, UA recruits HSIP students carefully, inviting only limited numbers to apply in order to be sensitive to the youth involved and not to raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, UA annually has waiting lists of 10-30 students in each region and it is clear from the LEA partner letters (Attachment G) that the HSIP could serve far higher numbers of students, as demand for the program always exceeds the number of available internships.

In addition to the unmet demand in the current four HSIP regions, there is demand for program replication in new regions. Several school systems have approached UA to discuss replication, such as Montgomery County, MD, Denver and Detroit. UA is also in early exploratory conversations with the New York City Department of Education, Office of Post-Secondary Readiness.

B.2 Use of Funds to Address Barriers

To meet more of the existing demand and benefit more students in need, UA plans to bring HSIP to scale in its current four regions and replicate the program in one new region over the next five years. This proposed expansion will nearly double the number of youth served.

Table 2: HSIP scaling and replication with i3 support

	2014/15 Current	2015/16	2016/17 i3 Year 1	2017/18	2018/19 Replication	2019/20	2020/21 i3 Year 5
	Students Served						
DC	149	175	200	200	200	200	200
Baltimore	60	50	75	90	90	90	90
Chicago	114	140	160	200	200	200	200
No. VA	48	60	70	75	75	75	75
Replication					70	100	120
Total	371	425	505	565	635	665	685

For UA to successfully expand and replicate the HSIP as shown while maintaining its program integrity, three critical factors must be present: corporate partners to employ and mentor the students in a professional setting, UA's internal capacity to deliver an expanded level of

service at the same standard of quality, and a population of eligible students who are on-track for graduation and have a flexible academic schedule that will allow them to participate in the internship for approximately half the workday. I3 funding will greatly increase UA's ability to cultivate each of those conditions and ensure successful scaling and expansion.

Factor 1: Corporate partners

In order to meet demand for the HSIP, the most critical factor is the presence of corporate partners willing to sponsor and mentor the interns. UA must be able to recruit a sufficient number of employers to host and pay for the student employees. UA requests a contribution in the amount of \$12,500 from corporate job partners to cover the costs of intern wages and activities, direct case management by UA Program Coordinators, and program quality control oversight by UA directors. By 2017/18, UA will need corporate partners to provide 194 additional intern sponsorships annually (over the 2014-15 baseline) in order to reach the scale shown in Table 2 and a minimum of 70 new intern sponsorships by 2018/19 to replicate the program in a new site.

UA's experience shows that its corporate partners quickly see the value of their student employees and consider their participation in the program to be well worth the cost. Kerry Sullivan, President of Bank of America Charitable Foundation stated, "We think that investing in young adults is critically important. Our success as a global company really relies on having a trained workforce and we look at young people as our future." To recruit new employers to the program, however, UA anticipates that it will need to partially subsidize the cost per student to reduce barriers to program growth and entry.

In particular, UA will use the i3 grant to cover intern salaries and other sponsorship costs as a pilot effort to build connections with STEM companies or place interns in jobs with a STEM

focus. While all HSIP interns gain some technology experience (e.g., learning spreadsheets and other computer skills), UA plans to gain experience partnering specifically with STEM companies, viewing this as critical growth area to connect youth to strong career opportunities. As mentioned in Section A.1, UA is already building a partnership with Virginia Tech; subsidies would provide an incentive to encourage relationships with a wider range of STEM companies. UA anticipates that 50% or more of the i3-subsidized jobs would be with STEM companies.

UA is confident that the need for subsidy will be temporary, as participating employers will understand the value of investing wholly in the program. In fact, UA's experience has shown that employers often increase their participation in the program after the first year. For example, Northern Trust Bank partnered with UA in 2013 to sponsor two interns. The Bank was so impressed with the way interns were prepared for work, the support they received from their case manager while on the job, and their work product, that in 2014 it increased its sponsorship to 16 students. Northern Trust has renewed its commitment for another 16 students in the 2015/16 school year and it is not alone; more than 80% of UA's current corporate sponsors see the program's value and maintain or expand their partnership each year. UA projects that a temporary investment in program expansion using i3 funds to sponsor additional students in each region will lead to long-term gains in program growth and sustainability as the businesses come to recognize the value of their young employees.

Factor 2: UA Capacity

The process of replicating the UA HSIP to a new site commences approximately two years before a new program begins serving students. In the first year, UA staff evaluates the potential new region for a fit with the program model. This effort requires extensive research and planning at UA headquarters in Washington, DC and travel to the potential regional locations for

meetings with the LEA and other stakeholders, and may take place in more than one region simultaneously as the staff narrows replication options to a final candidate. In the second year, UA staff will spend considerable time in the selected region, lining up corporate partners and participating schools, and establishing and staffing UA's local office.

An award of i3 funds will allow UA to create a new national staff position, Replication Director, to spearhead these efforts. The Replication Director will be critical to the success of the proposed and any future expansions, helping to establish local relationships prior to launch, guiding the newly hired local staff, providing quality control to ensure the replication effort meets UA's national standards, and collecting data about the replication process that can be used to inform future efforts. An i3 award will also cover existing staff time and travel for the evaluation and launch process and the hiring of local staff to operate the replicated program.

The scaling and replication efforts will require UA to upgrade some of its critical systems, including accounting and timekeeping, to effectively and efficiently manage a geographically dispersed staff, multiple cohorts of interns, and hundreds of corporate partners. An i3 award will enable UA to replace outdated manual systems and enhance its reporting, monitoring and financial management capabilities along with its expanded programmatic reach.

Finally, as noted in Competitive Preference Priority 2, UA is beginning to see compelling results from its current RCT that provide clear proof of concept for the HSIP model and some key lessons learned. It would be preferable to further this research with an additional RCT as UA scales and replicates its program, but such studies can be prohibitively expensive. An i3 award will make it possible to perform a second RCT on the UA program in multiple UA regions.

Factor 3: Program Accessibility

The final factor that determines the reach of the UA program is identifying a population of under-resourced students whose academic schedules will allow them enough flexibility to be in their employers' offices for approximately half the workday. The HSIP's intensive, professional work experience is one of its hallmarks and sets it apart from other internship programs. One measure of a LEA's compatibility for the UA program is a willingness to arrange a flexible work-study scheduling option for interested students. This negotiation will take place as part of the staff time supported with i3 funds during the evaluation and planning process conducted prior to the decision to replicate in a given region. I3 funds will also support the Alumni Services staffing in each region to develop dual-enrollment partnerships with community colleges, so that interns get high school and college credit for the program.

Impacts and Scale

With i3 funding to make scaling and expansion possible, UA will increase the HSIP program size by 84% from the 2014/15 baseline of 371 to the 2020/21 goal of 685 students, serving a total of 3,480 youth over the course of the i3 grant period. As shown in Table 2, UA expects to be able to reach scale for the HSIP in the existing five regional sites by the 2017/2018 school year. With the addition of a new site, the HSIP will grow to 685 students per year across all sites, an increase of 314 additional students per year by the end of the grant period. Further, the increased capacity of the UA staff and systems will position the program for a potential second additional expansion after the conclusion of the i3 grant period, thus enabling UA to reach even more students in need.

B.3 Knowledge Sharing Mechanisms

As UA grows the HSIP and gains more knowledge about effective practices, it is increasingly positioning itself as a thought leader in youth employment in order to bring about

systemic changes at the local and national levels. As such, UA is already committed to sharing what it learns about successful implementation of this life-changing intervention for the nation's youth, recently hosting or participating in three nationally prominent events:

- UA co-hosted “*Youth Employment Matters: High Quality Solutions & the Role of Corporate Engagement,*” with the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Vice President Joseph Biden was keynote for the event, televised nationally by C-SPAN.
- UA was featured in the National Opportunity Summit, hosted by Opportunity Nation.
- UA co-hosted a “DataCamp” with Urban Institute (UI) on soft skills measurement in the workplace. Funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, this daylong session produced a brief co-authored by UI and UA.^{xiii}

In keeping with its thought leadership role, UA will widely disseminate findings from its current RCT and the work proposed under the i3 grant and the associated RCT evaluation, collaborating with its evaluation partner, UI, to reach a broad array of stakeholders. Working with the UI Communications Office, which manages a website that receives millions of visitors each year, the UA Evaluation team will use the web to engage readers and enter into public policy and program development conversations. Planned products include three research reports on the program's implementation and impacts: 1) implementation and baseline, 2) interim, and 3) final. Policy briefs and fact sheets that distill complex research into short, accessible papers for decision-makers, policy advocates, and practitioners will allow the researchers to highlight critical findings for key audiences.

In addition, the Urban Institute will complete a peer-reviewed journal article to ensure these findings are widely distributed to the research community, in a publication such as the *Journal of Nonprofit Management and Leadership, Educational Policy*. UI will also write blog

posts to be featured on the Urban Wire blog. UI staff will leverage its strong ties to the Washington policy communities by hosting one or more events to bring together a broad audience to discuss how programs like HSIP can serve disadvantaged youth. UI will also identify appropriate research conferences for presenting results, such the National Association of Welfare Researchers. UA will reach out to the business community through its contacts at the US Chamber of Commerce with the goal of presenting findings both through the national Chamber as well as the Chambers in each UA region. Through this broad dissemination strategy, the findings will reach a wide audience, supplying evidence-based information about effective practices to policymakers, nonprofit practitioners, school officials and educators, and funders.

C. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

C.1 Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

The work proposed for i3 funding—regional scaling and replication of UA’s successful HSIP model—is a core part of UA’s new strategic plan, currently being finalized, which includes measured growth targets and objectives aimed at achieving long-term financial sustainability. UA’s logic model holds that the HSIP activities—pre-work training, professional internship, hard and soft skill-building, coaching and alumni services—lead to short-term outcomes including skill-set growth, high school graduation, post-secondary readiness and college enrollment or employment. The short-term outcomes and the youth’s enduring connections to the program and resources then lead to the long-term outcome of economic self-sufficiency.

Goals

To extend the benefits of HSIP more widely, UA’s goals for the use of i3 funds are to: 1) Operate high-quality, scaled HSIPs in DC, Baltimore, Chicago and Northern Virginia; 2) Expand the UA program to one new region while maintaining program fidelity; and 3) Demonstrate the

impact of expanded programming on high school graduation, college enrollment rates and college completion in all of UA's regions (four existing and one new).

Strategies

UA will pursue these goals with a set of strategies that are designed to encourage scaling, replication and learning, while also building UA's financial sustainability.

Expand corporate partnerships (Relevant to Goals 1 and 2): The size of the HSIP is limited by the number of sponsored internship spots into which students can be placed. Scaling and replication of the program therefore depend on growing the number of available spots. UA currently partners with 265 businesses that host HSIP interns. An important part of UA's growth strategy is to work with these existing corporate partners to grow the number of interns they sponsor. Expanding the number of slots offered by existing partners is most efficient, as UA staff need not acquaint them with the program or manage a larger portfolio of partners. When slots at existing employers cannot be further expanded, UA will seek new partners to accommodate the additional students. In seeking new partners, UA will focus on: 1) large employers that might be able to sponsor a larger number of interns for a variety of job experiences, and 2) STEM employers and other growth industries such as health and hospitality.

Mine lessons from interim RCT report to identify improvements to the HSIP model (Relevant to Goals 1, 2 and 3): Urban Institute has shared with UA a draft of the interim findings of the current six-year RCT study evaluating the HSIP model. UA will use these findings to create and implement an action plan for improvements to the HSIP model. These improvements will inform both the scaling of existing regions and replication of the HSIP in a new region. Key findings and suggestions in the draft report include improvements to student selection, student

training, and mentor training and engagement. These findings and suggestions are already contributing to UA’s body of knowledge about effective practices.

Launch a new RCT to expand knowledge about the effectiveness of HSIP (Relevant to Goal 3): UA will partner again with Urban Institute to design and implement a second RCT focused on the HSIP model. The second study will expand on the scope of the first RCT, looking more deeply at how HSIP affects student’s post-secondary experiences (college persistence and graduation, and transition to careers), as well as evaluating the impact of the program enhancements proposed in the interim findings from the first RCT. It will also add to existing knowledge of how HSIP is successful in different settings and with different populations.

13 grant workplan and timeline

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Scaling existing programs					
Hire 1 new Program Coordinator per region	■				
Recruit additional corporate partners/negotiate expanded spots with existing partners	■	■			
Recruit students for additional program spots	■	■			
Negotiate relationships with community colleges to build out dual enrollment in all current program sites	■	■	■		
Deploy HSIP to full complement of students		■	■	■	■
Replication					
Hire Replication Director	■				
Assemble list of candidate sites	■				
Assess candidate sites	■	■			
Select replication site		■			
Hire local executive director		■			
Form agreements with LEA, corporate partners and community college and share information on UA model		■	■		
Hire remaining local staff			■		

Recruit students			■		
Launch first class of interns (Fall)			■		
Scaling and build-out				■	■
Research Work Plan					
Research design	■				
Implementation Study					
Visit the Urban Alliance sites in all four sites	◆	◆ ◆	◇		◆ ◆
Observe pre-work trainings and weekly workshops	◆	◆ ◆	◇		
Qualitative and/or focus group interviews with employers and participants	◆	◆ ◆	◇		
Impact Study					
Oversee random assignment	◆	◇			
Obtain data from school districts	◆	◆ ◆	◇		
Obtain follow up outcomes data from NSC, Credit Bureau, and UI Wage Records	○	○ ◆	◆ ◆	◆ ◆	◇
12 Month Follow-Up survey of applicants			◆	◇	
24 Month Follow-Up survey of applicants				◆	◇
Reports and Dissemination					
Implementation and baseline report		■			
Disseminate implementation findings			■		
Interim report			■		
Disseminate interim findings				■	
Final Report					■
Disseminate findings from final report					■
■ Work ◆ Work for Cohort 1 ◇ Work for Cohort 2 ○ Work for 2011-12 & 2012-13 cohorts					

Over the course of the five-year grant, UA intends to achieve the following objectives: 1) Grow corporate partner sponsorship spots to operate HSIP at scale in all current regions (total of 200 youth per year in DC, 200 in Chicago, 90 in Baltimore and 75 in Northern Virginia); 2) Serve a minimum of 70 students in replication site in launch year (2017/2018 school year); and 3) Publish three research reports and hold at least one event to disseminate RCT findings.

UA anticipates strong outcomes for the youth that participate in its expanded HSIP model: 1) 100% of students in the program will graduate on time; 2) 80% will enter college; 3)

80% will persist into their second year of college; 4) 85% of alumni will remain connected one year post-program (in college or a career-path job). A further outcome for UA and LEAs is that available knowledge about effective practices in college and career readiness will increase.

C.2 Management Plan

As noted above, the scaling and replication plan described in this proposal is core part of UA's new strategic plan. All of UA's staff and systems will be deployed in support of this work.

Key staff:

Urban Alliance is built on the strength of a powerful senior leadership team. Eshauna Smith, UA's Chief Executive Officer, is leading UA's expansion as it becomes a national organization. She focuses on building a national profile for UA and providing strategic oversight of corporate partnerships, institutional funder development, communications and advocacy. Meaghan Woodbury, Chief Operating Officer, plays a key role in UA's replication efforts, manages external partnerships and overseeing UA's strategic planning process and regional executive directors. Tameka Logan serves as UA's Chief Program Officer, running the day-to-day operations of programs across four cities. Chief Administrative Officer Jose Sousa oversees national operations and serves as a point of contact for contractors, ensuring compliance with government standards. Julie Farkas is UA's Chief Strategic Growth Officer, managing growth, replication and fundraising efforts. .

Other staff positions important to the proposed i3 project include the Replication Director (to be hired using i3 funds), who will assist with site selection and manage preparation for program expansion; Director of Corporate Partnerships, who will develop and maintain relationships with corporate partners; local staff, who oversee local programs and provide individualized support to interns; Alumni Services staff, including a new National Alumni

Director, who will develop dual enrollment partnerships and other supports to ensure students who have completed the HSIP remain connected to college and career opportunities; and a Grants Manager, who will oversee the financial and reporting functions related to the i3 grant.

Dan Tsin, UA's Director of Evaluation, has been with UA three years. Prior to that, Mr. Tsin was with DC Public Schools, where he designed and implemented district-wide progress metrics. He leads and manages all internal and external (Urban Institute's RCT) program evaluation. Mr. Tsin will work with Brett Theodos and Michael Pergamit from the Urban Institute, who will co-direct the research component of this project. Each brings extensive experience working on various program and performance evaluations. They lead the team of researchers working on UA's current RCT.

Partnerships

UA's successful HSIP model is built on a foundation of partnerships of two kinds. The first are partnerships with the local school systems that work with UA to further their college and career readiness reform strategies. UA works closely with faculty and administration in five school systems to implement the HSIP and to support interns' post-graduation planning and preparedness. Second are the partnerships with the corporations that UA brings into the program to sponsor the LEAs' students through the HSIP. UA's 265 business partners in four metropolitan areas include major employers such as Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, Northern Trust, Marriott and the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office.

UA also works with organizations that can provide complementary services and training to the HSIP interns. An example is UA's dual-enrollment partnership with Northern Virginia Community College. UA is in discussions with Baltimore City Community College and the Community College of Baltimore County and plans to offer dual enrollment in its other regions.

Finally, UA has strong partnerships to assist with the demonstration and replication of the model, such as its work with Urban Institute. UA works with other leaders in evaluation to present at conferences, attends professional development training in evaluation at the Harvard Business School, and collaborates with evaluation professionals to improve data tracking. These efforts build UA's own framework for performance management and data-driven decision-making and also contribute to the knowledge in the field about solutions for underserved youth.

C.3 Financial and Operating Model

UA's new strategic plan calls for growth, but also places a strong emphasis on organizational sustainability. The HSIP is the most significant component of UA's programming and UA has planned carefully to support and expand it. The HSIP is supported by corporate partner contributions. The cost to an employer is a flat \$12,500 per intern. This includes \$7,500 per student in potential wages and FICA and also covers UA's case management (Program Coordinator salaries) as well as a portion of UA's local and national program staff and overhead.

Scaling: In the existing regions, the scaling effort will require adding a few staff positions, specifically the Program Coordinators (PC) who serve as case managers to participating youth. An i3 award will allow UA to support one new PC in each of the four regions as well as the work of current staff to bring the existing programs to scale.

Replication: UA's expansion budget assumes the new local office staff will consist of a local Executive Director, two PCs and a Program Associate to provide program/office support. UA's program model is designed so that local offices are fully supported by the local corporate partners and philanthropy once they reach scale. UA assumes it will launch the HSIP replication with a minimum of 70 students. At \$12,500 each, 70 fully supported sponsorships (\$875,000) will cover the local staff salaries, the intern salaries and other UA local program costs. The i3

grant will serve as seed funds for both intern salaries and UA staff and overhead costs until the full corporate sponsorships are attained.

Intern subsidies: According to its strategic plan, UA will add 314 new intern placements across all regions through 2020/21. As noted in Section B.2, UA assumes it will have to cover some of the costs associated with additional interns, particularly to encourage STEM employer participation in the early stages of those relationships. UA projects using i3 funds to pay for 45-65 interns per year during the grant period. UA will fund the additional placements with corporate and philanthropic donations, ensuring fulfillment of the match requirement.

Economies of scale: As illustrated in Competitive Preference Priority 1, scale is critical to the organization's financial sustainability. The strategic plan assumes that as the HSIP grows, the cost per student will decrease from the current \$18,400 to around \$16,000, as the administrative and program staff costs are shared across more program sites.

Other funding sources: One of the HSIP's greatest strengths is its capacity to enlist significant contributions from the corporate community to sponsor the interns. UA will not only be able to provide ample private match for an i3 grant award, but will further leverage i3 Validation funds by attracting an average of \$5 million per year in corporate sponsorships from more than 200 employers to support the HSIP. UA also pursues philanthropic support for its program efforts. Currently philanthropic giving accounts for 35% of UA's budget. UA's strategic plan includes growing its corporate and other sponsorships from their current level of approximately 62% of the overall budget to 77% in 2020/21. It further features growing traditional foundation and donor support from 17% to 20%. Corporate support for UA over the next 5 years is estimated to be at least \$30 million. Philanthropic support during at both the national and local levels is estimated to reach \$1.3 million per year, totaling \$6.65 million over the grant period.

C.4 Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Urban Alliance is committed to its results and places heavy emphasis on program evaluation, data collection, and analysis. UA's evaluation team collects data for two purposes: to ensure program fidelity and to understand programmatic impact. Guided by its logic model, UA's performance management system identifies key performance indicators for student dosage (e.g., student retention, workshop attendance, and internship hours) and performance. Data are stored in UA's customized database, which displays dashboards on overall organization performance. In addition, the evaluation team generates a performance scorecard, highlighting five key indicators, that is distributed to the entire staff monthly. This scorecard is the basis for monthly progress check-ins in each region and at the national level.

In addition to continuously assessing fidelity, UA strives to understand student impact. UA has developed its own assessment to gauge growth in professional skills, assessing progress three times yearly after an initial baseline assessment. The assessment tests a number of soft skills that have been shown by research to increase wages, employability, and educational attainment. UA recognizes its post-program outcomes as the primary way to measure impact, and the use of college enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse, discussed in Section A.1, enables UA to track enrollment and persistence for all alumni.

Another important source for feedback and improvement is the RCT being conducted on HSIP by Urban Institute. As discussed in Section C.1, Urban Institute recently released interim findings for this RCT, which gave UA an opportunity to identify areas in which the HSIP model could be improved. UA used the findings to create an action plan that includes both short-term and long-term improvements to HSIP program delivery. UA is already working to implement the

action plan resulting from this feedback, and will include assessment of these changes in the next RCT to evaluate their impact on the HSIP's overall effectiveness.

D. PROJECT EVALUATION

Urban Alliance has engaged the Urban Institute (UI) to serve as an independent evaluator of its program. The Urban Institute is a highly regarded research institute with experience conducting program evaluations using experimental and quasi-experimental designs along with implementation studies.

Since the HSIP is currently being rigorously evaluated in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) and positive interim impacts on the quality of colleges youth attend have been found, the goal of this evaluation will be to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the long-term impacts of the UA program on post-secondary education (e.g. college persistence and graduation), employment and earnings, and indebtedness?
2. Do the impacts from the program hold for different cohorts and in different locations?
3. Do the modifications based on the interim RCT findings lead to improved outcomes?
4. What are the effects of the program on additional outcomes, such as soft skill development, and student debt accumulation?

To answer the first research question, UI will use administrative data to follow up with the cohorts from the current RCT study at least six years after high school graduation. The current study found that the program had impacts on four-year college attendance and the quality of college the youth attended, but given the short timeline it could not evaluate the effect on long-term college persistence and graduation or employment. UI proposes estimating longer-term effects of the HSIP using the 2011 and 2012 cohorts from the current study.

UI will obtain college data from the National Student Clearinghouse's (NSC) Student Tracker data system and will seek wage and employment data from Unemployment Insurance Wage Records. Finally, UI will also seek individual-level student loan debt data from one of the three major credit bureaus, with which UI has an existing relationship allowing it to develop project-specific data sharing agreements. This analysis will provide estimates of the long-term impacts of the HSIP on youth education, employment and financial outcomes.

The three remaining research questions will be answered through a new evaluation of the 2016 and 2017 cohorts. This evaluation will expand on the current evaluation by replicating the results with a new cohort of students and expanding the evaluation to two new sites, Northern Virginia and Chicago. Each of these sites is markedly different in its setting and the students that apply to the program. For instance, while youth served in Baltimore and DC are primarily Black, 94 and 85% respectively, in Chicago and Northern Virginia higher percentages of youth-served are Hispanic, 31% and 47% respectively; in these sites there are also higher percentages of youth that are not legal citizens. In the current study, with Baltimore and DC, UI found differential impacts across site, GPA, and gender. With the added diversity provided by new cohorts and the additional sites, differential effectiveness by setting and by student characteristics can be further explored.

The new evaluation will consist of two main parts: an experimental impact study and an implementation study. The impact evaluation will be an RCT design as was executed in the current study. Student applicants in each site's public high schools will be randomly assigned to either the treatment group (the UA program) or a control group. Control group youth will be eligible for any program or service available to high school seniors in those sites, but will not have access to the HSIP program. In order to secure ample students for the treatment and

control groups, two cohorts (i.e. two program years) will be recruited. Recruitment for the first cohort will begin in spring 2016 and for a second cohort in spring 2017. Applicants will be informed that there are a limited number of slots available with winners selected by lottery.

Based on initial UA projections of job placements, and assuming attrition between pre-work and job placement consistent with the previous RCT, UA will need to recruit 2,074 students into the program in order to create treatment and control groups across four sites.

Information for baseline data collection will come from two primary sources. The HSIP application provides information on the student's demographics (age, race/ethnicity, gender), work experience, citizenship, previous criminal charges, family structure, and household size. The other source of baseline information will be student transcripts, from which UI can capture students' GPAs, standardized test scores, types of courses taken (such as Advanced Placement), excused and unexcused absences, suspensions, and participation in the free- and reduced-price school lunch program (an indicator of family income).

UI will obtain follow-up data on educational outcomes from administrative data, high school transcripts for high school graduation and NSC Student Tracker data system for college enrollment and persistence data as was collected for the current study. For this new evaluation, student loan data will also be obtained from the credit bureau with which UI has a relationship.

Additionally, two follow-up surveys will be conducted for all youth in the treatment and control group. The first follow-up interview will occur in spring 2018 for cohort 1 and spring 2019 for cohort 2, roughly one year after the youth can be expected to have completed high school. The second follow-up interview will take place approximately one year later in spring 2019 for cohort 1 and spring 2020 for cohort 2. The surveys will collect information on outcomes not captured in the NSC data, such as soft skill development. Drawing on recent

literature showing the importance of soft skills in the labor market, questions will be identified or developed to capture changes in soft skills over time. Soft skills may also be important for navigating through college such as obtaining internships, being included in research projects, dealing with faculty, and developing collegial relationships with other students. This information speaks directly to UA's goal of college and career readiness. Surveys will also gather information on access to other services (such as housing), employment, finances, healthy behaviors, and other outcomes. Surveys will detect if control youth enroll in other programs that address the same educational objectives as the UA program.

Tracking and contacting former students is challenging, especially for those assigned to the control group and those who drop out of the treatment. However, the current evaluation indicates that high response rates are feasible. In the current RCT study, response rates of 77% (80% for the treatment group and 75% for the control group) were achieved at the one-year follow-up. The second follow-up of Cohort 1 achieved a response rate of 73% (the second follow-up for Cohort 2 is scheduled for fall 2015). UI will employ lessons learned from the current evaluation to improve the response rate. UI will aim to achieve a response rate of 80% for the treatment control groups to yield samples of 1,106 treatments and 553 controls.

The impact analytical strategy will be based primarily on Intent-to-Treat (ITT) comparisons in observed mean outcomes for the treatment and control groups. ITT analyses assume that the treatment provider intends to serve all the evaluation subjects that are assigned to the treatment group. This strategy assumes that the treatment and control groups do not differ systematically across any characteristics that might be associated with outcomes of interest since the two groups were selected through a random process. Any outcomes that differ between the two groups in a statistically significant way are assumed to be a result of the intervention being

evaluated. However, small sample evaluations can have differences in characteristics between the treatment and control groups due to sampling variation. To account for this possibility and improve the estimation, we will estimate regression-adjusted ITT comparisons. Furthermore, because students are nested within schools, and impacts may differ due to differences in school characteristics or a school's level of incorporation of the HSIP, two-level models (schools and students) will be estimated to account for school-specific effects.

As with any program, not all youth who engage initially in the HSIP complete the internship. Estimating the impact on those who complete the program gives an upper bound on the program's impact. This measure, known as the treatment-on-the-treated (TOT), is calculated by dividing the difference between the average outcomes of the treatment and control youth as assigned (the ITT impact) by the share of treatment youth who complete the program. Thus the TOT estimate represents the average change in an outcome per treatment recipient.

Due to likely systematic differences in youth who complete the program versus those who do not, these results are only internally valid to the group who completes the program. Persistence in the program requires certain levels of motivation, accommodating schedules, and other unobservable factors. These factors may also influence the youth's decision to pursue secondary education or employment. To correct for this selection bias, we estimate the Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE) using an instrumental variables approach (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubins, 1996). In this approach, UI assumes assignment to the treatment group has no impact on the outcome aside from that of actual receipt of the treatment. Thus randomization is used as an instrument for actual treatment to remove some of the bias caused by selection into take-up.

In addition to the impact analysis, UI will conduct an implementation study to inform the other components of this project. This study will investigate the growth in the number of youth

served and expansion to two new sites (Chicago and Northern Virginia) since the last implementation study (Theodos et al. 2014) was conducted; the design and delivery of UA's program elements; and the evolution of UA's informed replication strategy. UI staff will visit all of the UA sites, to examine materials, interview key staff, interview program participants, and collect contextual information about the site, the school and community environment in which it operates. UI will observe pre-work training sessions and weekly workshops in each site to understand how the curriculum is delivered and how participants interact with staff and each other. UI will speak with Urban Alliance staff in each site in order to understand how the program operates; with key school personnel to understand the recruitment process and the program's relationship to school activities and goals; and with job mentors to understand how interns perform on the job, youths' relationships with their mentors, and the relationships between the employers and the program. Focus groups with youth will be conducted to learn about their views on the program and its impact on their future paths.

UI will also analyze UA's case notes on participating youth. These notes track youths' progress in workshops and the internship, and analyzing them will provide a better understanding of the factors leading to attrition during the internship phase of the program, especially factors in dismissal from the program (e.g. the type of infractions, the number of warnings, actions job mentors and program staff took to remedy the situation).

The implementation study, by elucidating how the program operates and its fidelity to its design, will provide added insight into the impacts measured in the impact study. Findings from the implementation study will help inform why the program worked or failed to work. Furthermore, the implementation study will examine the relative contribution of each of the program's four components, provide performance feedback, and identify best practices to

improve the program throughout the grant period. These data will permit program staff to integrate findings into improvements during the growth of the program in the four sites, and inform continued replication.

The study will examine how implementation has changed in DC and Baltimore. Findings from the previous study have led UA to consider changes to its program, including: revamping the pre-work training and workshop curriculum; standardizing and improving mentor performance; and enhancing activities related to planning for postsecondary education. This implementation study will examine to what degree these changes have been made, and how successful they have been. Finally, this study will go into more depth exploring key implementation issues revealed by our findings in the previous study.

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