FAQs for FY 2015 Budget Request

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

1. What is the President's Budget request?

- Every year, the President transmits a Budget proposal to Congress for the coming fiscal year. To accompany the President's proposal, each federal agency prepares a more detailed Congressional Budget Justification, which is provided to Congress and to the public to help explain the proposals further and provide additional background information.

2. What is the next step in the process?

- This Budget proposal is for the federal fiscal year that will start on October 1, 2014. The next step in the budget process is that Congress will review and assess the President's request. Congress is ultimately responsible for passing a FY 2015 Budget. Once a final FY 2015 budget is approved, CNCS would begin implementation in accordance with the enacted law passed by Congress.

3. Where can I learn more about the CNCS Budget request?

- Details on CNCS's FY 2015 proposed Budget are available on the budget page of the CNCS website. A summary of the budget request is available here.

4. What does the CNCS FY 2015 Congressional Budget Justification include?

- The budget will support a record 114,000 AmeriCorps members engaged in high-impact service to meet community needs. This includes an estimated 75,000 AmeriCorps State and National members (an increase of 4,000 over this year), 30,000 members who will transition from the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs, 7,800 AmeriCorps VISTA members, and 1,200 AmeriCorps NCCC members.

- Transition of Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion Program models into AmeriCorps. In 2015, this transition will preserve existing program goals and infrastructure within the competitive framework of AmeriCorps and make participants eligible for new benefits.

- Investment in evidence-based programs that improve the lives of low-income individuals through the Social Innovation Fund (SIF). The SIF mobilizes public and private resources to grow innovative, community-driven solutions that have evidence of impact. Through rigorous evaluation, the SIF will contribute to the knowledge base of proven program models that can be replicated in communities across the country, including by other CNCS-funded programs. The Budget maintains the high level of

funding enacted in 2014, and continues to reserve up to 20 percent of funds for innovative Pay for Success initiatives.

5. Can you provide more detail about the changes to Senior Corps that the Budget proposes?

- CNCS will continue to engage older Americans in service opportunities to meet community needs through a reorganization of the Senior Corps programs— Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP— in a way that enhances competition and increases efficiency. Competition will enhance these programs' focus on impact.

- The proposed Budget supports approximately 21,200 AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent members. These AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents will continue to provide one-on-one mentoring, nurturing, and support to children who are at an academic, social, or financial disadvantage. The transition will preserve existing program infrastructure in the competitive framework of AmeriCorps. For the first time ever, Foster Grandparents will also receive a new type of Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Existing Foster Grandparent Program grantees will become AmeriCorps grantees in FY 2015.

- The proposed Budget also supports approximately 8,800 AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program members. These AmeriCorps Senior Companions will continue to provide a cost-effective option in the continuum of care available to our nation's aging population by providing companionship, transportation, help with light chores, and respite to help older and frail adults live independently in their own homes. The transition will preserve existing program infrastructure in the competitive framework of AmeriCorps. For the first time ever, AmeriCorps Senior Companion members will also receive a new type of Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Existing Senior Companion Program grantees will become AmeriCorps grantees in FY 2015.

- The proposed Budget provides $19 million for the Volunteer Generation Fund, which will focus on strengthening the ability of organizations to recruit, retain, and manage volunteers. The Volunteer Generation Fund will incorporate the most competitive RSVP projects. This strategic integration of RSVP into the Volunteer Generation Fund will capitalize on the alignment between the two programs and enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of both programs.

6. How will the AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent Program and the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program become competitive programs?

- Under the FY15 Budget proposal, existing Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion Program grantees will become AmeriCorps grantees. These existing grants will be administratively transferred into the AmeriCorps program. In future years, AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent Program grantees and AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program grantees will compete for funding under the competitive framework of AmeriCorps.

- CNCS anticipates that competition would be phased in during years after FY 2015. The parameters for competition in out-years would be clearly defined and implemented under the AmeriCorps competition framework, which is a fair and equitable process. The AmeriCorps competition process prioritizes programs with evidence that they are making an impact in their communities. Under this competitive approach, highly effective programs will have the opportunity to grow.

- CNCS will help current Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion grantees transition to AmeriCorps. Under the FY15 Budget proposal, CNCS is requesting funding to provide Training and Technical Assistance specifically to support grantees during this process.

7. What is the new type of Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents and AmeriCorps Senior Companions will receive?

- As part of this proposal, in FY 2015 AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent Program and AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program members will receive new benefits. For the first time ever, they will receive a new type of $250 Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

- As part of the transition of these programs into AmeriCorps, this education award is different than the regular quarter-time AmeriCorps education award. This new type of Segal AmeriCorps Education Award has expanded uses that make it of greater utility to Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions.

- Specifically, while the existing Segal Education Awards may currently be used to pay for tuition or loan repayment at qualified institutions of higher learning or qualified job training expenses, the

new type of AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion awards may also be used to pay for educational and enrichment programming such as afterschool programs or summer camps.

- Additionally, while the existing Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards may be used by the member or a qualified family member, the new type of award permits AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents to use the award to pay educational and enrichment expenses for the children they are serving through the AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents Program.

- In future years, the AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent and AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program grantees will have the opportunity to compete for funding under the broader AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions serving with grantees that are successful in the AmeriCorps competition will receive the quarter-time Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, which is equivalent to approximately $1,530 in FY 2015.

8. How will becoming a part of the AmeriCorps program change my organization's Foster Grandparent Program or Senior Companion Program grant?

- You may familiarize yourself with the basic rules and regulations that govern AmeriCorps grants by reviewing the AmeriCorps grant provisions and the AmeriCorps regulations. In addition, you may want to see the FAQs about AmeriCorps on our website.

- CNCS will provide training and technical assistance for new AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent Program and AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program grantees during a transition to AmeriCorps. This training and technical assistance may include face-to-face sessions and distance training, such as virtual meetings and webinars. These training and technical assistance sessions will focus on practical and concrete steps and materials to facilitate the transition of the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs into AmeriCorps.

9. A quarter-time AmeriCorps member is 450 hours. How many hours will existing Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions be able to serve?

- AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program members must serve a minimum of 450 hours to receive the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Members will be allowed to earn one such award annually.

- However, while the quarter-time AmeriCorps living allowance is a set amount, 450 hours is simply the minimum number of required hours to qualify for the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. There is no prohibition on AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion Program members serving additional hours. Such flexibility allows AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program members to have service schedules similar to those under their current Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion program placements. In FY 2015, AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents and AmeriCorps Senior Companions will serve as quarter-time AmeriCorps members and receive a living allowance of $2,771, which is slightly greater than the average stipend that they currently receive for serving 20 hours a week.

10. How will the stipend that Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion Program volunteers receive be affected by this change?

- AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion Program members will receive a living allowance that is slightly greater than the stipend they currently receive for serving 20 hours per week. The "income disregard" provision of the program will remain in place and become applicable to the AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program member living allowance. This means that the AmeriCorps living allowance that members earn will not be counted in determining eligibility for any other benefits that members may receive. In addition, AmeriCorps Foster Grandparents may be provided with funds to help offset the cost of service, including mileage reimbursement.

11. What is driving the growth in AmeriCorps to 114,000 members?

- The budget will support a record 114,000 AmeriCorps members

- This includes an estimated 75,000 AmeriCorps State and National members (an increase of 4,000 over FY 2014) 30,000 members who will transition from the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs, 7,800 AmeriCorps VISTA members, and 1,200 AmeriCorps NCCC members.

- This expansion is made possible in part by a new policy, in which CNCS will provide only the education awards and loan forbearance benefits to professional corps members except in unique instances where programs can demonstrate limited resources and require additional program dollars to operate. These savings are reinvested to expand opportunities for others to serve.

- This is consistent with the President's long-standing goal of finding more ways to engage Americans in service including supporting the implementation of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act goal of reserving at least 10 percent of member positions for seniors.

12. What is the Volunteer Generation Fund? Who is eligible for funding? Where can I learn more?

- The Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) is a program authorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and designed to support organizations in recruiting and retaining volunteers who are dedicated to addressing important needs in communities across America.

- The Volunteer Generation Fund makes direct grants to organizations and State Service Commissions to carry out volunteer programs or to support community-based entities that recruit, manage, or support volunteers. In prior years, funds were available to State Service Commissions to support volunteer connector organizations, train nonprofits in volunteer management, and increase the number of new and continuing volunteers in their states. The FY15 budget proposes an increase in funding for the Volunteer Generation Fund in order to integrate the most competitive RSVP projects.

- More information on the Volunteer Generation Fund is available on the CNCS website, including an overall program description, a list of current grantees, and the Fiscal Year 2013 Notice of Funding Opportunity.

13. How will becoming part of the Volunteer Generation Fund change an organization's RSVP grant?

- Under this proposal, in the FY 2015 transition year, RSVP programs receiving Volunteer Generation Fund grants would conduct activities similar to their current operations, engaging Americans age 55 and older in high quality volunteer assignments that meet critical local needs. In future years, all RSVP projects would be eligible to compete for funding through the Volunteer Generation Fund.

- RSVP projects receiving Volunteer Generation Fund grants will continue to report on performance using CNCS agency-wide and supporting measures.

14. Which RSVP grantees will transition to the Volunteer Generation Fund?

- Under this proposal, the most competitive RSVP grantees will be integrated into the Volunteer Generation Fund in FY15. CNCS will use the results of the FY13, FY14, and (upcoming) FY15 RSVP competitions to identify which grantees will become part of the Volunteer Generation Fund. Those grantees that are determined to be the most competitive in the FY13 and FY14 competitions, as well as those grantees that perform well in the FY15 competition will become grantees of the Volunteer Generation Fund.

- Decisions about which specific grantees will have the opportunity to become part of the Volunteer Generation Fund will not be made until this proposal enters the implementation phase. FY15 would be a transition year; in out-years it is anticipated that RSVP grantees will compete as part of the Volunteer Generation Fund's grant competition. Regardless of which RSVP grantees are integrated into the Volunteer Generation Fund in FY 2015, in future years all current RSVP projects would be eligible to compete for funding through the Volunteer Generation Fund.

15. What does this proposal mean for the future of national service? Are you planning changes to other CNCS programs?

- This proposal is designed to deepen community impact, enhance competition, and increase efficiency. While CNCS is always striving to improve national service and community solutions in order to meet these goals, at this time CNCS is not planning changes to the structure of existing programs beyond those included in the FY15 budget proposal.

16. What about Foster Grandparent or Senior Companion Programs that receive grants solely using state funds? What will happen to them?

- A small number of Senior Corps grants are funded exclusively with non-CNCS dollars, including with state and local government appropriated funds and from other sources. These grants would not automatically transfer to the AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent and AmeriCorps Senior

Companion Program models. To ensure that these sponsors and government funders are aware of their options, including the ability to maintain the current Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program projects or to transition these projects into AmeriCorps, CNCS will conduct targeted outreach to this group.

17. Are current Senior Corps volunteers going to continue to be able to serve in their existing roles?

- Foster Grandparents will become AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent members and they will continue to provide one-on-one mentoring, nurturing, and support to children with special or exceptional needs, or who are at an academic, social, or financial disadvantage.

- Senior Companions will become AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program members and will continue to provide a cost-effective option in the continuum of care available to the nation's aging population by providing companionship, transportation, help with light chores, and respite to help older and frail adults live independently in their own homes.

- In general, those Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions who are currently serving will be able to continue their service. However, every year people leave these programs for various reasons including when they move, permanently retire, or have health problems that do not allow them to continue their service. The Budget assumes that as participants leave their programs, they will not be replaced in 2015.

- In FY 2015, existing Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion grantees will become AmeriCorps grantees. Their AmeriCorps grants will be based upon the size of their existing Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs and the anticipated level of attrition from both programs during the course of an average year.

- Under this proposal, RSVP grantees transitioning to Volunteer Generation Fund grants will continue to engage Americans age 55 and older in high quality volunteer assignments that meet a range of community needs, similar to their current activities under RSVP. RSVP grantees that transition to the Volunteer Generation Fund will continue to receive CNCS funding to engage RSVP volunteers in their local communities. In addition, all existing RSVP grantees would have the option to continue their programs by using the existing RSVP statutory authority to become

independent RSVP projects outside the Volunteer Generation Fund; this includes RSVP those projects that are currently funded from sources other than CNCS, such as state appropriated dollars.

18. How does competition in the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs increase community impact?

- As part of an Administration-wide effort to focus on results, CNCS is deeply committed to using its limited funds to achieve the highest level of measurable impact. Competition is an important tool that focuses programs on achieving demonstrable impact and prioritizes funding for the highest achieving programs.
- Moving the Foster Grandparent Program and the Senior Companion Program into the competitive environment of AmeriCorps will further incentivize a focus on impact and will offer successful programs an opportunity to grow.

19. What is a professional corps and how does this budget affect them?

- Professional corps programs are AmeriCorps programs that recruit, train, and place AmeriCorps members to fill a demonstrated community need for professionals, pre-professionals, and para-professionals such as healthcare providers, social workers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, teachers and volunteer managers.
- Professional corps programs are different from other AmeriCorps programs in that there is no limit to the living allowance professional corps AmeriCorps members can receive. This exception from the normal limit of the AmeriCorps living allowance recognizes that typically professional corps members are being paid a professional salary by a third party organization, such as a school district or hospital. Like other AmeriCorps programs, AmeriCorps members serving in professional corps programs receive the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award upon successful completion of their service, as well as loan forbearance for qualified educational loans while they are serving.
- In the proposed FY 15 budget, there will be an increase in the number of professional corps AmeriCorps members to create additional opportunities for people to serve in AmeriCorps. In FY 2015, professional corps programs will receive grants only for the Segal AmeriCorps Education

awards (and loan forbearance) for their AmeriCorps members. These professional corps AmeriCorps grants will not be accompanied by a grant of program dollars, except in unique instances where grantees can demonstrate limited resources that require they receive additional program dollars in order to operate. Reinvesting program dollars into education awards makes possible this growth of professional corps programs.

20. I am a current Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program, or RSVP grantee, what will happen with my 2014 grant?

- The FY15 Budget proposal is for the period starting on October 1, 2014. Grants to Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program, and RSVP grantees will continue as scheduled in FY14. As such, Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program, and RSVP grantees that are scheduled to receive grants in April 2014 or July 2014 will receive their grants on schedule. Grantees on the January grant cycle have already received their initial 2014 awards, the remaining 8 months of FY14 funding for the January grants will be awarded by April 30, 2014. The Foster Grandparent Program and Senior Companion Program that are on September grant cycle will receive their grant notification letters shortly.

21. Under the reorganization of the Senior Corps, who would manage the grants?

- If this proposal becomes law, CNCS's field offices will implement and manage the reorganization of the Senior Corps programs, which will take place over the coming years.