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Executive Summary

AMVETS Career Center provides career services to Ohio veterans, National Guard troops and their spouses. Ohio has nearly 100,000 unemployed veterans, with current services falling short of needs. The program improves the employability of veterans through career assessment, skill enhancement training, licensing/certification assistance and resume and interviewing instruction. The program also provides job development and placement services to match veterans with veteran friendly employers.

Rationale and Approach

The Problem

In October 2010, the Ohio unemployment rate was 9.6%. The unemployment rate for veterans was 11.1%, with the rate for women veterans even higher at 11.9%. This means nearly 100,000 of Ohio's 900,000 veterans are unemployed. For recently separated veterans, even after two years, their unemployment rate was 16%, far higher than the overall rate. For young (18-24) veterans, the news is particularly grim. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in April 2010 that the unemployment rate for young veterans was 30.7%. This presents a large number of young unemployed veterans in Ohio, given that over 17,000 of Ohio's National Guard/Reserve troops, plus 15,000 active military troops from Ohio, are 24 or younger.

For the National Guard, large numbers of unemployed troops present operational readiness and troop safety issues. Commanders speak of unemployment leading to housing problems, an inability to pay bills and stressed relationships - all impacting a soldier's mental health and ability to stay focused on military tasks. Since 2001, the Ohio National Guard has lost more troops to suicide than to combat. National statistics reflect this, with the American Association of Suicidology reporting that the suicide rate for the unemployed is 2-3 times higher than the rate for the general population.

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The U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) suggests 3 reasons why the unemployment rate for veterans is so high

- Many veterans have leadership abilities and highly developed technical skills, but have difficulty translating their military skills into language civilian employers understand and their resumes don't match what employers are accustomed to seeing.
- Employers are reluctant to hire National Guard troops because when troops get deployed, federal law requires employers to hold their jobs. Many employers would rather leave positions open or hire non-veterans than commit to holding positions until a veteran comes home.
- Although the percentage of veterans who have been injured in combat is low, surveys reveal employers are reluctant to hire veterans because of fears that military injuries will impact the workplace.

The services currently provided to unemployed veterans fall short of needs. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has a DOL grant to employ veterans representatives (vet reps) to provide employment assistance. However, the grant requires vet reps to provide employment services only to veterans who have significant barriers to employment. In 2009, ODJFS vet reps provided services to about 5,000 of Ohio's 100,000 unemployed veterans. Veterans who do not qualify for intensive services may request assistance from non-veteran representatives, but they often are referred to the state's online job search site and for the most part, are on their own.

Member Roles and Responsibilities

We are two months into an AmeriCorps state grant funded by the Ohio Community Service Council (OCSC). We now seek funding to extend our program beyond the capacity of the current grant. While we have a short history, we already are on track to surpass all of our performance measures,

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including veterans assisted, veterans placed into employment and employers recruited. The activities proposed here reflect the model developed under the OCSC grant.

Reducing unemployment for veterans includes helping veterans better market themselves to employers and eliminating what employers see as barriers to hiring veterans. Assisted by AMVETS Career Center (ACC) staff, AmeriCorps members conduct outreach and recruitment activities to help veterans become aware of available services. This includes outreach to ODJFS one-stop centers, county veterans service commissions, Veterans Administration Medical Centers and homeless veteran programs.

Recruitment is followed by pre-enrollment assessments that enable AmeriCorps members to evaluate veterans' skills and barriers to employment and assess their employability needs. Results of the assessment allow members to enroll veterans in ACC services or refer them to supportive services from other organizations.

For veterans who receive ACC services, the assessment is followed by the creation of a career development plan (CDP). The CDP documents the skills and interests of the veteran, identifies skill deficiencies and other barriers that prevent him/her from achieving desired employment and income needs and describes activities and follow-up needed to ensure the veteran achieves his/her career goals.

The AmeriCorps member may refer the veteran directly to job development and placement services, where the goal is to place the veteran into employment that allows him/her to become self-reliant. These services may involve job search assistance or individual job development that matches a veteran

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with a specific employer and/or job. The member also may encourage the veteran to participate in ACC core program services, such as

- Formal career assessment and exploration assistance.
- Training that addresses vocational skills deficiencies, including classroom training, employer provided on the job training, vocational education services or apprenticeships.
- Credentialing assistance that helps a veteran obtain licenses or certifications that document work-related skills and abilities.
- Developing tools such as resumes, cover letters, job search techniques and interviewing skills that help veterans better market themselves to employers.

To help overcome employer resistance to hiring veterans, AmeriCorps members participate in employer outreach such as workshops, career fairs and presentations to business groups. Information is provided about hiring incentives and tax credits, on-the-job training funding and veterans training programs. Efforts are made to match veterans with specific employer needs, with particular attention paid to businesses that are legally required to show veterans preference.

Member Selection, Training and Supervision

The current AmeriCorps grant provides funding for 20 MSY positions. This proposal requests funding for 20 MSY positions. Based on our current grant, we expect to deploy 16 full-time and 8 half-time AmeriCorps members.

Current AmeriCorps members serve where significant numbers of veterans live and there is a National Guard base. This enables members to provide services to veterans efficiently and effectively. Members currently are deployed in 13 Ohio communities. This proposal will enable us to continue

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serving in existing locations, while expanding the program to under-served communities in northwest and southeast Ohio.

All AmeriCorps members are recruited from and placed in the communities in which they reside. Current AmeriCorps members are hosted in AMVETS Career Centers, county veterans service commissions, VA Medical Centers and Volunteers of America facilities. New AmeriCorps members will be hosted in similar locations. Each host site provides supervision the AmeriCorps member. While AmeriCorps members have opportunities to serve on their own, most assignments pair members with host site staff.

After identifying the number and type (full-time/part-time) of AmeriCorps members needed, the qualifications for each position will be defined. The project director will create a position description that identifies the tasks and responsibilities for each member, keeping in mind the basic membership requirements that have been established by AmeriCorps. Members selected for this program must

- Have good interpersonal communication skills, including the ability to conduct workshops and other activities in group settings.
- Be competent in the use of computers, email and the Internet. We provide an on-line case management system that AmeriCorps members use to track the progress of veterans with whom they work. AmeriCorps members have a private forum, blog and Facebook page that they can use to share information with other members or to ask for assistance. They also have access to websites, on-line training and job search resources and social media that are use to market their efforts and help veterans.
- Have the ability and maturity to serve on their own and as members of a team. We encourage an entrepreneurial spirit with our staff and current AmeriCorps members. We train in depth and then

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encourage staff and members to get things done, either in groups or on their own.

- Be able to maintain strict confidentiality. On a daily basis, members have access to the personal data of veterans with whom they work. Veterans share with them personal and private information about the issues they face. Confidentiality is of paramount importance.
- Have an interest in veterans and/or employment issues.

AMVETS Career Center will market the AmeriCorps positions to attract the most qualified candidates.

Recruitment will focus on populations having an interest in serving veterans, including:

- College students/recent graduates, with a focus on colleges that are located in desired service areas.
- Members of veteran service organizations who want to give back to their communities.
- Spouses of veterans or active duty service members who are looking for opportunities to serve veterans.
- Baby boomers and retirees who have specialized skills and a desire to serve.

We expect recruitment to represent the diversity that exists in our current corps: 11 members are male; 11 are female. 18 are white; 4 are minority. 6 are baby boomers; 10 are in college or graduated in 2010. 11 are veterans; 4 have disabilities.

The project director will screen applications to select candidates to interview and will develop an interview protocol that allows an assessment of candidate knowledge, skills and abilities. Each candidate will be told that the next steps will include reference and background checking. In addition to verifying education and employment histories, reference checks will be used to verify the experiences of others who know the candidate in terms of skills, motivation, work ethic and maturity. AMVETS Career Center also will conduct background checks, including National Sex Offender Public

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Registry check and a criminal background check.

Prior to bringing AmeriCorps members on board, AMVETS Career Center will provide orientation training for career center staff members and host site supervisors. Host site supervisors will receive

- A written list of the specific responsibilities and assigned service hours for AmeriCorps members.
- An overview of program goals, plans and activities so supervisors understand how their site activities fit into program objectives.
- Reporting requirements for site supervisors and AmeriCorps members.
- A schedule of team meetings, training, on-site reviews, project milestones and reporting deadlines.
- Contact information for program management and staff, site supervisors and AmeriCorps members.
- A commitment to ensure that information shared with AmeriCorps members is shared with site supervisors.

Prior to beginning their assignments, AmeriCorps members will attend orientation training that will include

- An overview of AmeriCorps, the AmeriCorps organization chart, member pledge and member contract. This includes the term of service (full-time/part-time) and basic service schedule.
- Eligibility to serve, including proof of citizenship, age and education requirements, and background checks of criminal records and national sex offender registry.
- Stipend and benefits, including the post-service educational benefit.
- Member development, including required core training, program specific training, performance evaluation schedule and opportunities for personal development.
- Organizational leave policies, excused/unexcused time off, holidays and other organizational days off.

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- Prohibited activities.
- AmeriCorps member grievance policies and procedures.
- Project goals, performance expectations, member responsibilities and reporting requirements.
- General information, such as organizational structure, office locations, program host sites, current programs in operation and contact information for managers, staff and AmeriCorps members.

Immediately after orientation, AmeriCorps members will begin receiving instruction on the AMVETS Career Center (ACC) service model and how to administer ACC core services, including

- Career assessment and exploration. Career assessments help veterans develop career goals and identify the information they need to achieve their goals. AmeriCorps members will learn about the career assessment tools used by AMVETS and how to access, administer, score and interpret them.

- Education/training resources. ACC provides free Internet-based training courses for veterans.

AmeriCorps members will have access to these courses. They also will be able to register veterans for courses. For veterans who need/want more intensive training, ACC provides information on formal, informal, apprenticeship and on-the-job training opportunities. If veterans need financial aid for education and training, including veteran-specific educational funding programs, that information is available. Serving with local career coaches, AmeriCorps volunteers will learn how to identify and access local education and training assistance opportunities for veterans.

- Credentialing. Employers often have difficulty understanding how a veteran's military training relates to civilian employment. ACC helps veterans obtain credentials that help document their skills. AmeriCorps members will learn how to interpret a veteran's military education and training record to determine how military training and experience translates to civilian occupations. Members will learn how to identify civilian credentials that reflect the occupations and skills listed in the training record and the steps the veteran must complete to earn the credential.

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- Life skills. Many veterans need help with the transition from a strict military environment to an independent and self-reliant environment. Life skills instruction can include time and stress management, personal finances, family relationships, health and wellness and communication skills. AmeriCorps members will learn how to determine if a veteran needs life skills training and provide a supportive environment after training.
- Personal marketing. AmeriCorps members will learn the ACC process used to help veterans make a better impact on potential employers. This includes high impact resumes, cover letters, thank you letters, business cards and "me in thirty seconds" speeches. It also includes how to develop a personal job search network.
- Job search and placement. AmeriCorps members will teach veterans to use job search techniques that have a high probability of success. They will learn which job search engines are veteran friendly and how to help veterans navigate government hiring processes. Members will learn how to develop partnerships with state agencies, staffing organizations and veteran-friendly employers that increase the probability of a veteran being placed in a job.

Several of our current AmeriCorps members are veterans who are sensitive to the employment issues veterans face. However, we want to ensure that all members, veteran and non-veteran, understand the challenges unemployed veterans face. Our member development efforts include the use of workshops, host site pairing and mentoring to provide each of our members with on-going access to career counselors, social workers and mental health professionals who routinely work with veterans.

Current AmeriCorps members meet as a group once each month for a full-day of training. Each workshop normally begins with a civic reflection exercise that helps promote a desire for lifelong community service. Built into each workshop is time for members to discuss their service with other

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members and a private Facebook page allows members to provide ongoing insight into the service they provide in their respective communities.

Day-to-day responsibility for AmeriCorps members rests with host site supervisors who will receive orientation training concerning their responsibilities before the AmeriCorps members join the team. The program manager will have primary responsibility for ensuring member compliance with organizational rules and responsibilities.

During orientation, AmeriCorps members will learn about the reporting and supervisory hierarchy, along with their specific service responsibilities. Goals and expectations will be spelled out and include a review of member reporting requirements. The member handbook will document performance, attendance and behavior expectations and outline consequences of poor behavior. While site supervisors will have first level monitoring authority, all AmeriCorps members will have open door access to the project director and program manager to discuss grievances or concerns over service-related issues.

The program manager will monitor of AmeriCorps member performance. In addition to reports from site supervisors, the program manager will stay in regular contact with AmeriCorps members using email, phone, individual or group meetings and performance reports. At least once every six months, the program manager will conduct a performance evaluation for each member. The purpose of the evaluation will be to evaluate and improve performance and build member satisfaction with their role, provide opportunities for personal growth and increase the likelihood of member retention.

Performance Measures

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The program's expected outcomes include

- Unemployed veterans will receive career assistance that will help them overcome barriers to employability.
- Employers will develop a greater understanding and appreciation for skills veterans developed in military service that apply to the civilian workforce.
- Because veterans will be able to better market themselves to employers and employers will have a better understanding of what veterans can offer as employees, veterans and National Guard members will succeed in finding employment in Ohio businesses.

The performance measure targets developed for the current grant and for the funding requested here are based on what AMVETS Career Center's non-AmeriCorps programs have achieved and what ODJFS vet reps achieve with their DOL-funded program. During each year of the grant, expected outputs include

- 500 veterans will receive career assistance that will help them become more employable.
- 50 veterans will find employment, or be placed in employment.

Our AmeriCorps members use an on-line case management reporting system that collects information about each veteran. This information is used to create a career development plan for each veteran who enrolls in the program and allows members to report monthly on the veteran's progress toward career development goals. The reporting system includes performance measures for achieving training goals and employment.

Volunteer Generation

AMVETS Career Center currently has over 50 volunteer career coaches. Our current AmeriCorps

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members are recruiting additional volunteers to expand the reach of the program, with a goal to recruit 100 additional volunteers who we expect to continue providing service beyond the tenure of the AmeriCorps members.

AmeriCorps members are expected to support the AMVETS Career Center's volunteer recruitment.

Volunteer marketing materials have been developed and the program manager is training AmeriCorps members on how to recruit and enlist volunteers. Since the beginning of the current grant, we have recruited over 25 new volunteers through

- Outreach presentations and networking by AmeriCorps members to veterans, posts, National Guard units, career fairs and business organizations.
- Referring veterans to other veterans who have specific skill sets, such as entrepreneurship and college advising
- Enlisting friends and family members of AmeriCorps members to help with workshops outreach and during service days.
- Recruiting veterans/non-veterans to assist homeless and recently deployed veterans with housing, food and transportation needs.
- Participating in Regional Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (RISFAC). Each RISFAC includes agencies, organizations, government, business and community leaders who have an active interest in serving veterans and their families. Through RISFACs, members encourage individual citizens of the community to attend meetings and offer their time and talents as well.
- Using social media, such as Facebook, to share information about the program and recruit new volunteers.

Partnerships and Collaboration

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Stakeholders in this AmeriCorps program include

- Veterans and their families. The ability of a veteran, young or old, to find work at a good wage takes a lot of stress off his/her family.
- Employers who are seeking highly skilled and motivated employees.
- The National Guard and active military services, which have a responsibility to help their troops with the transition to civilian life and employment.
- Social service agencies that serve veterans and their families. Every veteran who is able to become employed at a living wage because of our services reduces the financial and social services burden on social service agencies.

AMVETS Career Center works continually to build community awareness about the program and increase the involvement of our partners, including

- A partnership with the Ohio National Guard has opened access to employment, training and career assistance to thousands of Guard members who are not otherwise eligible for assistance.
- The AMVETS Career Center director chairs Ohio's annual Veterans Employer of the Year competition, which recognizes employers that make significant efforts to employ veterans.
- VA Medical Centers in Chillicothe, Cleveland and Dayton provide access to homeless veteran facilities for program-sponsored workshops and other activities.
- Volunteers of America facilities in Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Toledo are host sites for AmeriCorps members.
- AmeriCorps members will serve in information booths and make presentations at each of the National Guard's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration events, which help returning veterans with the readjustment to civilian life.
- Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), which promotes reemployment rights of

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veterans, participates in our employer outreach efforts and provides opportunities for members to participate in ESGR-sponsored events.

- County veterans service commissions provide space in their facilities to provide career services for veterans. Several commission staff members, including an executive director and a president of the board of commissioners, have been trained to serve as AMVETS Career Center coaches.
- Have developed a relationship with the Columbus Metropolitan Library Job Help Center to refer veterans to the AmeriCorps program and provide workshops.

Sustainability

The sustainability of AMVETS Career Center operations and the services provided by the AmeriCorps program is based on

- Donations from veterans. Most AMVETS Career Center operating funds come from donations made by the 35,000 AMVETS members in Ohio who are committed to providing career services for veterans. For the past seven years, AMVETS Members have contributed over \$500,000 per year for career center operations.
- Community donations. AMVETS Career Center operates a service throughout Ohio that picks up donations of clothing, appliances and household goods. The donations are sold to thrift stores and the proceeds help fund career center operations.
- Grants. In addition to the AmeriCorps grant, AMVETS Career Center has received a \$100,000 grant from the Call of Duty Endowment to extend the services we provide in Ohio to six additional states. We continue to pursue additional grants.
- In-kind contributions from individuals, agencies and businesses, including facility space, computers, furniture, technology, printing services and discounted phone and Internet services.
- Volunteers. From the beginning, AMVETS Career Centers have been staffed primarily by volunteers.

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The current AmeriCorps grant has expanded our recruitment of volunteers, including students, retired educators and family members of veterans.

Another key to sustainability is good marketing and media relations, which improve our ability to identify veterans who need services, recruit volunteers who can provide services or identify the financial resources to sustain our efforts. AMVETS Career Center is actively engaged in generating print and electronic media to spread the word about its programs and services. AmeriCorps member activities already have increased the visibility of AMVETS Career Center, attracted new supporters and partners and created new opportunities for publicity.

With the implementation of the current AmeriCorps grant, AMVETS Career Center has become more comprehensive in its delivery structure, becoming a one-stop shop where veterans can access a broad range of employment, training and career assistance. We will need to continue building capacity by

- Continuing to expand the range of services delivered.
- Expanding career services for veterans into areas of Ohio that are currently served by either AMVETS Career Center or government employment programs.
- Establishing new partnerships and improving collaboration with existing partners. An additional benefit to partners is that as our capacity to serve increases, the stress on other organizations will ease. For example, as veterans obtain stable employment, requests for financial assistance from county veterans service commissions will decrease.
- Strengthening service delivery infrastructure by increasing the use of technology to provide services, improve volunteer recruitment, provide training and strengthen financial controls and performance measurement.

Organizational Capability

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Organizational Background

AMVETS Career Center began in 2000 with a single career center located at AMVETS state headquarters. In 2001, it received a grant from the Ohio State Legislature to purchase computers and provide Internet-based training courses. In 2003, the IRS granted AMVETS Career Center 501(c)(3) status as a nonprofit to provide employment and training assistance to veterans. In 2004, AMVETS Career Center began establishing local career centers throughout Ohio. In September 2010, AMVETS Career Center received a \$260,000 formula grant from Ohio Community Service Council (OCSC) to expand the career services for veterans in Ohio. In March 2011, AMVETS Career Center received a \$100,000 grant from the Call of Duty Endowment to extend our services into six other states.

AMVETS Career Center currently operates career centers in 50 AMVETS posts, 3 VA Medical Centers, 2 county veterans service commission facilities, 2 one-stop employment centers, 5 Volunteers of America facilities and 2 community based organizations that serve homeless veterans. We also provide support services for veterans career services provided by community based organizations in Buffalo, NY, Chicago, IL and Nashville, TN.

AMVETS Career Center provides career services for veterans. Specific accomplishments and outcomes achieved by the organization include

- Over 5,000 veterans have received career assistance.
- Over 25,000 units of Internet-based instruction have been completed.
- Over 300 veterans have obtained civilian credentials that reflect military training and experience.
- Developed and maintain www.ohiovetscan.com, the only job search site that specifically matches veterans with veteran-friendly employers.

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AMVETS Career Center shares bookkeeping resources with AMVETS, Department of Ohio. In addition to the AMVETS Career Center Board of Trustees, financial resources accessed by the organization are monitored by full-time bookkeeper, an elected finance officer, a state finance oversight committee and an external auditing service.

For the past six years, AMVETS Career Center has managed an annual donations in excess of \$2 million per year. Because some donations come from AMVETS posts that participate in legal private gaming, AMVETS Career Center records are regularly reviewed by the IRS and Ohio Attorney General's office. The organization always has received a clean bill of health.

While employed by the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, the AMVETS Career Center director managed grants from the State of Ohio and the U.S. Department of Labor that ranged in size from \$20,000 to \$650,000.

Until AMVETS Career Center received the current OCSC grant, we provided career services primarily to veterans who were referred from other organizations or who were walk-ins at local career centers. With the rising joblessness of veterans, we set out to reach more veterans, provide more an improved services and develop an increased capacity to serve. The addition of 20 MSY AmeriCorps members with the current grant has enabled us to

- Serve more veterans, active duty troops and National Guard/Reserve members and increase and expand the number and type of job services. Two months into the grant program year, we already have provided career assistance to over 100 veterans, entered 30 into case management for core services and placed 7 into employment.

- Encourage more employers to provide employment opportunities for veterans. So far this program

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year, we have recruited 25 employers into our “veteran friendly employer” program.

- Recruit more volunteers. AmeriCorps members actively engage others in volunteer opportunities with veterans, their families and others in the business and local community and encourage them to join the service delivery team. We already have recruited at least 15 volunteers.

AmeriCorps host sites are located in existing AMVETS Career Center locations, county veterans service commissions and Volunteers of America facilities. Our selection of host sites is based on three criteria:

- Does the site/organization serve or provide access to a significant number of veterans who are not receiving employment assistance?
- Does the site/organization have the physical and human resources to support AmeriCorps members and AMVETS Career Center operations?
- Is there a commitment from leaders of the site/organization to support our AmeriCorps members and the services they provide?

Each local career center has at least one supervisor who monitors operations and provides local support for the AmeriCorps member. Supervisors of local career centers submit monthly reports to the project director and program manager, who also routinely visit each local career center to provide instruction and ensure smooth operations.

Local AmeriCorps host sites were chosen based on the quality of the host site and the proximity to a community that includes a local National Guard unit and a large population of veterans.

Programmatic and financial capabilities are not an issue because the service sites are located in existing facilities that already possess the staff support, physical facilities and resources needed by AmeriCorps members.

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AMVETS Career Center services are coordinated and delivered under the direction of AMVETS Career Center program manager. AMVETS Career Center provides funding to local AMVETS posts to provide office space, furnishings, utilities and insurance. The coaches and supervisors at most of these career centers use volunteers who also are members of the local post. Supervisors at one-stop and Volunteers of America facilities are paid employees of their respective organizations.

AMVETS Career Center has experience ensuring that local career centers adhere to the mission of the organization. The implementation of the OCSC grant has demonstrated our ability to expand and implement the program. Policies and procedures for the AmeriCorps program have already been developed. The project director and program manager review the performance and activities of each local career center, host site and AmeriCorps members to ensure compliance with the AMVETS and AmeriCorps policies and processes.

AMVETS Career Center has a Board of Trustees that includes three elected trustees, four appointed trustees (including a legal advisor and financial advisor) and one ex officio member who serves as the recording secretary.

Organization-level management includes a director/project manager and an operations/program manager. To minimize overhead expenses, AMVETS Career Center contracts with AMVETS Department of Ohio to provide all other support assistance, office space and supplies and all phone and Internet services.

The director of AMVETS Career Center is a Marine Corps veteran with multiple graduate degrees in

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workforce development and over 25 years in the workforce development arena. He taught in the Management and Human Resources program at the Ohio State University and was employed as a workforce policy analyst and workforce development director for the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services. He has past experience managing two nonprofit organizations and is actively involved in a Columbus-area anti-poverty program. He is director of the recently funded OCSC grant.

The operations/program manager is an Army veteran who has an undergraduate degree in management. He has experience working as a veterans service officer, helping veterans obtain training and disability assistance from the Veterans Administration. He has served as the AMVETS Career Center for five years and is actively involved in two Columbus-area nonprofits that work with children and teens.

The legal and fiscal management of AMVETS Career Center are monitored by the legal and financial advisors to the Board of Trustees. AMVETS Career Center contracts with AMVETS Department of Ohio to process income and expenses. As a check-and-balance, the organization has an elected finance officer and an external CPA firm that audits all financial activities. A financial review is reported three times each year to the AMVETS Career Center Board of Trustees.

Three times each year, the director of AMVETS Career Center completes a performance evaluation of all local career centers and prepares a report on AMVETS Career Center programs, publicity and collaboration with other organizations. All of this is reported to the AMVETS Career Center Board of Trustees for review and guidance.

AMVETS Career Center staff members normally respond to technical assistance needs at any local

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career center quickly. Local career center volunteers submit reports monthly, but when a need arises, they can phone or email the director or program manager and expect a quick response. The director and/or manager then determine the specific response as well as how soon a response is needed and act accordingly.

Feedback from AmeriCorps members about programs and operations is obtained from semi-annual performance evaluations, bimonthly workshops and direct communication through site supervisors and the program manager.

External oversight is provided through regular site visits from OCLC staff and meetings between the project director and OCSC staff.

AMVETS Career Center volunteers come from diverse groups including veterans and their families, college students, baby boomers, retirees and other citizens who want to show their support for veterans through service. The current AmeriCorps members include veterans and non-veterans, male and female, college age through baby boomers and retirees, African-American and Caucasian, and individuals with disabilities. While volunteers are recruited, selected and trained based on their desire to serve and the skills they bring to the organization, we will continue efforts to recruit from minority and disabled populations.

AMVETS Career Center is the largest nongovernmental organization in Ohio that provides career services for veterans. For National Guard members whose service has been only on the state mission, AMVETS Career Center is the only veteran-related resource available to provide employment and training assistance. Because of this, National Guard commanders view AMVETS as the most

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important partner of all the veterans service organizations and have

- Twice presented Commander's Awards (the latest in April 2010) to AMVETS Career Center for its commitment to improving employment opportunities for members of the National Guard.
- Asked AMVETS Career Center to take the lead on the Ohio National Guard State Employment Committee.
- Asked AMVETS Career Center to provide leadership to the National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program, which helps prepare troops and their families for issues they may face before, during and after deployment.

Other examples of community leadership and service include

- The director of AMVETS Career Center supervises a job search program for a church community of 3,500 members and chairs Pathways to Self-Reliance, an anti-poverty program designed to help families become economically self-reliant.
- The operations/program manager is the secretary for the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame Foundation. He is a board member and coach of a nonprofit organization that provides children from the inner city with the opportunity to play Pee Wee football. He also is the founder and president of Preps to Scholars, a nonprofit organization that helps gifted athletes from inner city schools make the life and education choices that will help them earn college scholarships.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Budget Narrative, Section I

Personnel expenses: \$25000.

Director (\$75,000 at 20%=\$15,000)

Program Manager (\$40,000 at 25%=\$10,000)

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$15,000+20,000=\$25,000$

Benefits: \$2,600.

Program Manager ($\$40,000*.26*.25=\$2,600$)

Director is an independent contractor and does not receive benefits.

Staff Travel: \$5,676.

Travel to CNCS-Sponsored Meetings: 1 staff attending CNCS meeting: 350 airfare+150 meals+350 hotel=150 conf. registration=1000

2 staff attending Ohio Volunteering Conference; reg 250*2+ meals 40*2 staff=80;

Three Program Directors mtgs

$.40/\text{mile} * 80 \text{ miles} * 3 \text{ mtgs} = 96$

Staff travel to monitor/participate in AmeriCorps activities: Project Director: $4000\text{miles}*.4=1600$;

Program Manager: $6000 \text{ miles}*.4=2400$

subtotal = $1600+2400=4000$

$1676+4000=5676$

Member Travel: \$9,676.

Member travel to training and to program events (80 miles/month*12 months*24

members*.4=\$9,216)

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1 member; civic reflection training: Travel: $.40/\text{mile} * 250 \text{ miles} = 100$

2 members; Ohio Conference on Volunteerism and Service; Travel $.40/\text{mile} * 250 \text{ miles} * 2$
members = 200; meals $40/\text{day} * 2 \text{ members} * 2 \text{ days} = 160$

$9216 + 100 + 200 + 160 = 9676$

Supplies: \$2,880

Member handbooks: 24 copies @ 10 = \$240

Program supplies: 50 per month * 12 months = \$600

Office supplies - AmeriCorps members: 50 per month * 12 months = \$600

$240 + 600 + 600 = 1440$

Member Gear

Member clothing: $60 * 24 = \$1440$

$1440 + 1440 = 2880$

Member training: \$3,120.

Orientation ($\$10 * 24 \text{ members} = \240)

Monthly skills training ($10 * 12 \text{ months} * 24 \text{ members} = \$2,880$)

$240 + 2,880 = \$3,120$

Program evaluation: \$1,000.

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External auditor; $2 \text{ days} * 500/\text{day} = 1000$.

Background checks: \$1,300.

Staff ($2 * 50 = \$100$)

Member ($24 * 50 = \$1,200$)

$100 + 1,200 = \$1,300$.

Sub-total, Section I: \$51,252.

CNCS share (\$0)

Grantee share (\$51,252)

Budget Narrative, Section II

Living Allowance: \$244,864

Full-time members ($16 * 12,100/\text{year} = \$193,600$)

Half-time members ($8 * 6,408/\text{year} = \$51,264$)

$193600 + 51264 = \$244,864$.

CNCS share = 244,864; Grantee share = 0

AmeriCorps members support costs: \$48,121.

Unemployment insurance ($16 \text{ FT} * 9000 * .027 + 8 \text{ HT} * 6408 * .027 = \$5,272$)

FICA ($244,864 * .0765 = \$18,732$)

Narratives

Workers Compensation ($244,864 \times .0044 = \$1,077$)

Health Insurance ($16 \text{ Full-time} \times 120/\text{month} \times 12 \text{ months} = \$23,040$)

$5272 + 18732 + 1077 + 23040 = 7,907 + 28,096 + 1,615 + 34,560 = \$48,121.$

CNCS share = 12515; Grantee share = 35536

Sub-total, Section II: \$292,915.

CNCS share (\$257,379)

Grantee share (\$35,536)

Budget Narrative, Section III

Administrative indirect costs accruing to grantor: \$2,600

State commission 1% fixed option ($259979 \times .01 = \$2600$)

Sub-total, Section III: \$2,600.

Total budget: \$346,767

CNCS share: \$259,979 (75%)

(20 MSY@12,999)

Narratives

Grantee share: \$86,788 (25%) Required match is 24%

The cost per MSY for the 20 full-time equivalent AmeriCorps members assigned to AMVETS Career Center is \$12,999.

Non-Federal Support

AMVETS Career Center currently is funded almost entirely by donations from the 35,000 AMVETS members in Ohio. Since November 2003, AMVETS members, through their local posts, have donated over \$10 million for AMVETS Career Center operations.

The organization also receives income from a donation pick up service that solicits neighborhood donations of clothing and small appliances. The donations are sold to a thrift store and the income used to support career center operations. The program has been affected by a sluggish economy, but normally provides over \$50,000 per year to help fund AMVETS Career Center operations.

AMVETS Career Center also has received, and will continue to receive, in-kind contributions in the form of office space from several organizations. The organization currently provides career services in two county veterans service commission facilities, two VA Medical Center facilities and two one-stop employment center locations. The Ohio National Guard provides access to armories around Ohio to provide career services and to host career fairs, thus removing an expensive barrier to efforts to bring together veterans and veteran-friendly employers.

Budget Adequacy

The current AMVETS Career Center budget is sufficient to provide the required match for AmeriCorps

Narratives

funding and to support AMVETS Career Center programs and activities related to the AmeriCorps program. It also has sufficient resources to cover the "float" between when AmeriCorps members will come on board and reimbursements from the AmeriCorps grant are paid.

About 80% of the donations received by AMVETS Career Center are paid to local AMVETS posts to provide office space, equipment, utilities and supplies for local career center operations. These are sunk costs that will exist with or without AmeriCorps funding. AmeriCorps members will be based in several of these facilities, so overhead costs for the program are very low. Other members will serve at Volunteers of America or county veterans service commission facilities. AMVETS Career Services currently has sufficient resources that the value of the services provided by these organizations is not needed for the match.

AMVETS Career Center has budgeted sufficiently to cover program costs specific to the AmeriCorps program. For example, in anticipation of AmeriCorps funding, the organization increased its budget for Internet-based training courses. AmeriCorps members could double the number of veterans registered in on-line training courses without seriously affecting the organization's training budget. Similarly, the budget for print and electronic materials that AmeriCorps members may use as part of their outreach activities to veterans and employers should be sufficient for the needs of the program.

Funding direct costs associated with the AmeriCorps program has not been a deterrent to applying for AmeriCorps funding. AMVETS Career Center's greatest need is for a cadre of team members who can help bring the organization's services to a larger number of Ohioans through their direct service delivery efforts and their ability to increase our pool of volunteers.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

Narratives

Not Applicable

Amendment Justification

Not Applicable

Clarification Summary

Explain exclusion of costs of site supervision from the budget.

Our host sites also are nonprofits and have expressed reluctance to allow their resources to be used for in-kind matches. Their concern is that resources have the potential to become in-kind contributions to multiple projects, which could cause problems with other funding organizations. In our host site agreements, we simply ask that they provide space, computer access and supervisory support while we provide members, training resources and marketing materials.

Provide the rationale for the travel estimates of the project director and program manager.

With the reduction in available funding, the travel estimates have been scaled back slightly. However, we will have at least ten host sites, located throughout Ohio, none within an hour of each other. While our host site supervisors will be responsible for the day-to-day care of our members, the project director and program manager will be visiting host sites routinely to monitor performance, provide program support and offer training and guidance to members.

Confirm that part-time members serve 12 months and will attend all activities.

Absolutely. All of our part-time members serve half-time. They are expected to participate in all training activities, service days and program events.

Explain the calculation for member gear.

During their service year, each member receives two collared golf shirts, two t-shirts, a briefcase and a

Narratives

portfolio notepad. All of them contain the AMVETS Career Center and AmeriCorps logos. We're able to keep the cost low because AMVETS has its own quartermaster service that produces similar items for AMVETS members.

Explain the evaluation costs.

This is the first year for us to operate a federally funded grant, so we've never been through an evaluation before. We know that we will be required to have an audit/evaluation during the program year. Since we've never done this before, we asked program managers in other AmeriCorps programs how much they paid for evaluations and where they obtained evaluators.

Please confirm that required background checks are included. Revise budget to provide checks for only two staff.

We included the background checks for three staff because our budget officer also has contact with AmeriCorps members. However, we have removed the third staff and have budgeted for only two background checks.

Confirmed: Our background checks for staff and members include Ohio BCI, FBI and the NSOPR website at nsopw.gov

Please explain the calculation for unemployment insurance.

We use a CPA firm to process staff and member payroll. Their explanation: Unemployment insurance premiums for half-time members are calculated at their stipend x .2.7%. So 8 half-time members x \$6408 per member x .027 = \$1,384. Unemployment insurance premiums are calculated on the first \$9,000 of their stipend. So 16 full-time members x \$9,000 per member x 2.7% = \$3,888.

Narratives

Revise the executive summary.

Completed.

Confirm your desired grant award start date and member enrollment start date.

We want September to be our program and member enrollment start date. We'll begin recruitment as soon as approval is announced. Because there is so much information for members to learn before they begin serving with veterans, we require a full 4 days of orientation and training before they begin serving. Last year, we began in mid-September. Because by that date, several members already had started college classes, completing the orientation and training was difficult. We want to begin earlier so that we can complete orientation before classes start.

Please verify that criminal history checks will be completed on all staff and members.

As explained above, we fingerprint all members plus staff who are associated with the grant. As instructed, we included in the budget only those staff who are listed in the proposal, although we complete checks on other staff as well. We complete a background check through the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and also check staff and members against the national sex offender registry. Although we don't expect our members to have access to defined vulnerable populations, we also complete an FBI fingerprint check on all members and staff who are associated with the grant.

Make any changes in the performance measures that reflect the change in funding and MSYs.

Completed.

Consider opting into the National Performance Measures Pilot.

We are participating in the pilot, using the Number of Veterans Assisted as the performance measure.

Narratives

The aligned performance measure is not consistent with the program outputs discussed in the program design.

We were not clear about the meaning of this request for clarification. We discussed the issue with our AmeriCorps program officers and think that the intent is to include job placement as a performance measure because it is mentioned in the program design. We initially did not include placement in our performance measure because we were trying to reflect the national performance measure of "number of veterans helped." However, we have edited our end outcome performance measure to reflect the measure stated in our program design - to place 50 veterans into permanent employment during the program year. We're pleased that through our second quarter performance report, we already have placed 32 veterans into permanent employment - several of them previously homeless veterans.

Continuation Changes

Not Applicable

Performance Measures

SAA Characteristics

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AmeriCorps Member Population - None c | <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic Focus - Rural |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geographic Focus - Urban | <input type="checkbox"/> Encore Program |

Priority Areas

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Opportunity
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Stewardship
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Futures
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Veterans and Military Families
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Services
<i>Selected for National Measure</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Grand Total of all MSYs entered for all Priority Areas 20

Service Categories

Job Development/Placement

National Performance Measures

Priority Area: Veterans and Military Families

Strategy to Achieve Results

Briefly describe how you will achieve this result (Max 4,000 chars.)

Twenty MSY AmeriCorps members will participate in a series of intensive one day workshops where they will learn how to help veterans and National Guard members improve their employability. The members will learn how to: use career assessment and exploration tools, access licensure and certification resources, prepare resumes and cover letters, improve employment interviewing skills and identify the most effective job search strategies.

Member training will be facilitated by AMVETS Career Center's director and will be completed before and after members are assigned to local host sites.

During their service with AMVETS Career Center, AmeriCorps members will meet with veterans and National Guard members in individual and small group settings, where they will share the employability methods and techniques they have learned.

AmeriCorps members will be supervised by host site supervisors. The workshops will begin in September 2011 and continue on a monthly basis.

Result: Intermediate Outcome

Result.

Veterans will exhibit an increase in confidence in their ability to find employment.

Indicator: Percent of veterans who have received employability assistance.

Target :Each year, 250 veterans who receive employability assistance will report an increased confidence in their ability to find employment.

Target Value: 250

Instruments: A post-assistance survey that will be completed by veterans who have received employability assistance from AmeriCorps members.

PM Statement: Each year, 250 veterans who receive employability assistance from AmeriCorps members will report an increased confidence in their ability to find employment.

Result: Output

Result.

500 veterans will meet with AmeriCorps members in individual or small group settings to receive employability instruction and guidance.

Indicator: (PRIORITY)V1: Veterans receiving services and assistance.

National Performance Measures

Result.

Target :Each year, 500 veterans will meet with AmeriCorps members in individual or small group settings. to receive employability instruction and guidance.

Target Value: 500

Instruments: 1. Pre-assessment interview forms will be completed when individual instruction and guidance is provided.

2. Workshop attendance logs will be completed when small group instruction and guidance is provided

PM Statement: Each year, at least 500 veterans will receive employability instruction and guidance in individual or small group settings that are facilitated by AmeriCorps members.

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Not Applicable

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable