

# PART I - FACE SHEET

## APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)

1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION:

Application  Non-Construction

2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS):	3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:  17-JAN-12	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:
2b. APPLICATION ID:  12AC132962	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:  12ACHVV0010001

**5. APPLICATION INFORMATION**

LEGAL NAME: United Way of Central West Virginia  DUNS NUMBER: 793081563  ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 1 United Way Sq Charleston WV 25301 - 1000 County: Kanaw ha	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Elizabeth Southall TELEPHONE NUMBER: (304) 340-3519 FAX NUMBER: (304) 340-3621 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: bsouthall@unitedwaycwv.org
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6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):  550402755	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Non-Profit 7b. Community-Based Organization
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8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

NEW                       NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE

CONTINUATION             AMENDMENT

If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es):   

A. AUGMENTATION            B. BUDGET REVISION

C. NO COST EXTENSION    D. OTHER (specify below):

9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY:  
**Corporation for National and Community Service**

10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.006

10b. TITLE: AmeriCorps State

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):  
Entire state of WV

11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT:  
LifeBridge AmeriCorps

11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 08/15/12    END DATE: 08/14/15

14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF: a.Applicant  b.Program

15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:

a. FEDERAL		\$	931,000.00
b. APPLICANT		\$	931,000.00
c. STATE		\$	0.00
d. LOCAL		\$	0.00
e. OTHER		\$	0.00
f. PROGRAM INCOME		\$	0.00
g. TOTAL		\$	1,862,000.00

16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS?

YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON:  
DATE:

NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372

17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT?

YES if "Yes," attach an explanation.     NO

18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.

a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Elizabeth Southall	b. TITLE: Program Director	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (304) 340-3519
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 04/25/12

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## Executive Summary

Seventy full-time AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 5,250 community volunteers over the three year grant period, to provide an integrated response to the needs of vulnerable and at-risk individuals and families by providing: academic support to at-risk children and families; training in financial literacy and job skills; and information and referral services to at least 6,000 individuals throughout the state of West Virginia. By the end of the three year grant period, 21,000 individuals will be served by this comprehensive approach to improve the lives of those living in poverty. This project will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Education, Economic Opportunity and Healthy Futures. The CNCS investment of \$931,000.00 will be matched with \$931,000.00 with organization and community generated funds.

## Rationale and Approach

### Need

For the past 17 years, LifeBridge AmeriCorps has successfully created positive change for vulnerable and at risk populations. Education, job readiness, financial literacy and human services are critical when addressing the comprehensive needs of individuals as they change their life circumstance and lift themselves out of poverty. These needs must be met before individuals and families can move beyond base survival to becoming productive and thriving members of society.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps addresses, and will continue to positively impact, three of the CNCS focus areas: Healthy Futures, Education, and Economic Opportunity. LifeBridge AmeriCorps chose these areas because of a proven track record in helping vulnerable and at-risk individuals, children, and families and because these areas continue to be pervasive core needs. Education, job skills, financial literacy, long term hunger alleviation and access to nutritious food are basic needs which must be met before individuals and families can move beyond base survival to becoming productive and thriving members of society. More than 38% of WV's 55 counties are categorized as distressed or at-risk by the Appalachian Regional Commission. The state is currently the 4th poorest state in the nation. In 2009, almost 18% of the total population lived below the federal poverty level (US Census Bureau). The unemployment rate has risen significantly from 3.9% in February 2008 to 9.4% in February 2011 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). The September 2011 rate remains high at 8.2%.

The high poverty rates are a result of low educational attainment levels and low levels of literacy. Approximately 14% of WV adults are functionally illiterate and in the most rural counties adult

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illiteracy rates are more than 20%. According to the most recent survey from the National Institute for Adult Literacy, approximately 58% of individuals who struggle with basic literacy are not employed full-time and 42% have weekly earnings of less than \$500. Approximately 20% of WV adults function below a 4th grade level (The State of Literacy in America). This translates into over 250,000 adults who have difficulty performing tasks such as locating and applying for a job, reading a newspaper, and preparing a budget.

The economic impact of illiteracy on families and children is devastating. The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that 82% of children whose parents have less than a high school diploma live in low-income families and 56% of children whose parents have a high school diploma, but no college education, live in low-income families. The high percentage of WV's children living in poverty also translates into a high percentage of children not afforded the educational opportunities necessary to thrive. According to the 2009 National Center for Education Statistics, less than 65% of WV's 4th graders are proficient readers and more than 75% of these students are below basic achievement in math. Children who have not developed basic literacy skills when they enter grade school are 3 to 4 times more likely to drop out before graduation.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps is cognizant of these interrelated issues exacerbating literacy problems and has developed a multi-faceted approach to address the educational needs of WV's children, adults, and families through its Education Corps. However, while providing these services across the state for over 17 years, it has become evident that climbing out of poverty takes more resources than education alone. At the intersection of needs to help individuals reach economic stability, sit not only education, but job skills readiness, financial literacy and overall health.

According to the National Skills Coalition (2010), "middle skills jobs" make up the largest part of WV's labor market. These jobs, which require more than high school but less than a 4 year degree, were prevalent in 2009 (54%) and are projected to remain the majority of employment opportunities through 2018 (52%). Only 45% of WV's workers in 2009 had the appropriate training for these jobs, and federal education and training policies have largely overlooked these jobs. Investments in programs that prepare middle skills workers have plummeted, yet WV adults have a significant need to gain the skills to obtain these career path jobs.

Financial literacy is at the very core of healthy families and communities. A basic understanding of fiscal matters is crucial to a person's ability to develop assets. According to a 2009 Financial Capability Study of adults in WV by the FINRA Investor Education Foundation: (1) 21% of individuals reported that their household spent more than their income; (2) 65% of individuals lack a "rainy day" fund to

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cover expenses for three months; (3) 30% of individuals reported using one or more non-bank borrowing methods in the past five years (such as taking out an auto title loan or a payday loan, getting an advance on a tax refund or using a pawn shop or rent-to-own store). This data demonstrates how lower-income families are unnecessarily losing a substantial amount of money in conducting basic financial transactions, thereby reducing their capacity to save and ability to weather any financial shock. For these families, financial literacy could improve their ability to reduce expenses for financial services and increase savings capacity.

With approximately 18% of WV citizens living significantly below the poverty level, long term hunger is another area of great concern. According to the Food Research and Action Center, 14.1% of WV citizens were food insecure at least some time during the year, including 5.3% with very low food security. This means that even with government assistance, there are not enough resources coming into many households to provide a sufficient amount of food to sustain those living in the home.

Long term hunger and poor nutrition have a significant impact on the health and well-being of the population. WV consistently ranks as one of the unhealthiest states in the nation. The CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (2004-05) showed that WV ranked highest in the nation in 2005 in the prevalence of heart attacks among adults and the prevalence of diabetes. As with the cycle of illiteracy, poor physical health also impacts the children, evidenced by the more than 20% of WV's children who are obese.

In WV, successful human service programs operate on a community level, where trust is established among residents and physical barriers are diminished. LifeBridge AmeriCorps embraces this model of community-based programming and will help low-income individuals across WV overcome economic challenges by accessing the educational and human service resource services they need to live healthy, productive lives.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps will target vulnerable and at-risk individuals, children and families in WV. For its purposes, LifeBridge AmeriCorps adopts The Common Rule (45 CFR 46, Subpart A) definition which identifies vulnerable individuals as children; persons who have physical or mental disabilities; those who are economically disadvantaged; and those who are educationally disadvantaged.

This target population was selected for a number of reasons. First, this population is comprised of individuals who are in most need of critical community supports. Focusing on this population helps the program ensure services are provided to those with the direst needs and that federal funds have the greatest impact. Secondly, LifeBridge AmeriCorps has a very successful track record in providing services and creating positive change for disadvantaged populations for over 17 years. The program

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has developed efficiencies, partnerships, collaborations, and systems that uphold high quality services to at-risk individuals and families.

Value Added: AmeriCorps Member Roles and Responsibilities:

Education, job readiness, financial literacy, and human services are critical when addressing the comprehensive needs of individuals as they change their life circumstances and lift themselves out of poverty. In an effort to implement an integrated response to these crucial needs, a statewide partnership was developed among LifeBridge AmeriCorps, United Ways of WV and targeted community organizations. This collaboration will leverage resources available, reduce redundancy of services, and maximize the specialties developed within each organization to best serve vulnerable populations. It will develop a coordinated network of comprehensive child and adult education services and supports, financial and job skills training services, and an effective human service referral system. It will provide sustainability by leveraging the services provided by the members with community volunteers. The focus on recruiting and training volunteers will increase the spirit of volunteerism by providing personal and professional development opportunities for the volunteers.

The mission of LifeBridge AmeriCorps is to utilize a diverse group of National Service participants to build and strengthen WV communities by addressing the most critical needs of citizens in the areas of education and health and human services. LifeBridge AmeriCorps will fulfill its mission by dividing the requested 70 full-time members into two corps: the Education Corps and the Health and Human Services Corps. All of the proposed member activities and roles add value to the communities served and do not replace or supplant current activities. Each Corps will consist of 35 full-time members. In the Education Corps: (1) Early childhood members will: teach parents techniques to help their children learn early literacy skills; mentor at-risk children to ensure that children are on track to meet developmental milestones appropriate for their age; provide for children's safety and wellbeing by organizing and implementing baby safety fairs; assist parents in learning to interact more effectively with their children and teach socialization skills. (2) School-based Education Corps members will: provide academic support to children in literacy, math and science; organize and facilitate parenting workshops to help parents hone their parenting skills; provide before-school mentoring; provide bullying prevention trainings; provide an array of drop-out prevention services.

In the Health and Human Services Corps: (1) Financial literacy and job skills training members will: provide assisted learning services to adults to improve work and life skills; provide GED

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preparation; provide employment skills training and financial literacy services with the goal of increasing the individual's capacity to be successful in the job market. (2) College retention members will: work with existing college support services to target students struggling with their course work; provide direct academic support services to these students and/or refer them to appropriate services on campus; provide peer mentoring and ensure students have the services and supports needed to remain in school. (3) Hunger alleviation members will: work with existing agencies to organize, stock and run food pantries, baby pantries, clothing closets and baby closets; provide health literacy services; work with existing agencies to educate the public about nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices.

All members will enhance community development by initiating new partnerships for agency sites, recruiting new volunteers, and responding to changing community needs. All members will provide quality information and referral services to assist vulnerable and at-risk individuals access the services and community supports they need to thrive in their communities.

Members will keep abreast of the most critical needs in their communities and use their community service projects to help meet these needs. In the 2010-11 program year, 4 members determined that there was a significant lack of knowledge about bone marrow donations. They worked in conjunction with another non-profit agency to lead an effort to increase knowledge about the bone marrow donor list and the need for willing bone marrow donors. They worked collaboratively to distribute information and set up several screening stations so community members could easily join the list of donors. Because of their efforts, one little girl was successfully matched with a donor and her life was saved. AmeriCorps members add value to communities across the state of WV. They do not replace employees, but add to the services and resources available to help those most in need. Members enable organizations to provide critical one-on-one services to help vulnerable individuals address significant issues and increase their quality of life.

AmeriCorps members are a highly effective means of addressing community needs because they are part of the communities they serve. Members understand the cultural barriers that are frequently encountered by those that need services the most. A few of these barriers include: mistrust of outsiders, feeling of isolation, sense of shame in asking for help. Members work within their communities to reduce these barriers and create bridges to help individuals and families access needed services and supports.

The benefits of an AmeriCorps program in the community are four-fold: (1) Members of the community serve their own communities; (2) AmeriCorps members serve vulnerable and at-risk individuals, children, and families who would otherwise go unserved; (3) through the AmeriCorps

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experience, members gain the personal and professional skills to go on to competitive employment; and (4) AmeriCorps members leverage their service by increasing community volunteers and a sense of civic responsibility.

### Evidence Based

LifeBridge AmeriCorps members and leveraged volunteers will be engaged in the following interventions: providing academic support and mentoring to children and their families; increasing college retention rates; providing parents and guardians with resources to promote healthy development and education in the home; improving access to healthy foods and nutrition information; providing financial literacy services; and providing job skills training. LifeBridge AmeriCorps makes decisions about how to serve vulnerable populations by integrating the best evidence-based practices with member expertise and the preferences of those being served.

The interventions proposed for members and community volunteers have been proven to be highly effective and have measurable positive impact on those served as evidenced by research. The proposed tutoring and mentoring interventions are based on solid research which has shown such interventions to have a positive impact on the academic performance of at risk students (Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, and Shumaker; 2001).

According to the ACT Policy Report, the proposed college retention interventions which include peer mentoring and support, have shown to be among the most successful interventions for improved academic performance (2004). The LifeBridge program, throughout its long history, has shown documented increases in the following areas: increased academic success; increased employability; increased financial literacy; and increased access to community services and supports.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps consistently meets stated performance measures and often exceeds them. More than 90% of the host sites, polled annually, report that the community volunteers recruited and trained by AmeriCorps members assisted the organization in reaching stated goals and objectives. Evidence of the impact of the program in the 2010-11 program is discussed fully in the Outcome: Performance Measures section.

### Member Experience

The LifeBridge program is designed to ensure members have a powerful service experience and

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develop a strong and life-long ethic of service. Members participate in a 3 day pre-service orientation program that is highly experiential in nature. Members have the opportunity to fully explore their ethic of service and motivation for participation in the AmeriCorps program. They work with 2nd year members or alumni to set personal and professional goals for their service year. Each member works with a professional mentor from the business community throughout their service year. Members participate in a member training program to enhance the skills necessary to be successful during their service and beyond and learn the regulations of the AmeriCorps program, including prohibited activities.

Every training AmeriCorps members attend has a structured reflection component incorporated to ensure that members are making the connection between their service and community improvement. Site supervisors are specifically instructed to provide frequent and structured reflection opportunities for their members.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps understands the importance of ensuring the member base identifies with the larger AmeriCorps group at the state and national level. Each AmeriCorps member receives member gear clearly displaying the AmeriCorps logo and specific instruction on how to identify themselves to the community. They also receive training on working with the media. At the end of their service year, each member is given information on the AmeriCorps Alumni Association so that they can broaden their professional network.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps members connect with other national service participants in WV in several ways. Members participate in the statewide Mountain State Leaders program on community leadership. LifeBridge members also participate in cross stream service projects with the Senior Corps programs and the VISTA program of the United Way of Central WV.

### Overall Picture

The AmeriCorps activities carried out will have a positive, direct and immediate impact on the needs identified by the program. All of the host sites have the infrastructure and curricula already in place for the members to begin service immediately. The interventions used by members are proven and tested for achieving positive results in the communities served.

In small rural communities, a trust must be established among residents before they access the services and supports they need. AmeriCorps members are best able to establish that trust because they have lived in those communities and are neighbors to those they will serve. AmeriCorps members

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further strengthen their ability to provide great benefit to their communities by recruiting and training volunteers to assist the host site in meeting organizational goals and objectives. The LifeBridge AmeriCorps program design establishes a model in which communities commit to improve, which is a key tenet of long-term community sustainability.

### Member Selection, Training and Supervision

LifeBridge AmeriCorps will recruit the majority of its members directly from the communities being served. All agencies requesting AmeriCorps members from LifeBridge AmeriCorps will be required to conduct outreach activities to local high schools, institutions of higher education, and/or vocational schools. This direct contact promotes the use of the Education Award as a recruiting tool.

The LifeBridge program makes a concerted effort to recruit and retain members with disabilities and members from traditionally underrepresented populations. The LifeBridge program has a strong history of working successfully with these populations. A secondary goal of the LifeBridge program is to help interested members move to competitive employment in the non-profit sector. Many of the members who successfully complete the program are hired as paid staff for community organizations. Those members report that the AmeriCorps training, development and experience gave them the edge for success over other candidates. As mentioned in the Member Experience section, LifeBridge AmeriCorps members receive 200 hours of training and personal development. These trainings target the following skill development in members: community leadership, problem-solving, conflict management, increased emotional intelligence, and effective communication. Members receive extensive research-based training in providing academic support, mentoring, financial literacy services and job skills services. LifeBridge AmeriCorps will partner with community organizations including, but not limited to, WV Public Broadcasting, community financial institutions, WV State University, United Way of Central WV, and community vocational organizations to provide these trainings to members.

Members will receive a site orientation during which the site supervisor reviews the service description, agency policies and procedures, the general expectations of the host site, and an orientation to the community. All members receive service-specific training to better enable them to serve the clients of the host sites more effectively.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps staff works diligently with site supervisors to ensure that the members have a positive and productive year of service in an environment that supports their personal and

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professional growth and fosters a productive work ethic. LifeBridge AmeriCorps places great emphasis on member support as the key to member retention. Each member will have a site supervisor who will act as the direct supervisor for the member. The site supervisor will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the member, schedule the service time, and approve or deny requests for leave. Member discipline is handled jointly with the site supervisor and the Director or Associate Director of the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program.

Site supervisors are selected by the host site and trained by the LifeBridge program. They are engaged in site supervisor training prior to member recruitment and are trained on member management, prohibited activities, member reflection, mediation and member selection.

Site supervisors are an integral part of the recruitment, training, supervision, assessment and improvement process. They inform AmeriCorps staff of the status and development of the member and the program progress. Site supervisors monitor member's service, conduct site specific trainings and conduct member meetings to ensure quality program delivery. LifeBridge AmeriCorps staff conduct site visits to support both the members and the site supervisors.

AmeriCorps member activities are closely monitored by both the site supervisor and the LifeBridge AmeriCorps staff to ensure that members are not engaging in prohibited activities. Any violations of prohibited activities are handled through progressive discipline as outlined in the member contract. Member activities and roles do not replace or supplant current staff activities. Program staff will conduct an internal audit of personnel files, training files and financial expenditures on a monthly basis to ensure documentation compliance.

Members are periodically surveyed throughout the year to gauge member satisfaction and it is formally assessed at the end of the program year. Each member is encouraged to offer suggestions for program improvement. More informal assessments are conducted throughout the year via questionnaires, personal conversations with members, program site visits and program evaluations. Every effort is made by program staff to ensure members feel supported and encouraged during their service term, as retention is our primary goal.

### **Outcome Performance Measures**

By the end of the three-year grant cycle (2012-2015), at least 1,800 youth will receive academic support, at least 1,500 individuals will receive financial literacy services, at least 1,500 individuals will receive job training and other employment skill development, at least 6,000 individuals will receive

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information and referral, and 6,000 will receive needed food to sustain their families. The program will use national performance measures for all Education and Economic Opportunity measures outlined in the Performance Measures Worksheets

The program will measure impact through standardized questionnaires and agency records. The results will be reported to the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service (WVCNCS) quarterly using the progress reporting system outlined by that organization. Performance measure targets were determined based on averages from the previous three -year grant cycle.

To measure the effect of services provided, the following outputs and outcomes were developed. Appropriate measures have been developed to assess client improvement throughout the year. The measures include, but are not limited to:; existing agency assessments; standardized surveys; standardized national reading assessments; and tracking logs.

### Education Performance Measures

Output: 600 at-risk students will be engaged in a mentor-mentee relationship which will be sustained for at least the required time period as defined in the national performance measures. These students will be targeted for extended testing. (ED4A)

Outcome 1: 80% of the students targeted for extended testing will show an increase in academic performance or attainment of age appropriate developmental milestones. (ED27).

### Economic Opportunity Performance Measures:

Output: 500 economically disadvantaged individuals will receive job training and other skill development services.

Outcome 1: 80% of clients receiving job training and other skill development services will show improvement in job skills.

Output: AmeriCorps members will participate in existing information and referral networks to ensure that community members have access to the community services and supports they need.

Outcome 1: 2,000 individuals will receive information and referral services.

Output: AmeriCorps members will assist individuals in receiving hunger alleviation services from food banks, food pantries or other nonprofit organizations.

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Outcome 1: 2,000 individuals will be assisted in receiving hunger alleviation services from food banks, food pantries or other nonprofit organizations.

### Member Performance Measures

Output: 1: 70 AmeriCorps members will participate in service duties and the member training program to increase the member's personal and work related skills.

Outcome 1: 90% of members will increase their personal and work related skills as a result of participation in service duties and the member training program.

### Volunteer Generation Performance Measures:

Output 1: 70 members will work individually and as part of a larger team to recruit and train 1,750 non-duplicated community volunteers to assist with activities and service projects.

Outcome: 90% of the host sites will report that the volunteers recruited by the AmeriCorps members had the skills, knowledge and/or experience to help them serve the community.

Previous Year's Data: In the 2010-11 program year, members provided academic support and/or mentoring to 9,851 school age children and 98% of the parents surveyed reported that services provided by AmeriCorps members were beneficial to their children. Members provided peer mentoring to 9,108 college students and 100% of the professors surveyed at the college reported that peer mentoring program was beneficial to student retention in degree earning programs. Further, 95% of the professors reported that students' grades increased and 90% reported that student attitudes improved. As a result of member activities, approximately 470 individuals obtained employment in the competitive job market; 650 are actively seeking competitive employment; and 7,800 are receiving ongoing formal education, support and training to prepare to enter the competitive workforce, many for the first time. LifeBridge AmeriCorps members provided 4,894 individuals with nutritious food and information on nutrition and healthy lifestyles and 2,833 individuals received instruction on nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Members recruited and trained 4,237 non-duplicated community volunteers, which is more than twice the targeted number. Finally, site supervisors reported that 100% of the AmeriCorps members showed improvement in their personal and professional work related skills.

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### **Volunteer Generation**

LifeBridge AmeriCorps will engage a wide range of community partners and individuals throughout the program year. As part of the pre-service orientation, members will be trained in best practices of effective volunteer management and support. All members and host sites will be encouraged to provide volunteer recognition as a method to recruit and retain volunteers.

Each year, each AmeriCorps member will recruit and train a minimum of 25 non-duplicated volunteers, which will result in 1,750 volunteers engaged in their community. LifeBridge AmeriCorps has historically met this goal and has exceeded it in most program years. Host sites routinely report that volunteers recruited by AmeriCorps members continue to volunteer after working with the members, which helps build sustainability for the organization. All members will be encouraged to recruit a diverse pool of volunteers and engage youth and adult volunteers--with a special emphasis on baby boomers.

In addition to personal contact with community members, members will recruit volunteers using the State Commission's statewide web-based data system that matches volunteers by skill and interest levels ([www.volunteerwv.org](http://www.volunteerwv.org)), United Way Information and Referral volunteer registry, Community Services Advisory Board, University of Charleston, Marshall University, WV State University, service-sites and community based publications and newsletters prepared by service sites and members.

The emphasis on volunteer recruitment efforts helps to ensure that the community itself has a vested interest in, and knowledge of, the services provided by the AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members will create a volunteer recruitment and management plan specific to their community needs. That plan will stay with the host sites to use once AmeriCorps support has ended to help the community develop and maintain needed projects. AmeriCorps members will be a bridge for interagency communication within communities which will strengthen the infrastructure of support and increase the capacity of communities to better serve and support residents.

### **Organizational Capability**

#### **Organizational Background and Staffing**

The mission of United Way of Central WV is to identify needs, develop and mobilize resources and implement programs in a manner that models shared leadership, enhances organizational capacity and builds better communities. In 1994, the first AmeriCorps grant was awarded to the organization

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for 18 members to serve 4 counties. In 1998, the program expanded to 33 members serving 14 counties.

Throughout its history, the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program has consistently reached its stated outcomes. In 2009, needs assessments indicated additional services were required and continuation grants expanded the program. Today, 85 members in two programs (LifeBridge AmeriCorps and LifeBridge Vet Corps) serve in counties that clearly show a need for of education and health and human services.

As the oldest and largest full-time AmeriCorps program in WV, the State Corporation Office and the WV Commission for National and Community Service often requests that the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program be a host for various national and state organizations to learn about National Service programs. The program also serves as a technical assistance provider for new AmeriCorps applicants and programs.

United Way of Central WV is experienced in successfully managing federal funds and national service programs. In addition to the LifeBridge programs, the organization also manages Foster Grandparents, RSVP and VISTA programs. Approximately \$1,972, 844.00 comes directly from CNCS to support these national service programs, and \$915,768.00 non- federal dollars are used as match for these programs. Throughout its history, LifeBridge AmeriCorps has been able to raise the required match funds through donations made from the communities and agencies it supports.

United Way of Central WV has the necessary administrative capabilities to manage the AmeriCorps program, following all federal rules and regulations. The organization is comprised of three divisions: Internal Operations, Resource Development, and Community Services. LifeBridge AmeriCorps, LifeBridge Vet Corps, Senior Corps, and AmeriCorps\*VISTA programs are under the direction of the Community Services Division. United Way of Central WV is acutely aware of the need to demonstrate transparency as stewards of public funds. An internal control system is in place to record, track and ensure that revenues and expenses are properly documented and credited to the correct account line items. A local certified public accounting firm conducts an A-133 audit annually. Also, the WV Commission for National and Community Service conducts a financial compliance review of each AmeriCorps program six months into the program year. The LifeBridge program is consistently found to be in compliance with all federal and AmeriCorps specific regulations and provisions. AmeriCorps is required to report outcome measures twice a year to the WV Commission for National and Community Service. Yearly compliance reviews and continuation grants are based on successful outcomes.

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Program staff for LifeBridge AmeriCorps includes a part-time Community Services Division Director, AmeriCorps Director, Program Associate -Director, a part-time Planning Coordinator, and limited contract staff.

Lisa Hudnall is the Community Services Division Director. She has over 25 years of experience in non-profit program and fiscal management. Lisa is the direct supervisor of the Director of the AmeriCorps Program. Lisa is the secondary contact for the grant.

Elizabeth Southall, Director of the AmeriCorps Program, is responsible for developing and monitoring goals and objectives of the program, completing and submitting financial and programmatic reports, training members and site supervisors, developing partnerships and program sustainability, and managing the day-to-day operations of the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program. She holds a master's degree in non-profit administration and has completed considerable research and work in the area of volunteer management and managing multigenerational teams. She has extensive experience working with vulnerable and at-risk populations including veterans, persons from underrepresented populations, and persons with disabilities. Elizabeth has attended the American Express Leadership Academy and other Corporation sponsored trainings. She has made many program and policy changes based on the best practices and recommendations learned at these trainings with a goal of ensuring the LifeBridge program continues to grow to meet the most challenging and critical needs of WV's citizens. Elizabeth is the primary contact for the grant.

Darnitta Elswick, Program Associate Director, is responsible for site management, member management and training, and tracking the activities of the programs. Darnitta was a national service participant for seven years, serving one year with AmeriCorps State and 6 years with AmeriCorps\*VISTA.

Joyce Foster, Planning Coordinator (part-time), is responsible for data input and program evaluation. Joyce assists the Director on an as-needed basis with other program tasks and events. United Way of Central WV provides additional accounting, marketing, and administrative staff support to the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program as needed.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps uses limited contract staff to assist in site visits and assist with basic administrative tasks. The program engages former AmeriCorps members or other community members with extensive knowledge of national service to complete the aforementioned tasks.

Program staff members are paid from a variety of sources, with all time charged to all grants and contracts properly documented on time sheets.

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### Sustainability

The LifeBridge AmeriCorps program recognizes the need for long-term sustainability to ensure the program's impact will last beyond the AmeriCorps presence in that community.

For the past 3 years, the program has been successful in expanding partnerships while maintaining longstanding partners. In addition, several short-term grants and endowments have helped sustain the program until additional committed partners were recruited. All of the partners have provided contact resources for additional partnership development. The staff will continue to develop new funding sources for contributions, endowments, and in-kind. All partners are committed to supporting this AmeriCorps program grant and have provided in-kind resources including: trainers; statewide training; office space; supplies; telephone services; copier; fax; and computer/printer access.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps has a vast network of partners throughout WV to engage the community in the project: WV State University; WV University; United Ways of WV; WV Public Broadcasting; Harrison Co. Commission; Volunteer WV; Big Creek People In Action; ARC of Mid Ohio Valley; Community Access, Inc.; CharacterEthics; WVU Extension Services; WV Army National Guard; Believe in WV; Covenant House; Lincoln Co. Schools; Clay Co. Schools; Monongalia Co. Schools; Shack Neighborhood House; ProKids; Taylor Co. Starting Points; First Baptist Church; Nicholas Co. Starting Points; Catholic Charities of WV; Mary Weir Public Library; McDowell Co. Adult Basic Education; WV Mental Health Consumers Association; Roark Sullivan LifeWay Center; Red Cross; Legal Aid of WV. While this list is representative of the kinds of relationships developed, it is not all inclusive.

### Compliance and Accountability

Because LifeBridge AmeriCorps is entering its 18th year of service to WV, it is well versed in the AmeriCorps rules and regulations. To ensure full compliance, the program undergoes at least one full review of program policies and procedures from the WV Commission for National and Community Service (Volunteer WV). Program staff will attend CNCS sponsored meetings and trainings to ensure the program has the most up-to-date information on provisions, rules and regulations.

To ensure compliance at the service site location, LifeBridge has a mandatory training for all host sites prior to the beginning of the program year. All pertinent rules and regulations are covered at this training and LifeBridge conducts at least one site visit each year to further ensure compliance.

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LifeBridge AmeriCorps believes that clear and consistent communication between the members, the host sites and program staff is the key to assuring compliance. As part of the Member Agreement, members are required to report any concerns they have regarding their service activities to the Director or Associate Director. Program staff will immediately initiate an investigation and take appropriate action if necessary. Host sites are also required, as a part of the site agreement, to report any concerns with the member service or program requirements to LifeBridge staff. All concerns will be investigated and addressed in a timely fashion and program staff will solicit assistance from the WV Commission for National and Community Service as needed.

In the event that instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the program or host sites will create a plan of action to rectify the situation. The LifeBridge program has a good working relationship with the WV Commission for National and Community Service and does its due diligence to bring any problems or potential problems to the Commission's attention so that the situation can be dealt with in a transparent and effective fashion.

### Enrollment and Retention

#### Current Grantees

Enrollment: In the 2011-12 program year, the program recruited 70 members. In the 2010-11 program year, the program successfully recruited 70 members.

#### Current Grantees

Retention: In the 2011-12 program year 70 members are still serving. During the 2010-11 program year, 6 members were released for personal and compelling circumstances and 8 were released for egregious violations of the member contract. While this is unfortunate, the program remains steadfast in its belief that two of the primary tenets of the AmeriCorps program are to be good stewards of federal funds and to maintain the public confidence in the AmeriCorps program as a whole. Retaining members who commit egregious violations undermines our ability to uphold either of these principles. LifeBridge AmeriCorps staff made every attempt to assist these members in correcting their behavior and completing their service hours. While this commitment to enforce the member contract and other program policies caused the retention rate of the program to drop, it was necessary to ensure that the program would operate more effectively in the future and federal funds would be spent prudently and responsibly. Due to these concerns, prior to the start of the 2011-12 program year, program policies and procedures and the member contract were both revised to address some of the most common

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issues identified as barriers to retention. To assist in both the recruitment and retention process, interview methods are continually revised to be more comprehensive and behavior-based to reflect best practices identified by human resource professionals and research. The site supervisors received interviewing and selection training two months before they began actually interviewing candidates.

LifeBridge AmeriCorps staff examined the individual performance records of each host site with regard to member retention. The sites with recurring retention problems were not awarded members for the 2011-12 program year. Other sites with a less severe retention problem were awarded AmeriCorps members on a conditional basis because the community need for AmeriCorps members was so great and the host sites were willing to augment their efforts to sustain AmeriCorps members. These sites were informed that recruiting members who would commit to the full year of service and utilize the education award should be the primary consideration.

### Performance Targets and Demonstrated Compliance

Throughout the last 3 years, the LifeBridge program has not only met its outlined performance measures, but in many cases it has exceeded them. The dire economic situation in WV led to a sharp increase in the need for the services provided by the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program. With this in mind, several targets for the performance measures have been increased for the 2012-15 grant cycle. The compliance reviews and the A-133 audit for the last full year of program operation did not identify any compliance issues or areas of risk. The LifeBridge AmeriCorps program has a strong commitment to be good stewards of federal funds.

### Operating Sites and Member Service Sites:

LifeBridge has not yet identified the service sites for the 2012-13 program year. Sites will begin applying in February 2012 through a competitive process. Sites requesting AmeriCorps slot(s) must complete an application stating how they will use the AmeriCorps member, and how their mission aligns with the priority areas of the LifeBridge program. Current sites must show how they will use the AmeriCorps members in a new or expanded program. This ensures that AmeriCorps members are being used in innovative ways to establish or expand programs until other community supports can be put in place to ensure long term project sustainability.

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### Special Circumstances

LifeBridge AmeriCorps has been serving WV since 1994. Non-profit service organizations in the state depend on the program to meet the increasing needs for services in the focus areas of Education, Economic Opportunity and Healthy Futures. WV continues to rank as one of the most impoverished states in the nation. According to a 2009 report from the WV Center on Budget and Policy, 1 in 4 citizens are expected to fall into poverty during the current recession. The number of children living in poverty is estimated to increase to 34.4%.

The impact of the LifeBridge program model is multi-faceted. Not only do the service activities undertaken by the members make a measurable difference in the lives of those they serve, those service activities combined with the professional mentoring and training available to each member makes a measurable difference in their own lives. Communities are able to use and build the capacities, skills and assets of their own community members to rejuvenate and strengthen their communities and the members leave the program with greatly improved skills and increased employability.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

The LifeBridge AmeriCorps program is entering its 18th year of service. During the many years of service, thousands of individuals and families have had their lives changed for the better. Hundreds of AmeriCorps members have pursued gainful employment. Many of these members now work in the non-profit and community service sector. The proposed budget meets the expectations of CNCS AmeriCorps programs and has been developed to be as efficient as possible. The program utilizes its financial resources prudently and effectively. The budget supports appropriate levels of staffing and adequate staff compensation. The line items are appropriate to meet the needs of the program. The proposed budget includes member support for ongoing personal and professional development. The proposed budget does not exceed the maximum cost per Member Service Year (MSY) of \$13,300. LifeBridge is requesting the maximum cost per MSY to cover the increases in member travel and costs associated with trainings (meals, facility costs, etc). LifeBridge AmeriCorps will continue to pursue grants from public and private sources to help support the program.

### Current Grantees Only

In accordance with CNCS regulations, the LifeBridge program continues to raise its match

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responsibilities each program year. In the 2012-15 proposed budget, the program match will be 50%.

### **Success in Securing Match Resources**

Cash match funding will continue from established partners. The cash match assists in meeting the cost of personnel, benefits, supplies, contracts, training for staff and members, program evaluation, and other general operating costs. The cash match donation is not a fee for service. In addition to the cash match, partners will supply a significant amount of in-kind contributions as explained in the sustainability section.

### **Special Circumstances**

LifeBridge AmeriCorps serves in 20 counties including 6 that are considered distressed. All of the counties served by LifeBridge AmeriCorps are considered rural in nature and more than 25% of the counties served can be considered remote in nature because of the limited economic, medical, and social service resources. These remote counties are also difficult to access because of limited transportation infrastructure. The proposed budget for member travel and staff travel are based on the previous year's average and are necessary given the rural nature of the state.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

Each year, LifeBridge AmeriCorps will contract with an external consultant for a program evaluation. The consultant will assist staff in developing measurement tools, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting progress towards the outcomes. The Community Services Advisory Committee of United Way of Central WV will provide program support and advice on an ongoing basis. This committee, in cooperation with representatives from the host site agencies and communities served, will conduct a mid-year and end-of-year review of the program to assess the program's progress towards meeting performance measures, and offer recommendations to help strengthen the program. The results of these reviews will be shared with site supervisors and members and used to facilitate future program planning and improvement.

Prior to the beginning of each program year, host site representatives and the staff of LifeBridge AmeriCorps meet to discuss and evaluate the program to determine changes needed for continued growth. These meetings are held in each of the 5 regions of the state. The geography and population varies greatly and each region has unique needs. Each program year is tailored to meet the most

## Narratives

critical needs of the state in the focus areas of education and economic opportunity.

### Amendment Justification

Not Applicable

### Clarification Summary

Entered 4/23/12 in order of requests made from CNCS

Programmatic Clarification Items

1. LifeBridge AmeriCorps has a desired grant award start date of August 15, 2012 and a member enrollment period start date of August 21, 2012.

2. LifeBridge AmeriCorps uses a contract employee to assist with site visits and member file audits and other compliance activities. This is a more cost effective option as the vast majority of host sites are in excess of 2 hours from the LifeBridge office and the contractor used is more centrally located which enables the program to save time by not having key staff out of the office and money as her travel costs are considerably less than it would be for program staff to travel from Charleston.

Danna Grant is a former LifeBridge AmeriCorps member and a former VISTA member. She has extensive knowledge of the LifeBridge program and keeps abreast of relevant provisions and regulations as they change. She is an integral part of our orientation process with the members and is able to form a personal relationship with them. She communicates regularly with program staff regarding questions or comments. With her experience in National Service, Ms. Grant is also a mentor to our members and is in a position to answer questions and understand issues from the perspective of the members.

3. The LifeBridge program does extensive outreach to individuals who are 55 or older. Currently, approximately 14% of the program is comprised of individuals in this age bracket. Due to a challenging economy, many individuals in this age bracket are entering college for the first time and are interested in the Education Award. The ability to transfer the Education Award to a child, grandchild or foster child is also an attractive option for retiring individuals wanting to assist their children with college costs.

4. Nature of partnerships:

WV State University -- Host site and provides training for members.

WV University -- Partner with Energy Express (another AmeriCorps program) to provide educational mentors in rural and distressed areas during the summer months.

United Ways of WV -- Host sites and partners in many service projects throughout the State

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WV Public Broadcasting -- Provide member training and educational resources (books, PBS characters, PBS materials) to LifeBridge sites throughout the State.

Harrison Co. Commission -- Host site

Volunteer WV -- The WV Commission for National and Community Service

Big Creek People In Action -- Host site and partner for educational service projects in the coal fields of Southern WV.

ARC of Mid Ohio Valley -- Host site. Also provides training on working with people with disabilities. Often partners with LifeBridge to ensure persons with disabilities have the opportunity participate in community service.

Community Access, Inc. -- Provides training and partners with LifeBridge to ensure persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in community service.

CharacterEthics -- Provides member training

WVU Extension Services -- Provides support services to sites and members in the most rural counties in WV.

WV Army National Guard -- Provides training on veteran issues. LifeBridge members work with military kids at Yellow Ribbon events and during Homecomings and Deployments.

Believe in WV -- Members work with this organization to get free supplies for their sites. They can get school supplies, healthy snacks or clothing.

Covenant House -- Host site. Also is a resource for members to refer families and individuals in need of services.

Lincoln Co. Schools -- Host site and partner in educational service projects in central WV.

Clay Co. Schools - Host site and partner in educational service projects in central WV.

Monongalia Co. Schools - Host site and provides member training

Shack Neighborhood House -- Host site and source for community volunteers

ProKids -- Host site

Taylor Co. Starting Points -- Host site

First Baptist Church -- Community partner that provides event space for community dinners and other service projects with a target population of inner-city homeless.

Nicholas Co. Starting Points -- Host site

Catholic Charities of WV -- Host site and information and referral contact for several rural counties in WV for families who have experienced disaster.

Mary Weir Public Library -- Host site and partner in service projects in Northern Panhandle of WV

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McDowell Co. Adult Basic Education -- Satellite site for Big Creek People In Action. Source of community volunteers in a very rural county.

WV Mental Health Consumers Association - Partners with LifeBridge to ensure persons in mental health recovery have the opportunity participate in community service. Also provides member training.

Roark Sullivan LifeWay Center -- Provides members support for those working with veterans and homeless veterans.

Red Cross -- Partner in service projects -- particularly those involving deployed service members.

Legal Aid of WV -- Host site and provides member training for those members who are interested in learning more about legal matters or studying the law in some way.

5.The member training program for LifeBridge is extensive. It is a combination of training at the local sites, group trainings hosted by the LifeBridge program with professional trainers, and statewide training provided by Volunteer WV.

6.Members are recruited and selected using a combination of local, statewide and national outreach methods including the online portal and social media. Members apply to specific host sites according to their geographic location or interest level in the service needed. Each site interviews candidates using a uniform interview packet with behavioral based questions. Each site is free to choose a member that is a good fit for the site and duties needed.

7.AmeriCorps members in the Education Corps provide academic support and mentoring to students as evidenced by the selection of national performance measures ED4a and ED27 which address mentorship. Our members are adequately trained to perform these duties by the LifeBridge program and the individual host sites. These members also attend conferences and other trainings specific to academic mentorship.

8.According to the 2009 National Center for Education Statistics, less than 65% of West Virginia's fourth graders are proficient readers and more than 75% of these students have below basic achievements in math. Children who have not developed basic literacy skills when they enter school are 3 to 4 times more likely to drop out before graduation. The most recent information from Kids Count WV (2011) reports that 15.5% of WV children drop out of school before obtaining a high school education with some of the most rural counties having rates as high as 24%.

The LifeBridge AmeriCorps program has a proven track record in assisting WV children enter school on grade level or helping those already in school perform at grade level as performance at grade level is a predictor of future academic success and high school completion. Over the last three program

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years, 96.3% of the students served by LifeBridge members improved in their academic performance with 25% of students served improving by more than two grade levels. Mid-year data from the current program year shows that 84% of students have shown academic improvement and 21% of those students have improved by more than 2 grade levels.

### Budget Clarification Items

#### Section F: Contractual and Consultant Services

LifeBridge AmeriCorps uses a contract employee to assist with site visits and member file audits and other compliance activities. This is a more cost effective option as the vast majority of host sites are in excess of 2 hours from the LifeBridge office and the contractor used is more centrally located which enables the program to save time by not having key staff out of the office and money as her travel costs are considerably less than it would be for program staff to travel from Charleston.

Danna Grant is a former LifeBridge AmeriCorps member and a former VISTA member. She has extensive knowledge of the LifeBridge program and keeps abreast of relevant provisions and regulations as they change. She is an integral part of our orientation process with the members and is able to form a personal relationship with them. She communicates regularly with program staff regarding questions or comments.

#### Section I: Other Program Operating Costs:

All site supervisors receive training on allowable in kind directly from the financial staff of the WV Commission for National and Community Service. To the best of the Director's knowledge, the office space claimed for in-kind is rented space.

#### Section II: Member Support Costs

Sources of in-kind contributions - Sites known to date:

WV State University

United Way Central WV

United Way Mon. & Preston Co.

Preston Co. Starting Pts.

Taylor Co. Starting Pts.

Catholic Charities of WV

Covenant House

Roark Sullivan

Lincoln Co. Schools

Clay Co. Schools

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Lincoln Primary Care Ctr

Mountaineer Boys and Girls Club

Legal Aid of WV

Capital Resource Agency

YWCA Sojourner's

Big Creek People In Action

Monongalia County Schools

Harrison Co. Parks and Recreation Commission

REACHH Starting Points

Mary Weir Library

Christian Help, Inc.

Clarifications Entered 4/26/12

1. Please provide additional detail explaining the training for the contract person who does compliance monitoring, to demonstrate how the program ensures this individual is adequately trained and prepared for the compliance monitoring activities.

The contract individual is trained personally by the Program Director on prohibited activities, member expectations and the Member Contract. The program has also created tools in the form of questionnaires and member surveys that address specific compliance issues for the contractor to use during the site visits. These tools contain specific questions for both the member and the site supervisor. The contract individual also has a list of specific items to look for and review at each site. She sits down with the member and site supervisor and asks the questions outlined in these tools created by the program. She records the member and site supervisor's answers.

Upon her return to the office, the contractor meets with the Director and the Director personally examines each of the survey/questionnaires for content and accuracy and to identify any possible compliance issues. If any compliance issues are found, they are addressed immediately by either the Director or Associate Director, not the contractor. If the member or site supervisor express concerns or have questions, those are recorded on the forms and the Director or Associate Director address those matters immediately. All tools (surveys, questionnaires, etc) are updated by the program director each year based on any changes to AmeriCorps rules or regulations.

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The contractor is also brought in on an as needed basis to ensure that all member files and site files are up to date and contain all necessary information. Again, she has a program created checklist to use when reviewing the files. She prepares a written report of any information that is missing or unclear and that report is submitted to the Director. The Director or Associate Director work with the member and/or the site to correct the situation. Again, the lists used to ensure member files and site files are complete are updated annually by the Director, reflecting any pertinent changes to rules and regulations.

At no time is the contractor in a position to make decisions regarding program compliance - she merely reports information back to the program director and the director works in cooperation with the WV Commission program staff to immediately correct the problem. The program uses a contractor for these tasks because it is more cost effective to bring in someone on an as needed basis rather than hiring a PTE. She is an integral part of our checks and balances system to ensure that the program is in compliance at all times. She always has program designed tools to assist her and reports to the director of the program.

At no time does the contractor have access to the financial aspects of the program operations. She does not review or make any decisions or determinations on in-kind contributions or how federal or match funds are used. All financial duties are solely handled by the Director and Associate Director and under the direction and guidance of the program and fiscal staff of the WV Commission for National and Community Service

This individual has been a contractor for the LifeBridge program for the last two program years and has been instrumental in assisting our staff in ensuring that we remain in compliance by helping us to identify potential problems before they become real problems. As a result, the WV Commission program officer has always found our program to be in compliance.

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A









## Required Documents

**Document Name**

**Status**

Evaluation

Sent

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable