

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:

04-JAN-12

STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:

N/A

2b. APPLICATION ID:

12AC133420

4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY:

FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:

12ACHIA0020002

5. APPLICATION INFORMATION

LEGAL NAME: Graceland University

DUNS NUMBER: 078075645 - 0000

ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county):

Graceland University
1 University Place
Lamoni IA 50140 - 1641
County: Decatur

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes):

NAME: Shannon M. Harris
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (641) 784-5495
FAX NUMBER:
INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: smharris@graceland.edu

6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN):

420707114

7. TYPE OF APPLICANT:

7a. Higher Education Organization - Private

7b. 4-year college

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box).

NEW NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTE
 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

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

AmeriCorps Youth Launch

12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc):

Decatur County IA, Ringgold County IA, Union County IA, Clarke County IA, Lucas County IA, Wayne County IA

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

13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 09/01/12 END DATE: 08/31/15

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

15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #:

a. FEDERAL		\$	175,146.00
b. APPLICANT		\$	162,597.00
c. STATE		\$	0.00
d. LOCAL		\$	0.00
e. OTHER		\$	0.00
f. PROGRAM INCOME		\$	0.00
g. TOTAL		\$	337,743.00

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:

Shirley Kessel

b. TITLE:

c. TELEPHONE NUMBER:

(641) 414-8093

d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

e. DATE SIGNED:

04/27/12

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Executive Summary

25 AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 450 volunteers to strengthen academic engagement through mentoring, service learning, 35 cultural/enrichment opportunity programs, and building 'developmental assets' as indicators of academic achievement in rural south central Iowa. Over three years, members and volunteers will provide intense services and promote educational success for 240 middle school and high school students annually. This CNCS project will focus on Education, matching \$175,146 from CNCS with \$162,597 from outside sources.

Rationale and Approach

NEED: IDENTIFIED PROBLEM. Many middle school and high school youth in rural south central Iowa experience economic, cultural, and opportunity poverty. Small, isolated communities dot the landscape of the poorest farmland in the state. Schools and towns have inadequate resources to meet human service needs. Museums, art galleries, science centers, YMCA's are over an hour away. In this homogenous society with limited opportunities and cultural diversity, youth lack regular exposure to other cultures and enrichment experiences.

Youth in poverty face classroom environmental challenges. Research (G.W. Evans, "American Psychologist," 2004) found that schools in regions of extreme poverty have lower per pupil expenditures, lower teacher quality, less rigorous curriculum, lower expectations for academic performance, and lower parent involvement in school, such as attending school functions and monitoring homework. To address the impact of this pervasive poverty, AmeriCorps Youth Launch (AYL) provides individual youth support systems and positive youth development activities to improve academic engagement and encourage educational success for area youth. AYL is based out of Graceland University, an oasis of diversity and accessible community resources in the region.

South central Iowa is a severely economically depressed six-county region composed of Decatur, Ringgold, Wayne, Lucas, Union and Clarke counties. The entire region qualifies as primarily Beale 9 (completely rural) with just 3 of 44 communities qualifying as Beale 7 (urban population 2,500 to 19,999 not adjacent to a metropolitan area) according to U.S. Department of Agriculture codes. The median household income of each of the six counties is below the state average: Clarke \$43,016; Union \$39,977; Lucas \$39,207; Ringgold \$36,810; Wayne \$35,867; and Decatur the lowest in the state of Iowa at \$34,250 (Iowa average, \$48,031; national average \$50,046). Children aged 0-18 living in poverty in the six counties include: Ringgold 29.5%; Wayne 26.5%; Decatur 26.2%; Lucas 25.4%; Union 20.9%; Clarke 19.1% (Iowa average, 16.2%; national average, 21.6%). All poverty statistics were taken from 2010 US Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Statistics. The six school districts served by AYL report 61.9%, 56.9%, 55.3%, 51.7%, 50.1% and 49.6% free or reduced lunch students (Iowa average, 38.2%,

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Iowa Department of Education 2010-2011). The cumulative effects of rural poverty in the region adversely impact youths' educational success, outlook for the future, and development of positive assets. The 2010 Iowa Department of Education report shows a 24.3% discrepancy in reading comprehension and a 23.8% discrepancy in math for 8th grade students on Iowa Test of Basic Skills between students eligible and not eligible for free/reduced meals. This data clearly points to the need to focus on academic achievement and school engagement with a low socioeconomic target population.

VALUE ADDED: MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. AmeriCorps Youth Launch members add unique value to improve educational success through mentoring, academic assistance, building assets, and providing enrichment programs to high barrier youth. They provide a highly effective means to solve youth challenges by giving the extra time and attention that many youth are lacking because of limited school resources. "With the squeeze on school budgets along with general economic hardship, the AYL program has been one of the truly bright spots across southern Iowa," according to Chris Coffelt, Superintendent of three school districts served by AYL. Members help youth discover that 'spark' or passion that will light his/her "fire" and instill the desire to achieve and succeed. Members utilize the text, "What Teens Need to Succeed" by Dr. Peter Benson, as a guide to build developmental assets. This curriculum delivers over 1,000 ideas on building strong foundations within youth to develop assets needed to achieve success.

AmeriCorps Youth Launch (AYL) utilizes 25 members--seven full-time members, six half-time members, and twelve summer quarter-time members--equivalent to 13.17 Member Service Years (MSY's). This structure ensures two members will work together to satisfy liability and security policies. Member service sites are local school districts, youth-serving organizations, and Graceland University. In six school-based service sites, one full-time and one half-time AmeriCorps member serve together to identify and provide comprehensive services to a target group of high barrier middle school and high school youth. During the school day, full-time members provide academic assistance by teaching study skills, organizational skills, and goal setting, as they model positive attitudes for youth. Members assist youth in developing a student portfolio to document and analyze grades as well as set academic and personal goals. Members add value to the educational experience through individualized attention to meet students' unique challenges and match youth with mentors.

The Search Institute, described in detail in the Evidence-based section, has done extensive research to discover what kids need to succeed. AYL members in schools will focus on providing 15 of the 40 developmental assets identified by the Search Institute: Other Adult Relationships, Caring School Climate, Service to Others, High Expectations, Creative Activities, Youth Programs, Planning and Decision Making, Achievement Motivation, Responsibility, Self-Esteem, Sense of Purpose, Academic Engagement, Bonding to School, Community Values Youth, and Sense of Purpose. Members will

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implement a plan for delivery of each of these assets from Search Institute literature.

One example of an asset that is primary to this program is 'Other Adult Relationships' developed through mentoring. AYL has developed the Lunch Buddy Mentoring program where youth meet weekly with adult role models from the community. Reading Buddies match peer-to-peer mentors and mentees. Other mentoring programs match youth to mentors with special skills and talents to match and nurture youth's passion or 'spark' and increase youth self-esteem. Lamoni SAFE Coalition, a Certified Mentoring Program in the Statewide Iowa Mentoring Partnership, provides training and management models for mentoring matches. State designation certifies that the quality of these mentoring programs is superior. A second example of AYL asset development is 'Community Values Youth.' AYL members help youth feel valued and appreciated by providing access to a range of community supports and opportunities. AYL has demonstrated success in partnering youth with community action groups. The Lamoni Mayor's Youth Council is an example of a partnership between city officials and AmeriCorps members that gives youth the opportunity to provide a voice in addressing community needs. Like a city council, this group identifies and addresses community needs with innovative solutions. Through service projects, youth learn how communities function and thrive.

Today's middle school and high school students belong to the Millennial generation. According to demographer and author Neil Howe ("Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation"), community service is a core value of this generation. "Millennials resemble a fully charged rocket," writes Howe. "So long as Millennials can wheel themselves onto the right launch pad and point themselves in the right direction, they can deliver excellent results. They represent an opportunity that, once fully understood and appreciated, must be acted on by people of all ages." AmeriCorps Youth Launch provides the opportunity for youth to discover the right direction for their rocket in 'Service to Others.'

Positive youth development results in interconnections between many of the other assets. 'Self-Esteem' can be built through 'Planning and Decision Making.' As a student sets and achieves goals, the student feels much better about him/herself. By instilling 'Achievement Motivation' within youth, members are able to build on 'Bonding to School' and 'Academic Engagement.' Motivating students to do well will encourage them to become more actively engaged with their school and academics. The AYL plan for educational success includes: 1) Identify target group; 2) Develop a strategic plan with youth as a guide to success to identify and analyze problems, set goals, and identify a 'spark'; 3) Find solutions from the AYL Support Toolkit. This toolkit includes potential mentors, service learning ideas, community volunteers, out-of-school support programs, academic support systems, and enrichment activities to build essential learning skills. Members will meet with their identified youth weekly to arrange activities and assess progress. Members will stay in close contact with teachers to ensure that youth are keeping up with assignments and will reflect upon and celebrate small positive steps. The Youth Development

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Specialist will guide and assist members in positive youth development methods which lead to educational success and academic engagement.

Half-time members will partner with full-time members to plan and provide after school programming for middle school aged youth with structured activities daily during the critical hours of 3:00 to 6:00 pm when most risky behavior is reported according to law enforcement records. Members will engage youth in academic assistance, fitness, service, exploratory, and cultural/enrichment opportunities.

One full-time member serves on the Graceland University campus as team leader. This member coordinates the 35 enrichment opportunities for the entire region and links all AmeriCorps members with campus diversity and resources. The Graceland member networks with regional youth-serving organizations and state agencies to strengthen school and community networks in the region.

Quarter-time members join full and half time members for summer service with an emphasis on community youth development: recreation, exploratory and enrichment opportunities, environmental education, and service learning. They assist with youth development activities in conjunction with free summer food programs to provide healthy meal opportunities; enhance literacy skills through summer reading programs at libraries and swimming pools; organize academic assistance programs; and collaborate with existing summer enrichment programs from Iowa State Extension and Graceland University. AmeriCorps members help to compensate for the scarcity of economic, cultural and enrichment opportunities in the region. Members represent the human capital to provide the extra boost to small rural communities. They leverage increased human capital in the community as they recruit mentors and volunteers. AmeriCorps members address an identified community need by providing the tools and individual attention youth need to become educationally successful and academically engaged.

AmeriCorps members recruit volunteers to provide mentoring and academic assistance. Collaboration between AmeriCorps members, youth, families, and school personnel identify the individual needs of each youth and link to community resources to enhance the learning experiences for youth. AYL members become the liaison between school and community connections to realize the concept that "it takes a village to raise a child."

EVIDENCE-BASED: MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT. AYL will use the evidence-based framework of Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets to guide interventions of AmeriCorps members and volunteers in order to increase educational success and academic engagement of south central Iowa youth. The U.S. Department of Education awarded Search Institute one of the national 2010 Investing in Innovation Fund's highest-rated program designations for the 40 Asset framework. The framework of Developmental Assets, founded by Dr. Peter Benson, is grounded in extensive research on what kids need to succeed. Since 1989, Search Institute has been studying assets in the lives

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of young people. Dr. Benson believed that real innovation and education reform begins with all adults paving a path of purpose, hope, joy, and connectedness for every youth. To date, about three million young people have been surveyed in thousands of communities across North America. From this research, Search Institute identified 40 developmental assets that act as powerful positive influences on adolescent behavior proven across all cultural and socioeconomic groups of youth. Research shows that too few young people are exposed to these basic building blocks of healthy development. According to research conducted by Search Institute, the average young person experiences only 18.6 of the 40 assets. This finding is consistent with the results of the Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors survey administered to all middle school and high school youth in south central Iowa in 2009.

Search Institute's research consistently correlates higher levels of assets with greater demonstrations of school success, service, valuing and overcoming diversity, maintaining good health, exhibiting leadership, resisting danger, and controlling impulses. In fact, developmental assets have as much, and often more, influence on student achievement than other demographic factors and school reform strategies. Youth with higher levels of assets have also been proven to be involved in fewer risk-taking behaviors that include skipping school, alcohol use, illicit drug use, and other aggressive behaviors leading to school disciplinary actions.

AmeriCorps Youth Launch has chosen this evidence-based framework to prepare prescriptive plans for educational success of youth. AYL members or volunteer mentors will work one-on-one with high barrier youth, discussing youth strengths and challenges for each of the 15 targeted assets. Working from evidence-based research, as youth build these assets one by one, each individual youth is taking steps along the road to success. Members will use the Search Institute text, "What Teens Need to Succeed" by Dr. Peter Benson, as the curriculum for building assets.

In order for the Asset Framework to be successful, it is critical for AYL members to make community connections and involve multiple partners in the lives of youth they serve. The assets clearly show important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, youth organizations, and others in the community play in shaping young people's lives. The AYL program has demonstrated success in recruiting community stakeholders: local school districts, parents, Graceland University, Iowa State Extension, ministerial alliances, and service clubs and organizations (Optimist, Rotary, Lion's, SAFE Coalitions). All 25 AmeriCorps members along with numerous community volunteers will serve as mentors, coaches, academic supporters, and friends in response to indicators of youth needs.

Search Institute has recently developed a concept called 'sparks'. 'Sparks' are the interests and passions of young people that light a fire in their lives and express the essence of who they are and what they offer to the world. Search Institute has repeatedly found that students who have support to develop their 'sparks' have better results on both developmental and academic outcomes. Two of the most common

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'sparks' among American teenagers are creative arts and athletics (Peter Benson, "Sparks," 2008) yet these programs are among the most vulnerable when school districts must reduce costs. Search Institute research indicates that bolstering these programs will improve students' connections to their 'sparks' and in turn lead to greater school success. AmeriCorps members will work with high-barrier students to identify a 'spark', find 'spark' opportunities, and find 'spark' champions or volunteers with similar interests to ignite the 'sparks' and launch each youth to success.

The AYL inclusive youth development plan will have a measurable community impact as youth, families, and schools see progress in individual high barrier youth. The U.S. Department of Education and its partners United Way Worldwide, National Parent Teacher Association, and Harvard Family Research Project presented a series of webinars in 2011 titled "Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School, and Community Engagement." These webinars provided best practices from the field and new innovations to demonstrate the powerful impact that family, school, and community linkages have on student learning. AYL members will be the link to connect these resources to support learning and school effectiveness of students and ensure measureable community impact. A 2007 article by the Iowa School Boards Foundation states "research on community engagement has found that when communities mobilize around school improvement efforts many positive outcomes can be achieved, including improved student achievement." AYL will engage the community through volunteer recruitment to achieve positive outcomes resulting in educational success.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE. AYL provides a powerful service experience for each AmeriCorps member. Members measure increased civic engagement with a pre/post Civic Engagement survey. On a local, day-to-day level, members are doing more than putting a bandage over the problems of low achievement and lack of school engagement by helping youth with homework. They are working on building support systems, intrinsic values, and life skills in all youth they serve, and in turn, building these same important life skills within themselves.

The AYL program components that support this unique service experience include monthly member trainings where all members meet together at Graceland University. Members develop close connections in these trainings with other AYL members. Members from other AmeriCorps statewide programs serving in this region attend AYL trainings to meet specific training requirements. Members develop personal connections with community leaders including mayors, city and county leaders, school administrators, and other adults serving youth in the communities. AYL members are collaborators who bring these individuals and groups together for events, meetings, and service. Members play an active role in identifying needs, initiating activities, and organizing events to increase community impact. Whenever possible they involve youth in the process so AmeriCorps members and youth learn leadership skills together.

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AYL members attend regional and statewide trainings for connectivity with other AmeriCorps and national service members. The annual Iowa Nonprofit Summit has an AmeriCorps track where members receive credit for many required training topics. The annual 2-day Iowa National Service Leadership Institute brings together AmeriCorps members from all programs throughout Iowa to provide team building and networking opportunities.

Members have many planned and structured opportunities to reflect on and learn from their service. Daily activity sheets require members to record their successes and challenges for each day. Each member keeps a notebook where they collect their daily activity sheets, quarterly reports, photographs, and Great Stories. Monthly Great Stories report the "wow" experiences of the month. Each monthly training includes an opportunity for members to share and reflect on the prior month's service and plans for the future month. Reflection (making meaning from experience) is something modeled and stressed at every training session because it is an essential component of effective service. Members become conditioned to think in terms of reflection in everything they do leading to a high quality member experience.

AYL members are linked with Facebook, emails, monthly newsletters, and 'Friday Inspirational Notes' where the director recognizes one member per week. Members receive continual support through training, education, and counseling by site supervisors and Program Directors to overcome obstacles and achieve goal outcomes. Members partner with one another as they work together to plan and implement 35 regional enrichment opportunities.

AmeriCorps members are encouraged to reveal the wonder of AmeriCorps to the world as they identify with the AmeriCorps brand. Members demonstrate their pride by wearing AmeriCorps gear and speaking publicly about the mission and values of AmeriCorps. They practice and utilize "elevator speeches" to answer the question "What is AmeriCorps?" They make presentations to local organizations to enlist volunteers and explore how AmeriCorps members, youth, and these community organizations can partner together in service projects. They post AmeriCorps signs at all their service sites. Members write articles regularly for local newspapers and school newsletters to feature special events and to explain the 40 Developmental Assets. They give illustrations of youth in action demonstrating how assets are being built in the community. They develop a lifelong ethic of service and civic responsibility that carries on after their term of service is complete. AmeriCorps alumni stories demonstrate continued civic participation. Two members from last year relocated and continued their AmeriCorps service with a new program. AYL alumni continue to serve their local communities, giving free music lessons, mentoring, serving on local boards, and planning community-wide events.

Current members are available for disaster deployment at any time during their term of service. In the past year, one member served a week as a Spanish interpreter in a nearby community devastated by a

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tornado.

OVERALL PICTURE: LINKING PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, AND OUTCOMES. A strong linkage exists between the identified need, the prescribed interventions, and AmeriCorps members and volunteers insuring that area youth have improved resources to accomplish AYL outcomes and assure academic and personal success.

Identified Need - Youth in economic, cultural, and opportunity poverty struggling with educational barriers. In an area of persistent poverty in southern Iowa, school resources (human and capital) are insufficient to meet the unique academic and developmental needs of all students. In addition to universal challenges of adolescence, unique problems--negative peer pressure, problems at home, the attitude that school doesn't matter, alcohol/drug use--combine to define a formidable challenge for the program.

Interventions - Evidence-based Search Institute asset-building activities and enrichment programs. AmeriCorps Youth Launch has identified powerful tools to address regional needs by empowering youth through building 'developmental assets' to enhance academic engagement. Through direct and individualized academic support, mentoring, service learning, and cultural /opportunity enrichment events at Graceland University, students ignite their 'sparks' (interests) and build 'developmental assets' to strengthen their academic engagement and educational success.

AmeriCorps Members Well-Suited to Deliver Interventions - Time, training, networking, volunteer recruitment, community connections, and service learning. AYL members and volunteers are well-suited to provide youth with the extra time and support needed to develop positive relationships that teachers lack due to resource limitations caused by poverty in the region. The individualized time spent with youth is a first step in building positive assets. Search Institute research clearly documents that 'developmental assets' play a significant role in students' academic achievement. A Search Institute training for members from the curriculum "What Teens Need to Succeed" by Dr. Peter Benson will focus on youth development principles to enhance their efforts to engage school and community in support of high barrier youth. In addition to extensive training in Search Institute asset building tools, members receive training in volunteer recruitment, building community connections, and implementing service learning programs on a monthly basis.

Anticipated Outcomes - Academic engagement and educational success. What matters "is not how many worms the bird feeds its young, but how well the fledgling flies" (United Way of America, 2002). AYL will provide intensive services on a long-term basis to 240 high-barrier middle and high school youth per year in six targeted school districts in the service region. Of these 240 students, 180 (75%) will show improvement on a pre/post rubric evaluation measuring the level of Search Institute developmental assets, an improvement that correlates directly to improved educational success. In addition, 35

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enrichment events will offer cultural and academic enrichment opportunities for 3,500 youth from the region. These exciting academic and cultural enrichment experiences will increase their life experiences, expand their horizons, and ignite new 'sparks.' AmeriCorps Youth Launch programs are a means to link the identified needs to specifically identified outcomes through the use of well developed interventions performed by well trained AmeriCorps members and recruited volunteers. All activities undertaken in the scope of the AYL program have the ultimate outcome goal of providing measurable improved academic engagement and educational success.

AMERICORPS MEMBER SELECTION, TRAINING, AND SUPERVISION. Member recruitment begins with the selection of service sites whose needs align with AYL services. Service site applications provide plans for local member recruitment and site supervision. Each site advertises, interviews, and enrolls its own members. The Program Director approves the enrollment of all members to ensure that appropriate background checks are completed prior to a member beginning their service. Local/regional candidates from the participating communities receive special attention by selection committees from each service site. 90% of Youth Launch members are local residents. This provides a benefit to the program, as local members are familiar with the specific needs and opportunities in their communities. For the investment of training and human development of members, the goal is for them to remain in the target communities and continue to make positive contributions toward promoting youth development and eliminating poverty when their year of service is complete.

Recruitment is strengthened by successful recruiting efforts of current and alumni AmeriCorps members. Recruitment efforts reach out to a diverse population. AYL members have included high school seniors, college and university students, non-traditional university students, baby boomers, veterans, and senior citizens. Having AmeriCorps members from various religious, ethnic, age, and gender groups provides an enriched experience for participating youth and families. 100% of all applicants are rural and a large majority of applicants are low-income. The Program Director works closely with county Central Point of Coordination directors who are aware of persons living in the service area with disabilities. As a result, in the current year one person with a disability is serving as an AYL member. All recruiting and marketing materials have inclusive statements that include "Minorities and individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply." Accommodations are made to assure support for all applicants and members. All interviews, trainings, and required group activities are held at accessible sites.

Members are oriented to AYL with a two-day training at Graceland University. The orientation allows members to identify with each other and build "esprit de corps." The orientation also equips them with essential knowledge and skills to successfully begin their assignments: understanding what it means to be an AmeriCorps member, understanding prohibited activities, understanding basic youth

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development including 40 Developmental Assets, and an introduction to the ideal of active citizenship. A curriculum training is provided to prepare members to perform all activities they will engage in during their term of service using the text, "What Teens Need to Succeed" by Dr. Peter Benson. Site supervisors provide specific training regarding the community where members serve and any unique community service needs.

After Orientation, members continue to meet monthly for 3 hour training sessions on the Graceland campus. One hour segments of each training focus on required topics of citizenship, communication, disaster response, volunteer management, and Life after AmeriCorps. At trainings members also learn about Graceland enrichment opportunities, mentoring, after school programming, summer programming, character education, community partners/coalitions, volunteer recruitment and management, and grant opportunities. Monthly meetings strengthen leadership skills of AmeriCorps members, build group solidarity, allow for discussion and problem solving of common issues, and enhance regional team efforts.

Prohibited Activities are listed in Member Service Agreements, which are completed prior to a member beginning his/her term of service. The Program Director thoroughly explains prohibited activities at the time the member signs their service agreement. The Program Director puts these prohibited activities in writing and conducts another dialog at the member orientation. Each site is required to fill out a site application that outlines site responsibilities and prohibited activities. AYL anticipates the need to remind members of prohibited activities at monthly training sessions.

Member management is a team effort between site supervisors and the Program Director. Day to day supervision of members and their work environment is the responsibility of the site supervisor.

Members complete daily time logs which report # of youth served, # of high barrier youth, # of participating volunteers, and assets addressed. Support and guidance are provided for all members by the site supervisors and the Program Director. Special accommodations are arranged to ensure a positive member experience for underrepresented populations. Close communication between site supervisors and the Program Director ensures that each site action plan is workable in terms of time required of members and position descriptions matching goals set for each member.

The Program Director and site supervisors meet together at the beginning of the program year for a site supervisor training. A deep overview of the Youth Launch mission is covered at this initial training so site supervisors have a clear understanding of requirements and expectations, including program management, timekeeping, and compliance issues. In addition to an AYL overview, site supervisors receive in-depth training to ensure that members will not participate in any prohibited activity. The primary goal of the site supervisor is to serve as a professional mentor to help guide members through their service year. Site supervisors will be located at the same site as their member, which will make

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them readily available to assist members in developing and implementing activities at the site. After the initial member orientation and site supervisor training, the Program Director remains in close contact with all sites throughout the entire program year to assure quality programming and compliance at each site and to address problems and issues as they arise. AYL anticipates the need to maintain periodic phone and email communication between the Program Director, site supervisors, and members to ensure that all members are receiving support and guidance to fulfill their position assignments.

The Program Director makes quarterly site visits to ensure member activities align with the mission of AmeriCorps Youth Launch. These quarterly site visits also provide on-site monitoring. Feedback and periodic reports keep programs consistent with the AYL mission. In addition, they help site supervisors assure that members are serving at a reasonable pace to complete all required service hours and performance measures within the required time frame.

Common program elements have been set by the general position descriptions for members. These are consistent with the performance measures for youth development programs shared throughout the state of Iowa. Monthly member meetings provide training on state and federal rules and requirements and good practices in youth development.

OUTCOME: PERFORMANCE MEASURES. Graceland University's AmeriCorps Youth Launch program will engage 240 youth (grades 5-12) experiencing economic, cultural and opportunity poverty in academic and personal development activities. 180 of these targeted participants will demonstrate improved academic engagement as indicated by a pre/post developmental assets rubric. 35 enrichment opportunities focused on building developmental assets and encouraging 'sparks' engagement will be offered to 3500 youth in the region. These experiences will allow youth to build a network of role models and mentors in the field of their 'sparks' interest.

At the end of the three-year grant cycle, 720 targeted low income (grades 5-12) youth will be engaged in academic and asset building activities that lead to notable improvement in educational success and academic engagement. The demonstrable impact will be youth with greater educational success and higher educational aspirations and the ability to achieve them. AYL members will deliver this result by increasing developmental assets as measured by improved scores on the developmental asset rubric.

This rubric was developed in collaboration with Dr. Katie Clauson, Graceland Vice-President for Institutional Effectiveness, to measure the sequential development of assets proven to impact academic achievement. The rubric is based on Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets Framework, a widely accepted model of positive youth development that promotes positive behaviors and attitudes including success in school.

105 enrichment opportunities will be offered in the three years of the AYL grant providing enrichment to 10,500 youth. These enrichment opportunities will decrease the cultural and opportunity poverty for

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youth in the region.

Annual reporting to the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service will ensure program accountability. Members will report youth served through program opportunities, activities, and volunteer service on a quarterly basis to the Program Director. This and pre/post developmental asset data will be aggregated for annual reports.

Members in communities are able to work with 40 low-income/high barrier (grades 5-12) youth on an individual basis through the school year and summer (6 sites x 40 youth = 240 target served). The AYL program is a key to success of high-barrier youth in the southern Iowa region. In previous four grant years, AYL has focused more on programs and activities offered for youth participation, exploration, and enrichment. These programs have been very successful in providing safe places and caring adults for all youth along with healthy lifestyle choices, improved academic skills and opportunities to serve (America's Promise 5 Promises). This grant application proposes to build Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets in individual youth to give them skills for lifelong success. This refined program will utilize many established successful developmental activities but will be more intentional to reach the target group of youth. In addition, shifting the focus to the individual rather than the program will add extreme value to existing AYL efforts.

The target of 35 enrichment opportunities per year serving 3500 youth is based on analysis of previous years' data and envisioning 'spark' opportunities based on the diversity and potential untapped resources on Graceland campus that can be developed to serve youth of the region.

AYL has met all performance measures in the last full year of operation. (1) GOAL: 100% of AmeriCorps members who participate in citizenship training and complete their service will report an increase in their knowledge, skills and/or attitude at the end of their service as compared to their knowledge, skills and/or attitude at the beginning of their term of service using a pre and post test format. RESULT: 100% showed increase. (2) GOAL: 24 members will recruit 360 community volunteers to be successfully trained and managed for 1800 hours of service in 24 service projects. RESULT: 24 members recruited volunteers; 382 volunteers; 1820 hours of service; 36 service projects. (3) GOAL: 3,000 youth will be served through the 5 Promises of America's Promise. RESULT: 608 were provided safe places; 606 were matched with mentors; 600 were provided marketable skills; 600 were provided healthy start; 600 participated in service projects, resulting in 3014 total youth served. (4) GOAL: 75% of youth will demonstrate improvements in positive youth development characteristics as measured by pre/post responses to selected questions from the Iowa Youth Survey. RESULT: 82% demonstrated improvement.

VOLUNTEER GENERATION. The involvement of volunteers is an important element of the AYL program that has been enhanced by the creation of the new Volunteer Center of Southern Iowa. This is

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another CNCS grant program administered by Graceland that shares office space with the AYL program. A very strong synergy between these programs has proven beneficial to the missions of both organizations. Volunteer Center volunteers and opportunities will continue to be an important asset for the AYL program.

The Volunteer Center Director conducts the training in Volunteer Recruitment and Management for AYL and assists members on projects that require volunteers. Members and sites utilize a web-based management system, "Volunteer Solutions," to publicize and expand the impact of youth programs in the community.

AmeriCorps members recruit and mobilize more volunteers by targeting specific groups. Persons with disabilities are targeted through the county Central Point of Coordination Directors. Baby boomers are targeted through church and community organizations to harness their rich experiences; AYL's positive relationship with county Veterans Affairs Directors provides connections to veterans for member recruitment and program volunteers; and Graceland University students are recruited through service learning opportunities to become more engaged in the community. High school and university students serve as excellent role models as middle school youth mentors.

Volunteers will serve in AYL program as site supervisors, mentors, academic assistants, role models, and participants in enrichment and exploration activities. Improving educational success for youth involves so much more than homework completion and skill building. While those are components that AYL members will address according to student needs, the whole picture of academic engagement, improved attitude toward school, higher aspirations leading toward graduation, and personal success will be attained only as AYL utilizes the concept that "it takes a village to raise a child." AYL members must strive to change attitudes and norms in families and communities to put education as #1 on their lists of success factors.

AYL members will be responsible for recruiting 450 volunteers (75 volunteers x 6 counties) to assist in their programs. They will work collaboratively with the Volunteer Center of Southern Iowa to recruit, manage, and recognize volunteers. AYL reflects Iowa's leadership as CNCS's #2 state in the nation for volunteer generation with a vision of becoming #1. Members will report number of volunteers, hours served, and projects completed.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING. Graceland University provides sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, a model for AmeriCorps sponsorship in a rural setting. Located in Lamoni, Iowa, near the center of the six-county AmeriCorps Youth Launch regional service area, the university was founded in 1895 by Community of Christ. Graceland's vision, mission, and values are well aligned with the AmeriCorps community service philosophy. Graceland University Values and Vision

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statements proclaim "Graceland values learning, wholeness, and community. Graceland encourages development of these values for the enrichment of lives and the betterment of the world...inspiring and empowering persons for transformational service and leadership." These words speak to Graceland's abiding commitment to providing experiences to benefit individuals, their communities and their world, now and in the future.

Graceland University adds value to the AYL program. With a student enrollment of approximately 2,000 students, the university's strong, seasoned management team has the administrative, accounting, payroll, and human resources capacity to support the training and service delivery requirements of AYL. In total, Graceland successfully administers over \$22 million in federal funding annually. In addition to the current AmeriCorps grant, Graceland has administered for over 20 years federal student financial aid and three significant Federal Trio programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. Graceland operates under a Board of Trustees and Executive Council structure. Dr. John Sellars, president of Graceland and primary contact for the AYL grant, reports to a 27-member Board of Trustees and chairs the Executive Council. AmeriCorps Youth Launch is located in the Enrollment division under the direction of Greg Sutherland, BA, Director of Affiliate Relations and the secondary contact for the AYL grant. Mr. Sutherland has a long history of employment in various roles at Graceland, including Vice President for Enrollment Management and Dean of Admissions. Mr. Sutherland understands the important role Graceland and Youth Launch play in south central Iowa. Mr. Sutherland and the AYL director meet weekly and share offices two doors apart.

Shannon Harris fills the AmeriCorps Youth Launch Program Director position. As a past AmeriCorps member, she has a firm understanding of and a deep commitment to the services provided by AmeriCorps and more specifically, by the Youth Launch program itself. Ms. Harris has a BA degree in Business and has had employment experience in student financial aid and admissions. She comes to AYL with a sound grasp of the importance of positive youth development. Ms. Harris and a finance department staff member will attend the CNCS-sponsored technical assistance meetings.

Shirley Kessel, a Youth Development Specialist, provides significant guidance to the AYL Program. She has a BA in Education and has taught in elementary and middle school classrooms for 21 years. Over the past ten years, she has worked for non-profits in grant management. In addition to her role as past co-director of AYL, Ms. Kessel directed the School to Work program in Lamoni Community Schools, the Iowa Department of Health State Incentive Grant for three years, the Drugfree Communities Support Grant in Lamoni for five years, and the Drugfree Coalition Mentoring Grant for one year. She excels in community organizing and building capacity with multiple partners. She serves on multiple county, regional, state boards, and was influential in Lamoni obtaining "100 Best Communities" status for the past five years.

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The Accounting Department, under the direction of the Vice President for Business and Administrative Services with specific oversight from university controller Katie Still, provides real-time operating budget information to the Program Director who is responsible for grant expenditures. Graceland is audited annually. The Accounting Office is responsible to assure that appropriate accounting practices are followed and that required reports and financial information are completed using financial accounting best practices. This department has significant experience in federal and state grant accounting processes and provides very good financial oversight to AmeriCorps Youth Launch. Graceland University supports the AmeriCorps Youth Launch Program at all levels. In a recent meeting, the Board of Trustees listed "Civic Engagement" as one of five goals in its strategic long-range planning. Board members receive reports on and support the regional civic activities of the university. Summaries of AYL activities are regularly included in that information. As evidence of this commitment, Graceland allocates facilities, equipment, supplies, and personnel to ensure the success of AYL. Combined with contributions from local sources these constitute a \$162,597 financial contribution that represents 48% of the total cost of the AmeriCorps Program. In the most recent fiscal year, that figure, \$86,588, represented 37% of the total cost. In addition, because of the visibility of the AmeriCorps Youth Launch program, faculty and staff see its positive impact on area youth and become engaged in providing enrichment opportunities in their fields of specialty.

Along with Graceland, the Dekko Foundation serves as a significant partner in the AmeriCorps Youth Launch program. The Dekko Foundation is a private foundation started in 1981 by the late Chester E. (Chet) Dekko. The mission of the Dekko Foundation is to foster economic freedom through education. That mission is well aligned with both the mission of AmeriCorps and Graceland programs. The Dekko Foundation promotes 0-18 youth development programs in south central Iowa and, as a result, has awarded Graceland University \$91,000 cash match for each of next four years for the AYL project. The foundation awarded an additional \$75,000 annual grant to Graceland for the next four years to initiate cultural and enrichment opportunities for area youth to complement AYL efforts. These dollars will serve over 3,500 youth in enrichment and exploratory opportunities annually.

The AYL Program is the result of well-developed collaborative efforts in south central Iowa. A strong network of individuals representing school districts and other agencies deeply interested in youth development serve as site supervisors, meeting regularly to coordinate youth programming in the region. The AYL program enables individual youth programs to benefit from services offered to the multi-county region instead of only to individual counties or communities decreasing the sense of rural isolation. This has had a unifying impact and has empowered providers with a broader range of resources and a vision to perceive the region as one community instead of isolated individual townships. Local monetary contributions are minimal in this region due to the economic status of residents. The

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financially able residents in the region are as generous as they can be with the multitude of needs in the area. There are some, but only a few, franchise/branch businesses that can draw upon larger corporate resources for charitable support. Local retail businesses are usually operated as hobby businesses because they can't compete with the likes of Wal-Mart. The participating service sites and other organizations and clubs will contribute cash resources from partners in the amount of \$19,500. The region is rich in the spirit of volunteerism and in-kind support, one of the great advantages of Iowa's small rural communities. Communities in south central Iowa are dedicated and invested in the lives of young people. AmeriCorps members are able to direct and channel these volunteer efforts toward identified needs in each community.

Graceland has a long and valued history in this region as a beacon in the south central Iowa fields of isolation and poverty. Communities are remote, high in poverty, and scarce of philanthropic and corporate resources. AmeriCorps Youth Launch is designed to provide highly needed assets that will build on the possibility of the success in young people who are served by the program. The pressing need to inspire youth to believe in themselves -- their capacity to find freedom through education, to become engaged citizens, to foster creative solutions for future prosperity -- highlights the vital importance of the AmeriCorps Youth Launch program.

SUSTAINABILITY. AYL stakeholders in the region and at the federal level strongly support the mission of the program. Each supplies critical elements of support to the program, some financial, some in-kind, and some moral support. All the individuals, organizations, and agencies that work as collaborators, partners, and stakeholders are vital to the success of the program and AYL continually seeks additional partners. In southern Iowa, collaboration is a relationship of mutual dependence. As one flourishes, the other flourishes; as one struggles, the other struggles. If any collaborative element of AYL were to be lost, options for program continuation would be pursued in two ways: through modifications to the program delivery and through the continued pursuit of additional collaborators who share the important mission of youth development. **COMPLIANCE.** AmeriCorps sites are located throughout the six counties encompassing the AYL regional service area: Decatur, Clarke, Ringgold, Lucas, Union, and Wayne. With her office at Graceland University located strategically within these contiguous counties, the AmeriCorps Program Director is no more than forty miles driving distance to each service site, which allows the director to maintain close contact with site supervisors and AmeriCorps members. Ongoing contact with site supervisors, members, and service sites along with monthly member training sessions, a yearly orientation meeting with site supervisors, and a monthly newsletter all include valuable and definitive information about compliance and prohibited activity regulations. Additional information about site supervision and compliance is described in the Member Selection, Training, and Supervision section.

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ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION. AmeriCorps Youth Launch has maintained 100% enrollment rate for the previous three years of AmeriCorps funding. The cumulative retention rate for the three years is 98.8% with only one member failing to complete her service during that three-year period due to a family move before she completed her service.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE. The AYL program has met and/or exceeded all performance measures in all prior grant years. An explicit list of those accomplishments is included in the Performance Measures section of this narrative. Ongoing assessment and evaluation has shown opportunities for improvement in the design and presentation of the program. This application reflects modifications that will further improve the significant positive impact of AYL on the youth in the region.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. The AYL program qualifies for special circumstance consideration due to serving high poverty, resource-poor communities in remote, rural areas with a scarcity of philanthropic and corporate resources. All of these circumstances are addressed in detail throughout the program narrative.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Corporation Cost per Member Service Year: The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) cost per Member Service Year for the AYL program is \$13,299. The compelling rationale for increasing this cost over last year (\$13,036) is based on the special circumstances of the region as well as a shift from part time to more full time member positions. This is a resource-poor rural region with a very high poverty rate. Scarcity of corporate and philanthropic resources is a huge barrier in raising local match. However, AYL has increased the percentage of match significantly from 37% to 48% while increasing the number of members serving on a full time basis from 58% to 76% with the half time members serving a specific role in after school programming. School sites will add additional local cash match this year and AYL will continue to increase local share of costs to meet or exceed program goals. AmeriCorps members meet with organizations and clubs such as Optimist, Rotary, Lion's Club, schools, and faith groups to present the vision of AmeriCorps and explore how these groups can be involved with volunteers, monetary and other resource support. Private foundation funding, including a match from the Dekko Foundation, provides a large part of the local match. Graceland University provides major support for this program through financial and in-kind support. The university and AYL enrichment programs -- Southern Iowa Special Olympics, Art Academy, History Day, Science Camp, Writers' Workshop, sports camps, dance troupes, and many more enrichment opportunities provide outreach to 3500 youth annually. The South Central Iowa Community Foundation has funded numerous children, youth, and family projects that link to the AYL mission. This funding is available semi-annually for local projects. South central Iowa counties are eligible for funding from the Dekko Foundation to support

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individual projects that promote the development of children from birth through 18. Since its inception in 1981, the Dekko Foundation has contributed nearly \$100 million to communities within its six county geographic limit. The Foundation's focus is on educational projects that benefit young people in targeted communities. This Foundation has committed \$91,000 annually from 2011-2015 to work together with AYL on common goals to allow for capacity building in the area of youth development and for sustainability planning. An endowment has been proposed and is being explored to permanently fund a part of the match for the AmeriCorps grant and enable communities to make long term and sustainable plans involving AmeriCorps service. Many citizens of this region model and practice the AmeriCorps way of life on a daily basis. Their annual income parallels the living stipend of AmeriCorps members. These citizens give all they are able to give in terms of time and support for their communities. In-kind resource commitments come from a variety of sources. Area churches, school systems, community coalitions, service clubs, Iowa State Extension, social service agencies, Students In Free Enterprise, Campus Ministries, athletic teams, and School of Education are current partners in providing learning supports to increase educational success. Each partner offers services that are part of the AYL Support Toolkit. As this program grows and new programmatic needs/supplies emerge, new community partners will provide the needed resources. Site supervisors offer in-kind support from each county. Each service site offers office space and supplies for AmeriCorps members. Graceland University has committed financial and in-kind support such as office space, supplies, equipment, telephone and Internet services, meeting space, and accounting and administrative services.

BUDGET ADEQUACY. The proposed budget is adequate to successfully implement the desired outputs and outcomes of the AYL Program. The recruitment, training, support, development, and evaluation of AmeriCorps members are sustainable within the monies proposed. The budget also supports technical and programmatic assistance to host organizations from the Program Director. The budget allows for Graceland University to monitor, document, and report all outputs and outcomes from the AYL Program. Supplies and materials for programs and activities for each county are funded by organizations within the counties or other grant funds.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

As a grantee of less than \$500,000, an internal evaluation was conducted of the AYL program. Graceland's Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, the Director of Affiliate Relations, the AmeriCorps Youth Launch Program Director, and the Youth Development Specialist have served as an internal assessment committee. They have developed two unique assessment tools. The first is the required Program Evaluation given to all past members and site supervisors. The Program Evaluation utilized a Survey Monkey tool to gather data about AYL operational and qualitative activities from the perspective of the individuals actually providing the services. The survey tool was administered and

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analyzed by a Graceland student in a statistics class and the data gathered offers valuable information about program strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation is attached with this application as required in 2522.730.

The second tool measures the program impact on youth. This tool is a pre/post rubric survey that measures student progress related to targeted Search Institute Assets. As opposed to simply offering programs with the assumption that they will impact students in a positive way, this tool offers actual data about the impact of the program on the level of assets students themselves feel they possess. This data will provide important benchmark information that will inform decisions regarding the continual improvement of the program for the benefit of youth who are fortunate enough to be served by AmeriCorps Youth Launch.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Question Concerning Mentoring-While mentoring was not chosen as a performance measure, "mentoring" will be utilized as a tool to help students become academically engaged (performance measurement) and educationally successful. AmeriCorps Youth Launch members will provide extensive wrap around services such as academic assistance, enrichment opportunities, asset development, and 'spark' development, along with mentoring as a means to increase academic engagement (performance measurement) and to ensure educational success through the positive development of the whole student.

Question Concerning Site Supervisors as Volunteers- AmeriCorps Youth Launch will utilize volunteers as site supervisors to guide member activities throughout their service year. These site supervisors are professional and permanent employees of the various youth serving organizations, primarily public schools that AmeriCorps Youth Launch will designate as its sites. These sites will have missions which align with AmeriCorps Youth Launch and will have similar performance and compliance expectations. An initial visit will be made by the AmeriCorps Youth Launch Program Director where the site supervisor will review and sign a site contract that outlines compliance expectations including prohibited activities. After the initial visit, these volunteer site supervisors will attend a site supervisor orientation at the beginning of the service year where they will be educated on AmeriCorps Youth Launch, its mission and goals, as well as compliance procedures. During the service year, the AmeriCorps Youth Launch Program Director will make routine visits to sites to ensure that the site programs, activities, and expectations remain well aligned with AmeriCorps and, more specifically, the AmeriCorps Youth Launch program.

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Continuation Changes

N/A

Required Documents

Document Name

Status

Evaluation

Sent

Labor Union Concurrence

Not Applicable