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## Executive Summary

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's Vet Corps program will serve veterans and family members of veterans in a four-county area of northeast Wisconsin. The program will offer meaningful service opportunities to members, while at the same time providing much needed veteran-focused support to local nonprofit organizations. Vet Corps will enroll 22 quarter-time members (5.82 MSY) who will leverage 150 additional volunteers. During the 09/01/13 - 08/31/14 project period, the following outcomes will be achieved: As a result of their participation in Vet Corps, a) 18 members will show an increase in indicators of successful integration into civilian life and b) 18 members will demonstrate an increase in their professional skills. CNCS's investment of \$76,940 will be matched with \$43,452.

## Rationale and Approach

A.NEED - A.I. Community Needs: The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's (UWO) Vet Corps will focus on supporting veterans transitioning from military to civilian life. Its primary target will be veterans returning from conflicts in the Middle East, yet other veterans and military families will be served as well. All of those who will be participating in Vet Corps will be either veterans who are UWO students or family members of veterans who are UWO students. Through research and surveys of the target population, we have identified difficulty transitioning from military to civilian life as the overarching issue confronting the veterans and military family members we intend to serve. We found that the following are the fundamental issues associated with that very challenging transition: a)Lack of adequate support systems for veterans and military families - especially at colleges and universities; b)Lack of employment opportunities that utilize veterans' existing skills; c)Lack of meaningful service opportunities for veterans; and d)Difficulties accessing veterans benefits. To address these issues, Vet Corps will utilize the knowledge, skills and abilities of 22 quarter-time members who will be veterans, immediate family members of veterans or immediate family of active duty service members. They will make a significant and positive contribution to the communities of northeast Wisconsin, improve the quality of their own lives as civilians, and be an asset to fellow veterans, service members, and military families.

A.II. Rationale for Selection of Community Needs: With its high veteran student population and award winning efforts to serve them, UW Oshkosh is uniquely positioned to address one of CNCS's highest priorities for 2013. The University has seen its veteran enrollment increase more than 200% over the last decade. The current number of veterans enrolled is 467; 401 are male and 66 are female. Another 181 dependents of veterans are receiving university associated benefits. Because of its

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awareness of and diligent responsiveness to its burgeoning veteran population, UWO was recently recognized as "the 7th most military friendly college in the country" by Military Times newsweekly. The university received high marks for its veteran-focused policies and resources, financial assistance, academic flexibility, campus culture, and support services. The University's Veterans Resource Center (VRC), which expanded during the 2011-12 academic year, is dedicated to providing support for UWO's active duty veterans, guard members, reservists, and dependents of veterans. The VRC has agreed to partner with Vet Corps to enhance and expand services throughout the community. Additional campus resources include the UWO-hosted veteran's support group, the Undergraduate Advising Resource Center, Counseling Center, Dean of Students, Center for New Learning, Admissions Office and Adult Nontraditional Student Resource Office. In addition, the University hired a Veterans Resource Coordinator in 2011, who is responsible for coordinating and promoting campus veterans' services. UWO's commitment to serving veterans is clear. With Vet Corps this commitment will be leveraged to enhance services and expand reach into the larger community.

A.III. Documentation of Extent and Severity of Need in the Target Community: According to the National Student Veterans Association, "each year, thousands of veterans separate from the military only to find an overwhelming combination of emotional, financial, academic, and cultural obstacles." As of 2010, there were more than 2 million veterans of the Global War on Terrorism and 870,000 military veterans in institutions of higher education." UW Oshkosh currently has the highest number of veteran students enrolled among the comprehensive universities in the UW system and the highest percentage for any university in the system.

In Wisconsin, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) states that Wisconsin's unemployment rate for veterans is 15%, more than double the current 6.7% rate of the state's general population. And though Wisconsin VA does not have specific figures, it estimates that the unemployment rates for recently returned Wisconsin battalions are much higher than for those who returned earlier. According to the Department, significant contributors include lack of education, lack of individual and family support and lack of meaningful connections to other veterans were cited as some of the key reasons for the high unemployment rate of veterans.

In addition, there are many factors that contribute to the complications in veterans' educational achievement. Research by the American Journal of Health Behavior has shown "a correlation between being a student who is an Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) veteran and being at increased risk for tobacco use, alcohol misuse, and unsafe behaviors compared to non-veteran students. Reasons for these risks relate to a complex array of factors

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including combat exposure, reintegration challenges, and emotional/mental health issues."

The post-9/11 GI Bill has helped increase the number of veterans attending colleges on a national level. Wisconsin is no exception, with the UW system seeing a 180% increase in veteran enrollment in the last decade. However, statistics also show a lower success rate for veterans in obtaining a bachelors degree compared to non-veterans, even though veterans are more likely to attend college than non-veterans. The 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement examined the experiences of veterans, who perceive lower levels of campus support than their non-veteran classmates. It is clear that being a student adds another level of complication to the already difficult transition from military to civilian life and that traditional university support systems are not enough to ensure success for veterans. The high rates of suicide, mental illness, unsafe behaviors and lower rates of college success among veterans are indicators that cry out for proven interventions like meaningful service opportunities that increase happiness and well-being, hopefulness and purpose.

A 2009 report by Civic Enterprises looks into understanding the civic lives of OIF/OEF veterans and the roles community institutions and veterans' own service on the home front can play in a successful transition from military to civilian life. Only 13% of veterans surveyed for this report strongly agreed that their transition home was going well, and just 9% strongly agreed the needs of their family were being met. Of those who had become volunteers, a much higher number said their transitions were going well, compared to non-volunteers. This difference also held for their family's transition. The youngest veterans surveyed were having the hardest time with their transitions and finding meaningful service opportunities, with only 47% of young veterans 29 and younger saying their transitions were going well, while 57% of older veterans strongly agreed or agreed with the same statement. These figures indicate a need to involve veterans, especially younger veterans, in ongoing, meaningful service experiences.

Veterans surveyed by Civic Enterprise identified sets of skills learned during their military service in areas nonprofits consistently report need: "management and supervision, ability to lead diverse groups of people, team-building skills, operational skills and logistics skills". While over 85% of the area nonprofits we surveyed indicated that veterans are served by their organizations, only 15% said they had staff trained specifically to serve veterans.

Vet Corps will offer area veterans a way to begin serving on the home front, providing needed skills to area nonprofits while also recruiting and training volunteers. Members will be able translate their AmeriCorps experience into documented work experience that will bolster their chances of securing meaningful employment once their service term is complete. Vet Corps will be an especially important

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resource given that 80% of respondents to a survey distributed at UWO's Veterans Open House in September 2011 said that employment was among their top needs.

A.IV. Description of Target Community: Vet Corps will serve UWO student veterans as well as the veterans, families of veterans and military families in the four-county Fox River Valley Region of northeast Wisconsin. This region's total current population is approximately 640,667, and of that 43,711 are veterans. The per county veteran population breakdown is as follows: Brown -- 16,459, Calumet -- 2,881, Outagamie -- 12,060 and Winnebago -- 12,311. There are 648 UW Oshkosh students currently receiving veterans' benefits. Of those, 467 are veterans -- 401 male and 66 female. The remaining 181 are spouses and immediate family members of veterans.

A.V. Rationale for Selection of Population to be Served: UWO is targeting veterans because it enrolls so many, understands their complex needs and is uniquely positioned to help them in ways that will also greatly benefit the larger community. It has made support for veterans and their families a clear priority. The four-county Fox River Valley Region was selected because of its relative proximity to the University.

B. WHY MEMBERS ARE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: B.I. What Members Will Do: We will place 22 quarter-time members with a variety of nonprofit organizations where they will support nonprofits' missions while also acting as key resources for veterans and military families. They will be available to staff, volunteers, and clients to provide information, organizational support and veteran-specific referrals. We currently have twelve firm member placement commitments from local nonprofits and are working to finalize the remainder.

Vet Corps will focus on serving veterans in two fundamental ways: 1) providing meaningful AmeriCorps service opportunities that target pressing community issues and 2) meeting veterans' demonstrated needs with peer support provided by other veterans. This direct two-pronged approach is the most effective means to solving the community needs outlined in Section A of this proposal. Vet Corps will also be specifically addressing the Serve Wisconsin State Service Plan by developing a sustainable service solution for veterans. The UWO Vet Corps program design is evidence based and targets community needs with methods that focus on using Vet Corps members to increase the number of volunteers recruited, retained, managed, and recognized.

After surveying the available literature (cited below) and interviewing both local veterans and representatives of local veteran organizations, we concluded that veteran-to-veteran service is extremely effective. Time and time again we heard that no one better understands the experiences of veterans than other veterans. The following are details from key sources that validate the efficacy of

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our proposed approach:

\* "CIVIC ENTERPRISES" REPORT - The key theme that echoed throughout the Civic Enterprises report "All Volunteer Force: From Military to Civilian Service" was the difference fellow veterans can make in whether someone serves. When a veteran service organization asked a veteran to serve, 78% did. Veterans answered that one of the most powerful "asks" to serve could come from fellow veterans. One veteran spoke to the appeal of serving with other veterans when he said, "Although there are many programs out there, I wish it was easier to meet veterans and find organizations to do things, such as serving the community, together as veterans."

\* "NATIONAL SERVICE RESOURCES" ARTICLE - "Veterans can gain a rich sense of homecoming and shared community through being of meaningful service to each other, and the community at large."

\* "VETS4VETS" - The program urges veterans to use peer support to express their emotions, manage their challenges and ease their reintegration into society. According to a recent article from the National Institute for Peer Support, their own "hierarchical regression research analysis of post-test change, found that the Vets4Vets program increased perceived peer support, self-efficacy and general self-efficacy reduced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Both situation-specific self-efficacy and general self-efficacy mediated the relationship between peer support and PTSD symptoms."

\* LOCAL VETERAN REPRESENTATIVES - Raymond Perez, Wisconsin VA; Robert Stone, Winnebago County VA; Lisa Danielson, UWO Registrar's Office all vouched strongly for the concept of engaging veterans to serve veterans as part of the UW Oshkosh Vet Corps program design.

B.II. Proposed Member Activities: Because of the diversity of our proposed nonprofit site types, members will have the potential to participate in a range of veteran-focused activities. Vet Corps member service activities will vary somewhat depending on the host site, but specific examples from committed sites follow below.

\*Oshkosh Truancy Intervention Program: a) Members will act as mentors to local public school students in need, meeting with students at school during study hall to assist with school work, organization, and problem solving. They will also act as strong adult role models; b) Members will assist in the development and execution of community service projects for students; c) Members will be matched on a priority basis with students who have veteran or active duty military family members. Vet Corps members will be much better equipped than an average volunteer to work with these students - answering questions and providing social and emotional support; d) Members will

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gain experience working with students and the public school system in advisory roles.

\*American Red Cross: a) A member specifically assigned to the organization's "Service to the Armed Forces Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services" (SAF-VAVS) will recruit and place veteran volunteers at Veterans Administration Medical Centers and the new Green Bay, Wisconsin VA clinic; b) This member will also be tasked with supporting and promoting SAF-VAVS in the four-county target area; c) A second member will be assigned to "Service to the Armed Forces Public Relations" (SAF-PR) and tasked with partnership building. They will provide information about SAF services to military support organizations, military families and members of the military in the target region; d) This member will also coordinate SAF events such as Holiday Mail for Heroes, a national card campaign in which members of the public create cards that are sent to veterans and active service members.

\*Goodwill Industries: a) Members will supplement existing direct service efforts to diverse populations, providing additional support and training to persons with barriers to employment and full inclusion; b) Members will share information about Goodwill with other veterans, opening up other possibilities for service or employment; c) Goodwill has made a commitment to strongly consider for any Goodwill job openings members who successfully complete an AmeriCorps service term.

\*UW Oshkosh Veterans Resource Center: a) A member will be tasked with leading the UW Oshkosh Military Ambassador Program, a peer mentoring program for new students on campus. In that role, the member will educate veterans about their benefits and about university policies; b) This same member will act as a campus point of contact for veterans and military family members, offering guidance and support in an effort to facilitate transitions from military to civilian life; c) A second member will be specifically tasked with assisting military families and dependents; d) This member will be a direct point of contact for students using veteran education benefits such as the Wisconsin GI Bill or Chapter 35 (Federal VA) benefits; e) This member will also work with students who have a family member facing deployment, currently deployed, or recently returned.

B.III. Number of Members and Types of Service Terms Requested: We are requesting 22, 1/4 time positions.

B.IV. How Slot Types Align with Program Design and Activities: Quarter time positions will be completed over a 3-9 month period, providing maximum flexibility for members with other commitments such as school and family. Training will be offered twice annually and designed to accommodate our relatively flexible member slots. We will partner with UWO's Office of Career Services to offer members the opportunity to receive three elective credits for their AmeriCorps service. This will be a significant added benefit to members.

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B.V. Proposed Sites and Their Ability to Succeed: Numerous nonprofit organizations have already committed to partnering with Vet Corps by hosting one or more AmeriCorps members. Among those that have committed to sponsoring one or more members are the following: a)UWO Veterans Resource Center, b)Oshkosh Area School District, c)Goodwill Industries, d)American Red Cross, e) Oshkosh Truancy Intervention Program, f)United Way, and g)UW Fox Valley. Service sites will be selected based on fit with Vet Corps program goals as well as the needs of prospective service members. Sites will make a financial contribution in the form of a site fee to support member and program expenses. Some sites will also provide in-kind resources such as office space, office supplies, and equipment. We will work with sites in support of their AmeriCorps related fund development efforts, offering information, ideas and guidance.

C. EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE INFORMED & MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT C.I.  
How Vet Corps Interventions are Evidence-Based: According to "All Volunteer Force: From Military to Civilian", a 2009 study by Civic Enterprises, veterans are more likely to volunteer when asked by a fellow veteran. In fact, 78% of veterans volunteer when asked by a veteran service organization. The Washington State-based Veterans Training Support Center also states that "Veterans are more likely to identify with other veterans per their military training." Thus, Vet Corps members asking other veterans to volunteer will greatly increase the likelihood that those veterans will get involved. The Civic Enterprises report also documents the fact that veterans who volunteer will have more successful transitions into civilian and home life than those who do not. In response to whether their transition was going well, 55% of veterans who volunteered responded positively, as compared to only 47% who did not. The report recommends that communities provide meaningful service opportunities to assist veterans in defining themselves as civilians and smoothing the transition home. The George Washington University's Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service recently analyzed a survey of veteran service projects ranging from national programs to individual efforts. Its subsequent report "Engaging Student Veterans in Community Service", published in September 2011, concluded that successful veteran service programs have the following four components: "1)Seek to understand each veteran, 2)Foster a peer-to-peer community of veteran volunteers, 3)Provide well-structured service opportunities, and 4) Communicate well." These four core components will be essential elements of UWO's Vet Corps, ensuring a high quality program that benefits both the members and the larger community.

C.II. How Vet Corps Interventions Will Have Measurable Community Impact: Vet Corps will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength. Specifically

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targeted member activities will result in an increase in the number of veterans and military service members and their families served by CNCS programs. Member activities will also result in an increase in the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through Vet Corps supported programs. We will place veterans and military family members at nonprofit service sites to recruit and manage volunteers, with an additional special focus on recruiting veteran volunteers and serving as a resource for fellow veterans. Members will use their skills in meaningful service positions while also providing much needed support to local nonprofits. Results will include an increase in volunteers who are veterans and military family members, an increase in the ability of nonprofits to serve veterans and members of military families, more successful integration of Vet Corps members into civilian life, and an increase in members' professional skills. Volunteer logs and pre and post surveys will be used to document impacts. Further detail on measurable impacts is included in the performance measures section of this proposal.

D. MEMBER RECRUITMENT: D.1. - Member recruitment will be done in two waves set to coincide with UWO semesters and will target veteran students at UWO who have returned from active duty within the last three years. All members will be veterans or immediate family members of active duty military members living in the Fox River Valley Region of northeast Wisconsin. In order to build a strong and diverse team of members, we will also enroll military family members and other veterans who exhibit outstanding qualifications. Our primary recruiting channel will be UWO's Veterans Resource Center (VRC), which has agreed to display and disseminate Vet Corps information, encourage students to apply and directly refer students to the program. Vet Corps will use an array of other recruiting methods. Among them are the following: a) Titan Jobs - UWO's online recruiting and job search system; b) Public presentations and electronic communications to local veterans' organizations; c) Social media networks including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, d) Employment and volunteer fairs; e) Established professional networks; and f) AmeriCorps websites, both national and local. We will use the AmeriCorps online application system and promote it on our Vet Corps website. The website will be listed on promotional and recruiting materials. It will include information on member benefits such as student loan forbearance and education awards.

D.II. - UWO's history and success working with underrepresented populations will be ensured in Vet Corps: Over its 30+ year history, UWO's Center for Career Development and Employability Training (CCDET), the Vet Corps Program Manager, has operated many programs that serve underrepresented populations. Its Truancy Intervention Program is one such example. It provides mentors for at-risk youth and trains case workers involved with families receiving benefits such as food stamps and

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medical assistance. Another example is UWO's previously funded AmeriCorps Connects program which provided tutoring to at-risk students. In addition, Vet Corps will be able to take advantage of the larger University's experience and knowledge gained working with underrepresented populations. Departments such as Human Services, Counseling, Student Services and the Multicultural Education Center all have vast experience serving underrepresented populations. Their staff will be readily available to CCDET and will help bolster the success of Vet Corps. As in its other programs, UWO will place special emphasis in Vet Corps on recruiting from underrepresented populations. Rural residents, minorities and low-income persons will be specifically targeted.

E. MEMBER TRAINING: Member training will be also be done in two waves set to coincide with UWO semesters. Members will complete AmeriCorps program orientation before beginning service at their sites, and host site orientations will take place during their first week of service. Each host site director will designate an employee as Vet Corps site supervisor prior to the start of the program year and will require that person to participate in site supervisor orientation.

Each training will open with a Vets4Vets-style peer support meeting led by the coordinator of the university's Veterans' Resource Center (VRC). Sessions will include the following: Program and Site Orientation, Volunteer Management, How to Organize and Run a Service Project, Recognizing PTSD/Other Mental Health Issues/Suicide Prevention, Veterans Resources and Life After AmeriCorps. Team building activities will be incorporated into each training. Ongoing supervision and consultation with members will be used to determine what additional trainings are needed. Among other likely training topics are the following: Civic Engagement, Volunteer Recognition, Stress Management, Mentoring, Communication Skills, Boundaries/Ethics, Customer Service and First Aid/CPR.

Vet Corps staff will design, schedule and implement member training and leadership from practicing professionals, community leaders and area experts will be incorporated in each session. We will utilize their many years of expertise related to veteran-specific issues. The following organizations have agreed to partner with Vet Corps during program start-up and implementation: 1)UWO Veterans Resource Center, 2)UWO Career Services, 3)UWO Counseling Services, 4)UWO Registrar's Office, 5)UWO Veterans Club, 6)Wisconsin State Department of Veterans Affairs, 7)Winnebago County Veterans Service Office, 8)Appleton Veterans Hospital, and 9) Goodwill Industries.

Members will be surveyed as part of the enrollment process to determine their training needs and availability. A training schedule will be developed based on survey responses, and members will complete training evaluations to provide further feedback. Site orientation will take place at host sites to familiarize members with site-specific information. Host site staff will provide job shadowing to

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familiarize members with site practices and activities. Members will submit a program-provided site orientation checklist to program staff to document that site orientation requirements are met. Vet Corps staff will provide ongoing support using the site supervisor email list, site visits and by inviting site supervisors to attend member trainings. A handbook for members and site supervisors will include general AmeriCorps and community information as well as guidance on program policies, procedures and prohibited activities.

Position descriptions submitted by sites will be reviewed before the member service begins so that training can be geared toward specific duties. Feedback will be obtained from site supervisors to assist us in developing a training schedule. Members will also be surveyed after each training to determine if the training met their needs and to find out what other training they feel they need. Sites will be required to provide site specific training and will be asked at each site visit about training they have provided.

Vet Corps staff will work with its veteran-focused partner organizations to design, schedule and implement member training on a twice annual schedule. Practicing professionals, community leaders and area experts will be recruited. The following trainings will be offered: volunteer management, boundaries and ethics, civic engagement, communication skills, team building, first aid/CPR, veteran resources, recognizing PTSD and other mental health issues, suicide prevention, mentoring, stress management, and customer service. At the end of each semester, we will provide the following trainings: Life After AmeriCorps (including career planning and goal setting), continuing civic engagement, and member reflection presentations. Additional trainings will be provided throughout the year as needed. They will be customized based on members' skill levels and needs, and will be presented in multiple formats to accommodate a variety of learning styles. Additional training will focus on transitioning into future education, a career or a subsequent term of service. UWO Career Services Office will provide assistance with job searches, education planning, labor market research, resume writing and interviewing.

Ongoing civic engagement training and activities will target the following: a)Positive attitudes regarding the value of lifelong citizenship and service for the common good; b)Opportunities to discuss and explore our community and its people as well as processes, and institutions that are most effective in improving community conditions; c)Enhanced life and employment skills through civic involvement; d)Coordination of effective service projects that respond to real community needs; and e)Development of social, cultural and analytical skills necessary to participate effectively in American democracy. Prohibited activities will be discussed during orientation and at every site visit to ensure

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that members are not performing these activities on AmeriCorps time.

Rather than holding a single training on diversity, our entire program design and training structure will be designed through an inclusive lens. Program evaluations will be given to members and site supervisors after trainings and group meetings to solicit ideas for improvements, with a focus on providing a positive member experience for underrepresented populations.

F. MEMBER SUPERVISION: Site supervisors will act as mentors and supervise day-to-day member site activities. The Vet Corps program director will work with site supervisors to provide support to members and ensure they are meeting Vet Corps requirements. The program director will provide individual support through regular site visits, phone and electronic communication, providing information about training opportunities and participating in one-on-one meetings. The program director will also meet with each member and site supervisors once per month, and as needed to discuss goals, progress and challenges. Supervisors will work with members to ensure challenges are being addressed, progress toward goals is being made and members are on track to complete program requirements.

In addition to regular contact with members, program staff will facilitate online chat sessions, at least once per week. They will be designed to encourage members to ask questions of program staff and to facilitate discussion among members. Vet Corps will also use social networking and web-based communication tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Sites and Google Groups to keep members connected and fully engaged throughout the program year and beyond.

After consulting with Vet Corps staff, and prior to member placement, each nonprofit agency director will designate a current employee as a site supervisor. Selection will be based on supervisory skills and experience, AmeriCorps or other volunteer experiences, military experience and ability to lead. Orientation will be completed either in person or online. Training will take place twice annually and will coincide with the start of each university semester. It will cover the local program, national AmeriCorps policies and procedures, prohibited activities, and where to find more information. Each site supervisor will receive a site supervisor handbook that includes information on topics such as approving timesheets, progress reporting, and allowable and prohibited activities. Site supervisors will be members' immediate supervisors, making regular contact (by phone, email and on-site meetings), serving as mentors and acting as liaisons between the site and Vet Corps program staff.

After orientation, Vet Corps will provide ongoing supervisor support and training through communications on the site supervisor email list, site visits, and scheduled trainings. A handbook for members and site supervisors will be provided before a member is placed.

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G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: G.1. Program components that allow powerful service experiences that increase community impact and lead to continued civic participation and connectivity with other AmeriCorps members and national service participants: Members will participate in team building activities, online interactions, group service projects and training to enhance their service experiences and connect with fellow members. They will have the support of fellow Corps members, site supervisors, and program staff encouraging them to reach their goals and strengthen their community through service. This team-based approach will reinforce the fact that members are part of a larger movement that can make a difference. Vet Corps' ongoing civic engagement activities and training will aim to promote the following: a) Positive attitudes regarding the value of lifelong citizenship and service for the common good; b) Opportunities to explore our community, its people and processes as well as institutions most effective in improving community conditions; c) Enhanced life and employment skills; d) Coordination of effective service projects that respond to real community needs; and e) Development of social, cultural and analytical skills necessary to participate effectively in American democracy.

Vet Corps will provide local veterans a new and much needed mission, meaningful service opportunities and a chance to put to good use skills developed in the military. Participation in Vet Corps will also further develop veterans' professional skills, making them more attractive to employers. Connecting members and volunteers to other veterans at nonprofit host sites will provide uniquely effective systems of support, facilitating smoother transitions into civilian life for both members and host site clients. And while a nine month Vet Corps term of service will not result in complete reintegration into civilian life, it will make a significant contribution to that process while ensuring that participants gain many of the skills they need to continue on their respective reintegration journeys.

G.II. How Vet Corps will provide structured opportunities to reflect on and learn from service: Members will participate in additional monthly Vet Corps trainings. They will be required to maintain a journal as a vehicle for reflection on their day-to-day service experience and submit at least one reflection piece during their term. They will be surveyed at the beginning and end of their service to measure the impact of Vet Corps participation on their knowledge and involvement in the community.

G.III. Description of How Program Design Links the Following Four Items: a) Identified needs, b) Interventions, c) Ways in which Vet Corps members are particularly well suited to deliver the interventions and d) Anticipated Outcomes: Members will be placed with community organizations

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where they will promote volunteerism and continued service while acting as veteran representatives. These veterans already possess many of the skills needed by area nonprofits. Through their AmeriCorps service they will develop and utilize their professional skills in a civilian setting, increasing nonprofits' general effectiveness and also their ability to serve veterans and military families. Members' military backgrounds will make them uniquely able to identify with other veterans and military families and thus especially effective in meeting targeted needs. Members will form a community with other veteran members through their service, providing a vehicle for them to support each other during the transition from combat to civilian life.

Service and training will provide work experience, a supportive community, and facilitated access to a network of resources (VA, GI Bill, etc.). Members will make positive contributions to the communities of the Fox River Valley Region, improve the quality of their own lives as civilians and be an asset to their fellow veterans, service members and military families. Veterans need support to feel valued by their community, reintegrate into civilian life, and avoid potential negative impacts of returning from military service. Vet Corps will provide these opportunities, offering a forum to translate skills developed in the military into meaningful civilian service experiences, providing support and resources to veterans and military families.

Though the time period for veteran reintegration varies widely, we will be working with member veterans for a year at most. Thus, we will measure indicators of successful reintegration over their period of AmeriCorps participation. We are working with Raymond Perez, Coordinator for Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs' Mission: Welcome Home Program, to develop specific measures of member reintegration best suited to our program. We intend to use intake and exit processes that incorporate member surveys on specific points related to reintegration. We expect to see an increase in indicators of successful reintegration, such as identifying and utilizing transferable skills, identifying and researching career possibilities, evaluating financial needs in relation to a job, establishing personal and professional goals, and translating military experiences into civilian terms.

G.IV. Service Sites: Service sites will be selected based on documented need for an AmeriCorps member to increase or stabilize organizational capacity and provide services. Ability to provide a quality service experience will also be a key criterion. Priority will be given to organizations that do not have staff or volunteers specifically trained to meet the needs of veteran clients and military families. Applications will require a service plan for each member that is based on Vet Corps goals. Sites will also develop position descriptions for their AmeriCorps member based on a template provided by Vet Corps.

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G.V. How Vet Corps members will identify as AmeriCorps members to themselves and the public: Ensuring members are aware they are AmeriCorps members and will identify as such: Members will be required to wear AmeriCorps service gear while performing service. This will ensure that both they and those with whom they interact will identify them as members. Sites will be required to display the AmeriCorps logo in a prominent location to alert the community that they are host sites.

G.VI. Connecting members with other AmeriCorps members and national service participants: Vet Corps staff will maintain a website members will use to connect and access information about Vet Corps, AmeriCorps, National Service, and community resources. A listserv will be maintained by program staff and will be used both as an information distribution mechanism and a way for members to connect with each other. Members will be encouraged to reflect upon and share their AmeriCorps service experience through blogging while other forms of social media such as Facebook and Twitter will be used to connect members and the larger community. Members will be encouraged to join AmeriCorps Alums as a way to connect with the national AmeriCorps community and learn about other opportunities and benefits. They will be required to attend statewide AmeriCorps events that occur while they are enrolled, providing them the opportunity to connect with other members and learn about AmeriCorps efforts throughout Wisconsin.

G.VII. Compliance and prohibited activities: As part of our process of orientation and contracting with placement sites for members, all sites will sign contracts with thorough information on compliance issues including prohibited activities, appropriate member service, required notice of AmeriCorps presence at the site, and any requirement of the program. Regular site visits during the program year by Vet Corps staff will provide for monitoring for compliance at the site and for identifying any issues that may need correction.

H. VOLUNTEER GENERATION: Volunteer recruitment and support will be a major part of member duties. Members will recruit volunteers to be involved in a variety of projects at service sites. Members will focus on recruiting veterans and military family members to provide meaningful service opportunities which, will in turn, support those veterans' transitions to civilian life. Working with the UWO's Veterans Resource Center, local veterans groups, and county veterans' services departments will facilitate their efforts. Members will also recruit volunteers by partnering with volunteer centers and volunteer fairs and by using online tools such as social media and online volunteer recruiting systems.

Volunteers recruited and supported by Vet Corps will participate in a wide range of activities in support of host sites. Among those are the following: a) Performing client assessments and intake

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appointments; b)Mentoring youth, c)Leading after school and other youth programs; d)Participating in service projects; e)Assisting with community events; f)Promoting wellness programs and activities; and g)Tracking and organizing donations and supplies. Some volunteers will also participate in program-planned and community-based service projects such as National Night Out, AmeriCorps Week and national days of service. By focusing on recruiting veterans as volunteers, Vet Corps will further support meaningful service opportunities for those volunteers and help facilitate their successful transition from military to civilian life.

Vet Corps members will enhance the ability of nonprofit organizations to recruit and manage volunteers. Members will recruit and manage veteran volunteers and will also implement practices designed to foster continued volunteer involvement by veterans and military families after the members' terms of service are complete. This will be a significant benefit to local nonprofits, many of which do not focus specifically on the recruitment and involvement of veteran and military family volunteers.

I. AMERICORPS BRANDING - Fostering a sense of connection and identity with the AmeriCorps brand: As part of their orientation, members will learn about AmeriCorps and how they fit into the bigger picture of National Service. Vet Corps will use the AmeriCorps logo on all websites, electronic material, print material, and service gear worn by members. Members will ensure that they are clearly identifiable as AmeriCorps participants while participating in Vet Corps activities. They will wear AmeriCorps logo gear at all times during their participation and always use AmeriCorps branded materials and publications.

### **Organizational Capability**

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND -- A.I. Mission and Brief History: UW Oshkosh was established in 1871, and is now a comprehensive State-supported university governed by the University of Wisconsin System. The University has approximately 13,500 students and offers accredited bachelor's and master's degrees in business, liberal arts and sciences, nursing, education and human services, and a doctorate in nursing. Vet Corps will be based at the University's Center for Career Development and Employability Training (CCDET) - part of the University since 1979. CCDET's unique structure within the University setting allows maximum flexibility in providing highly qualified staff. Its core values emphasize collaborative partnerships, integrity, innovation, diversity and continuous improvement. E-learning techniques such as computer-based training, web development, list serves and social networking are used to facilitate learning and communication throughout all of its programs.

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UWO CCDET has substantial experience administering AmeriCorps grants and other federal grants. For four years (2000-2004) it provided a combination of administration, case management and training for Appleton, Wisconsin's YMCA AmeriCorps program. In addition, UWO CCDET administered the Wisconsin National Community Service Board formula-funded AmeriCorps Connects program for eight years, from 2004-2011. Moreover, CCDET administers at least two to three federal grants annually, while the University administers at least forty each year.

A.II. Management Structure: UWO is governed by a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that will ensure sound program and fiscal oversight related to cash receipts and disbursements, purchasing, property management, payroll, and cost allocation. The University uses approved processes to ensure compliance with federal and state guidelines and regulations. It will manage all necessary fund accounting, auditing, and program monitoring as well as evaluation procedures as required. Audits of the University's federal programs are performed by the State of Wisconsin's Legislative Audit Bureau.

A.III. Staff, Their Experience and Specific Roles: Staffing will include a Program Manager (3%), Program Director (55%) and an Administrative Support Staff Person (37.5%). The Program Director will be Mary Manchester, a former AmeriCorps member who was AmeriCorps Connects Case Manager for four years. She will recruit members, secure sites and plan and deliver orientation. She will also meet regularly with members and site supervisors to track the progress and performance of each member. Part time administrative staff will handle administrative tasks and manage documents and records. The Program Manager will provide overall budget oversight and approvals. In addition staff from the UWO Veteran's Resource Center will participate in program training and ongoing support, providing deep and meaningful expertise that veteran participants will value highly.

The Program Director will work with sites to monitor and ensure program compliance. She and the University Financial Services Office will maintain site contracts and records of site fee payments. All site supervisors will be required to participate in an orientation, either online or in person. They will be provided with a handbook prior to member placement that will provide guidance on program policies, procedures and prohibited activities. Program staff will meet with site supervisors regularly to discuss program progress and address any challenges.

B. SUSTAINABILITY: B.I. The University will be a leader in supporting program sustainability. It has created and provides resources to staff a Veterans Resource Center that employs both a Veterans Benefit Coordinator and a Veterans Resource Coordinator. Buy-in and leadership from the Veterans Resource Center and CCDET's demonstrated ability to secure both foundation grants and local

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donations will foster program sustainability as well. Recruiting and management of volunteers by members at host sites will be a keystone to sustained program impact. Moreover, the high number of veteran students on campus, those with a clear and direct interest in the program, will bolster sustainability substantially.

B.II. Community Relationships and Program Sustainability: UWO CCDET has strong relationships with an array of community organizations that will support ongoing and continued community investment in Vet Corps. Among them are many that have contributed to AmeriCorps in the past and have expressed interest in doing so again with Vet Corps. Among our community partners are the following organizations: Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region and UWO Foundation. In addition, the campus Veterans Club has expressed interest in forming a group to support Vet Corps in the following ways: a) raising awareness of AmeriCorps; b) providing training for veteran members; and c) referring potential volunteers, potential sites and potential members. The Wisconsin Veterans Affairs Hospital, the County Veterans Affairs Office and the Appleton Outpatient Clinic (affiliated with the Milwaukee VA Hospital) will also assist by providing information, training and services to veteran members.

B.III. Diversification and Sustainability of Funding Sources: Our multi-site program design will contribute significantly to diversification of Vet Corps funding sources and ongoing financial support for the program. Host sites will make a financial contribution (site fee) and may also provide in-kind resources such as space, materials, and equipment. They will be asked to increase their commitment annually. Vet Corps will partner with regional foundations and the UWO Foundation, seeking funds and strategic support. In an effort to further diversify our sites, and thus our funding sources, we are also reaching out to organizations with which we have not partnered in the past. We expect to be able to offer a wide array of sites to prospective members, increasing their options and allowing us to find the best fit when placing a member.

B.IV. Recruitment and Support of Volunteers: Members will recruit volunteers at service sites with a focus on engaging other veterans and military families in community service. They will do so in partnership with UWO's Veterans Resource Center, local veteran groups, and county veterans' services departments. Volunteers will perform a variety of tasks at an array of service sites. The following are among anticipated volunteer tasks: tutoring and mentoring, disaster response, leading support groups and assisting with low income housing projects. Members will also recruit volunteers to participate in program-planned and community-based service projects such as national Night Out, AmeriCorps Week and national days of service. The UWO Veterans Resource Center has committed

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to supporting Vet Corps' by posting volunteer opportunities, referring students and inviting AmeriCorps representatives to participate in Veterans Resource Center events.

B.V. Community Stakeholders and Partners: Vet Corps has been designed as a regionally-focused collaborative project bringing together local nonprofits, government agencies and institutions of higher education to support a multi-site network of AmeriCorps members. Primary partners include the Office of UWO Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services, UWO Veterans Resource Center and the UWO Foundation. Additional partners include the organizations listed in Section "B" of this application. Primary partners have been involved in detailed project planning. Additional partners have been involved through survey responses and local "Collaboration Group" participation. Both will be integrally involved with project implementation.

C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY - C.I. Ensuring Compliance with Regulations: Program staff will use strong organizational partnerships and clear dialogue with site supervisors to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps regulations. Site supervisors will participate in orientation and will serve as liaisons between the site and Vet Corps. All sites will receive a handbook that includes general AmeriCorps information as well as guidance on program policies, procedures and prohibited activities. Vet Corps' Program Director will provide site support through regular visits, phone and electronic communication and one-on-one meetings. UWO's Director of Grants will be available as a resource for Vet Corps staff as part of his role providing advice and direction on all federal University grants. Internal UWO monitoring mechanisms will be used to provide a coherent structure for operating in accordance with state and national policies and procedures.

C.II. Preventing and Detecting Compliance Issues: Site staff will undergo thorough orientation and training regarding all compliance issues, including prohibited activities. All site supervisors will complete this orientation, receive detailed written information and sign contracts covering compliance issues, including prohibited activities, appropriate member service, site responsibilities and additional program requirements. Vet Corps staff will monitor for compliance during regular site visits, identifying any issues that may need correction. Compliance will be overseen by our Program Director who has four years of AmeriCorps program experience and is, therefore, extremely knowledgeable regarding policies and required procedures.

C.III. Accountability: If noncompliance is detected in any part of our program, immediate action will be taken to address and correct it. Our Program Director, UWO CCDET's Co-Director and the University's Director of Grants will be involved. When potential host sites apply to participate in the Vet Corps program, they will be required to describe the following: a)Organizational needs, b)Agency

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goals and vision, c)Member service plan, incorporating Vet Corps goals, d)Site staff who will support the member, e)Resources available to members (e.g. travel reimbursement, training and professional development opportunities), f)Source of site fee, g)Documentation of nonprofit status, and h)Current partnerships. Sites will be chosen based on alignment of the member service plan with program goals, ability to provide support and supervision to members, agency needs, and willingness to be part of a regional collaborative effort. After host sites are selected, additional sites meeting program requirements will be placed on a waiting list in case a selected site withdraws its application. This process will insure agencies selected have the programmatic and financial capabilities required for successful partnerships.

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. I. Adequacy of Budget: VetCorps' budget is adequate to support 22 members (5.82 MSY) within the specified program design. It will support staff time, including an experienced Program Director (55%), Program Manager (3%) and program support staff (37.5%). They will work as a team to provide member support, member training, office support and time for staff to coordinate with University intern offices and host sites. We are confident in our Vet Corps budget and believe our successful eight-year track record with a prior AmeriCorps program is compelling evidence of ability to develop a coherent budget for the new program.

A.II. Sufficiency of Budget: Desired Outputs and Outcomes: Vet Corps' budget is designed to fund only allowable and required expenses associated with program deliverables outlined in the federal register. While Veteran Corps is a new program, its budget was developed utilizing University expertise gained during eight years of experience operating other AmeriCorps programs. In partnership with funding from host sites, the budget provides adequate resources to accomplish performance measures related to member support and training, direct services and volunteer recruitment.

A.III. Criminal History and FBI Checks: We have budgeted for criminal history and FBI fingerprint checks, while staying within per member budget limits.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A: UW Oshkosh is not a re-competing grantee.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

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N/A

### Continuation Changes

N/A