

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Ten (10) AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 100 community volunteers to increase vulnerable children's knowledge of, engagement with, and access to healthy food, at three local partner organizations in Mississippi. At the end of the 2013-2014 program year, after delivering food and nutrition education, cultivating school gardens, and sourcing and promoting local food for K-12 students in communities of need, beneficiaries will measurably improve their attitudes toward fruits and vegetables, setting them on an enduring path toward maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle. The program will begin September 1, 2013 and end on July 31, 2014. It addresses the CNCS focus area of Healthy Futures and respectfully requests \$131,575 in cost-reimbursement funding, to be matched by an expected \$156,684.

## Rationale and Approach

A. NEED: Across the U.S., the consequences of dual epidemics of childhood obesity and food insecurity are grave. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in three American children born in the year 2000 is on a path toward type 2 diabetes. Among children of color, the figure approaches one in two.(1) Childhood obesity is a key indicator of negative health and wellness levels, meaning that this increased prevalence signals a rising tide of health care costs, lowered productivity, and premature disease and deaths. Retired [military] Generals describe a coming crisis of national security: already, 27% of 17-24 year olds are ineligible for military service because of excess body fat.(2) In Mississippi, that number nears 50%.(3) At the same time, over 23.2% of children don't know where or how they will access their next meal.(4) The terrible irony is that the child suffering from obesity-related illness and the child facing food insecurity are often one and the same. The prime culprit for each of these crises is lack of knowledge, engagement, and access to healthy food. Cash-strapped families often find nutritious meals to be too expensive.(5) Cheaper foods, such as highly processed meats or pre-packaged pastries, can alleviate hunger temporarily, but cause diet-related health problems in the long-term, often with obesity as the visible indicator of poor health conditions. Reversing this dual epidemic of childhood obesity and child hunger has become a priority for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the nation at large.

Though broad in its reach, these problems do not affect all parts of our country equally; Mississippi is the most obese state in the nation - 34.9% of adults are obese. This rate is expected to climb to 66.7% by 2030 if current trends continue.(6) Perhaps not surprisingly, Mississippi ranks 4th from the bottom in terms of adult fruit and vegetable consumption. (7) In addition to these general trends, the

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"F as in Fat" report found distressing racial and ethnic disparities in the state, with the adult obesity rate climbing to 42.9% percent among Blacks compared to 30.7% among Whites, suggesting similar dynamics with obesity rates among children.

These staggering health statistics can be traced to Mississippi's corresponding poverty rates, as poverty is indelibly linked to food insecurity and hunger. Not only do low-income families face the same challenges as other Americans in maintaining a healthy lifestyle (sedentary behavior, increased portion sizes, etc), families living in poverty are also subjected to unique challenges that increase their risk of obesity and diet-related disease, such as lack of access to healthy food, fewer opportunities for physical activity, cycles of food deprivation and overeating, higher levels of stress, increased exposure to marketing of obesity-promoting products, and limited access to health care.(8) The poverty and health concerns in Mississippi are critical, particularly for children in the state's most underserved populations. The U.S. Census bureau states that 32.9% of Mississippi children under 18 live under the poverty line.(9) Given these statistics, it is no surprise that Mississippi's food insecurity rate (19.2%) is significantly higher than the national average of 14.7%. Even more staggering is the number of children experiencing food insecurity; at any given time, over 210,000 Mississippi children (28.3%) are unsure of the source of their next meal.(10)

Mississippi's mixture of urban and rural landscapes are not so different when it comes to obesity and food security - all areas are affected. Centrally located and populous Hinds County has a childhood food insecurity rate of 21.8% - still markedly higher than the national average - while rural Perry County's rate soars to 27.2%, surpassed by Winston County's rate of 33.3%. These numbers can be explained further by looking at the availability of fresh food. Winston County has just four grocery stores (down from seven in 2007) for a population of 19,198, spread over an area of 610 square miles. Perry County is equally sparse, with just three grocery stores for a population of 10,591. Hinds County residents have a relatively higher number of grocery stores, 36, for 245,285 people, yet this figure is dwarfed by the number of fast food and convenience stores at 178 and 146, respectively. The USDA Food Atlas defines all three of these areas as "food deserts" - areas where low-income residents have to travel more than one mile [urban] and ten miles [rural] to access a grocery store.(11)

Beyond community statistics, childhood food access is measured in school, where many children receive more than half their daily calories.(12) An unbelievable 79% of students eating lunch in Mississippi are receiving free or reduced price meals; the figure rises to 91% at breakfast.(13) Considering that the national eligibility average is just 47%, these figures are staggering. What we feed our children, and what we teach them about food, affects how they learn, how they grow, and how

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long they live. Considering that only 2% of school children met the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans daily (14) , the school food environment has significant need for improvement. Schools - their classrooms, cafeterias and playgrounds - are the logical frontlines in our nation's fight against childhood obesity epidemic and food insecurity.

B. (AND C.) AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS and EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED and MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT: FoodCorps, in alignment with the funding priorities of both CNCS and the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS), believes that by changing the health environment of the public schools where many of these most at-risk kids attend by increasing students' knowledge of, engagement with, and access to healthy food, we can have a positive impact on long-term individual and community health. The FoodCorps model mirrors CNCS' Healthy Futures priority; to meet health needs within communities through investment in public service.

FoodCorps began with an inaugural class of 50 full-time National Direct service members in August of 2011, with four members stationed in Mississippi. In 2012, those numbers increased to 80 corps members nationwide and seven corps members in Mississippi. In the 2013 program year, with additional support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and other philanthropic partners, FoodCorps seeks to expand nationwide to 130 service members, including growing the Mississippi cohort from seven corps members to a total of 10 as a new CNCS competitive funding grantee. All 10 full-time service members will dedicate their 1,700 hours to delivering informative and engaging nutrition education, developing hands-on connections to fresh food through school gardens, and increasing awareness of and access to healthy meals in school cafeterias. These 10 corps members, providing a service unavailable to most resource-poor schools, will build school environments that make healthy choices the norm, not the exception, among vulnerable kids.

Specifically, serving in public schools, school districts, or school-focused organizational settings, service members will divide their service hours among three mutually reinforcing pillars of work, developing a robust Service Plan with proportions of each activity adjusted to local needs:

- 1) They will conduct food and nutrition education (Knowledge). Dedicated instruction in nutrition and physical activity is required in most states, yet median figures from elementary schools show teachers spending just 3.4 hours on these topics all year.(15) Service members will strive to increase both the quality and the quantity of this education, arriving armed with hands-on curriculum materials; working with teachers to integrate nutrition and physical activity lessons into classes as diverse as Health, Math, English and Science and implementing effective teaching strategies, such as

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cross-grade mentoring, to ensure their students are engaged in the lessons.

2) They will establish or expand school garden programs (Engagement). As studies have demonstrated, engaging children in the process of growing food increases their dietary preference for and consumption of fresh vegetables.(16) Service members will break ground on new gardens, help incorporate garden programs into curricula, and engage parents, community volunteers and kids in the active outdoor play of growing fruits and vegetables. Though garden harvests are rarely sufficient to supply most school cafeterias, even taste-tests conducted with garden produce have been shown to help children build positive relationships with fresh food.(17)

3) They will increase children's access to and information about healthy food, offering them regular servings of the nutritious meals they've now studied and grown (Access). Through holistic "farm to school" programming, service members will help transform public school cafeterias into educational environments where healthy food choices are promoted. They will also facilitate relationships between food service directors and local farmers who can supply nutritious ingredients at scale. Research demonstrates that kids participating in farm to school programs often consume one more serving of healthy fruits and vegetables each day.(18)

We expect service members to spend approximately 20% of their time preparing for or delivering nutrition education in the classroom, 40% of their time building, tending, or teaching in school gardens; and 20% of their time helping source and promote healthy food for school cafeterias. The remainder of their 1,700 hours will be spent on training and fundraising, as guided by AmeriCorps policies.

Through this three-pillared approach, corps members serving in resource-strapped public school systems will be the primary drivers of well-designed and well-researched interventions aimed at increasing the health of students at risk for lifetimes of diet-related illness and disease. This holistic approach addresses both the childhood obesity epidemic and the growing trend of childhood hunger with the same mechanism - targeted investment in the human resource of AmeriCorps members. These passionate and committed leaders will envelop the students they serve in a wrap-around environment of health and wellness through strategies identified across health and human services agencies as critical in reversing the well-marked course toward diabetes and obesity. Without these corps members as change agents, these services simply will not exist in these largely rural, largely poor, largely under-served yet over-burdened schools and communities. Imperatively, these solutions require an investment of human capital - in the form of service members - in order to achieve success. These evidence-based methods are built on a clear set of strategies endorsed by the CDC, The USDA,

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and The White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity addressing the obesity epidemic's underlying causes. From the Task Force Report to the President:

\*"More, and better, nutrition education is needed in schools. . . The time spent on nutrition and dietary behavior has declined in recent years, and funding has been limited."

\*"School gardens offer opportunities for fun and physical activity while also serving as an important educational tool to help students understand how healthful food is produced."

\*"Most children eat at least one meal at school. . . Use farm-to-school programs, where possible, to incorporate more fresh, appealing food."(19)

FoodCorps will measure our success by assessing the attitude change of children receiving at least 10-hours of garden-enhanced nutrition education, through counting process measures, and through measuring the change in the school environment over time. Research into the effects of this type of environment change is new - there are under 20 peer-reviewed studies to date - but preliminary findings suggest that school garden and farm to school programming of the type that service members help implement, have a positive impact on students' attitudes about, knowledge of, and behavior towards fruits and vegetables.(20) Through evaluation conducted during FoodCorps's first year as a National Direct grantee, classrooms receiving at least 10-hours of garden-enhanced nutrition education improved their attitudes toward healthy fruits and vegetables by 6.1% across the country. Overall, 46.6% of classrooms showed improvement of some amount, measurably above our target number of 40%. Narrowing the focus to specific groups revealed even more statistically significant results: first graders improved their attitudes by 18.2% and 9-12th graders improved by 11.7%. This groundbreaking research is the first in national scope, and FoodCorps expects to continue improving on these results by deepening our service forces in the states where we serve. By addressing the pervasive problems of food insecurity and childhood obesity at its root, FoodCorps provides an affirming and transformative solution for some of the most pressing problems in Mississippi's highest-need communities.

At the end of our three-year grant cycle, FoodCorps expects to see a measurable improvement in students' attitudes towards fruits and vegetables in the schools where we serve. Additionally, FoodCorps collects data on each schools' food environment annually, measuring improvements in things like presence of nutrition curriculum, integration of school gardens into state standards, frequency of local purchasing by school food service, and receptivity of wellness committees, amongst others. This data helps FoodCorps understand the impact of corps members' service over time, helping identify areas for long-term improvement and indicating when FoodCorps is able to transfer more and

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more program responsibility to the engaged and committed volunteers who have been recruited and trained by our service members. Our long-term impact on the health and wellness of children and communities can also be told in the story of our members and their career and academic choices post-service. We expect a majority of our service force to continue on in jobs and study related to food systems, agriculture, health, and public service. Specific plans for measuring these three successes follows.

In order to effectively demonstrate our impact and align our program with national priorities, FoodCorps will report on Healthy Futures National Performance Measure H6 in Mississippi, which we will sync with the data collection and reporting strategies of our proposed 14 other Host Sites, as well as the USDA, CDC and National Farm to School Network. Targets have been established through an electronic survey of Host and Service Site Supervisors, reassessed based on the data from FoodCorps' current National Direct grant, and compared against benchmarks from existing research. In FoodCorps' first year as a CNCS competitive funding grantee in Mississippi, at least 800 children and youth from at least 10 schools will receive at least 10 hours of garden-enhanced nutrition education from service members. The 10-hour exposure benchmark is accepted by the school garden and farm to school community as the minimum amount of time necessary to change beneficiaries' attitudes - many of our students receive a much higher dose of exposure. At least 320 (40%) of participating students in 10 classrooms or student groups will demonstrate improved attitudes toward fruits and vegetables. Due to the prohibitive cost and time of conducting pre- and post-surveys with 800 children, FoodCorps will assess our impact through surveying representative sample group of at least 200, the results of which will be extrapolated to the full impact target of 800 students. This attitude shift will be measured through changes in fruit and vegetable neophobia - the reluctance to eat novel fruits and vegetables. This method was developed by a team of researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill and has been vetted and used by similar programs across the country, based on the knowledge that food preferences and eating patterns in childhood have been shown to carry into adulthood, impacting long-term health. Over a three-year grant cycle, FoodCorps expects these efforts to result in a measurable shift in the dietary preferences of participating students.

Additionally, FoodCorps will track the impact service members have on: 1) Strengthening Communities: Generating volunteerism is woven throughout the service descriptions of members and they are trained on volunteer management. In the program's first State Commission grantee year in Mississippi, service members will recruit, train and place 100 new volunteers in community-led school garden and Farm to School initiatives. This number represents ten volunteers recruited and trained for

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each of the 10 corps members and was determined based on prior averages for service members nationwide as well as programmatic research indicating 10 committed volunteers as an efficient and manageable cohort. Within three years, we expect volunteer networks to have assumed enough management of established programs that service members can increase the portfolio of schools with which they work. School gardens implemented by FoodCorps members will be assumed by school and community volunteers over time.

2) Member Development: In the program's first Commission year in Mississippi, all 10 service members will receive career training and mentorship in food, agriculture, education or public health. Over three years, we will track the number of alumni actively entering fields that contribute to the state and the nation's wellness. We expect at least 40% of service members to continue serving with FoodCorps for a second term (or to apply for a Fellowship position), based on data from our National Direct grant. Of those who choose not to continue on in service with FoodCorps, we expect at least 50% to pursue career or academic opportunities in related fields. These targets are based on surveys of current service members as well as information from their applications indicating their career aspirations.

Corps members will report on the above outcome measures in required weekly impact logs that accompany their time sheets. Data from all sites will be compiled by the FoodCorps national office on a monthly basis and used to evaluate areas for improvement among sites and service members. Annual reports will be shared with MCVS and other funders. With its focus on results-driven deployment of resources, FoodCorps stands ready to be a critical player in achieving the larger goal established by Let's Move and the National Prevention Council: bringing childhood obesity rates back below 5% by 2030.(21)

D. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: MEMBER RECRUITMENT: FoodCorps recruits service members nationwide. In both 2011 and 2012, FoodCorps received over 1,000 applicants for the 50 (2011) and 80 (2012) positions funded through our National Direct grant and state commission grants in Maine and Montana. FoodCorps' Service Program staff uses both traditional (networking events, newspaper ads, career fairs) and modern (social media, blog posting, mobile technology) to reach potential candidates and has launched a proactive campaign to broaden FoodCorps' pool of applicants, with the goal of matriculating a diverse corps. FoodCorps has enlisted the help of leadership consultants, Koya Partners, brand manager Tumis, and diversity advisor and former recruitment strategist for the US Military, Diedre Smalls, in developing attractive recruitment messaging and materials aimed at increasing FoodCorps' presence in the diverse communities we serve.

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Woven in to this national strategy is the corresponding recruitment campaign of our statewide Host Site, the Roadmap to Health Equity (the Roadmap) in Jackson. Host and community Service Site Supervisors receive physical and electronic recruiting materials, personalized coaching on how to cultivate service members from within the communities FoodCorps serves, and media training on how to earn local press coverage of FoodCorps service opportunities. FoodCorps respects the place-based knowledge of our partners in determining the types of experiences and skills that will best serve our unique site communities. Therefore, local networks are relied upon to spread our service opportunities and recommendations of community members well-suited to serve with FoodCorps are taken into account during the selection process. Specific to Mississippi, the Roadmap and Service Sites will conduct outreach in local communities through schools, grassroots organizations and other community groups, in addition to land-grant universities and college systems. The Roadmap's Executive Director, Beneta Burt, has recently been chosen as a Jackson School Board member and will use her broad connections within the educational and health communities to promote FoodCorps opportunities to potential candidates from throughout the state.

Applications to Mississippi's FoodCorps positions are submitted through the national FoodCorps online application portal. Applications are vetted through an initial review by national staff, with approximately 30% of candidates advancing to second-round review by Host and Service Sites. Given the high value that FoodCorps places on honoring the individuality of our community environments and partners, FoodCorps asks state Host and Service Sites to interview semi-finalists and submit rankings to national staff for final placements, ensuring that candidates offered FoodCorps placements will enter their new positions as seamlessly as possible, with full support of and knowledge about the communities and organizations with which they will be serving. Given this process, FoodCorps does not evaluate candidates for minimum requirements beyond those required by AmeriCorps (though does do initial evaluations based on demonstrated experience, commitment, and potential to contribute). Instead, FoodCorps relies on our Host and Service Site partners to determine the specific qualities, experiences, and characteristics that indicate success for service members in their communities and organizations.

E. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: MEMBER TRAINING: FoodCorps' third program year of its National Direct award will commence on September 1, 2013, with six days of intensive service member Orientation during the month of August in Portland, Oregon. All State Commission funded service members will attend this Orientation. At this national training, FoodCorps staff will facilitate team building, external trainers will lead diversity workshops, and representatives from the nutrition

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education, school garden, and procurement fields will conduct courses on school garden and Farm to School program implementation. Topics will include food and garden safety, fresh-food procurement, classroom management, community engagement, effective communication, conflict resolution, diversity and equity, volunteer management and impact evaluation. The policies and procedures of FoodCorps and AmeriCorps (including prohibited activities, rules of conduct, and grievance procedures) will be closely covered in seminars rooted in the FoodCorps Member Manual, the substantive written guidebook that all service members receive upon enrollment.

In addition to the national orientation that service members receive, Mississippi Host Site Supervisor and Roadmap staff member, Willie Nash, and the FoodCorps Fellow, will organize an interactive, multi-day state orientation exploring relevant concepts including cultural and agricultural ecosystems of the state. The state orientation will include representatives from school gardens, state and local organizations providing cultural exposure and insight as well as training on Mississippi-specific gardening and local food procurement practices and nutrition education strategies - all topics that prepare service members for activities at their Service Sites. Once on-site within their communities, service members will receive a third orientation by their Service Site Supervisor, which includes topics ranging from important relationships within the community to how to use the copy machine. The intensive, three-pronged orientation structure builds relationships among service members nurturing their internal community, and also exposes them to numerous individuals in the state who offer resources to our corps members. Orientation training will also focus on service member citizenship. Throughout orientation and ongoing through each member's term of service, intentional and inclusive reflection through Weekly Reporting and Reflection Logs as well as individual check-ins with supervisors and the FoodCorps Fellow remain a key component for program success.

Midway through the service term, service members reconvene for the FoodCorps Mid-Year Gathering, where they forge deeper connections with their corps via service activities, receive training on topics pertinent to their service, learn about AmeriCorps policies and procedures for exiting their terms, and experience a new and diverse food and agriculture. Although the Mid-Year gathering location has not yet been identified for the 2013-2014 program year, past gatherings have been held in Washington, D.C. and Detroit, Michigan.

F. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: MEMBER SUPERVISION: FoodCorps service members are supported and guided by three mutually reinforcing levels of supervision: FoodCorps national, the Mississippi Roadmap to Health Equity (Host Site), and our network of community Service Sites. These three levels of support offer years of experience in the fields of food systems, agricultural education,

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public health, education, community development, and public service. As the current Host Site for FoodCorps' national direct placements in Mississippi, the Roadmap will serve as the Host Site for FoodCorps' members placed in Mississippi under MCVS. Willie Nash, FoodCorps Director and Director of Economic Development Initiatives at the Roadmap, will serve as Host Site Supervisor, monitoring data collection, coordinating Service Sites, and managing the scope of service of corps members in Mississippi. The FoodCorps Fellow, a full-time FoodCorps staff member stationed at the Roadmap, will provide support to service members throughout their term of service, including developing ongoing trainings, facilitating regular site visits and reflection opportunities, and ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures of FoodCorps and AmeriCorps. Service Site Supervisors in each of the three to five Service Sites where FoodCorps will serve will sign and certify electronic timesheets, and manage the day-to-day service of members.

Service Site Supervisors have been selected for their experience implementing school garden and farm to school programming, their deep community knowledge, and their ability and desire to oversee early career corps members as they embark on their terms of service. Service Site Supervisors guide the day-to-day service of corps members and ensure that their service hours are in compliance with FoodCorps and AmeriCorps policies, certifying detailed timesheets to this end. To ensure maximum alignment of program areas and compliance with AmeriCorps regulations, FoodCorps plans and funds a focused training of Host Site Supervisors over a three-day in-person retreat each April to prepare for the upcoming term of service, as well as day-long pre-service trainings in each state for all Service Site Supervisors. These trainings review and are supplemented by robust Host and Service Site Manuals. Throughout the year, sites are monitored through formal and informal Site Visits, file audits, and individual check-ins. Each site is given a risk assessment rating of low, moderate, or high based on these checks and a continued monitoring and guidance plan is established for moderate and high risk sites. The effectiveness of trainings is evaluated through participant and supervisor surveys.

The FoodCorps Fellowship program places one full-time FoodCorps staff member per state to assist the Host Site with service member support as well as to build capacity for school garden and Farm to School programming. The Fellow provides an additional level of support, guidance and oversight for service members throughout their terms of service. FoodCorps Fellows conduct quarterly informational site visits, develop state-wide training and reflection opportunities, compile state-specific resources for service activities, represent FoodCorps in the state and region, and act as each service member's first line of communication should a problem arise. Fellows receive their own training in advance of the service term, with sessions focused on peer-to-peer counseling, volunteer generation,

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service member training development, and conflict resolution.

In Mississippi, the Host Site Supervisor and Fellow will hold monthly check-in calls and/or visits with the Service Site partners to cover updates and areas of concern as well as to address development needs; service members are invited to join these calls when needed. In-person half-day meetings for all Service Site Supervisors, Host Site partners and corps members are held to share best practices, provide training and support members and sites. Additionally, the Host Site partners hold periodic calls with just the service members to address concerns, needs, updates and peer-to-peer support. Also monthly, the FoodCorps Fellow develops training, professional development or other opportunities determined vital to service member success and support. Weekly, service members have meetings with their direct supervisor.

G. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: AMERICORPS MEMBER EXPERIENCE: FoodCorps instills a commitment to service starting with the service member application - where candidates answer questions regarding their motivations to serve - and continuing through training, service, and life after AmeriCorps. Corps members are given a robust introduction to AmeriCorps and public service as soon as they arrive at Orientation, where speakers such as the former Director of AmeriCorps John Gomperts, CNCS Program Officer Lora Pollari-Welbes, and Director of Communications for Golden Gate National Recreation Area Howard Leavitt have welcomed service members and imparted their philosophies on public service. Moving through their terms of service, FoodCorps members are given opportunities to reflect on the impact they are having in their communities through weekly logs, group check-ins, in-person gatherings, and public appearances and press, sharing stories of success as well as challenges. AmeriCorps identity is promoted through participation in state and national service networks and events such as National Days of Service and AmeriCorps Week, and connection to AmeriCorps Alums post service. FoodCorps uniforms are worn by all service members and proudly display the AmeriCorps logo. Additionally, FoodCorps has developed relationships with other service programs operating in our communities and fosters connections between service members, including Coach Across America, Teach for America, and Citizen Schools.

FoodCorps deeply values the support corps members can offer one another as peers, providing opportunities for connection between members through FoodCorps Buddies, as well as broad connection through intra-corps and state-based emails listservs. Additionally, FoodCorps offers programmatic components that instill a sense of community engagement, including: a career mentor, pen-pal programs, podcasts with industry leaders (Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Merrigan was a guest this past year), quarterly care packages, and an opportunity to reconvene via the Mid-Year

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Gathering mentioned above. Host and Service Site Supervisors, as well as Fellows and corps members, will rely on an expansive Service Plans developed in collaboration between FoodCorps, the Sites, and the service members to help determine specific, attainable, and measurable goals for each term.

H. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: VOLUNTEER GENERATION: An integral part of FoodCorps' member service is to recruit, train, and place an army of community volunteers, ensuring that projects built (such as community gardens) are projects sustained and that FoodCorps' human resource investment is mirrored by investment from members of each community we serve. Currently in Mississippi, FoodCorps members interact with community leaders and work with volunteers, such Master Gardeners and Jackson State Public Health students, to help lead after-school garden clubs. They work with state food system leaders such as Harvard's Food and Policy Fellows and the Mississippi Food Policy Council to provide scalable farm to school solutions for school systems across the state. Parents and community members are invited to help in the school and Roadmap garden and share in monthly Food Forum dinners. Each service member is expected to recruit and support a minimum of 10 community volunteers. Member weekly reporting includes information about the number of volunteers recruited and placed. Within three years, we expect volunteer networks to have assumed enough management of established programs that corps members can increase the portfolio of schools with which they work.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: Corps ethos and pride in public service are at the heart of FoodCorps' service program. From the start of service, corps members are encouraged to seek connection with one another and with other AmeriCorps participants through multiple avenues, including group listservs and weekly inter-corps emails; weekly communication of creative strategies developed by and for service members; encouragement to attend National AmeriCorps and state commission gatherings and trainings; connection to other AmeriCorps members serving in their communities; service gear and signage that proudly displays the AmeriCorps logo; and a Service Member Manual full of resources. FoodCorps provides uniforms displaying the AmeriCorps logo, posters identifying the school or site as an AmeriCorps location, and AmeriCorps logos for websites, newsletters, and other press materials. In addition, FoodCorps requires all service members to participate in National Days of Service - for example, service members organize community Sunday Suppers in collaboration with Points of Light to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. In all that FoodCorps does, the civic and professional development of our service members is a priority.

### Organizational Capability

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A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: FoodCorps' mission is to give all youth an enduring relationship with healthy food through the hands and minds of emerging leaders. FoodCorps was formed solely to create service-based solutions to food-related problems, including childhood obesity and food security. While November of 2010 marked the beginning of FoodCorps' nonprofit status, the organization's staff, partnerships, and resources give it the capacity of a seasoned program. Six founders brought FoodCorps to life in 2010 while a staff of fourteen lead and direct the organization's work today, bringing more than six decades of experience building community food systems and administering federal grants from the USDA, Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, CNCS, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Montana and Maine State Service Commissions. Eight Board of Directors oversee FoodCorps. With representatives from agricultural law, organizational management, community development, and non-profit leadership, the Board directs the long-term strategy and vision for the organization.

Co-Founder and Service Program Director Cecily Upton is the full-time Service Program Director, managing the AmeriCorps program and directing the submission of all fiscal reports, which will be prepared by Finance and Operations Director Lauren Burnham. As Service Program Director, Upton develops and supports FoodCorps' AmeriCorps program in all our states. Upton's primary responsibilities include: maintaining FoodCorps' relationship with AmeriCorps (both CNCS and State Commissions); ensuring compliance and accountability of our program to AmeriCorps; supervising performance measurement; overseeing relationships with and training of all Host and Service Sites; directing the recruitment, selection, training, enrollment and exit processes for all service members; contributing to and implementing the long-term strategy of FoodCorps' Service Program, from program development to evaluation; and managing the Service Program staff.

FoodCorps' Service Program department staff dedicate a percentage of their time to each of the twelve states in which we operate, including Mississippi. The FoodCorps Fellow who serves in Mississippi is a full-time FoodCorps staff member who is dedicated to the programmatic implementation in the state and serves as the first point of contact for Mississippi corps members. With program duties managed at the state level and administrative responsibilities centralized at the national level, the FoodCorps model ensures a lean, cost effective approach without compromising the quality of our service members' experience and our program. Other full-time staff in the Service Program department include: Service Program Manager, Lucy Flores; Training and Professional Development Manager, Erica Curry; and Research and Evaluation Manager, Eva Ringstrom. Additionally, FoodCorps will be hiring a Recruitment and Alumni Manager in early 2013. All Service

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Program staff report to Ms. Upton. Finance and Operations Director, Lauren Burnham, will prepare all fiscal and financial reports for FoodCorps. Ms. Burnham possesses an MPA from NYU and is currently finishing coursework for her CPA licensure.

All staff are trained in the programmatic and financial management of AmeriCorps grants both in-house and externally. Upon hiring, staff are given a thorough introduction to AmeriCorps rules and regulations, as well as guidance in where to find information regarding AmeriCorps program administration through the statute, FAQs, Knowledge Network, and grant contacts such as Program Officers. Externally, FoodCorps invests in staff participation in the annual AmeriCorps Grantee Meeting, National Conference on Volunteering and Service, the AmeriCorps Program Start-Up Institute, and the CNCS Financial and Grants Management Institute, as well as other opportunities provided by our state commission partners.

Since being awarded our Planning Grant, FoodCorps has been an invested AmeriCorps grantee, participating in the AmeriCorps conferences and meetings listed above as well as working closely with AmeriCorps program officers Jennifer Brown and Lora Pollari-Welbes and Program Development Coach Thenera Bailey, with additional guidance from Acting Deputy Director Rob Glazier and former Director of AmeriCorps, John Gomperts. Under our National Direct grant, FoodCorps boasts an enrollment rate of 100% and retention rates of 96%. In both 2011 and 2012, we received over 1,000 applications for positions. FoodCorps' record of compliance and responsiveness is exemplary, with a recent educational compliance visit yielding no measurable findings. As we are a fixed amount grantee, FoodCorps does not report on match to CNCS, however additional funding received for our service program well exceeds the minimum match requirements. Programmatically, FoodCorps invests in continuing to develop our organization and model through ongoing evaluation. Both for AmeriCorps and for other grants, FoodCorps has developed relationships with external evaluators, such as Headwaters Group. External evaluations, as well as on-going internal evaluations, are managed by FoodCorps' Research and Evaluation Manager, Eva Ringstrom.

B. SUSTAINABILITY: In addition to our CNCS funding (which represents about 20% of our total budget), FoodCorps' active donors include: the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; David Rockefeller Fund; Woodcock Foundation; Whole Kids Foundation; and Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation. FoodCorps also raises a significant portion of our budget through individual donations and cost shares from our Service and Host Sites (\$5,000 per service member, for an estimated total of \$650,000 in the coming program year).

The CNCS share (though MCVS) of \$131,575 will represent approximately 46% of the total \$288,259

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we expect to invest in the FoodCorps program in Mississippi in the coming program year. The Commission's grant will help us leverage significant additional resources from philanthropic and corporate partners to support important healthy food access work serving communities in Mississippi. While FoodCorps' growth plans nationwide are ambitious, and private fundraising efforts have been successful, constraints on funding through our National Direct grant mean that it is unlikely that FoodCorps can grow our effective, evidence-based model in Mississippi without support from the CNCS' competitive funds. The investment we request will increase our current force to 10 in the state for our third program year, a rate of growth that would take several years through our National Direct grant. Investment into FoodCorps' expansion in Mississippi ensures that we can take advantage of the significant cultural, political, and financial interests in supporting proven programs like FoodCorps.

As we leverage corporate and philanthropic support into the work of combating childhood obesity and hunger in school environments, AmeriCorps provides a trusted framework to build on. However, we expect federal support to always comprise a minority of our budget, and we are building a model of high-impact national service that is prepared to stand on its own. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation anchors FoodCorps' growth with a 3-year, \$3.5 million grant, and grants have been committed or invited from other high-capacity funders. Much of the work service members will do is designed to be institutionalized and sustained by local partners at a minimal cost.

Programmatically, FoodCorps emerged from the grassroots up, and serves as a national organization that local voices have shaped according to real needs in their communities. At the local level, corps members' Service Plans are individualized to best reflect the needs of the beneficiaries and the partnerships in place on the ground, ensuring program development that best reflects local interest and resources. Long-term, FoodCorps will measure success against performance measure outcomes, baseline/landscape assessments, progress reports, service members reporting and reflection logs, and monitoring visits to assess when the programs developed and supported by service members are ready to be assumed by community members. Through the establishment of School Garden Committees, FoodCorps Advisory Boards, invested volunteers, mutually beneficial farmer-food service relationships, and teacher advocates, FoodCorps continuously strives to put itself out of business. On the national level, FoodCorps educates governmental and private partners to demonstrate the success of the program model and pave the way for institutionalization. In Mississippi, Host Site partner the Roadmap, leads a high level of collaboration supporting a rapidly spreading school garden and Farm to School movement. Executive Director Beneta Burt and Host Site Supervisor Willie Nash, have

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developed deep relationships with education (both K-12 and higher ed), public health, and agricultural partners. The Roadmap partners with Jackson State University, the Mississippi Food Policy Council, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, and Leadership Jackson to support service members and the school partners with whom they work.

Our Service Site partners all work with underserved schools: those that display significant overweight or obesity challenges and financially disadvantaged students. The sites all meet the requirements for office space, computers, and accouterments needed to implement service, evaluation, reporting, and follow-through. Each Service Site is committed to a long-term partnership and willingness to serve as a hub site and in a mentoring role to other organizations as the FoodCorps program expands. Current (under National Direct grant) and future sites to be served in Mississippi are: Mississippi Roadmap to Health Equity - Jackson; Mississippi Association of Cooperatives - Indian Springs; Winston County Self-Help Cooperative - Louisville; Moore Community House - Biloxi (pending); and Communities in Schools - Greenwood (pending). Across all Service Sites, the primary beneficiaries of our service will be youth in educational settings, with at least 50% representing schools with 50% or more of the student populations qualifying for the federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

In Mississippi, FoodCorps looks forward to expanding relationships with an extensive network of partnerships already supporting us. Specifically, statewide supporters include: the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; USDA; Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Alcorn State University Extension Program; Jackson Public Schools; Piney Wood School; RD & S Farms, LLC; and Jackson State University School of Public Health.

On the National scale, FoodCorps boasts partnerships with: The Whole Kids Foundation; Cooking Light; USDA; The National Farm to School Network; Let's Move; and many more. These partnerships demonstrate that FoodCorps, nested into the existing organizational landscape, is the rare national NGO that can avoid duplicating existing work as it makes a game-changing national impact.

C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Service members are trained, supported, supervised, and held accountable by three coordinated tiers of oversight. The first tier is the Service Site, which provides day-to-day service management in each of the counties where corps members will serve. Service Sites provide on-site orientation and safety training, monitor progress toward the goals of the Service Plan, and sign and certify electronic timesheets. Host Site Supervisors and the FoodCorps Fellow make up the second-tier of oversight, ensuring compliance of Service Sites, executing state-level orientation, training, and teamwork for the service members, and generally administering the

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FoodCorps. The administrative processes of service members' enrollment and exit, background checks, payroll, and benefits are centralized at the third tier, the national office of FoodCorps. FoodCorps staff compile compliant electronic and paper Member Files and signed Member Contracts from service members, maintain the Memoranda of Understanding with Host Sites, ensure coverage for child- and healthcare, and process biweekly stipend payroll for service members.

Through prevention, detection, and enforcement, FoodCorps ensures that AmeriCorps rules and regulations are complied with at all links in the chain. We provide robust training in Prohibited Activities, time tracking, programmatic deliverables, and reporting to Host Sites, Service Sites, and service members through in-person training, detailed manuals, weekly emails, webinars, and conference calls. Each year, FoodCorps' national staff members conduct monitoring and training visits to each state where we operate. Discussions during these visits are guided by a detailed monitoring tool outlining expectations in terms of program management, service member management, and AmeriCorps compliance. Host Sites, Service Sites, and corps members submit reports annually describing programmatic successes and challenges and progress toward performance measures, amongst other topics. Each week, service members submit detailed timesheets listing the amount of time spent on direct and indirect service, as well as outlining specific activities. These timesheets are approved by Service Site Supervisors and spot-checked by FoodCorps' national staff to ensure service members are not inadvertently engaged in any Prohibited Activities. Monitoring visit reports, progress reports, and timesheet check-ups all contribute to an annual risk assessment through which FoodCorps determines what sites are at higher risk for a compliance infraction. Sites with a higher risk assessment are subject to increased monitoring and check-ups. Specific areas for concern are identified and a plan for corrective action is determined, implemented, and followed-up on.

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

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS: FoodCorps' program design seeks to be cost efficient and effective at achieving our goal: building school food environments that foster healthy kids. We do not seek to invest valuable resources in duplicating work other organizations already do well. In our AmeriCorps program, we cost-effectively centralize administrative functions with our national staff while empowering our Host Sites and the state-dedicated FoodCorps Fellows to direct the service of our members on the ground. FoodCorps seeks implementation support of \$13,158 per MSY, which is below the \$13,300 cap. This represents a relatively modest contribution to the program's overall cost: FoodCorps will pay its service members annual stipends of \$15,000, cover the operating costs of background checks, health insurance, and childcare, fund the program's national office and staff, and

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sponsor multiple in-person trainings for Site Supervisors and service members. FoodCorps anticipates program implementation costs in Mississippi of \$28,826 per Member, 46% of which will be supported by additional CNCS competitive funds. The balance will be supported in full by Host Site cost sharing (\$5,000 per service member) and by the third installment of a three-year, \$3.5 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation, amongst other contributions. Additional start-up support is described in detail below.

As discussed, FoodCorps has built a strong, recent history of investing CNCS and other funding to build effective programming. The program was formulated with planning grant funds of \$44,213 from CNCS, and then implemented in 2011 when awarded a \$625,000 National Direct AmeriCorps grant. FoodCorps also receives funding from Serve Montana and the Maine Commission for Community Service.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY: In 2013, implementation of the FoodCorps program (at a nationally requested 130 MSY) is expected to cost \$6.1M with specific program budgets set aside for service member stipends and benefits (representing 45% of our program budget), and a smaller share for national staff, office expenses, communications (including recruiting), evaluation, technology (including time and impact tracking systems), meetings and conferences (including trainings), travel, and trainers. These numbers parallel the budget for Mississippi, which is \$288,259 total for 10 MSY, with \$131,575 (46%) obtained from CNCS' competitive funding. The remainder of funds have been raised from an anchor, three-year, \$3.5 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation, as well as grants that have been committed or invited from the Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation (3 years, \$300,000) the Woodcock Foundation (3 years, \$300,000), the David Rockefeller Fund (2 years, \$60,000), and others. Not captured in the budget is the significant in-kind support our Host and Service Sites provide, including staff time, office space, and equipment for corps members as well as funding and infrastructure for program implementation. With a program design that combines a focused national organization, empowered Host and Service Sites and well supported service members, FoodCorps stands ready to cost effectively grow its operations to a 50-state scale, while still investing significantly in Mississippi over time. The proposed 10 MSY size of the Mississippi FoodCorps class is amply supported by contributions from partner funders and will join our almost doubled force of FoodCorps' service members nationwide in 2013.

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### Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

N/A

### Continuation Changes

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N/A