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Executive Summary

96 AmeriCorps members (ACMs) will be placed at up to 90 Service Sites across Maryland to develop or improve direct service volunteer programs. Leveraging at least 9,720 volunteers, these ACMs will enable Service Sites to provide more services, improve the effectiveness of their volunteer programs, and increase organizational capacity to manage volunteers. At the end of the 3-year grant period, volunteers will have served 97,200 hours, and at least 66 Service Sites will have implemented effective volunteer management practices and will report that ACM activities have helped make the Service Site more efficient. A capacity-building program, Volunteer Maryland will place ACMs at Service Sites focusing on the CNCS focus areas of economic opportunity, education, healthy futures, environmental stewardship, disaster services, and veterans and military families. The CNCS investment of \$399,026 will be matched with \$531,039.

Rationale and Approach

1. NEED

Nonprofit organizations regularly report that they need help recruiting and managing volunteers and lack the resources to do so effectively. The Urban Institute reported that agencies that are "interested in retention of volunteers should invest in recognizing volunteers, providing training and professional development for them, and screening volunteers and matching them to organizational tasks."

Unfortunately, most nonprofits lack adequate resources to implement these volunteer management practices. A 2009 report in the Stanford Social Innovation Review emphasized an increased need for volunteers: "The nation's nonprofits are under strain from the current economic crisis, a leadership drain as older executives retire, and high turnover among younger staff. Volunteers are an undervalued and underused resource for tackling these challenges."

According to the 2009 report 'Reimagining Service National Core Capacity Assessment Tool Dataset, "Positive Deviants" in Volunteerism and Service,' only 17% of nonprofits are effective at all volunteer management practices: only 21% state they are effectively recruiting; 26% are retaining volunteers, and just 27% are supervising volunteers. At a time when 63% of nonprofits have noted an increase in demand for services (The Effect of the Economy on the Nonprofit Sector, GuideStar 2010), volunteers are an essential component to meeting the demand. This national data is reflected throughout Maryland (MD) as organizations seek to utilize volunteers to meet community needs. However, organizations can only engage volunteers effectively and, in turn, provide services effectively, with the

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full implementation of volunteer management practices.

Volunteers are needed to meet a variety of community needs in MD. For example:

Economic Opportunity: From 2008 to 2009, MD's total homeless population increased by 26.89%; 11,698 people were homeless in 2009 and 2,062 were categorized as chronically homeless.

Education: While educational needs and educational attainment vary tremendously across MD's 23 counties and Baltimore City, not one jurisdiction met No Child Left Behind's Adequate Yearly Progress for all subgroups (i.e., African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, students with limited English proficiency, students who qualify for free/reduced meals) in 2011.

Healthy Futures: According to the 2010 US Census, 95.9 million Americans are at risk of, or suffering from, hunger. Throughout MD, over 2 million households are at risk of experiencing hunger and the rate of food insecurity is 12%.

Nonprofits, schools, and government agencies throughout MD work to meet these diverse and challenging community needs. Volunteers play essential roles in this work and effective volunteer coordination enables volunteer service to have a demonstrable impact. For the many organizations lacking effective volunteer management practices, Volunteer Maryland's AmeriCorps program can be the solution.

2. ACMs AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Nonprofit organizations need volunteers in order to serve clients and meet community needs. A partnership with Volunteer Maryland (VM) helps to fill this gap in both the short and long-term. Rather than providing direct services, VM AmeriCorps members (ACMs) generate volunteers during the term of service and put volunteer management practices and structures in place to maintain the volunteer services after the ACM term of service is complete. VM provides intensive training to ACMs to prepare them for this service and provides training to organizational staff, enabling them to support the ACM during the service year and sustain the efforts in the years following. This training, and the ACMs' full-time focus on both volunteer generation and volunteer program development, is what makes VM ACMs so highly effective. For little cost to the organization, the ACM is able to accomplish

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what it could not with existing staff and volunteers: building a solid, sustainable volunteer program. The ACM is a short-term infusion of resources and energy, building organizational capacity, generating volunteers, and creating stable volunteer programs that can be sustained for years.

VM's "Multiplier Model" enables partner organizations (called Service Sites or sites) to provide more services, improve the sites' volunteer programs, and increase organizational capacity to manage volunteers. Each year, VM establishes partnerships with 30 new sites which address needs such as homelessness, educational attainment, and hunger. For each site, VM recruits, trains, and manages ACMs to serve as volunteer coordinators and provides coaching and technical assistance to ACMs and sites on volunteer program development.

With intense training and ongoing coaching and support, each ACM works closely with site staff to implement effective volunteer management practices including conducting a site needs assessment, developing a written volunteer generation plan, creating volunteer trainings and orientations, writing interview scripts and implementing screening procedures, developing databases to collect volunteer information, writing volunteer position descriptions and policies and procedures, evaluating volunteer program activities, institutionalizing volunteer recognition activities and events, and training paid staff and volunteers in the best practices of volunteer management.

"[We] have benefited greatly from this program," stated a former Site Supervisor (SS) from a nonprofit that focuses on improving the independence and quality of life for individuals with disabilities. "It has kept our program going and growing and has ensured our program's survival over the next few years." This "survival" of volunteer programs beyond the AmeriCorps service is essential to VM's program design. As part of the partnership, VM provides training to site staff through 3 full-day training sessions and up to 5 1-hour webinars. This training further ensures sustainability by infusing volunteer management best practices throughout the site.

Through a VM partnership, sites are able to build an argument for effective volunteer management within the organization. VM provides training on understanding the return on investment of effective volunteer management - the cost of a volunteer and the benefits of utilizing them well. By engaging an ACM, and by understanding the financial value of volunteers and effective volunteer coordination, sites are able to fully and explicitly tell the "volunteer coordination story" and work with

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organizational leadership to develop staffing plans for volunteer coordination. This work is essential, as the ACM resource is short-term and exists in order to develop or improve a volunteer program, not to provide long-term staffing of the volunteer program. As noted by one site, "Our partnership added a great deal of capacity that was not there before and is helping us make the case to funders for the sustainability of a staff position in the future."

In 2010, VM was selected for inclusion in the publication "Transforming Communities through Service: A Collection of 52 of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps Programs in the United States," published by Innovations in Civic Participation and Americas' Service Commissions.

VM is requesting 96 full-time ACM slots over the next 3 years (32 per year). 30 per year serve as volunteer coordinators; 2 per year serve as "Peer Leaders," peer mentors and guides for ACMs.

3. EVIDENCE-INFORMED PROGRAM AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Over the past 20 years, VM has created and refined a program with an evidence-informed, laser-like focus on building the capacity of organizations to engage volunteers. VM understands that recruiting volunteers is only one piece of the equation; it is the development of the volunteer program structures that enables the sites to have sustainable volunteer programs, provide services more efficiently, and continue engaging volunteers in the years after the VM partnership concludes. The report "Volunteering Reinvented: Human Capital Solutions for the Nonprofit Sector" identified 8 steps or functions that should be adopted in order to achieve the greatest return on investment from volunteers. VM's program design thoroughly addresses all 8 steps and VM ensures attention to the "most critical and yet neglected step in the value chain, strategic planning around volunteering" starting with site selection and continuing with each ACM developing a tailored volunteer program plan with their site. Then, the ACM implements this plan and its sustainability measures. As part of this plan, ACMs develop or refine procedures that collectively maximize the impact of volunteers, especially those volunteer management practices that, according to the Urban Institute's Volunteer Management Capacity Study, correlate strongest to volunteer retention (i.e. screening and matching volunteers, recognition activities, and training and professional development for volunteers).

VM's model for developing these structures is "The Cycle of Volunteer Program Development." The Cycle was designed by VM in the program's pilot phase and is based on best practices of volunteer

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management as outlined by the Association for Volunteer Administration. The practices correlate with the Corporation for National and Community Service's list of effective volunteer management practices and are consistent with best practices of volunteer management as taught by leaders in the field such as Susan Ellis and Steve McCurley. To measure the impact of the ACM service and the sustainability of ACM efforts, VM utilizes an external evaluator and conducts ongoing, internal evaluation.

Each year, sites develop volunteer generation goals and measurable client outcomes. In the most recent year, 95% of sites that completed the service year met these outcomes. 95% also reported an increased ability to recruit, manage, and supervise volunteers and a statistically significant increase was observed in volunteer program satisfaction from the beginning to the end of the service year.

Over the last 10 years, 90% of sites reported an increased ability to manage volunteers as a result of the ACM's service and the VM partnership.

In annual follow-up surveys with previous sites from the last 10 years, 90% of sites note that they sustained or improved their ability to recruit and manage volunteers beyond the VM partnership.

Examples of results from 2011-2012 include the following.

- Stepping Stones Shelter provides support to homeless families with children in order to move them from crisis to a stable home environment by providing temporary shelter and services. ACM Elizabeth Trabucco coordinated 189 volunteers who provided childcare assistance and homemade meals, sorted donations, and maintained the shelter grounds. Elizabeth recruited and carefully matched enough volunteers to provide services to the clients almost every day, a benefit which was never possible for the shelter in the past. In addition, due to the consistency of volunteers preparing and serving meals, the shelter is now able to save approximately \$2,000 per year in food-related expenses.

- Asian American LEAD promotes the well-being of Asian American youth through education, leadership, and community building. ACM Sumiko Chambers recruited 39 new volunteers to tutor, mentor, and assist with special programs, collectively reaching 187 students. Additionally, Sumiko created a new function for their volunteer database that improves tracking of volunteer hours.

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- V-LINC creates technological solutions to improve the independence and quality of life for individuals with disabilities in Maryland. ACM Donté Taylor recruited 30 volunteers to build, design, and monitor customized devices for clients. Donté's efforts also resulted in a 79% increase in "What I Wish for My Child" requests, which recruits engineers to design and build customized devices.

Over the next 3 years, 96 ACMs at 90 sites will mobilize 9,720 volunteers who will provide 97,200 hours of service. In addition, at least 66 sites will implement 3 or more effective volunteer management practices and will report that capacity-building activities helped to make them more efficient.

These targets were determined based on site and community needs and average results over VM's history. Since 1992, ACMs mobilized 101,898 volunteers who provided 1,509,816 hours of service to 1,269,004 community members. Performance Measurement tools include statistical reports submitted by ACMs in January, April, and August and a pre/post assessment of sites.

In addition, each site must address one or more of the Corporation for National and Community Service focus areas. VM will work with all sites to develop targets and measure results in the national performance measure areas of economic opportunity, education, healthy futures, environmental stewardship, disaster services, and veterans and military families.

Finally, VM will work with each site to develop 1 or more site-determined measures for the site's volunteer program clients. By engaging in this level of performance measurement, VM anticipates that all sites will have evidence of the effectiveness of their volunteer programs, which will help to 1) improve programs to better serve clients and 2) provide evidence of the importance and effectiveness of volunteers and volunteer management practices.

In 2011-2012, in response to changes at the Corporation for National and Community Service, VM instituted new and revised performance measures; this year served as a pilot of these measures and measurement tools. With assistance from its external evaluator, VM is using the lessons learned in the evaluation of 2011-2012 to improve tools and reporting procedures in 2012-2013. In 2011-2012:

- 16 sites demonstrated a statistically significant increase in volunteer program management

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knowledge as a result of ACM service and staff training and technical assistance. Of sites that completed the service year, 89% had a skill/knowledge increase averaging .82 on a 5-point scale.

- 16 previous sites (89% of responding sites) sustained their organizational capacity to recruit and manage volunteers as a result of ACM service and program staff training and technical assistance.

- ACMs recruited and mobilized 3,432 volunteers to serve at partnering community organizations in MD. ACMs trained volunteers to provide 40,976 hours of local community service. On average, a volunteer mobilized by an ACM provided 12 hours of service.

Since 1992, ACMs mobilized 101,898 volunteers who provided 1,509,816 hours of service. VM saw a decrease in episodic volunteers over the last year, representing a change in the volunteer needs of sites and, in particular, a decrease in the number of sites focusing on environmental stewardship, which tend to mobilize larger number of volunteers for single-day opportunities.

4. MEMBER RECRUITMENT

VM values diversity in its participants; ACMs have ranged in educational levels from GED to PhD, and in gender, race, religion, and geographic background. ACMs have also ranged in age from 17 to 79; 9% of ACMs in the last 3 years were 50 years of age or older. 42% of ACMs in the last 3 years were people of color.

The first step in ACM recruitment is training the sites to identify and recruit talented candidates in their own communities, which often include traditionally underrepresented populations. Site preparation for recruitment includes written materials, VM staff coaching and support, and an orientation day during which VM staff provide recruitment and screening strategies and resources. Many ACMs are recruited from the communities where they serve, often from former volunteers or clients. In the last 3 years 57% of ACMs were recruited by sites.

VM recruits ACMs broadly through the media and Internet, fairs and seminars, the national online AmeriCorps recruitment system, and the VM and AmeriCorps alumni networks. Experience has shown that each of these methods is valuable, though no one strategy is most effective.

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All ACM candidates submit a complete application, including writing samples and references, and are interviewed by both VM staff and site staff. Once a tentative match is made, the candidate completes a full background check (state, FBI, and National Sex Offender Registry); selection is finalized when all references and background check results are received.

5. MEMBER TRAINING

VM prepares ACMs for service with an intensive 100-hour training program. The training program is an annual process that begins on the first day of service in September and concludes at the annual finale in August. ACMs receive 20 days of training during the service year: 11 days of pre-service training and 9 in-service days. The in-service days occur monthly, and a 2-day overnight retreat occurs at the mid-point of the service year. 4 training days, optional webinars, and roundtable meetings for Site Supervisors (SS) are also included in VM's training program. Upon successful completion of VM training and the AmeriCorps year, ACMs receive up to 12 Continuing Education Units in volunteer program management.

To enable ACMs to acquire skills and become ready to serve as ACMs, VM's comprehensive training program combines experiential activities and classroom instruction; it is fast-paced and quickly equips members with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to serve successfully. The training allows members to (1) develop a connection to national service and volunteerism; (2) learn and demonstrate best practices for volunteer program development; (3) practice effective team-building and communication; and (4) acquire and demonstrate leadership skills. According to VM's external evaluator, ACMs demonstrated a statistically significant increase in all 4 of these skill/knowledge areas.

All VM program and training activities are built around a framework of best practices called the Cycle of Volunteer Program Development. The Cycle is the model used by VM for each site and ACM's training, supervision, and evaluation. It provides a 3-phase process for volunteer program development: big picture (vision), foundation building, and implementation. Sites and ACMs are trained in the 20 elements of the Cycle (i.e., community need, evaluation, position descriptions, recruitment, and supervision), and then they tailor their volunteer programs according to their particular needs.

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Additionally, VM trains ACMs and sites on all rules concerning AmeriCorps prohibited activities; ACMs then develop volunteer position descriptions and training that specify allowable volunteer activities. Training in prohibited activities begins with sites; each SS attends an orientation which covers prohibited activities and must sign a Memorandum of Understanding acknowledging these activities. SS also participate in additional 1-on-1 discussions of prohibited activities as part of the site application process and must agree to the ACM position description, which includes the list of prohibited activities, prior to ACM recruitment. During recruitment, each ACM applicant receives the position description with this list and, as part of enrollment, reviews the ACM policies and procedures, which includes prohibited activities. VM staff lead a session on the requirements and benefits of being an ACM as part of pre-service training and continues to revisit and reinforce the regulations throughout the year during in-service trainings, emails, and 1-on-1 meetings if necessary.

Orientation to each ACM's site and community begins with a training day for ACMs and SS with discussion time concerning site culture, community need, and a community assessment. Once on site, ACM orientation is conducted by each SS. VM provides training and resources on conducting site orientation, including a recommended list of elements and template for planning the site orientation.

6. MEMBER SUPERVISION

ACMs are matched individually with sites and supervised by the Site Supervisor (SS) and VM's Director and Program Manager. Each SS, designated by the site's Executive Director or Board President, receives an extensive orientation, written materials, and 4 days of VM training each year, which includes detailed information on volunteer program development and AmeriCorps goals, policies, and regulations. Throughout the year, SS are provided ongoing support and training in ACM supervision through monthly phone and email contact with VM staff, an e-newsletter, and optional events including training webinars and networking roundtables.

To further support the supervision of individually placed ACMs, VM created a comprehensive SS Manual. The 85-page manual provides detailed instructions on ACM recruitment, selection, orientation, training, supervision, and a step-by-step orientation and training plan for new ACMs. It is especially helpful for articulating AmeriCorps regulations and site participation requirements.

SS conduct issue and community-specific training with the ACM at the beginning of the year and

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monitor the ACM's capacity-building and direct service activities. ACMs and SS meet weekly to review progress toward program goals and review accomplishments and challenges.

VM's Director and Program Manager also monitor service hours and progress toward partnership goals and performance measures during the service year. VM conducts 2 site visits per year with each site, facilitates mid-year and final performance evaluations with all ACMs, tracks progress on ACM leadership skills and goals, and provides ongoing coaching to SS to meet individual supervision needs.

7. MEMBER EXPERIENCE

In addition to a focus on meeting community needs and developing organizational capacity, VM is equally focused on ensuring a powerful service experience for ACMs. Each ACM is supported by VM staff, Site Supervisors, 2 second-year ACMs who serve as Peer Leaders, and a program that is designed to develop ACMs both personally and professionally.

As part of the VM experience, each ACM is required to develop up to 9 goals for the year that are separate from the goals of their sites. 3 goals are in the area of professional development, 3 are for learning about social issues, and 3 are personal goals. These goals are submitted at the beginning of service and revisited throughout the year, with plans made and VM support provided to work toward reaching the goals. In the most recent service year, 100% of ACMs achieved some/all professional goals; 88% achieved some/all social issue goals; and 96% achieved some/all personal goals.

Peer Leaders provide reflection, team building, and service opportunities for 1st year ACMs, playing a valuable role in fostering a positive esprit de corps. Peer Leaders convene monthly member meetings, produce a class newsletter to spotlight ACM accomplishments, and organize service projects.

Throughout the year, ACMs assess their service experiences and identify help or resources needed to successfully complete their terms. VM alumni regularly reflect on their experience and the impact it has had on their personal and professional lives. Alumna Caitlin Alcorn shared the following: "My year with VM not only taught me practical skills that I can use in future professional positions and graduate school, but also gave me the confidence and leadership necessary to apply these skills. I am much more comfortable in interviews and can always draw on experiences I had during my AmeriCorps year to address issues I have in my current position."

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The VM experience also impacts the ACMs by reinforcing a lasting service ethic. In annual follow-up surveys, 85-90% of program alumni report that they continue to be actively engaged in service as community volunteers, members of AmeriCorps Alums, community board members, volunteer and nonprofit managers, teachers, Peace Corps Volunteers, and government employees. VM AmeriCorps alumni have been recognized as White House Champions of Change and many have gone on to careers in public service, including as the Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment, Executive Director of the HandsOn Network, and staff of the Points of Light Foundation and AmeriCorps State and National programs.

VM works with the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism and AmeriCorps programs throughout MD to reinforce AmeriCorps identity and provide opportunities for ACMs to connect and collaborate. In 2009, VM hosted a 1-day conference for ACMs and, for the last 3 years, VM has hosted an annual networking event titled "Destination AmeriCorps" for ACMs serving in MD. In 2012, VM hosted the 3rd Destination AmeriCorps, which engaged 82 ACMs, alumni, and staff from 16 programs; it included several networking activities, a mini-workshop on developing elevator speeches, and prize giveaways. 1 of the most successful aspects of Destination AmeriCorps was the planning committee, which engaged 20 ACMs from 9 AmeriCorps and VISTA programs in agenda-planning, publicity, and donation solicitation for prizes.

8. VOLUNTEER GENERATION

ACMs are focused on building the capacity of sites to mobilize volunteers to meet specific community needs; ACMs build volunteer program structures and recruit and manage volunteers. Volunteers engage in direct service activities to meet community needs specified by each site and agreed to by VM; the scope of the ACM service and the volunteer roles are developed prior to partnership. All ACMs and sites are trained in AmeriCorps regulations; both ACMs and volunteers are supported, supervised, and monitored for compliance throughout the service year.

In addition to volunteers mobilized by ACMs at VM sites, VM also engages volunteers to provide staff and member training, marketing and material development, and database maintenance.

9. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

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VM is committed to sharing the story of AmeriCorps and national service. VM recruitment materials include AmeriCorps information; when at recruitment events, VM staff discuss AmeriCorps programs at large with participants, knowing that, while VM may be the best fit for some, others are interested in a different type of service. VM regularly refers individuals to the AmeriCorps web site, online recruitment system, or specific programs when possible. VM provides all ACMs with uniforms bearing the AmeriCorps and VM logos, facilitates a training session on AmeriCorps and national service, celebrates AmeriCorps Week, and connects ACMs to AmeriCorps Alums upon completion of the year. VM also provides AmeriCorps posters and materials to sites and encourages ACMs to participate in "AmeriFridays," by wearing AmeriCorps uniforms at their sites each Friday.

Organizational Capability

1. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING

Developed in 1992 as a program of the MD Governor's Office, VM's mission is to build stronger, healthier communities by developing volunteer programs with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and schools. In the last 20 years, 612 VM participants designed effective and sustainable volunteer management systems at rural, urban, school- and faith-based, secular, and other community-based agencies. They mobilized nearly 102,000 community volunteers and 52,000 service-learning students. Volunteers served over 1.5 million hours valued at nearly \$27 million.

VM has been recognized as an innovative way to leverage the energy and talents of ACMs to get things done and to rebuild communities through committed volunteer power. In 2010, VM was selected for inclusion in "Transforming Communities through Service: A Collection of 52 of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps Programs in the United States," published by Innovations in Civic Participation and Americas' Service Commissions. In 2012, VM received 2 nominations for the National Service Impact Awards.

VM is a program of the Governor's Office and has a high functioning program staff and fiscal management system. Financial oversight is provided by the Governor's Finance Office (GFO); both GFO and VM staff are experienced in administering federal and CNCS grants.

VM's Director reports to the Chief of Staff of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. VM staff members, all AmeriCorps alumnae, have 25 years of combined volunteer and AmeriCorps program management experience. Duties and relevant experiences include:

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- Director (staff since 2008): hire and supervise staff; conduct ACM and staff evaluations; complete program reports; oversee VM's training program. Prior experience includes providing training and technical assistance to sub-grantees of Florida Learn and Serve and Experience Corps (an AmeriCorps National Direct program), managing a VISTA program, and serving as AmeriCorps NCCC staff.
- Outreach Manager (staff since 2003): conduct site and ACM recruitment and VM program marketing; screen and select ACMs. Previously served as a VM ACM and Peer Leader.
- Program Manager (staff since 2010): evaluate ACMs and site partnerships; provide technical assistance to sites and ACMs. Previously served as a VM ACM and Peer Leader.
- Administrative Associate (staff since 2012): oversee program logistics including obtaining training facilities, reproduction of training and recruitment materials, and web site maintenance.

To supplement the knowledge and experience of VM staff, VM engages external experts. Guest trainers from area nonprofits and volunteer centers deliver workshops on volunteer management and professional development. VM also works with an external evaluator to develop and improve evaluation tools and to assess VM's results each year. In VM's formative years, the evaluator and a University of Maryland team developed VM's evaluation plan and tools; the same evaluator still works with VM and is able to offer comparative data from year to year, as well as suggestions for ongoing improvement of the annual evaluation.

Within the Governor's Office, VM has both programmatic and fiscal support. VM regularly meets performance measures, submits financial and narrative reports in full and on-time, and responds to requests by the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism in a timely manner. With a strong history, knowledgeable staff, and full integration within the Governor's Office, VM has the capacity and support to effectively manage federal funds and an AmeriCorps program.

2. SUSTAINABILITY

In 2013-2014, matching funds (\$358,269) will be raised by sites (\$202,500) and MD state general funds (\$155,769). VM will also raise \$172,770 worth of in-kind donations to support the program.

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Details of the matching funds are provided in the budget narrative. VM has consistently exceeded the match requirements, reducing the federal share of the budget to 43%.

As a capacity-building program, sustainability will also be measured by the sites' ability to continue to engage volunteers to serve local community needs after the investment of federal funds and VM support. In 2012, 91% of responding sites reported that they sustained or improved their capacity to effectively manage volunteers after the VM partnership.

To build these sustainable programs, VM staff and ACMs will work closely with site staff, VM's primary stakeholders, to design and implement comprehensive volunteer management systems and train site staff on the best practices of recruiting and retaining volunteers. Each ACM taps into the rich trove of local resources in his/her community by creating partnerships and soliciting in-kind donations to support the volunteer program beyond the VM year. These partnerships promote the services offered at local sites and provide renewable sources of volunteers.

In the next grant period, 90 sites will evaluate and inform program design and ACM training, invest financially, and provide in-kind services to support 96 ACMs. Additional stakeholders are: ACMs and alumni; former sites; 3,240 new community volunteers per year and the citizens served who will have access to food and shelter, receive tutoring and mentoring, and a wealth of other services from community volunteers; and community partners, who will be connected to VM sites and clients as a result of the ACMs' service.

3. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

VM will place 96 ACMs at nonprofits and agencies across MD in the next grant cycle. VM recruits new site partners each year; consecutive partnerships may be allowed for agencies with multiple volunteer programs or for sites that require an additional year to ensure program sustainability. In all, 30% of sites worked with VM in a prior year. Over the last 20 years, VM has established an effective system for selecting, orienting, monitoring, and supporting ACMs and sites in this statewide initiative.

Selection: VM conducts a comprehensive site selection process that includes a detailed site application, site visit and partnership negotiation by VM staff, and a 1-day orientation for Site Supervisors (SS). Throughout this process, sites are continually trained on AC regulations and prohibited activities in

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written materials, during the site visit, and at the orientation. VM's 3-month site selection process allows VM to assess and verify the agency's community need and ability to support an ACM, assures that VM has a full understanding of the site's financial and programmatic capabilities, and prepares each site for the rigors of partnering with VM and supervising an ACM.

Orientation: SS receive extensive orientation, written materials, and 4 days of VM training, which includes information on volunteer program development, AmeriCorps goals, policies, and regulations. To support the supervision of individually placed ACMs at community-based agencies, VM created an 85-page SS Manual that provides detailed instructions on ACM recruitment, selection, and supervision, and a step-by-step orientation and training plan for new ACMs. It is especially helpful for articulating regulations and site participation requirements.

Monitoring and Support: VM's Director and Program Manager monitor service activities, ACM service hours, and progress toward partnership goals and performance measures during the service year. VM conducts 2 site visits per year with each site, collects statistical and narrative reports on site activities, provides a monthly newsletter of resources and program reminders to SS, facilitates mid-year and final performance evaluations with all ACMs, tracks progress on ACM leadership skills and goals, and provides ongoing coaching to SS to meet individual supervision needs. VM develops connections among the sites informally via phone conversations, email exchanges, and site-specific resource sharing. Formal connections are fostered during training days and site visits with ACMs and sites. VM also schedules informal networking opportunities for sites in similar locations in MD.

Demonstrated Compliance: VM trains sites and ACMs in AmeriCorps regulations and prohibited activities, encourages ACMs and sites to contact VM with questions, and monitors for any areas of risk. With this training, the comprehensive site selection process, and ongoing monitoring, the risk of noncompliance is greatly diminished. As noted with all sites during site selection, any engagement in prohibited activities could result in the termination of the partnership and ACM service. If an issue of noncompliance were to arise during the service year, VM staff would immediately contact the ACM and SS to clarify rules, regulations, and prohibited activities, and ensure that no ACM time has been allotted to an unallowable activity. VM spends considerable time mitigating risk so as not to reach a time or position when a partnership would need to be terminated because of noncompliance.

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Enrollment: Since 2004, VM has enrolled 94% of awarded slots; the enrollment rate in the current grant cycle is 98%. The success of VM's program hinges largely on the intensive training provided to sites and ACMs. Prior to beginning service, each ACM participates in 11 days of pre-service training; every ACM must be available for this training. Each training element builds on the previous day's workshops; it is nearly impossible to make up any missed training.

VM aims to fill 100% of slots by the first day of training; to do so, recruitment deadlines are set with enough time between the application submission and the first day of training for ACM candidates to complete all screening, including interviews, background checks, and the submission of required paperwork. In an effort to enroll 100% by the first day of training, VM instituted a waitlist in 2009. In 2010, just a few days before pre-service training but after the recruitment deadline had passed, a selected candidate backed out and VM was able to fill the slot with another screened candidate. In the last full program year (2011-2012), VM filled 31/32 slots; training began with 32 individuals selected as ACMs; unfortunately, one did not complete training and it was too late to call up an individual from the wait list. In 2013-2014, VM will continue to utilize a waitlist with the goal of filling all slots by the first day of pre-service training. If necessary, VM will refill a slot up to the 3rd day of training and will provide 1-on-1 training and support to help the ACM catch up on any missed sessions.

VM also accepts more organizations as potential sites than it has ACM slots, which increases the chance of filling all allotted slots. In 2012-2013, VM filled 31/32 slots. For a variety of reasons, 7 selected sites withdrew from the program prior to training; recruitment was unsuccessful for 1 additional site, despite efforts from VM and site staff. VM was able to fill all remaining selected sites.

In addition to traditional outreach methods of career fairs, tabling at colleges, and print and online ads, VM is utilizing social networks, including Facebook and Twitter, to attract a diverse pool of qualified applicants. VM also launched a blog (volunteermaryland.wordpress.com) that follows ACMs through the service year and provides information on the ACM application for interested candidates. Along with recruitment from individual sites, each of these methods increases awareness of ACM opportunities. VM will also continue to select more sites than allotted slots, provide training to sites to assist them in local recruitment, and utilize a waitlist in order to reach the goal of 100% enrollment.

Retention: VM's strategy for ACM retention is 1) make the best match between the ACM, site, and

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VM; 2) provide solid training to ACMs and sites to help them to fulfill their position requirements; and 3) offer immediate guidance, correction, and direct communication as challenges arise during the service year. To implement this strategy, VM devotes a tremendous amount of time and energy to ACM recruitment, matching, training, and partnership support. Each ACM is supported by VM's staff and 2 2nd-year ACMs who serve as Peer Leaders, peer mentors and guides for ACMs.

Since 2004, VM has retained 86.7% of enrolled ACMs. In recent program years, reasons for incompleteness included financial challenges related to the stipend, personal health issues, and competitive job offers. In the most recent program year (2011-2012), 4/7 ACMs who exited early did so for other full-time paid opportunities. In an economy where jobs are hard to find, particularly for young college graduates, ACMs are more anxious than ever about finding post-service job opportunities; when an opportunity arises in one's field of interest, it is often viewed as impossible to pass up. In the current economy, it is difficult to gauge whether another opportunity will exist at the end of the service year. It is clear that this economic climate is having an impact on retention.

VM ACMs are high performers; most are college graduates and many graduated at the top of the class. They are quick learners who quickly become seen as seasoned professionals. In short, they are highly desirable hires and those who leave for other positions tend to do so when opportunities present themselves within the first months of the service year, when the connection to VM and AmeriCorps is not yet strong enough to outweigh the lure of a full-time paid position in one's field of interest.

To address the need for stronger retention, VM has taken several steps. 1)VM staff has further refined the ACM interview to focus even more on a candidate's commitment to completing the service year and provides training to SS on screening and interviewing for ACMs and the differences between ACMs and staff or volunteers. 2)With input from ACMs, VM developed a resource guide for living on the stipend that is searchable by county and need. 3)VM's Program Manager received 45 hours of basic mediation training to help VM staff engage in efforts to mediate any conflict on site or disappointment in the ACM position. In addition, VM continues to look for ways to support ACMs throughout the service year, including developing a strong connection to VM and AmeriCorps early.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. COST EFFECTIVENESS

VM's cost per MSY is \$12,470, a decrease of \$64/MSY from the previous 3-year grant period, even

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with an increase in the ACM living allowance of \$232/MSY. In terms of cost effectiveness, VM will provide \$2 worth of goods and services for every federal dollar invested.

VM's organizational budget is composed of State of MD general funds and in-kind support; cash match support from Service Sites; in-kind support from nonprofits, for-profits, and individuals; funds acquired through fee-for-service training; and the AmeriCorps grant. The grant represents 40% of VM's total operating budget. 80% of VM staff time is spent on AmeriCorps program implementation.

In 2013-2014, matching funds (\$358,269) will be raised by Service Sites (\$202,500) and MD general funds (\$155,769). VM will also raise \$172,770 worth of in-kind donations to support the program. VM has consistently reduced its reliance on federal funds since the program was founded. In the last 10 years, VM has reduced the federal share of the budget from 48% to 43%.

VM is a cost effective way to address the need for volunteer program development. As a multiplier model, VM resources - small staff, diverse funding and in-kind support - generate many volunteers who meet the needs of even more community members. Based on Independent Sector's value of a volunteer hour, an ACM that engages 120 volunteers in 10 hours of service generates services worth \$26,148 for the community. In addition, ACMs develop volunteer program structures that will outlast the AC term of service, meaning that the dollar value of the service will continue for years after the federal investment. The ACM is a short-term infusion of resources and energy, generating volunteers and creating stable volunteer programs that can be sustained for years. A volunteer program that is sustained at the same level for just 3 years beyond the AmeriCorps term will generate at least \$78,444, a considerable return on the investment of \$12,470 per MSY.

2. BUDGET ADEQUACY

VM's budget details program and member expenses to support all activities described in this narrative. To fully implement the program and achieve all projected performance outputs and outcomes, VM's budget provides appropriate and adequate staffing, operations, and member and staff development.

- 4 staff provide training, outreach, and member support to 32 ACMs and 30 Site Supervisors; 56% of staff salary and benefits are provided by VM.

- 8.5% of the CNCS budget share is dedicated to VM's comprehensive training program. This program provides 20 training days in the best practices of volunteer coordination and nonprofit management to

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ACMs and 4 days for supervisors, directly meeting VM's goals of developing service leaders and creating strong, sustainable volunteer programs. In addition to the CNCS share, VM is consistently able to acquire in-kind donations of training workshops, facilities, and equipment.

- Approximately \$8,000 is dedicated to ACM and site outreach. Despite increasing costs for attending career fairs and utilizing print media, VM has decreased this amount in the last 6 years, supplementing with in-kind media coverage, webinars, and the use of free social networks.

- \$5,000 is budgeted for VM's external evaluator, a decrease of \$1,000 since 2007. VM's evaluator provides analysis of ACM skills assessment and the success or areas for improvement in site partnerships. VM's evaluator also provides coaching on increasing the response rate of multi-year surveys.

- More than half of the budget is dedicated to ACM support costs. VM will provide a living allowance of \$13,250 for a full-time volunteer coordinator ACM; this is an increase over the previous 3 years and an incentive for enrollment and service completion. Peer Leader ACMs receive a living allowance of \$17,500.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

VM conducts evaluation internally and externally. Evaluation elements include in-person monitoring, pre and post tests and surveys, and annual ACM alumni and site surveys, as detailed below. External evaluation reports from 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 were emailed to the GOSV on November 29.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: The capacity of programs is measured by the Volunteer Program Survey, administered at the beginning and end of each partnership year to assess the site's appraisal of the quality of service provided by volunteers to clients and the site's ability to manage direct service volunteers. The results of this survey are analyzed and reported by VM's external evaluator. VM staff and Peer Leaders also conduct site visits to assess the development of the partnerships, suggest course adjustments, and provide additional resources and VM staff conduct follow-up surveys with sites for 3 years after the partnership to monitor the sustainability of the volunteer program.

COMMUNITY BUILDING: The number of volunteers recruited and/or managed and hours served are measured and reported in mid-year and final reports and the Volunteer Program Survey. VM provides resources on database development for each ACM and site to collect this data.

ACM DEVELOPMENT: ACMs complete a pre/post Skills Assessment to assess their service leadership skill development. The results of this survey are analyzed and reported by VM's external evaluator. ACMs also complete a goals worksheet at the beginning and end of the service year. This instrument provides professional, personal, and issue-related categories; the ACMs revisit these goals mid-year.

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Peer Leaders and VM staff use the worksheets to tailor the support provided to each ACM.

Additionally, VM conducts follow-up surveys with alumni for 3 years to survey their on-going service involvement and attitudes toward their AmeriCorps experience.

STAKEHOLDERS, FEEDBACK, PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT: VM Program: VM staff conduct regular monitoring site visits with ACMs and site staff and attend weekly VM staff meetings to evaluate internal operations and brainstorm improvements.

VM Training Program: Daily feedback forms are solicited from ACMs and a thorough evaluation form is completed by each ACM at the completion of pre-service training.

ACM Service: VM staff hold on-going meetings with SS to assess the ACM's development and performance. ACMs and SS also submit written mid-year and final evaluation forms.

Volunteer Experience/Client Service: ACMs develop and administer their own evaluations for soliciting client and volunteer feedback. VM provides technical assistance to develop evaluation plans.

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES: In 2013-2014, with assistance from its external evaluator, VM will modify or create new tools to track results on 2 new performance measures:

- 1) A Pre-Post Assessment to measure the number of organizations implementing effective volunteer management practices.
- 2) A Pre-Post Assessment to measure the impact of ACM service on organizational efficiency.

Amendment Justification

n/a

Clarification Summary

n/a

Continuation Changes

n/a