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Executive Summary

Heart of Oregon Corps' AmeriCorps Opportunity Youth (AOY) project enrolls 48 AmeriCorps members who will leverage 50 volunteers. Members improve their own economic opportunities while they conduct environmental stewardship. Project interventions are located in the geographically isolated and economically depressed central region of Oregon that encompasses three counties (Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook) and tribal lands within the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. At the end of the 10/1/2013 to 9/30/2013 period, the primary outcomes are economically disadvantaged AmeriCorps members who earn a GED/diploma (9 members), secure employment (16 members), or complete a college course (16 members), thereby significantly improving their own economic futures. The secondary outcome is the 1,000 acres of at-risk eco-systems improved on public lands. The program is aligned with the CNCS focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$337,791 is matched with \$267,585.

Rationale and Approach

1a. NEED: HOC addresses two IDENTIFIED NEEDS in the communities of Central Oregon: opportunity youth and at-risk eco-systems. The first COMMUNITY PROBLEM is that local opportunity youth need pathways to re-engage in education and the job market to improve their futures and the nation's economic vitality. After two decades of rapid growth and a housing boom and bust, Central Oregon was hit extremely hard during the 2009 Great Recession. Tri-county average unemployment rates skyrocketed to 16.5% in 2009 and stayed persistently high at 15% through 2011 (Oregon Employment Dept). Current rates of 12.2% remain the highest in the state and far exceed the national average of 7.9% (Oct, 2012). In Central Oregon, 1 in 9 people are in poverty with nearly 1 in 3 hovering above the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau). Nearly 1 in 4 Central Oregonians were enrolled in food stamps, compared to 1 in 7 nationally (USDA, Mar, 2012). Homelessness in Central Oregon increased 741% between 2008 and 2011 (Homeless Leadership Coalition). Economic indicators magnify for "opportunity youth," defined to be 16-24 year olds who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market. Their societal disconnection equates to society not investing in their human capital or ability to earn income, and represents a loss of economic opportunity for themselves and the nation. Utilizing Belfield, Levin, and Rosen's report to CNCS, "The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth" and US Census data on the tri-county Central Oregon area, there are nearly 4,000 local opportunity youth with a total lifetime potential burden of \$2.9 trillion to the regional and national economy--in Central Oregon alone. The national employment-to-

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population rate for 16-24 year olds had fallen to 42.6%, the lowest level of youth employment on record dating back to 1948 (Jul, 2010). Oregon has the 7th highest number of unemployed youth (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2011). Overall, economically disadvantaged students in Oregon have a graduation rate 14% below that of their higher income peers (Commission on Children and Families, 2011). The college gap is even larger: at age 28 only about 1% of opportunity youth have achieved a degree relative to 36% in the general population.

The second COMMUNITY PROBLEM is regional at-risk eco-systems in Central Oregon. Land management experts identify 4 primary needs. First, non-native invasive species pose a serious risk to ecosystems, threatening to change existing ecology, suppress endangered species, reduce biodiversity, and damage habitat (Chornesky et al. 2005). Second, juniper encroachment has expanded since the 1800s from 1.5 million acres to 5-6 million acres in the Northwest, affecting ecological cycles, habitat, and biodiversity (Miller et al, 2010). Third, hazardous fire fuels are extremely problematic. In an average year, regional agencies combat fires on more than 50,000 acres (Project Wildfire). Fourth, the US Forest Service (USFS) identified improvements for recreational impacts as a top need for regional forests, estimating that the Deschutes Forest receives in excess of 3 million visitors a year.

The TARGET COMMUNITY, Central Oregon, is a heavily forested and agricultural rural region, roughly equivalent in square miles to the state of New Jersey and comprised of 80% federal public lands. The remote landscape is a 4 hour drive over steep mountain passes to the state's metropolitan centers. At least 80% of members recruited from the community will meet CNCS' ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED eligibility definition, and at least 80% will be "Opportunity Youth." HOC SELECTED THIS POPULATION to serve the environmental needs because of the local youth unemployment crisis and because it is in perfect alignment with our mission: "to empower and inspire positive change in the lives of young people through jobs, education, and stewardship."

1b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: Through a crew-based, 'boots-on-the-ground' model that incorporates classroom-based education and workforce development, MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES improve their own economic opportunities through earning GED's, preparing for employment after service, and completing college courses. Activities include career, GED and college classes, improving soft skills, earning industry recognized credentials, and seeking post-program employment or college enrollment. MEMBER ACTIVITIES also improve 1,000 acres of the crushing back-log of projects on Central Oregon's 7,000 square miles of public lands through a wide range of year-round, hands-on interventions. Plant removal includes hand-pulling invasive weeds at critical growth periods and mechanically felling

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juniper trees to address their encroachment on eco-systems. Hazardous fire fuels reduction includes thinning, limb-cutting and brush-cutting undergrowth in densely, overgrown forests. Signage installation, fencing and trail work restores and protects eco-systems from visitor impacts. In addition, one crew primarily focuses on "eco-landscaping" the environments surrounding public housing for low-income area residents. On a typical day members meet their Crew Leader at HOC to load gear, hold a safety session, and embark to a USFS site where they thin trees in order to reduce fuel for potential wildfires. The staff Crew Leader closely supervises members to improve the chainsaw skills they gained during a certification class. At mid-day lunch break a USFS land manager visits and the crew converses with her about USFS jobs. She encourages them to apply. Later, members attend a GED class at HOC where they calculate the square acreage of the day's service site. Members celebrate; they have improved 34 acres of an at-risk ecosystem this week alone!

HOC will ACCOMPLISH DRASTICALLY MORE during the AOY project than it would only with existing resources. The project increases HOC's scope and depth of service for economically disadvantaged youth: HOC will serve more youth with a longer intervention period and more member development resources. The accomplishments of our public lands partners will also increase (via more acres of land improved) and help them meet their missions. At-risk eco-systems need AmeriCorps members' efficiency, crew-organization, and 'getting things done' attitude to address projects. Volunteer groups from 'friend-of-the-forest' type organizations are unable to adequately address this backlog because of the technical skills required (operating chainsaws), the vast geographic travel-distances, and the at-times unappealing nature of the projects (hand-pulling invasive species in the desert heat). This service-based labor does not replace public land agency employees; it expands the capacity of what agencies can achieve. Without this project, the US Forest Service, BLM, and Deschutes County Forestry would face significant challenges in meeting their missions.

HOC REQUESTS 48 AMERICORPS MEMBERS for a combined total of 26 MSY, in two types of SERVICE SLOTS. 44 members fill 900-hour Part-Time (PT) slots and 4 members fill 1700-hour Full-Time (FT) slots. This slot allocation ALIGNS WITH THE PROGRAM DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES to make AmeriCorps a highly effective means to solve dual community problems of lack of economic opportunity for youth and eco-systems at risk. Members in PT slots complete 900 hours over 6 months and serve in five 9-member crews, each supervised by a staff Crew Leader. Two FT Members are "Team Leaders," in a leadership role to support other PT members in environmental stewardship. The third FT Member is a "Volunteer Coordinator" who recruits and manages volunteers that expand program capacity. The fourth FT Member is an "Opportunity Access Coordinator," in a capacity

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building role, who builds partnerships that support disadvantaged members in their service.

1c. EVIDENCE-BASED/INFORMED AND MEASUREABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT: Through HOC's project, the IMPACT of the AMERICORPS INVESTMENT is represented by a quadruple bottom line: the health of at-risk ecosystems on public lands, the opportunity youth members who serve, the local community whose economy is largely based on recreational tourism associated with public lands, and the nation that shoulders a potential \$1.56 trillion taxpayer burden for every cohort of opportunity youth who remain unengaged. This EVIDENCE-INFORMED INTERVENTION 'corps model' aligns with the priorities of the "21st Century Conservation Service Corps" (21CSC) as envisioned by a federal advisory committee in September, 2012 and prominently noted in the FY2013 AmeriCorps announcement as a program CNCS is "exploring" for potential. The committee endorsed the 21CSC corps model, especially for disconnected youth. 'Corps models' have delivered strong education, workforce, and civic engagement outcomes to more than 600,000 youth over several decades. In 2003, The Corps Network completed a four-year national Welfare to Work project funded by the Department of Labor. The project moved nearly 500 young adults from welfare through a corps model to employment. The median weekly earning for an individual with less than a high school diploma was \$444 versus \$1,038 with a Bachelor's degree (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2010). The \$594 variance between education levels and weekly wages demonstrates that unemployment rates correspond to education levels. For example, the unemployment rate in 2010 for an individual with less than a high school diploma was 14.9% versus 5.4% with a Bachelor's degree. "Vanishing Work Among U.S. Teens 2000-2010" provides research-driven insight that reveals that those who participate in work-based learning programs are more likely to see the connection between school, work, and their career goals (Sum and Khatiwada, 2010). EVIDENCED-BASED RESEARCH also guides the project's INTERVENTIONS on public lands to address at-risk ecosystems. For example, the Tribe's well-researched "Project Management Plan" for the Pine Creek Conservation Area targets projects of highest concern with prescribed interventions, i.e. those which restore natural processes. The USFS and BLM utilize federal land management plans to identify project interventions. Debra Mafera, USFS Invasive Plant Program Manager stated invasive plants are a leading threat to biological diversity in regional areas (Mack et al . 2000). Because of their devastating impacts, significant resources are targeted for control and management interventions (Duncan et al. 2004; Pimentel, Zuniga & Sheley 2005). The "USFS 10-year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge," found 100% of Central Oregon's wilderness areas are rated "managed below standards" using a metric of five measurable qualifiers. These data-driven trends drive HOC's AOY interventions.

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BY THE END OF THE THREE YEAR GRANT CYCLE, the investment in the AOY project will have demonstrable impacts on youth's lives and at-risk eco-systems. At least 123 opportunity youth will be employed, earned a GED/Diploma, or be attending college. Not only will previously unemployed, under-educated disadvantaged youth now have jobs, education, and career goals, they will be engaged citizens who view service as their connection to their communities. Eco-system health on at least 2,700 acres of public lands will be improved to an "excellent" level. This means less risk of wildfire, healthier eco-systems, and recreation resources that help fuel Central Oregon's recreational tourism economy. The DEMONSTRABLE PROGRAM IMPACTS of the first year of the project are MEASURED through four of CNCS's standard National Performance Measures, utilizing the structure and definitions for eligibility provided by the Corporation. First, of all enrolled, 26 members will be economically disadvantaged who were unemployed prior to service. Of those, 16 will secure employment within a year of completing service. Second, of all enrolled, 12 members will be economically disadvantaged without a high school diploma prior to service. Of those, 9 will obtain a GED/Diploma within a year of completing service. Third, of all enrolled, 18 members will not have completed a college degree prior to service. Of those, 16 will complete a college course within a year of completing service. These first three measures all capture impacts in the Economic Opportunity Focus area. Fourth and finally, members and volunteers will improve 1,000 acres of public lands. Of those, at least 900 will be improved at an "excellent" quality as evaluated by land managers. Members will also recruit 50 volunteers to further leverage the impact of the project.

The Program Manager and Program Assistant will MEASURE AND COLLECT raw data with reliable and consistent instruments (such as demographic forms, self-reporting surveys, and GPS measurements), accompanied by source documentation. For example, all alumni complete a self-reporting survey once a quarter after their service, which collects data on employment, GED, and College Course attainment. It is available by email, paper, or documented phone conversation to maximize data collection. The Program Assistant then works with alumni to secure back-up documentation such as pay stubs, GED test score, or copy of college transcripts. The Program Manager tabulates data on excel-based summary logs with unique project and participant identifiers in order to be sorted for any duplicates and analyzed. The Program Manager REPORTS on IMPACTS on a bi-annual basis to CNCS, and by progress reports to the state commission summarizing results and detailing a corrective action plan for any deficiencies.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES TARGETS were set by first projecting the number of all enrolled participants who would meet the CNCS defined eligibility and definitions of each measure (such as the

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CNCS definition of "economically disadvantaged"). Not every member is appropriate for every outcome (GED vs. college), but other members could achieve in multiple areas (employment and college). Then the total projected eligible were multiplied by the project attainment rate of that specific outcome (Employment: $26 \times 60\% = 16$ members), (GED: $12 \times 75\% = 9$ members), (College Course: $18 \times 90\% = 16$ members). These attainment rates were set based on HOC outcome history or goals in similar 21CSC programs. HOC will increase these outcomes each successive year. Environmental stewardship targets were set by discussing partners' goals and metrics for specific projects.

1d. MEMBER RECRUITMENT: HOC believes strategic RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PLAN will positively support crew motivation, retention, quality of service projects, and ability to meet performance measures. HOC leverages its extensive and formalized referral network which includes school districts, public assistance offices, shelters, Latino groups, Tribal groups, and the justice systems. HOC targets young people who are from the LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO BE SERVED. HOC is located 4 blocks from the regional transit hub of Central Oregon, allowing members from Bend, Oregon and five other surrounding RURAL COMMUNITIES to potentially participate (La Pine, Sisters, Redmond, Madras, and Prineville). A substantial number of referrals are from peers. When brothers refer their sisters and alumni refer their friends, it demonstrates community confidence in HOC. The Program Manager advertises using radio, Facebook, posters in youth locations, and presentations to referral partners. Applicants can apply in-person, on-line at HOC's website, or via MyAmeriCorps. Translated Spanish materials are available and HOC widely advertises our equal opportunity policy. The Program Manager conducts interviews to assess and select applicants. They consider commitment level, integrity, genuine interest in transformative change through service, ability to attend daily, and work through barriers.

HOC has a 13 year SUCCESSFUL HISTORY of recruiting OPPORTUNITY YOUTH and TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS. HOC has served over 2,000 youth in 13 years and has participated in nationally-modeled programs that target these youth (Civic Justice Corps pilot program and YouthBuild). For example, when working with formerly incarcerated young adults from 2007-2012, HOC achieved a 65% GED/diploma attainment rate. However, demographic realities such as homelessness, court-involvement, poverty, or disabilities present barriers that can make a 900 hour service commitment challenging. So, HOC structures its program with member support and development to equip members with the tools they need for successful service such as individual goal setting and personal organization classes, regional bus passes to attend the program daily, or applying for SNAP (food stamps). The same strong partner network HOC uses to recruit

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youth is also used to provide referrals for services that are outside of the scope of what HOC provides in-house (drug and alcohol counseling, public assistance, or legal aid).

1e. MEMBER TRAINING: During a one-week member ORIENTATION, the Program Manager completes required AmeriCorps paperwork, covers AmeriCorps service requirements, and reviews the service agreement and member handbook (which includes PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES, equal opportunity, confidentiality, and grievance procedures). Members learn about the COMMUNITY THEY ARE SERVING, including the needs of "opportunity youth" like themselves. Orientation also includes introduction to the SERVICE THEY WILL PERFORM from environmental educators about at-risk eco-systems. HOC does not utilize other placement sites. Program staff provide members training to BUILD TRANSFERABLE SKILLS for future careers and PREPARES MEMBERS TO PERFORM ALL THE ACTIVITIES THEY WILL ENGAGE IN DURING THEIR TERM OF SERVICE. Members receive structured field-based and classroom training, guided by checklists, curriculum, and/or certifications. Training in team-building, leadership, communication, and goal setting prepare members for the 21st century workforce. Members receive certifications in safety and specialized field-specific competencies such as CPR/First Aid, OSHA-10, Chainsaw, Fence Building, Species Identification, and Eco-Landscaping. Crew Leaders train and guide member's skill development and assess work readiness. Each 9-member crew gets extra training from the "Team Leader" FT Member, who fills a leadership and training role while also completing environmental stewardship service. These FT members are not supervisors of other members; they serve in a supporting and training role alongside other members, with a special emphasis on helping members practice technical field skills while encouraging a safe service environment. The Program Manager utilizes University of Oregon's Career Information System to administer a career assessment which matches members' interests with labor-market research. The Program Manager helps members create a career portfolio and provides them with employment placement support and job coaching.

Members who enter the program without a GED/diploma work with HOC's Education Coordinator. Classes include GED pre-testing, basic skills remediation, test-taking strategies (including computer literacy), and computerized GED testing, with all costs covered by HOC. If youth are under 19 years old, HOC offers high school diploma completion through a local school district partnership. Alumni can continue to attend classes and take tests with HOC up to 1 year after finishing AmeriCorps. Members who enter the program with a GED/diploma but without a college degree will work towards completion of at least 1 college class. HOC's College 101 curriculum includes college prep, financial aid, and campus tours. The Education Coordinator assists members with the

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application, placement test, and enrolling in one college credit course prior to program exit. College access mentors are matched with members attending college after service so members receive personal support in advising, registration, and financial aid.

HOC's TIMELINE FOR MEMBER TRAINING is linked with the crew enrollment schedule. Crews begin in the fall, late winter, early spring, and late spring (timed with the Central Oregon climate). Crews overlap, with maximum enrollment at 35 members at one time. Each crew completes one week of orientation, then one month of certification-based field skills training while starting to complete projects with partners. Member development classes (Career, GED/diploma, College Prep) are scheduled weekly throughout the service terms, and occur prior to or after field-based service. On other days, classes are held for an entire day instead of field based service. Training hours (that count towards the Education Award) are capped at 20% of total member hours. The four FT members begin in the fall, when only one crew of PT members is enrolled, creating flexible schedules for training to prepare for the busy warmer seasons. The four FT members receive additional training to the PT member topics. The "Team Leaders" receive a S212 Chainsaw Certification and extended fence building training, along with shadowing land managers and Crew Leaders to gain additional technical field experience. All four FT members receive training from "Volunteer Connect" in effective volunteer management practices and training volunteers in PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES, with the "Volunteer Coordinator" receiving extended volunteer trainings from the Nonprofit Associate of Oregon. Each FT position has allocated funds (\$200 each) to select trainings aligned with their specific position. Training classrooms have postings of the RULES REGARDING PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES, which is a regular topic in both member and volunteer trainings.

1f. MEMBER SUPERVISION: HOC's SUPERVISION PLAN ensures member receive ADEQUATE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE throughout their terms of service. Two full-time/year-round and on-call/seasonal staff Crew Leader positions are dedicated to daily crew-based supervision. As role models for members, Crew Leaders are the backbone of a successful, safe, and service-oriented crew experience. Crew Leaders interface with project sponsors, direct service work, ensure safety procedures, train members in technical skills, promote teamwork, provide members feedback, and implement disciplinary actions when needed. Crew Leaders directly supervise the "Team Leaders," FT members who play a leadership role in the field. Finally, the Program Manager provides direct supervision to the two FT Members in capacity-building roles (the "Volunteer Coordinator" and "Opportunity Access Coordinator"). Each FT member meets one-to-one weekly with their supervisor to review their service goals and progress. The Program Manager also provides all PT and FT

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members with additional supervision, and oversees all disciplinary actions made by Crew Leaders (including releasing members from service). HOC believes it is critical to dedicate a 100% full-time Program Manager strictly to this project. While HOC operates five other distinct programs, each program is 100% separate from this project and operates under different auspices.

The Program Manager SELECTS AND TRAINS SUPERVISORS with support from the Executive Director (ED). At project implementation, the Program Manager provides a staff orientation training HOC's veteran Crew Leaders in the project goals, member supervision procedures, and AmeriCorps compliance (including prohibited activities). The Program Manager and Ex. Director conduct field visits to monitor safety, supervision, AmeriCorps compliance, and project accomplishments. If a non-veteran Crew Leader needs to be hired and trained, he or she is selected through HOC's rigorous hiring process. This includes an application, interview, reference checks, AmeriCorps 3-part background checks, drug testing, and a driving history check. After an AmeriCorps staff orientation, a new Crew Leader completes 2 weeks of "shadowing" a veteran Crew Leader. New hires achieve AmeriCorps background check clearance before independently supervising members. Crew Leaders and the Program Manager receive ongoing TRAINING, OVERSIGHT, AND SUPPORT that helps them sustain high-quality supervision while working with a high-needs member demographic. The ED supervises and trains the Program Manager, ensuring effective program implementation. The Program Manager holds bi-weekly supervision meetings, where Crew Leaders discuss member supervision, project implementation, and program improvement. Each Crew Leader receives annual technical skills training, as well as soft skill training in managing crews and working with opportunity-youth. Wilderness First Aid, and OSHA certifications are renewed when required.

1g. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: The POWERFUL SERVICE EXPERIENCE of HOC AmeriCorps members embeds them into the NATIONAL SERVICE MOVEMENT. During orientation, the Program Manager teaches the history of national service, dating back to the CCC. In order to help members REFLECT ON and LEARN FROM SERVICE, we utilize a "Service Learning Model," which has 4 main components: 1) explore, 2) act, 3) reflect, and 4) demonstrate. Crew Leaders engage members in the reflection and demonstration portions of this model. Achievements of AmeriCorps goals such as service hours, community outreach, volunteer recruitment, and commitment are highlighted at weekly team meetings thus instilling a sense of ownership and pride in their service. National service is emphasized as a lifelong commitment that continues once an AmeriCorps member becomes an alumnus; 5 HOC staff members are AmeriCorps alumni. Through service young people are motivated to exceed their expectations of themselves: they are part of a team whose achievements

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serve a greater, more urgent purpose. In these ways, they prepare for a life of CIVIC PARTICIPATION. The project strongly IDENTIFIES as an AmeriCorps program, and participants are highly AWARE that they are AMERICORPS MEMBERS. Members are required to wear AmeriCorps uniforms daily, learn the pledge, and plan national days of service such as serving meals to veterans on MLK Day. 12 members attend the Oregon Volunteers AmeriCorps Kick-Off to experience CONNECTIVITY to the national service movement and INTERACT WITH OTHER AMERICORPS MEMBERS from across Oregon. AMERICORPS ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE PROMOTED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC through press releases, semi-annual achievement celebrations attended by community leaders, and public events such as our local Veterans Parade.

1h. VOLUNTEER GENERATION: At least 50 volunteers will be RECRUITED TO EXPAND THE COMMUNITY IMPACT of the program. Volunteers increase the impact of economic opportunity for members in ROLES such as episodic support of career classes as a mock interviewer or resume reviewer, or regular engagement as a college access mentor or job-hunting coach. Other volunteers increase the quality of improvement for at-risk eco-systems in ROLES such as environmental educator, technical skills trainer, or public lands intern (recruited from college natural resources departments to help interface with public lands agencies and plan logistics for projects). HOC's four FT AMERICORPS MEMBERS RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS targeting specific skills and interests to fill needed roles. They partner with the local community college and businesses to reach volunteers. The FT "Volunteer Coordinator" member orients and MANAGES volunteers. In 2012-13 HOC hosted a VISTA member through YouthBuild USA who created a new, research-based volunteer management system including screening, training, support, and recognition procedures. In 2013-14, the FT "Volunteer Coordinator" will fully implement this structured system to engage more volunteers. HOC subscribes to Volunteer Connect, a local online volunteer system, where a diverse group of individuals who are ready and willing to volunteer log on to find a place to serve. FT members receive formal and comprehensive volunteer management training from Volunteer Connect. For national service days, FT members plan large volunteer events with the PT members, supporting the PT MEMBERS TO RECRUIT THEIR PEER GROUP to get involved. By targeting this peer-based audience, members connect with younger community members who might not otherwise volunteer. The Program Manager oversees volunteer compliance in activities with AmeriCorps' PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.

1i. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: National service BRANDING, is an important benefit to HOC's members and to HOC's reputation. HOC keeps "AmeriCorps" in the very name of our project, "AmeriCorps Opportunity Youth" because AmeriCorps

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is recognized, respected, and appreciated on member resumes when they list their experience.

AmeriCorps is on every member uniform, worn daily. Member materials, from handbook, to training curriculum are identified with the "AOY" program name and symbol. It appears on HOC's brochure, website, Facebook, annual report, press releases, and program vans, which travel over 50,000 miles a year across Oregon. HOC especially highlights the economic stimulus of living allowances paid and Segal Education Awards distributed. AmeriCorps helps HOC attract donors who are familiar with national service and value the leverage AmeriCorps funding brings to every dollar they give. HOC ensures our local, state, and federal representatives are aware that HOC receives federal AmeriCorps support, sharing the impact made possible with AmeriCorps' increased leverage for their constituents.

Organizational Capability

2a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: HOC was founded in 2000 to provide work, learn and earn opportunities to low-income, at-risk youth and young adults, ages 16-27 years old, living in Central Oregon. The MISSION of HOC is to empower and inspire positive change in the lives of young adults through jobs, education, and stewardship. As a result, HOC stimulates regional economies, improves community viability, and preserves healthy natural resources. Throughout its HISTORY, HOC has earned a strong reputation for highly productive youth crews that efficiently complete projects benefitting Central Oregon. Agency-wide outputs in the past five years include: over 1,000 youth served, over \$4M in wages/stipends paid to youth/staff, over 1,000 miles of trails maintained on public lands, over 3,000 acres of land are protected from wildfire, 11 homes built or rehabbed providing affordable housing to 41 people in 7 cities, 21 homes were weatherized for low-income families, and over 716 tons of tires and appliances recycled. HOC's history demonstrates it has the ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE, STAFFING, AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE available to ensure efficient, effective, and high quality PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION of the project.

The proposed AOY program will be STAFFED with its own distinct team, led by the Executive Director (ED) (.25 FTE), Finance Director (.2 FTE) and a full-time, dedicated Program Manager (1.0 FTE) who will implement the AmeriCorps program's components to ensure grant compliance and project success. The ED will execute contracts/agreements with public lands agencies and partner agencies while supervising the Program Manager. The Program Manager, who has a M.S. in Natural Resources will interface with program staff, partners, and AmeriCorps members. A part-time Program Assistant (.8 FTE) assists the Program Manager with member files, data collection, and crew logistics. Veteran staff Crew Leaders (2.85 FTE) will be dedicated to supervising and training the members. One has a B.A. in Environmental Studies, another is bilingual in Spanish. HOC's On-Call

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Staff Crew Leader is a 3-year alumnus of our programs who later returned to HOC to give back to others. HOC's Education Coordinator (.2FTE) for GED/diploma and college prep classes is a licensed teacher. The Oregon Volunteers State AmeriCorps commission provides FINANCIAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ORIENTATION to project staff, which is followed-up by TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. Oregon Volunteers provides site visits, quarterly meetings, webinars, and technical support adding a crucial layer of external oversight.

HOC possesses the CAPACITY TO PROVIDE TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR MEMBERS. This includes infrastructure for projects such as three 10-passenger vans, dump trailers, a chipper, a backhoe, and power tools to complete high-demand fuels projects. Capacity includes HOC's Operations Center with staff offices and program space for member classes. HOC's highly qualified staff offer technical skills training and development designed specifically for opportunity youth needs. HOC has CAPACITY TO COMPLETE AN EVALUATION for the project. The Program Manager has an academic background in the sciences and is well qualified to run the required internal evaluation for the grant. The Program Manager will design a web-based member pre and post self-evaluation to measure workforce preparedness that conforms to effective evaluation techniques. HOC will subscribe to an online survey system in order to achieve reliable results and secure data.

HOC's PRIOR EXPERIENCE ADMINISTERING AMERICORPS and other FEDERAL GRANTS make it a highly qualified organization to be awarded its FIRST direct AmeriCorps operating grant. Since 2007, prior experience includes 17 "grant-years" of AmeriCorps sub-grants (totaling 350 AmeriCorps slots) from national non-profits including: YouthBuild USA (YouthBuild-AmeriCorps sub-grant for 3 years) and The Corps Network (Civic Justice Corps-AmeriCorps sub-grant for 6 years; Clean Energy Service Corps-AmeriCorps sub-grant for 3 years, and the Education Award Program for 4 years). In FY2012, HOC received a one year Formula Supplemental Funding through Oregon Volunteers for 26 MSY. HOC has also administered \$2.2M of Dept. of Labor YouthBuild funding.

HOC is governed by an active BOARD OF DIRECTORS comprised of nine respected professionals in their fields of education, law, government, and business that are stakeholders in HOC's mission and ensure thorough oversight and guidance to the policies and strategies of the agency. HOC's leadership team is made up of the ED, Development Director, Finance Director, and Education Director. The leadership team and Board of Directors will SUPPORT THE PROPOSED PROGRAM and are ultimately responsible for successful grant implementation and administration. The ED (who has a M.A. in Leadership), and Finance Director (who has a B.A. in Finance and a Certificate in Nonprofit Finances), will dedicate direct administration hours building partnerships, directing grant finances,

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and ensuring HOC's policies are in compliance with federal requirements.

2b. SUSTAINABILITY: HOC's FINANCIAL RESOURCES to support the AOY project DEMONSTRATE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT. Based on a successful 13 year history and sterling project reputation, HOC leverages long-standing partnerships to create project sponsor match contracts and agreements. These contracts are then further leveraged by AmeriCorps funding. Of PLANNED project 2013-14 matching funds (\$267,585), 28% is secured in currently signed contracts with the BLM and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS). The other 72% is pledged by long-standing partners and represents highly reliable match funding from the Housing Authority, Deschutes County, USFS and BLM. If any one of these pending match sources fails to fully materialize, others partners have indicated they can find additional projects or in-kind support to compensate for any unexpected changes. HOC will RAISE FUNDS from project sponsors TO SUPPORT THE SERVICE-BASED ACTIVITIES of corpsmembers for this project. This project would further enhance, leverage, and expand HOC's proven model, and help HOC grow to achieve even more sophistication and success. This growth in turn contributes to LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY. For example, Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) has discussed a potential Job Development Contract with HOC for job placement services for opportunity youth with disabilities. The AOY project would help HOC grow by fine-tuning youth employment services and measuring placement outcomes. In turn, HOC would then be positioned to secure this contract from OVRs, leading to greater sustainability.

HOC's Board of Directors and staff leadership team created a three year "Adaptive Strategic Plan" in 2012 which OUTLINES PLANS FOR ENSURING THE IMPACT OF OUR PROGRAMS IN THE COMMUNITY IS SUSTAINABLE BEYOND LIMITED FEDERAL GRANT PERIODS, such as this project. It details the role of HOC's new Development Director (whose position is supported by an \$80,000 investment from a regional private foundation), in launching an individual donor campaign. This campaign is estimated to increase private unrestricted revenues by 250% from current levels. From 2012-2015, HOC hosts two VISTA AmeriCorps Development Coordinators through YouthBuild USA to increase private fundraising capacity. The fundraising plan details the cycle of cultivation, requests, and stewardship to develop and sustain HOC's COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS. Emerging stakeholders include the Redmond School District, Bend Parks and Recreation Department, and local companies such as Mt. Bachelor Ski Resort, JeldWen, Hayden Homes, and local banks. For example, in 2013 HOC was selected as a Mt. Bachelor Charity Ski Week recipient for \$12,000, renewing for 2014. Combining these types of support with project sponsors, HOC can meet

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its match share during the project and continue program operations in 2016. HOC will fully engage our primary project partners like local, state, federal and tribal public lands agencies IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED PROJECT, in fact this process has already begun. When partners are invested in the project as a shared enterprise that is mutually beneficial, they also become invested in its survival and continued growth. LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY stems from combining private fundraising efforts with cultivated partnerships to reach mutual goals.

2c. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: While HOC would be a NEW direct grantee, competing for our first operating grant through the state commission, we are a veteran organization when it comes to COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICORPS RULES AND REGULATIONS. HOC's staff is extremely well trained in AmeriCorps regulations as staff have received cross-training through Oregon Volunteers, The Corps Network and YouthBuild USA. HOC has a strong reputation with grantees for full compliance with grant requirements, timely and accurate reporting, and meeting and capturing expected performance outcomes. The ED has six years and Finance Director has two years of experience operating five AmeriCorps sub-grants. Four staff members are highly trained in eGrants Portal member management, with 100% enrollment and 30 day compliance rates across all sub-grants. We have received five site visits from grantee managers (one which included The Corps Networks' CNCS Program Officer), which noted the strength of our fiscal and program policies, the excellence of our member files, and our site's strong AmeriCorps identity. HOC has board-adopted policies that conform to AmeriCorps requirements on topics such as equal opportunity, drug-free workplace, procurement, equipment, and records retention. For this project, Oregon Volunteers will provide timely and regular trainings via Program Directors meetings and webinar topics such as new CNCS announcements, background checks, and member satisfaction.

HOC is committed to operations managed through the implementation and usage of strong financial fiduciary controls ENSURING APPROPRIATE CHECKS AND BALANCES across financial activities. HOC follows generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and ensures compliance with federal, state, and local legal and reporting requirements. HOC utilizes an independent CPA firm to review year-end financial data, to prepare year-end statements and conduct A-133 audits. FY 2010 and FY 2011 found HOC in compliance and without findings; FY 2012's A-133 audit is in progress. Systems are in place to maintain and track agency assets, provide accurate financial reporting and provide an audit trail. Appropriate levels of liability insurance are carried with reputable carriers to protect the agency. The Board of Directors establishes and approves all levels of authority within the agency related to purchases, contract approval, bank account access and signature authority. The

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Board Finance Committee reviews monthly financial reports. HOC follows a defined retention schedule for all records and maintains financial accounting systems that allows for fiscal reporting at a grant level. HOC is committed to PREVENTING AND DETECTING COMPLIANCE ISSUES, in general and related to PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES. The ED or Program Manager will conduct internal compliance audits quarterly, using compliance checklists provided by CNCS and Oregon Volunteers to methodically check member files, eGrants Portal reports, background checks, and financial documentation to ensure that training topics are understood and procedures are being followed. The ED and Program Manager will perform regular unannounced project site visits and directly interview members to observe safety practices, monitor for engagement in PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES, ensuring members can identify what activities are prohibited.

HOC has a high STANDARD OF ACCOUNTABILITY IF INSTANCES OF RISK OR NONCOMPLIANCE ARE IDENTIFIED. The ED reviews HOC's whistleblower policy and how to report noncompliance issue at staff training and member orientation. If instances of non-compliance or risk were found through internal audits and controls, HOC's policy includes immediate notification of HOC's ED and Board of Directors and investigation of what occurred. The ED would seek guidance from the grant program officer for rule clarification and corrective actions to ensure proper resolution. If members engaged in a one-time activity found to be prohibited, the ED would disallow the related member hours, retrain members, Crew Leaders, and partners, and issue a written warning to members and Crew Leaders. However, if the ED detected willful noncompliance by members or staff, appropriate formal disciplinary measures, up to release for cause, would be enforced. HOC is a SINGLE SITE OPERATION of the project (HOC does not utilize ANY sub-grantees or sub-sites). However, if noncompliance was related to project activities with a particular project partner, the ED would meet with the partner for correction actions, training on prohibited activities/regulations, or if noncompliance was willful and severe, terminate the partnership.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

3a. COST EFFECTIVENESS: HOC offers CNCS and taxpayers a COST EFFECTIVE APPROACH for lowering burdens on taxpayers while for increasing the engagement of opportunity youth and improving our region's vast public lands. HOC is requesting \$337,791 of Corporation funds, which represents 56% of the total program budget, matched at 44% by partners. To capture TOTAL LONG TERM BENEFITS, consider HOC's performance measure goal is for 16 economically disadvantaged opportunity youth, who were unemployed prior to service to secure employment after service. Belfield, Levin, and Rosen's "The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth" found that "each opportunity youth

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imposes -- on average compared to other youth -- an immediate taxpayer burden of \$13,900 per year and an immediate social burden of \$37,450 per year (2011 dollars)." Therefore, when HOC achieves the goal of 16 opportunity youth securing employment, an immediate annual taxpayer burden of \$222,400 and social annual burden of \$599,200 is potentially realized. In addition, many of the opportunity youth engaged in HOC's program will choose a pathway of full-time college instead of employment. HOC's goal is that 16 opportunity youth will complete a college course. As these youth complete college degrees, there is a potential taxpayer return on an even greater amount, as people who earn a college degree earn \$21,424 more than people with only a high school diploma per year (median earnings, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2010). HOC's interventions with opportunity youth are well-researched, intensive, closely supervised and supported by highly qualified staff, and well equipped with existing infrastructure. Yet, HOC's costs per opportunity youth participant is only \$7,677. This represents a value to the community and the taxpayer when COMPARED TO ALTERNATIVE MODELS such as Job Corps' \$16,500 cost per participant (Schochet, Burghardt, and McConnell. 2008). And unlike Job Corps, in HOC's model, youth from economically disadvantaged communities don't leave their communities to receive training at a distant residential training center, possibly then not returning to their home community. HOC youth stay in their communities serving as positive change agents on the forests and grasslands adjacent to their rural communities. This provides an added, but difficult to quantify, cost benefit to HOC's program model. HOC requests 26 MSY, at a COST PER MSY OF \$12,992, under the \$13,300 maximum allowable cost and demonstrating a high level of cost effectiveness for programming.

Fiscal Year 2012 SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL FUNDING include \$989,579 of federal grants (Dept. of Labor-YouthBuild, Office of Juvenile Justice, CNCS via YouthBuild USA, and CNCS via The Corps Network), \$256,340 of federal fee-for-service agreements (USFS, BLM), \$375,250 in non-federal fee-for-service contracts (county, housing authority, thrift store, misc. contracts) \$65,333 in state grants (Youth Conservation Corps), \$205,455 in county and school districts funds, \$280,500 in private foundation funds, \$24,000 in individual and corporate giving, \$25,000 in misc. income (refunds, dividends), and \$207,760 in-kind contributions. THE PROPOSED PROJECT REPRESENTS 25% OF HOC'S CURRENT YEAR OPERATING BUDGET of \$2,429,417 (FY 2012). In the PAST 5 YEARS, HOC was awarded several TYPES OF SUPPORT FROM CNCS: one year "Formula Supplemental Funding" through Oregon Volunteers (2012-13, \$343,200), YouthBuild USA sub-grantee funds (2010-13, \$116,183), and Corps Network sub-grantee funds (2008-2012, \$873,790).

HOC needs \$267,585 cash MATCH FROM NON-CORPORATION SOURCES to support the

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project, which represents 44% of the total project budget. HOC strives not only to provide service opportunities, but also to provide transformational experiences for disadvantaged members. This goal requires resources for robust staff support to provide intensive supervision, training, and case management, a state licensed teacher, GED testing, and college access. Therefore, HOC's amount of project match far exceeds the required amount for a NEW program. However, because of our partnership development during previous AmeriCorps sub-grants, HOC generates significant program income through the service activities HOC members complete.

The \$267,585 cash match is SECURED FROM DIVERSE RESOURCES FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION, primarily from service projects which generate program income. The sources include federal funds (USFS, BLM), Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS) funds, local funds (Deschutes County and Central Oregon Regional Housing Authority). All of HOC's match is either secured or based on standing master agreements that have a long history of annual renewal. The USFS has an active master Participating Agreement with HOC (10-PA-11060120-018). In the summer of 2013, the USFS will identify and fund specific projects for the proposed budget cycle with a goal of securing \$38,000 of supplemental agreements. The BLM has an active agreement with HOC (L10AC20190) that is valid through 9/30/2015. The Agreement currently authorizes for \$46,560 for the grant period, and the BLM anticipates securing more projects in July, 2013 for an additional \$47,440. The CTWS has a signed contract in place with HOC for 2013-14 (\$28,700) for conservation projects on a stable-funded and tribally managed conservation area. The Housing Authority contracted with HOC for eco-landscaping improvements in 2012 and 2013, and has pledged renewal for this project in 13/14 (\$69,885). For a decade, Deschutes County has contracted with HOC for fuels reduction and recycling and litter management, which renews annually in July of each year. HOC will utilize \$37,000 of this overall contract. Our federal match sources are aware of the AmeriCorps matching requirements and our intention to use their dollars as match, and are also prepared to provide needed documentation for this match upon request.

3b. BUDGET ADEQUACY: The program budget is a CLEAR, adequate, and cost effective representation of what is required for HOC to efficiently and effectively operate the proposed AOY project, IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE PROGRAM NARRATIVE. The following is a detailed explanation each budget category (CNCS portion only): SALARIES AND FRINGE BENEFITS for 1.0 FTE Program Manager (dedicated to this program/grant), 2.85 FTE Crew Leader, 0.2 FTE Education Coordinator, 0.8 FTE Program Assistant, 0.2 FTE Finance Director, and 0.25 FTE Executive Director total \$164,264. HOC bases our compensation packages on experience, performance, and tenure. HOC

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utilizes the "Opportunity Knocks Wage and Benefits" analysis to align our compensation with non-profits similar to our size and demographic area. These personnel expenses enable HOC to recruit and retain qualified candidates that deliver quality support and supervision to our members. Significant direct time by the Finance Director is required to invoice and process the large amount of program income (\$267,585) paid by project sponsors as match, in addition to the typical AmeriCorps fiscal reporting. STAFF TRAVEL is budgeted at \$6,168 to ensure training and supervision capacity. Staff mileage is \$1,998 for 3,600 miles of travel reimbursed at the federal rate (currently \$0.555 per mile) allowing Program Manager and ED to drive to service sites and partnership meetings. \$1,500 is budgeted for the Program Manager to attend the national Corps Network conference to learn national best practices for corps programs. The remaining expenses of \$2,670 for lodging, per diem, and fuel for HOC-owned vehicles, allow staff to travel 324 miles round trip to attend State Commission Oregon Volunteers trainings, events, and required quarterly meetings. These trips allow for training on CNCS requirements and supervision of members attending Oregon Volunteers events. MEMBER TRAVEL is budgeted at \$9,840 to enable members to attend Oregon Volunteers events and engage in the national AmeriCorps movement. Funds for fuel, maintenance, and insurance for HOC-owned vehicles are included to transport members to service sites. Funds for bus passes for rural members to access the program are also included. EQUIPMENT costs are not included in our proposed budget. SUPPLIES are budgeted at \$13,520. HOC provides AmeriCorps service gear to all members at \$60 per uniform for \$2,880 total because we prioritize creating a national service identity. HOC provides required safety gear at \$50 per member for \$2,400 total which includes gloves, ear/eye protection, visibility vests, hard hats, chaps, and crew epi pens. Computer hardware and software for 5 computers at \$3,000 (100% dedicated to this program) enable members to prepare for a newly implemented GED testing system that as of 2014 is taken on computer. Office and Classroom supplies at \$540 include paper, ink, folders, pens, calculators, etc. Tools <\$1,000 each are budgeted at \$4,700 including new and replacement costs based on quotes from vendors and historical replacement costs for chainsaws, chainsaw hand-tools, chain, brush cutters, trail-building hand tools, landscaping tools, fencing tools, etc. CONTRACTUAL AND CONSULTANT SERVICES are budgeted at \$3,507 for the contracted financial service of bi-weekly payroll processing for 5.3 FTE staff and 48 members. This service is cost-allocated with the CNCS portion of the budget divided by the total organizational budget at 14%. STAFF TRAINING is budgeted at \$1,125 to provide CNCS-related training from an Oregon Volunteers conference, the Corps Rendezvous training, technical training for Crew Leaders, and Network NW. MEMBER TRAINING is budgeted at \$6,726 to enrich the development

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opportunities for members. Costs include CPR/First Aid Certification, GED testing, community college fees and courses, and professional training for FT members. EVALUATION is budgeted at \$204 for a one-year online subscription to web-based survey software in order to meet CNCS Evaluation requirements effectively. OTHER EXPENSES are budgeted at \$3,600. In order to ensure a safe environment for members and those they serve, COSTS FOR FBI AND STATE CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECKS, and drug testing are included. Member recognition costs of \$480 are also included to highlight the importance of recognition, and do not include unallowable items such as gift certificates or entertainment. MEMBER LIVING ALLOWANCE AND SUPPORT COSTS are budgeted at \$111,957, CNCS portion, to provide living allowances and the required FICA, Worker's Compensation, health benefits to members for their service. All FT members receive a \$12,100 living allowance and all Pt members receive a \$6500 living allowance. However, the living allowance/member amount budgeted (\$4,875) is pro-rated at 75% (6,500 x 75%) based on estimates of past experience with economically disadvantaged members being released early from service for compelling circumstances or released early for cause. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS are budgeted at \$16,880 with the 5.26% fixed amount with 1% for the commission. These costs are associated with the demands of processing grant reimbursement requests and conducting an A-133 audit. This funding assists HOC in achieving full compliance with federal grant requirements. The proposed budget represents a streamlined and cost effective approach to operating an AmeriCorps program ensured to meet its goals in opportunities for disadvantaged members and environmental stewardship. Central Oregon's ability to leverage resources as cash match for the federal dollars represented in this grant demonstrates our community's commitment to the value of these goals.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

The Program Manager will complete an internal program evaluation on member attitudes toward workforce preparedness with a web-based member pre and post anonymous survey that conforms to effective and balance evaluation techniques.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

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N/A