

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

### Executive Summary

42 AmeriCorps members will leverage 125 volunteers to serve in Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) afterschool and summer camp programs in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn to help participants improve their academic engagement and literacy skills, and increase their awareness and participation in healthy living. The program will run from September 1, 2013-August 30, 2016. Our anticipated outcomes are: of those students completing our program, 75% will demonstrate an improvement in academic engagement; 70% will either improve their performance in English or sustain their satisfactory performance in English, and 80% of those who participate in our Verde food justice program or our enhanced physical activity component will increase their awareness of and participation in healthy living. We will measure outcomes through student surveys on academic engagement, report cards, pre- and post tests on healthy eating, and pedometers to measure physical activity. We will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$251,753 will be matched with \$765,273.

## Rationale and Approach

### a. Need

CHLDC is a multiservice, community based organization. The AmeriCorps program will address the need to improve local students' academic engagement, literacy skills and commitment to healthy living, and increase volunteerism. As community-based service providers, we've observed these needs, and know that CHLDC is equipped to make a significant impact with the support of the AmeriCorps program. We will serve the Cypress Hills community, since CHLDC's mission is to revitalize this area. Our neighborhood is low-to-moderate income, with a large immigrant population. The total 2010 neighborhood population was 72,320 (US Census). According to the 2006-10 American Community Survey, the area's racial/ethnic composition was: 55% Latino, 29% black, 8% Asian, 4% white, 3% other races, and 1% two or more races. 41% of residents are immigrants, and their most common countries of origin are the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Bangladesh. The median income is \$37,096 or 60% of the City's area median income. 43% of children under age 18 and 30% of the total population live below the poverty line. Parents often have difficulty helping their children to succeed in school, since 27% of area residents age 25 and older do not have high school diplomas, and 12% of adults have achieved less than a 9th grade education. The graduation rate at our local high schools is just over 50%, compared to 77% statewide.

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Need to improve academic engagement: In the NYC Department of Education 2011-12 Progress Reports, on average, the schools where AmeriCorps members will be placed in our programs scored 7.05 out of 15 points in their grades on school environment, which are based on student attendance and the NYC School Survey, where parents, teachers, and students rate academic expectations, safety and respect, communication, and engagement. Need to improve literacy skills: In 2011, across these same schools, only 26% of students met state standards in English (compared to 47.5% statewide). Need to improve fitness and nutrition: 30% of Cypress Hills' residents are obese, compared to 20% in New York City. Almost 53% of residents report getting no physical activity. 16% of local adults have diabetes, which is almost twice the rate of NYC residents as a whole.

(<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2006chp-204.pdf>) In "Going to Market: New York City's Neighborhood Grocery Store and Supermarket Shortage," the NYC Department of City Planning created a Supermarket Need Index, which identifies high need areas, with high rates of diabetes and obesity, low consumption of fruit and vegetables, low share of fresh food retailers, high population density, and low household access to cars and incomes. Community District 5, where our neighborhood is located, is ranked as one of these highest need areas. Need to increase volunteerism: When parents are involved in their children's schooling, it positively affects student academic performance and commitment to achievement. (edweek.org, September 21, 2004). When parents volunteer in afterschool programs, the bonds between families, schools and communities are strengthened, leading to greater parent involvement in students' education (Kakli and Kreider, 2005). People of color and those lacking higher education are less likely to volunteer. While 42.4% of college graduates volunteer, only 28% of non- college graduates do so; 28.2% of whites volunteer, compared to 20.3% of blacks and 19.4% of Hispanics (Monthly Labor Review, February 2012, US Department of Labor). Local residents face barriers to the ability to volunteer. They lack time, due to work and family obligations, and often feel intimidated or unwelcome in their children's schools. We offer a welcoming environment, with staff from the neighborhood, where residents can easily connect with volunteer opportunities. An AmeriCorps award will allow us to recruit parents and other residents to volunteer, and strengthen the connection between children, families, schools and community.

### b. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems.

We will use four full time, 14 Half Time and 24 Reduced Half Time members to serve in our school based afterschool programs, located at PS 7, PS 89, IS 171 and our Beacon Center at JHS 302. All sites

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operate from 3-6 PM, Monday-Friday, for 36 weeks, and serve a total of 675 youth (ages 6-14) during the school year. All sites run summer camp for at least 550 students for 45 hours per week for six weeks. Our programs provide literacy curricula, homework help, community service, sports, recreation, and arts. Support from AmeriCorps will enhance our programs with an enriched literacy and healthy living focus and increased volunteer participation. As a result of the AmeriCorps members' work, we will help participants to increase their academic engagement, improve their academic performance in English or sustain their satisfactory performance in English, and enhance their awareness of, and participation in, physical activity and healthy eating. Each site is led by a Site Director. Elementary school participants are divided into groups of 20, and middle school participants are divided into groups of 25. Each group is staffed by a Group Leader and a Program Aide. The Site Director supervises all staff. One full time AmeriCorps member each at PS 7 and the Beacon will be Verde members, focused on food justice work, where students engage in gardening, healthy cooking, and community activism. One full time AmeriCorps member each at PS 89 and IS 171 will be Literacy Members, focused on literacy enhancement through the use of the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility (MCTSR) 4 Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution) curriculum. Cypress Hills Verde is CHLDC's sustainability initiative, and one of its goals is to increase access to healthy food. CHLDC has developed the People's Garden, a community garden and chicken coop, near our Beacon Center, and a Teaching Garden at PS 7. At each of these sites, one group in afterschool and two groups in summer camp participate in gardening and cooking activities, and also plan, develop and lead community service activities related to food justice. Past projects included a composting program; a map of healthy food in the community; and a cooking show about healthy eating. These activities are led by a Youth Food Justice (YFJ) Coordinator, and the Group Leaders for these groups. The two full time Verde members will be Group Leaders for these groups. They will work with the YFJ Coordinator to plan and implement a food justice curriculum, where participants learn about nutrition, and access to healthy food. They will support participants to garden and care for chickens, and to plan and implement their service projects. They will also work with the YFJ Coordinator to maintain the gardens, and engage residents to participate in gardening. The full time Literacy members will lead literacy activities in all groups at their sites. The 4Rs curriculum uses children's literature and interactive activities to develop students' skills in building community, understanding and handling feelings, listening, assertiveness, problem-solving, embracing diversity, and cooperation. The two full time Literacy members will support Group Leaders and Program Aides to develop and implement lesson plans. They will use an approach in which they model, then co-lead, and then

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observe the Group Leaders and Program Aides independently lead the lessons. All four full time members will train and support other members in service learning, nutrition and healthy eating, and literacy during regular Roundtable meetings.

Our half-time members will serve as Group Leaders at all four sites. In addition to all Group Leader responsibilities, they will recruit, train, and manage volunteers, including parents, seniors and other community residents. Our reduced half-time members will serve as Program Aides at all four sites. We have chosen these levels of service to align with the time commitments and responsibilities of each of these roles. Group Leaders have primary responsibility to lead groups of afterschool participants. Program Aides serve as assistants to Group Leaders during afterschool activities. Our programs offer the following activities which Group Leaders and Program Aides lead, or assist in carrying out. All participants receive 1 hour of daily homework help. Staff circulate through the classroom, providing assistance to help students understand instructions, master a concept or stay on track. Staff maintain a homework log for each student, and share information from the log with parents and teachers to celebrate successes and address concerns. Literacy: Participants join in 3 hours/week of literacy programming, grounded in the 4Rs curriculum. The 4Rs program is complemented by a Theater Arts Program. Our Theater program is staffed by a professional teaching artist, assisted by the Group Leaders and Program Aides. Participants learn theater skills and culminate in two events per year. The theatrical presentations will be developed with the Literacy Members to highlight 4Rs skills. Participants will select their favorite books of the 4Rs program as the starting point for the creation of theatrical pieces which will be presented to an audience of family, school and community members. STEM: Science and Math Explorers is led by a teacher or a graduate student in science assisted by Group Leaders and Program Aides. Drawing on afterschool science curricula such as Afterschool Science Plus and After-school KidzScience, Science Explorers uses a hands-on approach to explore scientific concepts, skills, disciplines and careers. Participants are engaged in 1.25 hours/week of STEM programming. Physical Activity and Healthy Living: The Sports, Games and Fitness activity is offered to each afterschool participant 3 hours each week. A sports specialist, assisted by Group Leaders and Program Aides, leads groups through skills-building and practice in several cycles of sports, including volleyball, softball, basketball and floor hockey. Each session begins with warm-up activities incorporating cardio exercise and stretching. Each elementary school participant cycles through the "Healthy Me' Club, which engage participants in cooking healthy food, and information on nutrition and healthy living, drawing on resources like Washington State University's 'Magic Spoon Cookbook' and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's

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'EmpowerMe4Life' curriculum. All middle school students cycle through a month-long series of nutrition workshops with Cornell Cooperative Extension Service. Through The Afterschool Corporation (TASC), one of our funders for our afterschool program at PS 89, we recently received funding from the US Department of Education Carol M. White Physical Education Program which allows us to offer an enhanced focus on physical education for 180 students in grades 4-8 at this site. These students will participate in three hours of physical activity per week, which will include a number of choices such as sports, dance, yoga, and Zumba. Each year, there will be five data collection weeks, where students will wear pedometers for seven days/week, to measure their overall levels of physical activities, both during program hours and on their own time. Friday Clubs All students choose from several Friday clubs, led by specialists, Group Leaders and Program Aides, which are offered in cycles, so that participants can choose different options throughout the year. Elementary school clubs include Verde food justice, Latin dance, stepping, jump rope, soccer, and running. Middle school clubs include: Youth Advisory Council (YAC) engages participants as advisors to the program and activists on youth issues. YAC conceives and carries out three service projects over the course of the year that address needs in the school and community and participates in program planning. Cooking club engages participants in cooking healthy food, and educates them on good nutrition and healthy living. Book Club participants select a book to read in common, and participate in discussion guided by the facilitator. They also issue a program-wide newsletter at the end of each cycle with their thoughts on the books they read. Girls' Talk/Boys' Talk is a middle school group focused on life skills and adolescent development. Led by a graduate Social Work intern and an afterschool staff member, the group uses evidence-based curricula (such as Botvin Life Skills Training and Planned Parenthood's 'All Together Now' Curriculum) to develop skills such as self-management and resisting peer pressure; and explore topics such peer and family relations, gang and drug awareness and sexual and reproductive health. Facilitators inform parents of the group's content, and get permission for their child's participation. Stepping Club introduces participants to this African American tradition, involving dance, percussion and spoken word poetry. Each cycle of the club culminates in a performance. Comic Book Making uses Columbia University's Teachers' College's Comic Book Project Curriculum, a resource for engaging youth in literacy and social awareness. Set Design engages participants in creating sets for the Annual Musical Production. They design and build set pieces and backdrops. Leadership Development: 3rd and 4th graders can participate in Youth-in-Action, where, based on the Institute on Community Integration's 'Together We Make a Difference' 8-week service learning curriculum, participants are trained in team-building and decision-making, and

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develop and carry out projects about community issues. Each middle school group participates in a weekly 1.25 hour service learning activity, 'Our Hood is Good.' Using the Buck Institute for Education's model of project-based learning ([www.bie.org](http://www.bie.org)), Group Leaders and Program Aides help each cohort to undertake an inquiry-driven process to arrive at a driving question, addressing their community concerns. 'Our Hood is Good' service projects culminate three times per year. Potential projects include theater that incorporates peer education on drugs or violence, or campaigns to increase the availability of fresh foods in local stores. Participants also keep journals to reflect on the experience of service learning. Middle School Enrichment Activities: Enrichment groups include Theater, Chorus, Creative Writing, Verde Food Justice, Photography, Game Design, Visual Arts and Science Explorers. Participants choose activities and are placed in mixed-grade groups, according to their interests. Enrichment activities are led by instructors, assisted by Group Leaders and Program Aides. Each enrichment activity culminates three times annually, so participants can try several disciplines. Activities incorporate literacy and math skills. Verde participants use geometry to calculate the area of a garden bed and the number of bulbs to plant based on their design. Theater students write their own scripts. Photography students respond to photographic art through journaling, and accompany exhibits of their work with essays on their process.

### c. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact

Our programs use evidence-based curricula to increase literacy skills and academic engagement. 4Rs is evidence-based, and has been shown to support the development of social and emotional competencies, related to engagement with school, and academic skills building (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2010/07/an-evidence-based-approach-for-fostering-positive-social-behaviors-in-schools/4Rs>). Our theater activities help students to improve their literacy skills and academic engagement. Studies on theater programs show academic effects such as an increased motivation to read. (Iwai, 1993, UNESCO). The Buck Institute model of project-based learning, which we use for our service learning and food justice component and our clubs, has been shown to be effective in teaching math, preparing students to integrate and explain concepts, and to improve students' mastery of 21st Century skills. It has been especially effective with low-achieving students ([http://www.bie.org/research/study/does\\_pbl\\_work](http://www.bie.org/research/study/does_pbl_work)). Our food justice component uses curricula from The Food Project, which has improved participants' eating habits and knowledge about healthy food.

(<http://thefoodproject.org/sites/default/files/The%20Food%20Project%20Follow%20Up%20Study.pdf>)

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). Our physical activity component teaches skills in sports and dance, and creates a community of physically active peers. According to the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity's Report to the President (2011), "Young people who believe they are competent and have the skills to be physically active are more likely to be active. Likewise, young people who feel supported by friends and families or are surrounded by others interested in physical activity are more likely to participate in both structured and non-structured activities."

([http://www.letsmove.gov/sites/letsmove.gov/files/TFCO\\_Increasing\\_Physical\\_Activity.pdf](http://www.letsmove.gov/sites/letsmove.gov/files/TFCO_Increasing_Physical_Activity.pdf)).

By the end of the three-year grant period, 75% of participants who complete the program will improve their academic engagement, as measured by a student survey on completion of assignments, interest in school, attachment to school, and educational aspirations; and 70% will either improve their performance in literacy or will sustain their satisfactory performance in literacy, as measured by report cards. 80% of the participants in our Verde food justice program will demonstrate increased knowledge and awareness of healthy eating and nutrition, as measured by pre- and post-program tests, and 80% of participants who join in enhanced physical fitness activities will demonstrate increased participation in physical fitness, both during program hours and outside of the program, as measured by pedometer readings. The program's impact will improve students' academic engagement, literacy performance and knowledge, and attitudes and behaviors related to physical fitness and nutrition, and we will measure that impact through student surveys, report cards, pre- and post-tests, and pedometer measurements. Our evaluator, Youth Studies Inc. (YSI), will share data which we will use to report internally, through reports to the Executive Director and the Board of Directors, and to analyze and learn from to identify areas for program improvement. We will comply with all AmeriCorps reporting requirements, and share data through these reports. We determined our performance targets based on our experience, and by setting goals which are both reasonable and ambitious. Based on our experience in afterschool, we know that our programs help participants to connect with academics and their school environment in a fun, engaging way with strong support from trained, caring adults, and we expect that 75% will demonstrate some improvement in their academic engagement. In a recent evaluation of our 21st Century CCLC program, TASC found that most participants stated that our program helped them academically, and that most stated that they plan to attend college, a high aspiration in our community, where most adults do not attend college. On average, at the schools where we run afterschool programs, 26% of students are performing at or above grade level in English. We expect the students in our programs to reflect that level of performance, so that our goal will be to help approximately 34% of our participants to improve their

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literacy performance, by at least one level, as measured in their report cards, and 36% of students to maintain their level of performance. Based on our experience in providing academic support, we are confident that we can reach these outcomes. We typically have a very high average daily attendance in our programs (89% in the last year), so that our participants are able to fully engage in our programming. Because we will offer high quality, evidence based programming in nutrition and physical fitness; we expect that 80% of our participants will demonstrate increased awareness, and increased participation in physical fitness.

Performance Against Objectives: We have met or exceeded our targeted objectives. We aimed to enroll 640 children during the school year and 450 during the summer. We enrolled 751 during the last school year and 607 during the last summer. Our objective was for 85% of our participants to complete the program. Our database, provided by our primary funder, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, tracks our program's average daily attendance, which we used to measure the completion rate, since all participants are enrolled for the full length of the program. In the last year, across all sites, our participation rate was 89%. Our second performance objective is that at the conclusion of the third year, students will meet or exceed standards in reading at a rate 10% greater than the general population at their schools. Our program evaluator, TASC is currently collecting and analyzing data to measure our progress towards this objective. TASC collects results from the NYS ELA assessment test. We will be able to report on our full results by the fall of 2013. Because our programs have a high rate of attendance, we use research-based interventions to help participants improve their literacy skills, and we have a strong track record, we are confident that we will reach our AmeriCorps objective.

### d. Member Recruitment

We have a robust recruitment strategy in place and a strong track record of attracting AmeriCorps members of color from our community. 82% of our current members live in the neighborhood. 70% of our AmeriCorps members are Latino, 24% are black, and 3% are Asian. We conduct outreach internally, among the over 2,000 teens and young adults who we serve through our college access, youth employment, and recreation programs. We post bilingual announcements for AmeriCorps positions in our 15 local offices, and those of other community organizations and elected officials, on our web site, and through Facebook and Twitter. From our 29 years of providing outstanding services in the community, we have a strong reputation and recruit many members

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through word of mouth. We are confident that we will attract a similar population of AmeriCorps members for the proposed program.

### e. Member Training

Members are required to join in a one week orientation, which gives an overview of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), CHLDC and the Cypress Hills community. Topics include teambuilding exercises, best practices for positive behavior management, classroom environments, AmeriCorps stipend policies and procedures, and community service. The AmeriCorps contract is also discussed, with an emphasis on prohibited activities. All members will also attend the week-long training for afterschool staff, before the start of the school year. Topics in this training include site-specific policies and procedures, mandated reporter training, youth development principles, homework help, and core curriculum standards. All topics will prepare members to effectively work in afterschool settings and help participants to engage in literacy, service learning, and other activities, and to engage volunteers. The four full time members who will specialize in food justice and in literacy will have dedicated time during these weeks with the AmeriCorps Director to receive focused training in their areas of specialization. During their term of service, members can participate in training with external organizations, such as the Partnership for Afterschool Education, Youth Development Institute (YDI), and Ramapo for Children, on topics such as behavior management, integration of arts and fitness, or time management. Members will attend bimonthly three-hour roundtables, led by the AmeriCorps Director, with assistance from other CHLDC senior staff. These will include training, reflection, and discussion. At each biweekly roundtable members will be presented with a service situation and will then discuss whether it is a prohibited activity. This will be followed by a review of prohibited member activities. Projected training topics are: the Impact of Service Learning, Creating Engaging Lesson Plans, Coaching Students toward Success, Time Management, Professionalism, Supporting ESL Learners, Bias Awareness, Social and Emotional Competence, Engaging Volunteers, Critical Situations: Responding vs. Reacting, and Teambuilding activities. The full time members will also have time during roundtables where they will receive targeted training from the AmeriCorps Director in food justice and literacy. Our Director develops Roundtable sessions' content based on her observations of members' strengths, interests and needs. Some of the resources we use to develop these trainings include CNCS's National Service Knowledge Network, All Kinds of Minds, Learning Generation, National Youth Leadership Council, Generation On, and Learning to Give. Projected types of reflection include: journaling, poetry/spoken word,

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surveys and discussions. We will ensure that all volunteers are aware of prohibited activities. Written policies and procedures will be distributed to all volunteers and reviewed at all volunteering events.

### f. Member Supervision

AmeriCorps members are supervised by the AmeriCorps Director and the Site Directors of each program. Site Directors will meet with AmeriCorps members weekly to track their performance, and address concerns. They will hold weekly meetings with their staff and AmeriCorps members, to provide training on specific topics, and share information. Site Directors will also lead lesson planning sessions, observe Members leading afterschool activities and provide them with feedback, and meet weekly with the AmeriCorps Director to share information and concerns about members' performance. The AmeriCorps Director will meet with each member once monthly for formal supervision, and check in biweekly, reviewing number of hours completed, and a discussion of successes, challenges, and progress towards goals. The AmeriCorps Director will also connect members to CHLDC services, such as access to public benefits and college counseling. She will also hold weekly office hours to provide members additional times to meet. The hiring process for every full- and part-time employee, including our supervisors, includes a three-step process of check and balances. The supervisor of the prospective employee conducts initial screening, interviews and prepares a personnel package that includes proof of qualifications and experience. The staff person who supervises the staff member who conducted the first interview and either the Director of Youth and Family Services or Assistant Director of Youth & Family Services conducts a second interview and reviews paperwork and lastly, the Director of Administration conducts a final review of the personnel package. The supervisor of the prospective employee conducts three reference checks. New full-time staff participate in an agency orientation program and every full time CHLDC staff member must complete 28 hours of professional development annually. All full time staff meet weekly with their supervisors to track progress towards goals, address challenges, and plan professional development. The AmeriCorps Director is supervised by the Assistant Director of Youth and Family Services. Three of the afterschool site directors are supervised by the Director of Youth and Family Services, and the fourth is supervised by the Assistant Director.

### g. Member Experience

We will emphasize the AmeriCorps program's national identity during orientation, by giving an overview of CNCS and showing and discussing videos about other programs across the country.

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Throughout their experience, members will connect to each other through teambuilding activities during roundtables, and each roundtable will include reflection about their service experience. We will incorporate materials and best practices from the national AmeriCorps web site, and will inform members when we use these materials. We collaborate with City Year, a national service organization which has AmeriCorps members providing service in the community, so this will provide a regular opportunity for our members to connect with another AmeriCorps program. Members will be required to attend four out of five core service experience days, located in different parts of the New York city. These will involve activities such as park clean ups or volunteering with emergency food providers. Members will participate in the New York State AmeriCorps Commission's annual kick-off rally, and at least one other core service day (MLK Day) will include other AmeriCorps programs. In the past, we have connected with organizations such as TASC, Harlem Children's Zone, and the Center for Family Life, which have AmeriCorps members who participate in this event. Members will produce a biannual newsletter for parents in our afterschool and summer programs which will describe AmeriCorps, opportunities for parent involvement, and events at the school sites. Members will submit program surveys in December and June, to give feedback about the program and suggest ideas to strengthen the AmeriCorps identity and experience. We will invite former AmeriCorps members, community leaders, and activists on college campuses to speak at roundtables about civic engagement, and to encourage members to sustain their involvement in community service.

### h. Volunteer Generation

All half-time members will recruit volunteers as one of their primary responsibilities. All will recruit parents/guardians, and at the Beacon, they will also recruit seniors who can participate in our intergenerational services program or in literacy activities. Our full time Verde members will recruit volunteer gardeners. The AmeriCorp Director will provide technical assistance to members on engaging volunteers. In total, our AmeriCorps members will recruit 125 volunteers who will each volunteer for at least five hours per year. Parents in our programs will have regular opportunities to volunteer. Each program will offer at least six family events per year, including performances, Family Fun Nights, meetings, orientations, and parent workshops. Parents can also volunteer by teaching a skill in our choice component, or helping during homework help. Seniors can participate in monthly "A Taste of Who We Are" activities, where they share their experiences with youth. All residents can become gardeners at the People's Garden. Our members will assess volunteers' interests and needs, develop detailed outreach and work plans, and regularly contact potential volunteers through

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announcements at community events, phone calls, email, the distribution of flyers, social media and one-on-one outreach. Those responsible for parent volunteering will plan and implement volunteer activities, and facilitate parent advisory boards, which will provide input into program development. All volunteer activities will help to address our identified needs. When parents are actively involved in a program, it deepens the connection of the family to the school, so that their children are more likely to engage with the program's literacy activities, and to improve their performance. Local residents are key partners in our community gardening work, which helps participants to improve their awareness of nutrition and healthy eating. Our AmeriCorps Director will ensure that all volunteers receive written policies and procedures that detail prohibited activities, and these will be reviewed at volunteer events. At each site, we will hold volunteer recognition events, to celebrate their contributions.

### **i. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification**

We will include the AmeriCorps emblem on all program written materials, including stationery, application forms, brochures, press releases, publications, and job postings, our web site and online job postings. Members will receive AmeriCorps service gear, including a T-shirt, sweatshirt, pin, and an additional piece of their choice (a hat, bag, or pants). Members will be required to wear their AmeriCorps pin when they are on service sites. Once a week, all members will wear their AmeriCorps T-shirts in place of their usual afterschool or summer camp staff T-shirts. AmeriCorps posters/banners will be hung in each afterschool site office, with thermometers measuring the progress of AmeriCorps hours by each member.

## **Organizational Capability**

### **a. Organizational Background and Staffing**

With community residents leading the way, the mission of CHLDC is to build a strong, sustainable Cypress Hills/East New York, where youth and adults achieve educational and economic success, secure healthy and affordable housing and develop leadership skills to transform their lives and community. Local residents and merchants founded CHLDC in 1983. CHLDC serves over 8,000 residents each year, through career and education programs, community development, community organizing, housing counseling, and youth and family services. Our programs strengthen the area's physical and economic infrastructure, provide quality educational and social services, and foster local leaders.

CHLDC has extensive experience providing youth development and service learning programs, and we are well equipped to provide the proposed program. We have provided youth services since 1983,

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and now run programs at two elementary, one K-8, two intermediate schools and our local high school campus. We run two school-based community centers, which provide education, recreation, arts, sports, and leadership development for local youth and adults. We also provide college access counseling services, youth employment programs, and GED instruction. We ran an AmeriCorps program from 2003-08, and again from 2009-present. The AmeriCorps program engages adults to serve in afterschool programs, to provide afterschool services, implement service learning and generate community volunteers. We work closely with the Youth Development Institute (YDI) which chose CHLDC as a pilot site to integrate youth development principles into college counseling and GED instruction. Our work has been documented in several of their publications . In 2010, CHLDC won an Afterschool Innovator award from the MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance, and our Director of Youth and Family Services won the first Beacon Pioneer Award, at the National Beacons Conference. Our afterschool programs all include a service learning component and our Ladders of Leadership program has been nationally recognized as a model for service learning.

We have a strong staff team to run the proposed program. Executive Director Michelle Neugebauer has held that position for 29 years and holds master's degrees from Columbia University in Social Work and Urban Planning. She supervises CHLDC's Director of Administration, Director of Finance, Director of Planning and Development, and Director of Programs. Emily Van Ingen is our Director of Programs. She has an MSW from Columbia University School of Social Work and a BS degree in Human Services from Springfield College. She joined CHLDC in 1994 as the Director of Youth and Family Services and held that position for six years. In 2003, after supervising youth programs at Good Shepherd Services, she rejoined CHLDC as the Director of Programs. She supervises the Directors of Career and Education Programs, Community Organizing, Economic Development, Housing Counseling, and Youth and Family Services. Rob Abbot is our Director of Youth and Family Services. He has a BA from Swarthmore College, and an MSW from Hunter College School of Social Work. He joined CHLDC in 2004, after leading youth programs at Good Shepherd Services for ten years. He supervises the Assistant Director of Youth and Family Services, the site directors at PS 7 and PS 65, the Directors of our two school-based community centers, which both include afterschool programs, and the Director of our family counseling program. Yalenis Cruz is our Assistant Director for Youth and Family Services and supervises the AmeriCorps Program Director, and the PS 89 afterschool director. She has a BA and a Masters of Public Administration from Baruch College. She joined CHLDC in 2010 to run our AmeriCorps Program. She came to CHLDC with experience managing an AmeriCorps program at City Year, where she managed eight school partnerships and an

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80-member AmeriCorps cohort. Prior to that, she worked for the Children's Aid Society for nine years. Allison Pelissier is our AmeriCorps Program Director. She has a BA from the New School for Social Research with a focus in education and psychology. She joined CHLDC in 2012 with six years' of experience in working with youth, most recently as the Recess Enhancement Program Coordinator for Asphalt Green. Allison is dedicated to AmeriCorps activities, including program and grant administration, trainings, roundtables and reports and helps members with academic and career development, addresses employment concerns and facilitates teamwork. Allison facilitates member orientation, roundtables and celebrations. She oversees the implementation of service learning at all sites. Allison visits afterschool sites, meets with members, observes them in their roles and provides onsite technical assistance. All Afterschool Program Site Directors and school-based community center directors supervise AmeriCorps members in their daily work, and meet with them weekly. Augustina Warton is the Afterschool Site Director at PS 7. She has a BA from Temple University and a Masters in Education from New York University. She joined CHLDC in 2011 with several years' experience in youth services. Erica Oquendo is the PS 89 Afterschool Site Director. She has a BA from Hunter College. She has worked in CHLDC's youth programs since 2002, and held her current position since 2006. Larry Acosta is the Director of our 21st Community Learning Center at IS 171. He has a BA from Queens College, and has worked in CHLDC's youth programs since 2001. Joseph Cruz is the Director of our Beacon Center at JHS 302. He has a BA and a Masters Degree in Administrative Recreation Education from Lehman College. He joined CHLDC in 2010 with many years' experience in youth development, most recently as Assistant Beacon Director at Harlem's Children's Zone. Julia Middleton is our Youth Food Justice Coordinator. She has a B.A. in Nourishing an Environmentally Sustainable Culture from University of the Redlands and five years of related experience.

Employment for all afterschool staff begins with a week-long training institute, led by CHLDC senior staff. The week emphasizes training in the core competencies of youth work professionals and in the content areas of afterschool, including the homework help model and skills, the 4Rs curriculum, lesson planning, Common Core Standards, child development, group management strategies, team-building activities, safety and security procedures, child abuse awareness and reporting, social group work skills, and communication with parents. We also ensure we have staff that are trained in CPR and first aid. All staff must also participate in additional training (28 hours annually for full time and 15 hours annually for part time staff). Our program approach is based in youth development theory and practice. We have a long-time relationship with YDI, a leader in the field, and the afterschool professional staff are trained in 'Advancing Youth Development.' For

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ongoing staff training, we draw on research from YDI, the Search Institute, and the Forum for Youth Investment on best practices in youth development. Our approach to Group Management Techniques draws on materials from MCTSR, Ramapo for Children. Certified social workers from CHLDC's family counseling program lead training on child abuse and neglect awareness and reporting. We also use the frameworks developed by the National Institute for Out-of-School Time (O'Connor, McGuire, 1999) and by SEDL's National Center for Quality Afterschool. MCTSR provides training on the 4Rs curriculum. Over the course of the year, Site Directors identify ongoing training needs by analyzing program data. They work with staff through supervision and meetings to connect them with external trainings that meet their specific needs. Training organizations we use include MCTSR, Partnership for After-school Education, YDI, Global Arts to Go, GenerationOn, Development Without Limits, Dignity for Children, Materials for the Arts, the American Camping Association, Resources for Children with Special Needs, the Association for the Advancement of Social Group Work and the New York City DYCD. Our AmeriCorps Director provides ongoing training to AmeriCorps members. She has experience and training in the education and development of staff and AmeriCorps members.

We are experienced in evaluating our program and will use methods that have been effective in the past. Measurements include: regular performance evaluations for staff and members, tracking the number of youth participating in each program against projections set at the start of each year, retention rates, and young people's adherence to program attendance guidelines; regular collection of participant demographic data and semi-annual program evaluations completed by participants. The AmeriCorps Director will track and coordinate data for our outputs and outcomes. We will engage Youth Studies, Inc (YSI) to collect and analyze data for our performance measures. YSI provides evaluation support to youth-serving organizations, including schools and youth programs. The evaluation will be overseen by YSI's Founder and President, Ajay Khashu, who brings more than 14 years of experience managing and conducting evaluations for over 30 government agencies and community organizations. From 2005 to 2008, Mr. Khashu served as Research Director of TASC, a national leader in the out-of-school time sector. He also served on the Steering Committee of the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) and as Co-Chair of quality assurance committee of NYSAN.

Regular evaluation helps to identify program problems and weaknesses. The AmeriCorps Director has quarterly meetings to share challenges with our AmeriCorps Self Assessment and Improvement Committee, which includes include the four site directors and the Director of Youth and Family Services. The AmeriCorps Director will provide reports based on feedback from members

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gathered at roundtables. As appropriate, members are invited to the committee to discuss programmatic concerns. At the end of each quarter, the Director and Committee conduct a comprehensive review of the program. The Director collects and analyzes outcome data as a basis for measuring success, learning lessons and planning.

CHLDC is experienced at managing federal contracts and has had an AmeriCorps contract since 2003. CHLDC currently has an annual budget of \$8.4 million, which includes support from 52 private sources and 15 government agencies, including the US Department of Education, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the US Small Business Administration. CHLDC adheres to fiscal policies and procedures approved by its Board of Directors and uses the fund accounting software Blackbaud, which produces receipts, disbursements and general ledgers as well as "budget vs. actual" reports per fund and restricted grant. Blackbaud generates financial statements, which are analyzed monthly by CHLDC's Director of Finance and Executive Director. The Board of Directors and its Finance Committee work with auditors, perform monthly bank reconciliations, review quarterly financial statements, sign checks and work with the executive director to draft and approve the annual budget, internal controls and fiscal procedures.

The majority of our Board are people who live or work in our community, and three are graduates of our youth programs. The Board provides oversight and is involved in all major programming and planning initiatives. The Board supervises and evaluates our Executive Director and receives monthly updates from all program directors which include progress on outcomes. They are actively involved in our programs and provide regular feedback and participate in special events. Our Executive Director supervises the Director of Programs, who supervises the Directors of Career and Education Programs, Community Organizing, Economic Development, Housing Counseling and Youth and Family Services. The Director of Youth and Family Services supervises the Assistant Director of Youth and Family Services, who supervises the AmeriCorps Director. All staff meet weekly with their supervisors to track outcomes and address any challenges.

### b. Sustainability

CHLDC will provide \$765,273 in match funding to support the proposed program. These funds include three contracts from the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development's Out of School Time program, which support our afterschool programs at PS 7, PS 89, and JHS 302, and the NYS OCFS Advantage Afterschool Program, which supports our program at IS 171. CHLDC has extensive experience in raising funds. We have an \$8.4 million budget, with 67 public and private sources. We

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have run afterschool programs for over 25 years, and have a service learning component in all programs. Our programs are supported by Con Edison, the Levitt Foundation, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services Afterschool Advantage Program, the NYS Education Department 21st Century Community Learning Center Program, the Pinkerton Foundation, TASC, United Neighborhood Houses, and YDI. The NYC Department of Education provides our programs with in-kind programming space, and snack services at each of our sites. Security personnel are also provided in-kind. CHLDC was recently awarded one of 10 US Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grants, and we expect that this will enable us to deepen our relationships with stakeholders and attract support to improve academic performance and school readiness. We are confident that we will be able to raise funds to sustain our programs.

We benefit from the involvement of stakeholders including residents, parents, students, corporations, foundations, individual donors and government agencies. Parents and participants are actively involved in programs, as parent volunteers, and as members of Youth Councils. Our Board of Directors volunteers their time to plan budgets, modify and improve programs, create strategic plans, and give ongoing advice and support to the organization. We have relationships with local graduate schools, and have hosted volunteer interns from Hunter College, Fordham University, Columbia University, and the New School. These students have increased our capacity to provide services and conduct research to improve our programs. We run College Success Partners, a group of professionals who support our college access programs through volunteering and fundraising.

We have strong relationships with other agencies and individuals to increase the quality and reach of our services, including elected representatives, public agencies, community-based organizations, businesses, colleges and universities. CHLDC is a member of the National Council of La Raza, United Neighborhood Houses, the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, the New York Employment and Training Coalition, the Neighborhood Family Services Coalition, and the College Access Consortium of New York. CHLDC is part of Moving Towards Achievement, a project which includes CHLDC, the Youth Development Institute, New York City Technical College and Kingsborough Community College. The area's largest Catholic church, Blessed Sacrament provides space for special events and publicizes CHLDC's activities. Our local senior center provides space for CHLDC staff meetings and special events. All of these relationships help CHLDC provide stronger programs.

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### c. Compliance and Accountability

Each member will have a complete personnel file before beginning service, including documentation of qualifications for AmeriCorps. At weekly meetings with Site Directors, the AmeriCorps Director will review the prohibited activities and check in to ensure that the members are not engaging in these activities. If instances of risk or noncompliance are identified, the AmeriCorps Director will hold a meeting with the Site Director and members at the particular site to discuss the regulations. This meeting will be documented with parameters put in place to ensure compliance and avoidance of risk. If instances of noncompliance are identified, they will be written up and the time will be removed from the member timesheets. The AmeriCorps Director will work with senior staff to create a corrective action plan, which will be monitored by the Executive Director and Board.

Demonstrated Compliance, Enrollment and Retention: In the last year, we were compliant with AmeriCorps regulations and were able to enroll 100% of our slots. We have not retained all members. Three out of 32 members did not complete their service. One had a conflict with her school schedule and determined that she had to leave AmeriCorps to focus to her studies. One suffered from a health condition that made it impossible to finish her service year but was granted a modified award. The last member had family responsibilities and could not dedicate the time to complete her service hours. We are pleased that we retained 91% of our members, and we continue to improve our methods to retain members. The screening process is an important first step in ensuring a high retention rate. We revised our documents including the contract, code of conduct and member expectations, to emphasize member requirements and highlight a clear roadmap to program completion. Members are also now required to meet with the AmeriCorps director if they miss more than two days of work and must develop a plan to make up the hours they have missed.

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

#### Cost Effectiveness

We run efficient, high performing, cost-effective programs with a dedicated and talented staff who are supported by community residents. We make every effort to keep our costs low, maximize all existing resources and to seek all potential funding sources to support our work.

Cost per MSY -- CHLDC member costs are \$171,865 with a cost per MSY of \$12,500. We are requesting 20.14 MSY's. This is both lower than our previous cost per MSY of \$12,572, and below the average statewide cost per member of \$13,300.

CHLDC has a total organizational budget of \$8,422,587. Our organizational funding sources include

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52 foundation and corporate funding sources, six NYC government agencies (with multiple contracts from most of these), six NYS government agencies, and four federal government agencies. Our proposed AmeriCorps project represents 3% of our total organizational budget. CHLDC has received support from CNCS for the last ten years. For the last three years we have received funding through the cost reimbursement program.

We have extensive experience in fundraising for youth programming and will continue to leverage our past successes and existing fundraising capacity to obtain additional non federal resources for the program. We are committed to diversifying our base of funding so as to eliminate reliance on a particular source of funds and to minimize the potential effects of changes in the fundraising landscape. Currently, we have all needed non-CNCS funds committed to the program. Our program requires \$765,273 in non-CNCS funds, and we have those funds committed, including \$288,045 from the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Out of School Time (OST) program at PS 7; \$288,044 from the NYC DYCD OST program at PS 89, \$51,684 from the NYC DYCD OST program at JHS 302, and \$137,500 from the NYS OCFS Advantage Afterschool program at IS 171.

We also have additional funds which support the afterschool programs where AmeriCorps members will serve, including the following: an additional \$28,756 in our DYCD OST contract at PS 7; an additional \$28,756 in our DYCD OST contract at PS 89; an additional \$130,316 in our DYCD OST contract at JHS 302.

We have run afterschool programs for over 25 years, and have a service learning component in all programs. Our programs are supported by Con Edison, the Levitt Foundation, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services Afterschool Advantage Program, the NYS Education Department 21st Century Community Learning Center Program, the Pinkerton Foundation, TASC, United Neighborhood Houses, and YDI. The NYC Department of Education provides our programs with in-kind programming space, and snack services at each of our sites. Security personnel are also provided in-kind.

CHLDC also receives in kind support from New York City Department of Education through the use of school facilities, provision of security and meal service, free of charge. We will continue to secure additional non federal funds through a combination of strategies. Staying abreast on all state and local

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funding opportunities including OCFS and DYCD, we will respond to all RFPs that offer funding for the type of youth and community programming needed by the residents in our community.

The budget presented by CHLDC represents the resources to offer a rich, year round educational youth development experience to 675 children during the school year and 550 children during the summer. In addition to the required matching member support costs, the budget provides for significant executive and program management capacity as well as a cadre of youth programming specialists with expertise in teaching literacy, arts, music, dance, physical activity, and other engaging activities.

In addition, our administrative structure which includes our Director of Programs, our Director of Youth and Family Services, our Assistant Director of Youth and Family Services, and our AmeriCorps Director will provide a continuum of support for our AmeriCorps members. Together they will provide support to members in designing and implementing their service projects and literacy activities. Finally, the budget provides for sufficient capacity for program research and evaluation to ensure that the program is able to document our success toward the stated goals.

The required criminal history checks and FBI checks will be supported through our Grantee share funding. Our city and state out of school time funding streams support all of the costs for the required criminal history checks (including SCR, Sex Offender registry, NYC Department of Health fingerprinting clearance) and FBI check.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

#### Evaluation Summary

For our proposed AmeriCorps program, CHLDC will employ Youth Studies Inc to serve as our evaluator for our AmeriCorps program. Youth Studies, Inc, ("YSI"), a research firm that specializes in providing evaluation support to a variety of youth-serving organizations, including schools and youth programs, will conduct a formal evaluation of the Cypress Hills AmeriCorps program. The evaluation will be overseen by YSI's Founder and President, Ajay Khashu, who brings to this work more than 14 years of experience managing and conducting evaluations for over 30 government agencies and community organizations. From 2005 to 2008, Mr. Khashu served as Research Director of The After-school Corporation ("TASC"), a national leader in the out-of-school time sector. Mr. Khashu founded YSI in 2009 with a mission of providing clients with the best available evaluation services to help them effectively manage their youth programs. Through his work at TASC and YSI, Mr. Khashu also served on the Steering Committee of the New York State Afterschool Network

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(NYSAN) and as Co-Chair of quality assurance committee of NYSAN. Mr. Khashu is a member of the original team that developed the NYSAN Quality Self Assessment (QSA) tool, the comprehensive quality framework that has been adopted by the New York State Department of Education.

Through our partnership with YSI, CHLDC will complete the annual APR. Mr. Khashu will design, implement and analyze data from a pre- and post test survey for all afterschool participants to measure their levels of academic engagement, including indicators such as completion of assignments, interest in school, attachment to school, and educational aspirations. He will analyze report cards to measure increases in performance in Literacy. CHLDC staff will design and implement a pre- and post-test survey for participants to measure an increase in knowledge about healthy eating and nutrition. CHLDC staff will also measure participants' increase in physical activity, based on regular pedometer readings. Mr. Khashu will analyze all data to share with CHLDC for internal discussions on program results and ongoing program improvement, and to report to OCFS for all required AmeriCorps reporting.

We are currently in the last year of our three year AmeriCorps contract. Our final evaluation highlighting our program's accomplishments will be produced and available by October 2013.

### **Amendment Justification**

N/A

### **Clarification Summary**

N/A

### **Continuation Changes**

N/A