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Executive Summary

Building on 12 years of success, the YouthBuild Just-A-Start AmeriCorps Program will address the AmeriCorps Focus Areas of Opportunity and Veterans. With 48 members serving, (22.93 MSYs), the YB JAS corps will provide housing rehabilitation services to upgrade affordable housing for low-income families in Cambridge and Chelsea, MA, and, new 2013-2014, for homeless and disabled veterans. Educational enrichment and job training services will be delivered to disadvantaged "opportunity" members. Over the course of the 3-year grant period, 10/01/13-09/30/16, 222 low-income families/222 units of affordable housing in Cambridge and Chelsea, and 30 veterans/units of veterans housing will benefit from rehab; 45 members will receive a GED or diploma, and 63 will be placed in jobs, thereby creating increased opportunity for them and significant potential economic and societal benefits for the community; 300 community volunteers will be engaged to enhance the program's efforts. The CNCS annual investment of \$304,969 will be matched with a minimum of \$304,969 from leveraging additional public and private resources.

Rationale and Approach

Just-A-Start Corporation (JAS), a non-profit community-based organization with 45 years of success in administering youth and affordable housing programs, proposes to continue to operate YouthBuild Just-A-Start AmeriCorps Program (YB JAS), which engages 17-24 year-old "opportunity" youth (defined as economically disadvantaged youth ages 16-24 disconnected from school or work) in service to the community while providing them with extensive education, career, and leadership training leading to a GED or high school diploma and job placement. The three needs to be addressed are: maintaining affordable housing in the cities of Cambridge and Chelsea, MA (National Performance Measure/PM O4); repairing housing for veterans (National PM V6); and providing education services and job readiness/ placement to disadvantaged youth members (National PM O13, O16; National Priority PM O12, O15).

a. COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEEDS: The need to stabilize and preserve affordable housing for low-income people in the cities of Cambridge and Chelsea, MA, is well documented. In 2009, the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute/Citizens Housing and Planning Association reported that 63.4% of MA respondents identified housing affordability as an issue of significant concern. The 2011 U.S. census data show that 49% of all renters in MA paid 30% or more of their total income for housing. In Cambridge, the lack of affordable housing is exacerbated by a highly competitive real estate market, due to the presence of colleges and universities, the city's small size and lack of

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undeveloped land, decreasing availability of federal Sec. 8 rental subsidies, and high waitlist (10,775) for public housing (Cambridge Housing Authority 2012). The FY 2011-2015 Cambridge Consolidated Plan highlights the need to preserve/ stabilize affordable units through rehabilitation and names Just-A-Start as a partner to meet this need. The preservation, modernization, and new construction of public housing are noted as important elements in the city's affordable housing strategy. In Chelsea, an aged housing stock, growing immigrant population, and lack of community resources create significant pressures on housing. Chelsea Community Development Department figures indicate that many families are paying a high percentage of their income for rent (some over 50%), and over 40% are paying more than 30% of their income on housing. A result is that many low-income families share housing units, some with 10-12 people living in an apartment to keep housing costs down. The Chelsea Housing Authority (ChHA), with a multi-year waitlist of 383 people of whom 94% are very low-income (below 50% median income), represents 17% of the city's affordable housing stock. ChHA has identified an acute need to upgrade and repair apartments and common areas which have deteriorated due to significant funding cuts resulting in reductions in maintenance staff. They have for seven years partnered with YB JAS to help meet this need.

There is a growing need to stabilize and maintain housing for veterans, approximately 31,000 of whom have returned to MA since 09/11/01. According to HUD's 2011 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness report, veterans constitute 14% of the homeless population. The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, MA, one of two MA state residential facilities serving homeless and disabled veterans, has identified the urgent need to repair their single room occupancy units and common areas, which have declined due to high use and budget cuts reductions in non-direct care staff. They will partner with YB JAS to help meet this need.

The third need YB JAS will address is to provide educational enrichment leading to a high school diploma or GED and career development leading to a job for youth corps members, over 90% of whom are economically disadvantaged without a secondary school credential and/or job. YB JAS believes that all youth, including "opportunity" youth, should have the chance to participate in and benefit from service. The program targets these youth primarily from our service areas of Chelsea and Cambridge, with corps membership reflecting the diversity of the communities, typically 70% Latino, 15% African American, and 15% white or other. MA Department of Education data show a 2011 high school graduation rate of only 54.6% in Chelsea, from which about 80% of our opportunity youth are drawn. 81.9% of students in Chelsea spoke English as a second language, 78.1% were low income, and 12.3% received special education services; while in Cambridge 26.8% of students spoke

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English as a second language, 48.4% were low income, and 20.8% received special education services. A 2009 Northeastern University study prepared for the MA Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development showed that youth employment had fallen from a 1999 high of 52.4% to only 28.6% in 2009. Demographic data showed that employment numbers for Black and Hispanic youth (approximately 85% of YB JAS membership) were especially low at 13.6% and 20.2% respectively.

YB JAS is aligned with CNCS in recognizing that "service can create pathways to education and employment for these populations, transforming their communities and creating broad economic benefit for the country." By participating in service through rehabbing affordable housing for their community while simultaneously engaging in education and job training, members will ultimately gain career-readiness, industry connections and skills which will put them on a career path to earning a family-sustaining wage. This approach is consistent with the mission of Just-A-Start Corporation, our parent agency, which since 1968 has focused on stabilizing and developing affordable housing and training and educating disadvantaged youth and adults.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS:

Building on our 12 years of success as an AmeriCorps program and 19 years of success as a YouthBuild program, YB JAS will continue to recruit disadvantaged opportunity youth as the majority of our member corps and engage them in service in their communities rehabilitating housing for low-income families, and will add rehabbing veterans' housing as a new goal for 2013-2016. Service projects are developed by non-profit housing partners including Cambridge's Home Improvement Program, JAS' Housing Development Program, the Chelsea Housing Authority, and the Soldiers' Home. Partners provide project development and all materials. Members perform carpentry, construction, wallboard installation, painting, weatherization, landscaping, and other service, under supervision of skilled YB JAS staff. Since the services provided by AmeriCorps members are unique in the agency and not performed by regular staff, there is no violation of non-duplication, non-displacement, and non-supplantation requirements. Members do not displace licensed trades people but rather provide services which are not within partner budgets, enabling housing rehab projects to go forward which might otherwise go unaddressed. Opportunity members without a diploma or GED also receive education services leading to a GED or diploma. All members receive career development leading to job placement within one year of completion of their last term of service. About 25% of members typically continue for a second term of service in the program.

For 2013-2014, YB JAS is proposing a 48 member corps (22.93 MSY's) comprising 4 full-time (FT) and 44 part-time (PT) members, including 26 half-time, 10 reduced half-time, and 8 quarter-time. All

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members will spend at least 80% of time on direct service activities and up to 20% on member development and training. This is very similar to our successful 2010-2013 49 member corps of 21.23 MSYs, with the addition of one new FT member.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES: 47 of the members (3 FT and all of the PT) will be engaged in housing service working on 2-3 teams, each of which is supervised by program staff skilled in construction and youth development. The teams will serve Monday-Friday for 12 months on projects developed by our housing partners in Cambridge and Chelsea, with the partners providing all materials and the members performing direct renovation and repair services. All members without a GED or diploma will receive education instruction leading to a GED or high school diploma on alternating weeks at our Cambridge headquarters. This allows for smaller member-to-staff ratios and concentrated time for each group (half of opportunity members in the classroom, half on service site at one given time). YB JAS provides for three types of PT slots: half-time (HT), reduced half-time (RHT), and quarter time (QT). YB JAS has found that offering slots of different levels of time commitment helps maximize the number of opportunity members who can participate and receive full Segal AmeriCorps Awards. As part of the application process, prospective members meet with education and case management staff to assess their current academic level, educational goals, estimated time to complete GED or diploma, service goals, and personal responsibilities. Usually 1st-year opportunity members apply for the longer HT slots, while 2nd-year opportunity members nearing completion of their GED/diploma or 1st-year members with more demanding outside commitments, apply for RHT and QT slots. Three of the FT members serve on the housing service teams, performing the same service activities as the PT members but on a weekly rather than bi-weekly basis. Since they are typically college graduates, FT members do not require the same level of educational support and can devote greater time to service. They also bring seriousness, maturity, and commitment to service, allowing them to serve as positive role models for opportunity members, in addition to providing continuity of service on the crews. The 4th FT member will serve as an alumni coach (AC), a new position this year. The AC will be based out of the Cambridge headquarters, performing one-on-one/small group academic and life coaching under the supervision of education/career staff, to AmeriCorps alumni who have completed their last AmeriCorps term of service, but have not yet received their GED or need extra coaching as they make their Life After AmeriCorps transition to postsecondary education or employment. The AC will have an AA/BA, interest/experience in academic and/or life coaching, and ability to commit to a term of service. Opportunity members, who historically enter with reading and/or math skills at or below grade 8.9,

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make huge strides while in the program, with 70+% typically attaining grade level increases. However, over 60% typically need post-AmeriCorps academic and life coaching to complete their high school credential. Working alumni may also need to schedule coaching around their job requirements. This places great demand on program staff at a time when new members are entering the program and needing training. The ability to provide more intensive support to alumni through the AC will result in sustaining the momentum built by service and education, which will in turn result in more alumni completing their GED/diploma within one year after their last term of service, higher alumni job placement rate, and, consequently, better program performance and Life After AmeriCorps outcomes for opportunity member alumni. While not regularly involved in housing service, the AC will participate alongside all current members at morning meeting, training-related corps activities, and program-wide service days.

c. EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT: YB JAS conforms to the very successful national YouthBuild (YB) model, which transforms disconnected youth through education, training and service to the community. A significant amount of evidence-based research has documented the success of this model. YB has been shown to have the highest level of GED achievement compared to other national youth programs (R. Ferguson et. al, YB in Development Perspective, Dept. Of Urban Studies and Planning, MIT). Program completers at YB AmeriCorps Programs were more likely than completers at non-AmeriCorps YB programs to have applied to and been accepted to postsecondary education or training, with those earning a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award more likely to accomplish post-secondary education/training (A. Hahn and T. Leavitt, The Efficacy of Education Awards in YouthBuild AmeriCorps Programs, the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis, 2007).

"Living in a distressed neighborhood exacerbates the effects of family poverty on individual educational achievement, economic prospects, health, as well as other indicators of well-being" (Center for the Study of Social Policy). Bringing to fruition the AmeriCorps Pledge to "bring Americans together to strengthen our communities" and the national YB motto, "rebuilding our communities and our lives," YB JAS members provide housing services which improve their communities while learning important life skills such as how to work with colleagues, gain leadership skills, and build their academic skills. Through service to their community and receipt of academic enrichment and career development services, our opportunity members are given the tools to make a transformation. Although more than 90% of opportunity members enter JAS at or below 8.9 in reading and/or math, upon graduation from the program, historically over 50% have completed their

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secondary school credential and over 70% have gone on to college, training, and/or employment. We continue to evaluate and innovate to assist as many as possible to gain credentials and a job on a career path that will lead to a family sustaining wage, breaking the cycle of poverty.

Other past performance also provides evidence informed data to support our assertion that our proposed intervention will have the intended results. YB JAS has consistently met or exceeded program goals and made a difference for nearly 500 low-income families living in the Cambridge and Chelsea units benefiting from renovation services to date. During the last full program year ending 09/30/12, YB JAS achieved the following: enrolled 49 members/21.23 MSY (100% of goal) who generated 43,754.25 hours of AmeriCorps service; recruited/trained 100 non-AmeriCorps volunteers who contributed an additional 1967 hours of service; provided housing rehab/renovation benefiting low-income residents of 23 units in Cambridge (121% of goal) and 48 units in Chelsea (106% of goal); provided educational enrichment to members without high school credential resulting in 40 members attaining grade-level increases, 15 members attaining their secondary education credential as of 12/31/12, and 8 more on target to attaining by 09/30/13, within 1 year of completion (23=110% of goal).

EXPECTED 3-YEAR CHANGE: In 2013-2016, building on efforts to date, YB JAS will extend our housing services to veterans, increasing the overall number of housing units served. This is a natural and logical extension of our work -- meeting emerging needs and serving those who have served our country at great cost to themselves. Over the course of the 3-year grant period, 222 low-income families/222 units of affordable housing in Cambridge and Chelsea (National Performance Measure/PM O4) and 30 veterans/units of veterans housing will benefit from repair (PM V6). 45 economically disadvantaged members will receive a high school credential (PM O13, O16); 63 who are unemployed prior to service will be placed in jobs and will benefit from increased opportunity (O12, O15); and 300 volunteers will be engaged and leveraged to support program efforts. Annual progress will be formally reported to all stakeholders including the City of Cambridge, Chelsea Housing Authority, Soldiers Home, and MA Service Alliance/CNCS. Performance measure targets were determined based upon re-assessment of community need, past performance, and review with service partners. The YB JAS Housing Field Coordinator (FC) visits each service site at least once a week to monitor quality and progress and ensure satisfaction of the housing partner and family being served. The housing partner and FC communicate on a weekly basis to discuss progress of the service activities and identify any problems needing to be resolved. When a project is completed, they jointly certify that the job is satisfactorily completed and the housing partner submits a written evaluation of

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the project, including an evaluation of crew performance. The client or family who received the service is also asked to complete an evaluation of the activities performed and of their satisfaction with the experience. These reports are compiled by the FC and submitted to the Program Director (PD). The PD and FC meet bi-monthly to review ongoing and upcoming projects, and other service requests from community partners or other community organizations. The FC provides written monthly production reports to the Program Manager, who uses these to analyze progress toward meeting annual goals. Formal meetings with PM, PD, FC, and housing partners are held monthly to discuss ongoing and upcoming projects and ensure that progress towards annual goals is on track.

d. MEMBER RECRUITMENT- All 44 PT members will be LOW-INCOME OPPORTUNITY YOUTH ages 17 to 24, mostly people of color, from our target recruitment area of Cambridge, Chelsea, and other Metro North Boston communities. Consistent with our past experience, program model, and compelling community needs highlighted above, a minimum of 40 members will not yet have achieved a high school diploma or GED; a minimum of 40 will be unemployed, with income, education and employment data collected as a part of the application process and updated upon enrollment. Many will have risk factors that threaten their ability to transition to positive roles in society. These often include a combination of learning difficulties in school, childhood trauma, domestic violence, depression/other mental illness, responsibilities of teen parenting, unstable housing situations, and patterns of substance abuse. Building upon our parent agency's 45 years of experience recruiting and serving underrepresented populations, YB JAS has been successful in attracting applicants from the target group and ensuring diversity by conducting intensive summer recruitment, including networking with youth-serving agencies and distributing fliers door-to-door in areas with high concentrations of disadvantaged youth, such as public housing developments. Many referrals come from current or former members. For the 4 FT slots, the program will target alumni from a prior year or from alumni of similar programs in the community as well as college graduates interested in a year of service. We have been successful in attracting candidates and will continue to advertise for the FT slots as follows: regular follow-up contact and mailings to program alumni; contacts with local school departments and agencies serving youth; outreach to local colleges, craigslist, idealist, and posting on the National AmeriCorps recruitment portal. Most corps members are from lower income segments of the target communities, and represent the racial and ethnic diversity of those communities. Providing reasonable accommodations for interviews and service, YB JAS has historically enrolled members with disclosed disabilities. All will need to articulate commitment to term of service and have acceptable CORI/ SORI/ background checks. (Note that

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JAS is exempt from CORI fees in MA.) We are not required to conduct FBI background checks because members do not work directly with vulnerable populations.

e. MEMBER TRAINING: Members participate in a 3-week orientation during which they are introduced to all aspects of the program. A speaker from MA Service Alliance introduces AmeriCorps, and YB JAS staff review the Member Handbook which covers program rules, procedures, and AmeriCorps prohibited activities; and, even though accompanied by staff on all service, staff discuss their role in orienting and supervising volunteers to ensure that no one ever engages in prohibited activities. Members are introduced to the concepts of service and civic engagement and become involved through a variety of exercises and challenges. Partners introduce members to the housing needs (low-income and veterans) and proposed placement sites, describe their roles in addressing needs, and explain the role members will play. This helps to develop members' appreciation of service they will be performing. Formal training of members in housing rehab skills, including safety training, intro to tools and equipment, and training in rehab procedures begins during this period and continues throughout the program. On-site training, supplemented by special workshops, is provided by team supervisors in skill areas such as carpentry, wallboard installation, painting, and masonry. Members may also obtain additional pre-apprenticeship-level training using an industry-recognized curriculum designed by the Home Builders Institute and taught by YB JAS staff (HBI PACT). The FT Alumni Coach member will receive ongoing academic and life coaching instruction and support from the Ed. Coordinator, with specialized subject-specific training given by teachers and career staff. Competency assessment for all members occurs periodically over the course of the year to ensure that all achieve the skills essential to perform the service at hand.

Members also receive training in citizenship and civic engagement, life skills, career goal setting, and employability skills through bi-weekly workshops. PT members who have not yet received their high school credential engage in educational enrichment services leading to a high school diploma or GED. All are exposed to postsecondary training and educational opportunities and, upon completion, are given placement assistance to transition to a job, college, or further training, with follow-up support for a year.

f. MEMBER SUPERVISION- During provision of housing rehab service, 47 members serve on 2-3 teams accompanied and directly supervised by Massachusetts licensed contractor-level YB JAS staff leading the teams. When receiving classroom training, members are supervised by an assigned BA/MA-level teacher. The FT Alumni Coach member providing academic and life coaching to AmeriCorps alumni is supervised by the PhD-level Education Coordinator with general support from

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education/career staff. YB JAS focuses on providing members with support and guidance in overcoming obstacles to successful completion of their terms of service. Each member is assigned a counselor to provide weekly check-ins/bi-weekly case management. Three BA/MSW-level counselors, supplemented by two Boston University MSW student interns, help members confront challenges such as housing, childcare, and transportation, and provide advocacy and referrals to community resources. To strengthen members' support system in the community, opportunity members are provided with adult "sponsors" or mentors who provide support and guidance. Life skills training is provided through workshops in substance abuse, domestic violence, and stress/time management. A great deal of attention is paid to community building, through community meetings and program-wide recreational and cultural activities involving all members and staff. A particular strength of the program is that members soon come to view the program as "family". All of these support activities have been instrumental in achieving a high rate of member commitment and retention. Members receive formal feedback in all aspects of their service and training through progress reports three times a year.

YB JAS staff are selected based upon education, training, and skills that match with core job requirements, plus experience/ability to work with disadvantaged youth. An important goal is that staff best reflect the diversity of the students served, including prior AmeriCorps experience. (JAS is an AA/EOE/ADA employer.) All staff receive weekly individual and group supervision at Cambridge headquarters. The Field Coordinator also regularly visits service sites to provide ongoing support and guidance with project-specific tasks and procedures. All staff receive annual performance evaluations. The Program Director and department coordinators assess training needs annually and create training/professional development plan which includes a review of AmeriCorps-prohibited activities. YB JAS allocates funds to attend conferences and workshops, as appropriate, and to contract for on-site trainers. Additionally, YB JAS takes advantage of training offered by the MA Service Alliance and YouthBuild USA and receives training as being a part of several ongoing learning communities (Hyams, United Way, and the MA YouthBuild Coalition).

g. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: For many of the youth we enroll, "community service" is a sentence imposed by a judge for commission of a crime. A particular goal of the program is to change this concept, utilizing service as way to positively reconnect youth to their communities, and to build self-esteem through their recognition of the value of the contributions they are making to their communities. Members learn and exercise leadership skills planning service projects. Classroom projects are developed using application of reading, writing, research, and math skills to link to direct

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service activities being performed, to encourage SERVICE LEARNING. Structured opportunities are provided for REFLECTION ON SERVICE, with the goal of further promoting civic responsibility and a lifelong ethic of service. These include writing pieces to be included in student portfolios as well as oral reflections during morning meetings and at the completion of group service projects. Members' achievements are formally recognized at Monthly Appreciation events, with certificates or other recognition for good performance or improvement. Special recognition is given at the Annual Graduation ceremony to all who successfully complete their term of service and earn Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards. Their names are highlighted in the written program, and they are issued special certificates of recognition as part of the ceremony. YB JAS provides members with uniforms that highlight the AmeriCorps logo, and also connects members to the larger AmeriCorps community through program attendance at 3-5 ANNUAL STATEWIDE AMERICORPS EVENTS and service opportunities sponsored by the Massachusetts Service Alliance and by the MA YouthBuild Coalition. YB JAS' success with CONNECTION TO AMERICORPS IDENTITY is demonstrated by the fact that over 25% of members historically enroll for a second term of service and that many alumni return to volunteer at the program as speakers, mentors, and tutors.

h. VOLUNTEER GENERATION: The program will use volunteers to expand the reach of the program by recruiting groups of volunteers to work alongside members on housing service and other community service projects. YB JAS recruits college students through service organizations at Tufts, Boston University, and MIT and youth through member outreach. The program's employer partners often provide volunteers, and veterans are recruited through the Soldiers' Home and the Cambridge Department Of Veterans' Services. YB JAS also recruits volunteers to increase the program's capacity around member development. Boston University MSW interns provide case management support; and community volunteers are recruited through idealist.org and program alumni. A number of employer partners, including The Community Builders and Maloney Properties, provide speakers, tutors, and mentors to enrich program services. In total, we plan to leverage at least 100 volunteers for 1000+ hours/year, consistent with past performance. Housing service volunteers will be recruited, trained and supervised on site by both members and staff; member development volunteers will be recruited, trained, and supervised by staff, assisted by the FT Alumni Coach member. All are recognized during group service reflections, and through certificates, t-shirts, and/or publicity. YB JAS Program Director guides volunteer recruitment and reviews all volunteer projects at point of conception to ensure that volunteers are never engaged in prohibited or unallowable activities and receive an orientation to this and other requirements at the start of each project.

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i. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: The YouthBuild Just-A-Start AmeriCorps Program (YB JAS) has demonstrated commitment to branding national service. By virtue of having "AmeriCorps" in the full program name and operating the program year-round, YB JAS promotes national service on a daily basis. The AmeriCorps logo and name appear on the agency and program website (with appropriate links to AmeriCorps and MA Service Alliance websites), service gear, and on signs at every service site and program van. They are also on stationery, on-line member and staff recruitment materials, orientation and application materials, publications and press releases related to YB JAS. Programmatic materials are regularly assessed by MSA as part of an AmeriCorps Binder compliance review to ensure YB JAS is effectively promoting AmeriCorps identification.

Organizational Capability

a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: Just-A-Start is a 501(c) 3 non-profit corporation, based in Cambridge, MA. Established in 1968, its mission is to develop and stabilize affordable housing and provide education, training, and employment services to disadvantaged populations. Current services include housing development and stabilization, a revolving loan program, landlord/tenant mediation, a homeless teen shelter, and 6 training/education programs for youth/adults. Now the largest of the training and education programs, the YouthBuild AmeriCorps Program (YB JAS) evolved from a small program for at-risk youth begun in 1978 with a training component on JAS' affordable housing sites and a GED option, to a comprehensive program for disadvantaged youth which achieved affiliation as part of the national YouthBuild community in 1993. With strong agency and program commitment to service, applying to become an AmeriCorps program in 2000 was a logical next step. This allowed YB JAS to strengthen and grow, and to develop and refine its methods for engaging at-risk youth in service, using that experience to reconnect them to the community.

YB JAS is administered by JAS's Director of Training and Education (DTE), who has an MA in Social Work and has held that position for over 40 years. She is responsible for funding development, fiscal monitoring, and preparation of fiscal and programmatic reports for the ED and Board. She reports directly to the Executive Director (ED), who secures all private and corporate funds. The ED reports to JAS's Board of Directors, which meets formally on a quarterly basis to provide oversight of corporate activities and support with community involvement, strategic planning and funding development. The YouthBuild Program Manager (PM) reports to the DTE and supervises the YB Program Director. With a BA and over 18 years of youth program development and supervisory

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experience, the PM is responsible for the following: overall direction, strategy, and development of the program, including resource development, staff development, monitoring contract goals, budgets, and outcomes to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps regulations and requirements; collaborating with partners; and preparing all program reports to MSA and other funders. The Program Director (PD) is a licensed social worker (MSW/LCSW) with 15 years of operational management and supervisory experience at JAS. She oversees daily program operations, supervises YB program staff, maintains reporting systems for tracking progress, and assists in the preparation of Progress Reports to MSA/CNCS. The 3 Field Service staff are MA Licensed Construction supervisors with over 15 years of experience each in the construction trades. The Field Coordinator (FC) develops housing service sites with partners and supervises the 2 Service Site Supervisors who train and supervise members on the housing service teams. The 4 teachers providing academic instruction include 1 PhD (Education Coordinator), 1 MA, and 2 BA; 3 are certified teachers, 1 bilingual/Spanish; all are experienced in working with low-income young adults studying for the GED/ high school diploma. The 3 counselors who provide recruitment, orientation and support services for members include a M.Ed. and MSW (BA or equiv. and 2 yrs experience required of 1 current vacancy) and have extensive experience with our target population. The Career/Placement counselor providing career development to members has a BA with over 5 years of counseling and career development experience. Program support staff include a Driver with a MA license and 5 years experience at JAS, and a Program Assistant responsible for processing stipends and maintaining files. She has a BA, advanced computer skills, is a former AmeriCorps Member, and is bilingual/ Spanish-speaking.

A FINANCIAL ORIENTATION is provided annually to senior-level staff (DTE, PM, PD,) by Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA) fiscal staff. It includes a review of AmeriCorps financial procedures and requirements. A program-level review of fiscal and programmatic policies and procedures and an AmeriCorps Operating Policies and Procedures/Systems and objectives Binder is submitted annually to MSA to ensure compliance. PROGRAMMATIC ORIENTATION is provided to all new staff. It consists of an introduction to AmeriCorps goals and procedures, including prohibited activities, as well as to overall program goals. An opportunity is provided to shadow veteran department staff and review departmental policies, procedures and expectations. The PD assesses and arranges for professional development needs annually in consultation with staff. The FC assesses the need for staff or member training in particular rehab skill areas through ongoing monitoring of sites. He provides training directly, engaging consultants or scheduling external trainings as needed. YB JAS continues to take advantage of training and technical assistance (TA) opportunities provided by

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the MSA and YouthBuild USA, the national TA provider for all YouthBuild Programs, and other learning communities. The Education Coordinator provides educational assessment and directs the delivery of academic enrichment/ career development to members.

YB JAS has completed TWO MULTI-YEAR INTERNAL EVALUATIONS for CNCS in addition to evaluations for other funders. The agency and program are committed to continuous improvement and regularly seek feedback from all stakeholders, including members, staff, service recipients and program partners, all of whom complete at least one written program evaluation annually. Feedback is reviewed by senior staff, who make appropriate adjustments to program or practice. JAS has successfully operated the YouthBuild AmeriCorps Program for 12 years, historically meeting or exceeding all goals, and achieving an unblemished record of compliance with all regulations and procedures. Site visits and other reviews by the MSA, including file reviews and AmeriCorps Binder submissions, have consistently had satisfactory results. Because the agency mission is so consistent with AmeriCorps goals, YB JAS is well integrated and supported within the agency. The collaboration between the Housing Development and Training departments has been a key factor in the success of the YB JAS program. In addition to AmeriCorps, JAS has managed 8 HUD and DOL YouthBuild grants of \$325K-\$1.1M, and a number of City, State, and private grants for over 40 years. JAS has sound fiscal/accounting procedures that meet accepted Auditing Standards, and is audited annually by an independent auditor.

b. SUSTAINABILITY: For the past 12 years, YB JAS has met or exceeded required financial matching requirements, demonstrating both community stakeholder support for the program and ability to achieve long-term sustainability. In the first year of the current 3-year cycle, the overall match requirement was 40%, which was raised to 42% in the second year and 46% for the current year. We exceeded the required match in the first 2 years and expect to exceed it in the current year. Significant staff resources are devoted to grant and proposal writing at the local, state, and national level throughout the year. The diversity of funding sources of all types that YB JAS has been able to achieve, with many long-term funders both governmental and private at the state and local levels, has been the key to sustaining the program over the years. Much of our success is due to the fact that community stakeholders have recognized the value of our program in helping them to achieve their own goals. A prime example of this is the city of Cambridge, which has recognized YB JAS as a key resource in meeting the city's housing goals, and has channeled both CDBG and city funds to our program since its inception. Over the past 2-3 years we have succeeded in becoming part of 3 large initiatives funded through private foundation sources, which have invited our participation and

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provided us with financial support because of our common goals. One of these is the United Way of Greater Boston's Road to Opportunities Initiative, which is supporting partnerships that involve employer and postsecondary partners working with programs such as YB JAS to improve the pathways for disconnected youth to college and jobs. A second is the Hyams Foundation's Teen Futures Initiative, which has funded YB JAS along with other local programs to improve the delivery of services to the most at-risk youth and support them through transition to college. A third is YB USA's Postsecondary Education Initiative funded by the Open Societies and Gates Foundations, which supports the development of innovative relationships between higher education institutions and YB programs to pilot best practices for transitioning youth to college and other postsecondary experiences. Inclusion in these initiatives has not only provided us with funding support and increased opportunities for community investment in the program, but has also involved us in learning communities with programs similar to ours, resulting in sharing of best practices, common resources, and additional connections in the community. JAS also sponsors an Annual Walk, with part of the proceeds allocated to YB JAS.

YB JAS has long benefited from long-term collaborations with many community partners and stakeholders. Housing partners include the Cambridge Home Improvement Program, JAS Housing Development Department and the Chelsea Housing Authority, all of which provide packaging services and rehab materials. Since 2000 the Cambridge Housing Authority has provided a program-based Sec. 8 housing subsidy for members in need, assists with recruitment of members, and provides job placement opportunities for graduates. The Cambridge School Department, a major collaborator in the development of our competency-based high school diploma curriculum, awards diplomas to our members who meet all requirements and also supports our Drivers' Education Program, allowing school vehicles to be used for road training. The Chelsea School Department provides extensive member recruitment and enrollment support. For 6 years Boston University's Graduate School of Social Work has provided case management interns, significantly expanding program capacity in this important area. Bunker Hill Community College is supporting our efforts to upgrade our educational curriculum to better prepare members for postsecondary education. They provide curriculum consultation, dual enrollment in college classes, and college success workshops. The program also depends on and leverages significant in-kind resources from other partners and community stakeholders who perform a number of functions at no cost. Among the agencies, non-profits and faith-based organizations whose services increase the scope and quality of member development and support resources are: Neighborhood Health Centers (health care), Wayside (emergency housing/

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homelessness prevention), CEOC (life skills speakers), The Career Place and Metro North Regional Employment Board (career forums, job search resources, labor market information); Chelsea Collaborative (community service opportunities); Community Cooks (monthly community luncheon); and ROCA, Chelsea Boys and Girls Club, Cambridge Department of Youth Services, probation/court officers, MA Departments of Social Services and Transitional Assistance, and many other agencies (recruitment and referral of applicants). Finally, local businesses provide career speakers, access to jobs and training, and general guidance through participation on an employer advisory board.

c. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY- DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE: YB JAS' ongoing plan for compliance begins with maintaining and updating an AmeriCorps Program Binder, regularly submitted to the MA Service Alliance (MSA) for review and TA, which outlines our program and practice in accordance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations. The Binder includes basics such as proper use of AmeriCorps name and logos as well as the protocol for recruitment and selection of members, related forms, system for tracking hours, implementing member training and supervision (including prohibited activities), tracking progress, management of site partners, continuous improvement, matching funds, reimbursement, and FSR preparation. The binder is maintained and, in consultation with MSA, updated by the Program Manager (PM) with systems reviewed annually by the Program Director (PD) who oversees day-to-day program operations and all other staff impacted by the systems. Training on prohibited service activities is provided to members and is annually reviewed with program staff and service partners so that no service projects are developed that violate the rules. All service proposed for members is reviewed directly by the PD, who ensures that it conforms to AmeriCorps guidelines, and directly supervised by YB JAS staff who accompany members on service sites. We have no sub-grantees. While unlikely in the current structure that requires review prior to service, if an instance of risk or noncompliance were identified, the PD would inform the PM who would create a corrective action plan, in consultation with JAS's Director of Training & Education and our assigned MSA Program Officer.

YB JAS has a demonstrated history of compliance, with no compliance issues or areas of weakness or risk identified during the last full year of program operation or prior. The agency and program are experienced in operating programs in accordance with funder regulations and have developed extensive policies and procedures to ensure compliance. These are regularly vetted by funder site visits and audits, which have included a 2010 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) audit of our program as part of a general OMB audit of Department Of Labor/ETA YouthBuild funding.

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ENROLLMENT and RETENTION: YB JAS has historically enrolled 100% of the slots received each year, including the last full year of program operation. The program has retained 98% of members during the last full year of operation, up from 92% the prior year. With a majority of corps members being disadvantaged/opportunity youth who come to the program with much promise but many barriers to service, YB JAS focuses a great deal of effort on retention, with a goal of all members retaining and receiving full Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards. This has been the focus of our last 2 AmeriCorps Internal Evaluations. Findings combined with ongoing feedback have allowed the program to make adjustments to better support retention. For example, case management staff have increased in recent years to 3 counselors and 2 Social Work interns, and the program now utilizes an interdisciplinary approach whereby staff across all departments, Housing Service, Education, Career, and Case Management come together weekly to strategize about struggling members, utilizing a strengths-based approach. Additionally, the YB JAS program structure has evolved to include 4 FT members who are not disengaged youth, (often college grads) who come to be viewed as mentor/models for opportunity corps members. The program design also allows for terms of service of different lengths to accommodate member needs, and encourages opportunity members to stay for more than one term of service, about 25% typically doing so each year. This allows new members to benefit from the life experience of FT members and service experience of all returning members, providing corps consistency from year to year and contributing to good retention. Retention is also aided by a low member-to-staff ratio.

OPERATING SITES/MEMBER SERVICE SITES: YB JAS' operating site/headquarters is 1175 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, where all members will report each day. Those scheduled for member development remain at the site; those scheduled for service divide into teams and accompany their supervisors to service sites via YB JAS vehicle. In Cambridge, YB JAS will partner with the City's Home Improvement Program (HIP) to upgrade 1-4 family housing units, comprising the major part of the service. HIP uses reduced- or zero-interest loans to income-eligible homeowners to bring properties into compliance with building and health codes, while keeping them affordable for both owners and tenants. Member crews will generally be utilized on projects in two areas: where economic need is the greatest; and where the service performed by the crews frees up very limited dollars for heating, roofing, plumbing and electrical work which can only be done by licensed tradespeople. Member service often makes an affordable rehab package viable.

The program will also support Cambridge's goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing by providing service on projects packaged by city-sponsored non-profit developers, chiefly the JAS

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Housing Development Department. The goal is to create one such unit in 2013-2016 (one created in 2010-2013). Housing partners buy properties that become available on the open market and package them for rehabilitation, using a range of public and private funding programs. Depending on the size and other characteristics, they either sell them to income-eligible first-time homebuyers, or keep ownership for rental by income-eligible families, generally through the Sec. 8 rental subsidy program. At rare times when vacant land becomes available, new units may be constructed for sale or rental, with the crews participating in new construction, often "green." Both ownership and rental units created have provisions built in to insure that they will remain affordable over the long-term. Part of affordability may include member provision of rehab service to maintain affordable rental units.

In Chelsea, the program's major housing partner will be the Chelsea Housing Authority. In line with the Authority's rehabilitation goals, member crews will be engaged chiefly in renovation of hallways in public housing developments, repairing deteriorated conditions caused by water leaks and deferred maintenance. When requested, the crews also provide repair services in apartments, performing activities such as mold removal, wall and ceiling reconstruction, and painting. To address the partner goal of adding new units to its inventory, members may also undertake one or more housing conversion projects over the course of the 3-year grant cycle if expected leveraged funds remain available, providing construction and repair services needed to convert space currently not used as housing to habitable dwelling units. One such unit has been created to date and one is in progress in the 2010-2013 cycle with one previously completed in prior funding cycle.

The program's major VETERANS partner will be the Soldiers Home in Chelsea, MA, one of two MA-state residential facilities servicing homeless and disabled veterans. In line with the Soldiers Home's goal, member crews will engage in renovation and repair of single room occupancy units and common areas which have declined due to high use and budget cuts reducing non-direct service staff.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS: The program proposes to enroll 4 full-time and 44 part-time members, for a total of 22.93 MSY's. Over our 12-year history, we have not exceeded the maximum allowable cost per member, and in some years have operated below that number. For the past 3 years our cost/MSY has been \$13,000, with the maximum allowable being \$13,300. For 2013-2016, we are requesting the maximum \$13,300 cost/MSY, which we feel is justified for a number of reasons. The total cost of the program has increased each year due to cost of living increases and program enhancements we have implemented to increase community and client services and overall impact. For the next contract period, the total program operating cost is increasing by 21%, while the increase

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to CNCS is only 9.4%, with the match share increasing from 46% to 50% of overall program costs. These cost increases will result in significantly increased services and benefits, including 60 more housing units to be served over the course of the 3-year grant period (30 of which are targeting a new priority group, veterans) and expanded services to opportunity youth, who have been identified as a priority target group by CNCS. We feel that the derived benefits strongly justify the increased costs. Furthermore, the fact that opportunity youth comprise 94% of our corps justifies a higher cost per member, not only because the costs of serving this group are higher, but also because the benefits and cost savings to the local and national community of improving the functioning of this group are significant.

In terms of housing services, much of the work performed by members would otherwise not have been performed because of financial infeasibility, or would have been further deferred because of lack of resources. The result of not performing this work is that low-income families remain in substandard housing for longer periods of time. A number of studies have documented the health costs to communities when people, particularly children and the elderly, live in substandard housing, and also the cumulative negative effect (broken window theory) of deferred maintenance of housing, which leads to further decline of neighborhoods and increasing crime. Our internal assessments have shown that the cost of housing rehab by our members as compared to private contractors is approximately half. This means that the federal, state and city funds that our partners use to fund rehab activities are greatly expanded through our partnership, allowing additional housing units to be served by them, or for tax burdens to be decreased.

A 2012 CNCS commissioned study, *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*, states that the economic burden of youth who are unemployed and out of school after age 16, or who are unable to progress through college or to stable employment is significant. The immediate taxpayer burden is \$13,900/year and the immediate social burden is \$37,450 per year. The costs benefit of an investment of \$13,300/year is obvious.

DIVERSE FUNDING RESOURCES: Long-term sources of non-federal support include the City of Cambridge and MA YouthBuild funds through the state Dept. of Education. Support from foundation/corporate grants has been consistent, most recently increasing through special initiatives of the United Way, Hyams Foundation, and Open Societies Foundation. Federal support is provided through federal YouthBuild grants, which we have received for the past 5 years through DOL and prior 10 years from HUD. HUD CDBG funds have been provided by the city of Cambridge since program inception.

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Over the past 5 years we have received direct operational funding support from CNCS for YB JAS each year. The CNCS funding request for this proposal represents 50% of the total operational budget, down from 54% this year. Historically achieving more than the minimum match required, YB JAS will raise a minimum of \$304,969 as match for each year, with \$4000 of this expected to be in-kind JAS funds (rental depreciation). Cash match will include: \$31,525 in private funds (already committed by Hyams Foundation); \$79,010 in state and local funds, and \$190,434 in federal funds, of which \$50,000 is already on hand from the current DOL YB grant. Remaining federal funds will come from a combination of Cambridge CDBG funds, which while not committed have been granted continuously for the past 25 years, and a new DOL YB grant. (The sources of federal funds have been as approved as match.) State/local sources, though not committed, include the State Department of Education, which has supported YB JAS for over 9 years, and city of Cambridge, which has provided funding since program inception.

b. BUDGET ADEQUACY: A major portion of the budget supports a team of professional, experienced staff who are critical to both achieving output and outcome goals and to providing the core activities needed for community capacity building and program sustainability. A high staff-to-member ratio is maintained because of the wide-ranging needs of the at-risk youth population, and because of the program's commitment to significant member development. Staff includes certified teachers, case managers, and a career counselor, as well as the housing service staff and highly credentialed management staff. The commitment to member development and support is also reflected in funding allocated for the following types of activities: educational supplies; enrichment activities such as drivers' education; emergency needs of members; a transitional housing unit; and program supplies and program-wide activities that support member recognition, community building, and service learning. A commitment to continuous improvement and quality programming is reflected in funding dedicated to staff development. JAS is CORI exempt from fees in MA and gets few out-of-state applicants. We have not budgeted fees for FBI checks because members do not serve vulnerable populations.

Administrative costs are kept low, in spite of the extensive contract management, budget management, fundraising, and other administrative burdens brought about by accountability to multiple funding sources. The low level of administrative costs to the program has been made possible largely because of the in-kind resources and other support services provided to the program by Just-A-Start Corporation.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

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For the 2010-2013 INTERNAL EVALUATION, as with the 2007-2010 Internal Evaluation, YouthBuild Just-A-Start AmeriCorps Program (YB JAS) examined member retention and related initiatives utilizing member, staff, and outcome surveys. Evaluation results showed improved retention (90%; 98% receiving full or partial Segal AmeriCorps Award in 2010-2011; 2011-2012) and an increase in member service hours. Evaluation was utilized to further fine-tune program operations including adjustment to 2013-2016 proposed MSY configuration. For the 2013-2016 Internal Evaluation, YB JAS will, pending funding, continue to evaluate member retention and outcomes, revised MSY structure, and use this data to inform and further refine our program and practice.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A