

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

One hundred seventy-four (174) AmeriCorps members serving in Operation LINK will leverage an additional 650 volunteers to provide mentoring services to approximately 1,980 military children and youth in after school programs in Craven, Cumberland, Onslow, and Wayne counties in North Carolina. The project will begin August 1, 2013, and end July 31, 2014. At the end of the project year, we anticipate a minimum of 990 program participants who attend 75% or more of mentoring sessions will increase their level of connectedness to school, family, and community as measured by the 1) Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness, 2) Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and 3) Self Esteem Questionnaire. Operation LINK will address the CNCS focus area of Veteran and Military Families. The CNCS investment of \$575,762 will be matched with \$201,939.

## Rationale and Approach

### a. Need

Community Need: Military families in North Carolina as well as other states in our country face major challenges as loved ones are deployed throughout the world. According to the Military Child Education Coalition, two million American children have been affected by the challenges of military deployment since 2001. Multiple deployments, frequent moves and having a parent injured or die is a reality for many children in military families. In the past twelve years, North Carolina has experienced the largest deployment of military personnel since World War II. With more than 120,000 military families living in our state, including the National Guard and Reserve, there are thousands of children who are struggling with the separation from one or both parents during this difficult time (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2012).

The management of stress associated with the deployment cycle is an ongoing issue in the lives of military families (Esposito-Smythers, 2011). Extended tours of duty and rapid redeployment can exacerbate the emotional challenges experienced by military families. A 2007 report from the American Psychological Association stated that "parental deployment places school-age children and adolescents at higher risk for a range of adverse mood and behavioral changes: anger, apathy, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, decline in school performance, loss of interest in normal activities, and social isolation". Anita Chandra (2010) in the 2010 journal of Pediatrics stated that "children of military families ages 11 to 17 were found to have a higher prevalence of emotional and behavioral difficulties than children in the general population."

In May 2010 the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University published a research

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brief entitled "Trauma Faced by Children of Military Families: What Every Policymaker Should Know." Study after study cited in the brief reported similar findings in regard to the impact of deployment on school-age children: "changes in school performance, lashing out in anger, worrying, hiding emotions, disrespecting parents and authority figures, feeling a sense of loss, and symptoms consistent with depression" (Huebner, Angela; Mancini, J.; Wilcox, R.; Grass, S.; Grass, G., 2007; Sogomonyan, Fianna and Cooper, Janice L., 2010; Chandra, Anita; Lara-Cinisomo, S.; Jaycox, Lisa. H.; Tanielian, T.; Burns, R. M.; Ruder, T.; Han, B., 2010). Interviews with military parents from Fort Bragg, Camp Lejeune, and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base added "real life" data to the findings listed above. These parents had lived with the impact of multiple deployments or frequent transfers on their children--lashing out in anger, disrespecting parents and authority figures, worrying, feeling a sense of loss, unable to concentrate, and losing interest in school.

The Targeted Communities: Approximately one-eighth of the nation's troop strength from Army, Marine, Air Force, and National Guard is stationed in six of the North Carolina's major military bases and two smaller defense installations, with the greatest concentration in Cumberland, Onslow, Craven, and Wayne counties (North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, 2006). This large troop concentration also means there are large numbers of children and military families in these counties. In 2011-12, 31,000 identified military children attended public school in Cumberland, Onslow, Wayne and Craven counties. Cumberland County Schools served 16,000 military children (29% of their student population). Onslow County Public Schools served 12,000 military children (49% of their student population). Craven County Schools and Wayne County Schools each served 1,500 military children (10% and 8% of total enrollments, respectively).

Meeting the needs of such a large contingency of military children is a daunting task when communities have a large number of children living in poverty and receive free or reduced-priced school meals. According to the US Census Bureau, all four counties have poverty rates that exceed 20% for children ages 5-17 living in families; three of the four counties (Craven, Cumberland, and Wayne) have rates that exceed 25% for the same age group; and one county (Wayne) has a poverty rate that exceeds 30%. Many of our military children attend high poverty schools, as defined by Free and Reduced-Price school meals percentages. In 2011-12, the following percentages and numbers of students in these counties were eligible to receive Free or Reduced-Price school meals: Cumberland, 51.09% (approx. 28,000); Onslow, 47.68% (approx. 11,883); Craven, 58.6% (approx. 9,060), and Wayne, 66.34% (approx. 13,159).

The Solution: Operation LINK will bring needed resources to our target counties and help

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communities provide supports and supervision for children and teens during the critical time period from 3:00 PM -- 6:00 PM. Our proposed afterschool cross-age mentoring program will help children and teens connect to self and their family, deployed parent, schools and community. A key component of the mentoring program will be early detection. Members will be trained to identify early warning signs of high risk factors in their mentees and share this information with school counselors. Our goals are to increase protective factors that promote self-esteem, resiliency, social interest, and a positive attitude toward school; and decrease risk factors associated with depression, violence, substance abuse, academic underachievement, and social skills deficits.

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems: AmeriCorps members represent people of all ages and backgrounds who are committed to helping solve local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic engagement through national service. The power of AmeriCorps lies in its ability to provide value and effectiveness through its triple bottom line return on investment -- for the individuals, families, and communities that benefit from the service of AmeriCorps members; for the people who serve in AmeriCorps; and for the larger community and nation. Numerous reports demonstrate the positive impact AmeriCorps programs have on the volunteers and the communities where they serve. Operation LINK, will have a cadre of 174 enthusiastic, talented, and dedicated young adults in the same age and peer groups as the mentees-- something missing in all other models presently employed in the local communities in Craven, Cumberland, Onslow, and Wayne Counties. At a time when organizations are struggling to meet increased needs of military families, AmeriCorps can help fill the gap and tackle critical community issues.

Member Roles and Responsibilities-Twenty four (24) Half-Time (HT) members and 150 Minimum Time Education Award Only (MT-EAO) members will serve as mentors. All members will participate in the delivery of the structured CAMP Cross-Age Mentoring Program developed by Michael Karcher at the University of Texas at San Antonio. This peer mentoring program promotes mentors' leadership and collaboration skills while simultaneously strengthening mentees' connectedness to school and community, self-esteem, and academic achievement.

The Cross Age Mentoring Program (CAMP) will operate afterschool at Boys and Girls Clubs or other community-based sites in the targeted counties from August through mid- June and during the day from mid-June to July. The program has four major components designed to connect military children to new ways of thinking, acting, and caring about others, society and themselves.

1. Curriculum to connect child, family and school--The afterschool sessions

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typically open with an icebreaker, followed by a curriculum activity, a snack, and a group game or activity. At the beginning of the year, curriculum activities focus on connectedness-to-self and help children become more aware of their unique talents, interests and values. The mid-year curriculum emphasizes connectedness-to-others, cultivating interpersonal skills and respect for diversity. The year ends with activities promoting connectedness-to-society, including school, family, community and culture. The process is repeated every year with a different cohort of military youth and AmeriCorps members.

2. Virtual Robots to connect child and deployed parent-- Following the curriculum activity, AmeriCorps members and their mentees will transition to their designated desktop computers to log into an Internet-based Robot program developed by the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy. The Robotics Academy, part of the Carnegie Mellon's Computer Science Student Network (CS2N), uses an interactive, sophisticated 3-dimensional color graphics and video game design to create a highly engaging learning environment where parent and child not only communicate and problem solve as they build the robot, but also have the opportunity to share experiences and reflections about service to country and community.

3. Super Saturday quarterly events to connect child, family, and community-- Super Saturdays are morning or afternoon events in which parents, children and mentors participate in community service activities. Super Saturdays promote connectedness to family and help integrate the worlds of family and community. The four Super Saturdays will include civic and/or service activities that align with AmeriCorps National Identity Days.

4. Summer camp to allow the child to continue to connect with family, deployed parent, and community--A structured summer day camp is also part of the model, in which mentors and mentees continue to build connections and relationships across social, academic, and family domains. HT members will work with school districts, Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H Clubs, Military Family Support Groups, and the ECU Science and Math Center to plan and implement a series of mini-camps. Military children participating in the summer camps will rotate through the planned activities. MT members will be encouraged to volunteer to help with the mini-camps. The conclusion of the mentoring year will be celebrated with a structured termination ceremony and dissolution of the match.

Weekly Schedule for MT-EAO members: August-mid June from 3:00 -- 6:00

Group A (75 members mentoring 750 military children and teens)

\* Monday and Wednesday--implement the CAMP mentoring program

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\* Fridays-participate in monthly training sessions, complete required paperwork, review mentees' progress, communicate with school counselors or parents when needed, complete reflection journal entries, prepare for the next week, recruit volunteers

\* One Saturday per quarter-participate in Super Saturday activities

Group B (75 members mentoring 750 military children and teens)

\* Tuesday and Thursday--implement the CAMP mentoring program

\* Fridays-participate in monthly training sessions, complete required paperwork, review mentees' progress, communicate with school counselors or parents when needed, complete reflection journal entries, prepare for the next week, recruit volunteers

\* One Saturday per quarter-participate in Super Saturday activities

Weekly Schedule for HT members: August-mid June from 3:00 -- 6:00

\* Monday and Wednesday--implement the CAMP mentoring program (24 HT members mentoring 240 military children and teens in one cohort)

\* Tuesday and Thursday--implement the CAMP mentoring program (24 HT members mentoring 240 military children and teens in a second cohort)

\* Fridays-participate in monthly training sessions, complete required paperwork, review mentees' progress, communicate with school counselors or parents when needed, complete reflection journal entries, prepare for the next week, recruit volunteers

\* One Saturday per quarter-participate in Super Saturday activities

Weekly Schedule for HT members: Mid June - July from 8:00 -- 6:00

\* Monday --Thursday--Plan and implement summer camp activities for all students mentored by the project during the year; recruit and manage volunteers to serve as Team Advisors to the mentee teams and assist with implementation of summer camp activities

\* Fridays- complete required paperwork, review mentees' progress, complete reflection journal entries, prepare for the next week, recruit volunteers

b. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact (10 points)

Evidence-Based Intervention-The Cross-Age Mentoring Program (CAMP)

Parental deployment places school-age military children and adolescents at higher risk for a range of adverse mood and behavioral changes: anger, apathy, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, decline in school performance, loss of interest in normal activities, and social isolation. To reduce this risk, Operation LINK members will implement the CAMP mentoring program, a mentoring program

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designed to help children connect with their family, school, and community.

Karcher's Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Program (CAMP) is an evidence-based model that has demonstrated through research studies and statistical analyses its impact on school-age children and teens. Research studies on the CAMP model have examined the relationships between cross-age peer mentoring and several important psychological constructs among adolescents. Following cross-age peer mentoring, mentees have demonstrated or reported improvements in attitudes toward and connectedness to school and peers ( Karcher, 2005; Stolz, 2005; Kracher, 2009), grades or academic achievement (Karcher, Davis & Powell, 2002; Stolz; Tomlin; Westerman, 2002), and social skills (Karcher, 2005)

Our evaluation will utilize instruments developed by Karcher and others in the fields of counseling and psychology. The evaluation process will include pre-post data collection using the following instruments: 1) Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness, 2) Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and 3) Self Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ). Each instrument is described in detail below.

The Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness developed by Michael Karcher is the first research-based instrument to assess adolescent connectedness. The subscales measure connectedness to 1) school and teachers, 2) parents and siblings, 3) friends and romantic partners, and 4) self. Operation LINK will administer the 78-item, Likert scale Hemingway assessment at the beginning and end of the mentoring year to capture change over time on connectedness subscales. The instrument is available free-of-charge to nonprofit organizations and Dr. Karcher has offered to assist Operation LINK with data analysis.

Two additional instruments will be administered pre-post to measure the impact of the CAMP intervention on the target population. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) is a 75-item, Likert scale instrument assesses adolescents' perceptions of the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of relationships with their parents and close friends -- particularly how well these figures serve as sources of psychological security. Three broad dimensions are assessed: degree of mutual trust; quality of communication; and extent of anger and alienation.

The Self Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) uses 42 self-evaluation statements to assess self-esteem pertaining to the five domains of peer relations, school, family, physical appearance, and sports/athletics.

By the end of the project year, we anticipate 1) a minimum of 990 program participants (at least half the number of total participants) will complete a minimum of 75% of program sessions. Of that

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number, we expect 2) 50% or more will increase their level of connectedness to friends, school, family, and self as measured pre-post by the Hemingway Instrument, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and Self Esteem Questionnaire (SEQ). Our target number was based on the PD's prior knowledge and experience with similar projects. We believe our target number is ambitious and robust. All impact data and results will be reported in the Operation LINK Yearly Evaluation Report. By the end of the three-year grant cycle, and in addition to the cumulative number of children and families served, the expected overall changes would be that 1) counselors in the targeted schools are more aware of challenges and issues faced by military children and families, 2) Operation LINK will support opportunities for counselors and military parents to examine topics of concern to schools, families, and communities with military families, 3) build an infrastructure to engage veterans, currently enlisted military personnel (VA, VFW, etc.), and other community groups in volunteerism and community service.

For Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only: In previous service years, Project HEART has providing tutoring services to low performing students in eastern North Carolina. During the past 13 years, our AmeriCorps program has served more than 20,000 low-performing students in high needs schools in eastern NC. Our average success rate for student promotions for the past five years is 88.4%. Since 2005, the program has recruited 4,529 volunteers.

Project HEART has been in compliance on all fiscal and program policies and procedure since the fall of 2000. The project has accomplished all performance measures and has received a rating of low risk from the NC Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service for the past 10 years. Data collected for the first quarter indicate the Project is on target to meet all performance measures. In 2010, Project HEART was selected by the America Service Commission (ASC) and Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) as one of the 52 most innovative AmeriCorps Programs in the United States.

On July 31, 2013, Project HEART will end its final service year as an AmeriCorps tutoring program. Our ECU Volunteer Center and Pirate Tutoring Center will now to assume the responsibility of providing volunteer tutors to low performing students in our service area. Project HEART is shifting its focus from tutoring low performing students to mentoring children of military families.

c. Member Recruitment: The CAMP cross-age mentoring program is based on student-to-student activities and interactions. Therefore, we will recruit 174 members--24 college students as HT members and 150 high school seniors to serve as MT-EAO members from local high schools and institutions of higher learning. Fortunately, there is a large pool of talented high school students at

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least 17 years of age and college students in the four-county counties, many of whom may themselves be military youth or young adults recently discharged from military service. We will recruit members who are leaders in their local schools and communities; are mature and reliable; who are representative of the cultural and ethnic composition of the communities and schools they serve; possess effective communication and listening skills, and express a keen desire to work with military youth. These 174 youth and young adults will be perfect candidates to serve as mentors to younger military children. Members will also benefit from the education award.

One key component in our recruitment plan is recruitment assistance from the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), a national organization that supports a variety of programs for military children. MCEC currently operates school-based high school programs to support transfer students in Cumberland and Onslow counties with the potential to expand into Craven and/or Wayne counties in upcoming years. MCEC will send letters and notification to all military groups and school districts in their NC partnership to promote Operation LINK and recruit members.

Another component in our plan is securing assistance from a variety of local organizations, such as high school counselors, school district Military Liaisons, Military Family Assistance Centers, Military Family Support Centers, and Veteran Support groups. We believe this broad-based recruitment coalition will help us identify a well-qualified, diverse HT and MT-EAO applicant pool. Priority in recruitment will be given to any potential member living in a targeted county who is military involved and has prior successful experiences in working with children in summer camps, volunteering in schools, and volunteering in the community.

Operation LINK will also use the following media strategies to recruit members: 1) distribute promotional flyers, posters, and brochures; 2) advertise the program and positions in local newspapers, cable, and TV; 3) use social media networks, and 4) make presentations to schools and military groups. Finally, the project will utilize the on-line recruitment system developed by the Corporation to maximize service/volunteer opportunities for all Americans. All recruitment materials will include information about how to access the on-line application packet containing the application, recommendation forms, parental permission forms, criminal history forms and interview process.

d. Member Training; Our training sessions will focus on three major themes: 1) member understanding of AmeriCorps and its mission, goals, and ethic of service, including prohibited activities, 2) member skill development to serve as an effective mentor, and 3) member skill development in recruiting volunteers. We will use the National Service Knowledge Network's online courses, videos, and Effective practices Collection to help members understand their role and

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responsibilities as an AmeriCorps member and how to recruit volunteers. We will use Michael Kracher's mentor training materials to prepare members to implement the CAMP mentoring program and we will use the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Institute's Train-the-trainer model to help members serve facilitators of the Virtual World segment of the mentoring model.

In August, members will complete 4 days of Orientation training that includes on-line training modules and face-to-face training before reporting to their assigned site. During the Orientation training, participants will receive a copy of the AmeriCorps handbook for members. There will be didactic, demonstration, and application sessions to allow members to work in collaborative groups, pairs, or triads to practice their newly acquired skills, receive feedback, and reflect on the training process and the skills they have acquired. Also, Program coordinators will review all prohibited activities, engage members in role play activities and facilitate the use of case studies to help them understand what they can and cannot do. On Day 4 of Orientation Training, members will spend half of the day at their designated site to meet with onsite supervisors and complete their placement site orientation. Throughout the year, program coordinators will revisit the list of prohibited activities during training session and monthly site visits to ensure member compliance. Member training satisfaction will be assessed via evaluation surveys at the end of each training session.

We will use training materials from the National Service Knowledge Network to promote an ethic of service and civic responsibility among our members. As members plan, organize and implement their Super Saturday projects, they will apply the knowledge and skills they learn in each of the training sessions. While working together on their projects, members will develop leadership, communication, critical thinking, and team-building skills.

Training Timeline for Operation LINK participants (All HT and MT-EAO members)

August: Orientation--Introduction to AmeriCorps and Ethic of Service, Member Roles, Responsibilities, Prohibited activities, Time Log, Data Collection, CPR & First Aid, Disaster Preparedness, Implementing the CAMP mentoring program and Developing the knowledge base and skills to build virtual robots; September: Diversity-Learning styles, Communication; October: Volunteer Levering: Engaging college students as Volunteer Leaders; November: Conflict Resolution; January: Volunteer Management; February: Working with Diverse Volunteers ; March: Making Connections: SaYES to Intergenerational Service-Learning; April: Moving Volunteers from Service to Civic Engagement; May: Community Engagement and Strengthening; July: Life after AmeriCorps-- Personal reflections about skills and knowledge learned during the year of service

e. Member Supervision: We recognize that supervision and support of our members is critical to our

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success. Program coordinators and on-site supervisors will observe, guide, and support members as they mentor their assigned mentees. We will be a multi-site program and will select sites and supervisors based on the number and percentage of military youth served by a Boys and Girls Club and its proximity to the schools attended by MT-EAO and HT members. In August, the PD will meet with community partners and school district staff to discuss the Corporation's financial policies and procedures, program policies and procedures, and the partner Memorandum of Agreement.

Operation LINK staff will participate in mentor and robotics trainings and will serve as members of the training team. The training team will provide Orientation and quarterly training sessions for on-site supervisors. Program staff will meet every quarter with on-site supervisors and finance managers to ensure compliance with all federal and state guidelines as they relate to program implementation, review program implementation, plan National Identity Days, discuss ways to recruit volunteers, and identify ways to connect Operation LINK members with other service streams such as VISTA, RSVP, and VeteranCorps. Program coordinators and the educational specialist will visit each site once a month to supervise and support members. At each visit, program staff will engage members and on-site supervisors in discussions about prohibitive activities through the use of scenarios and case studies.

Between site visits, program coordinators will communicate weekly with members and on-site supervisors via email, phone or FAX.

Operation LINK staff will use different monitoring tools, such as site visit audit forms, satisfaction surveys, interviews, and anecdotal records from phone calls and emails to collect information related to concerns, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, successes, and suggested changes for improvement. Staff will review and analyze the information and inform members, site supervisors, and other key stakeholders of results via quarterly updates. All participants will assist in the development of an improvement plan to modify components of the program. The PD will hold weekly team meetings to monitor program implementation and adherence to processes and procedures. This monitoring system will enable us to quickly identify concerns, weaknesses, and any engagement in prohibitive activities and develop a plan of action to address the identified concern. Our goal is to establish a collaborative environment in which all participants are encouraged to express concerns about program implementation, identify challenges and find solutions.

Tutoring Programs Only--N/A.

f. Member Experience: We will structure our training sessions and community-based activities to allow our members gain new skills and experience the tremendous satisfaction that comes from

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helping others. We hope their participation in AmeriCorps becomes a pipeline to careers in public service; and their participation creates civic leaders who continue to serve in their communities long after their service has been completed.

Members will participate in specific skill building sessions, team building activities, and group productions of skits, songs, cheers, etc. to build an AmeriCorps esprit de corps during training sessions.

Throughout the service year, members will keep a Reflection Journal to document the impact of being an AmeriCorps member on their personal and professional life. One of the requirements of the Journal will be a written plan for a community service project based on the needs of their community. Members will determine a strategy to address the need, locate resources, develop a plan to recruit and manage volunteers, or activity in which they would engage after their AmeriCorps service year ends. AmeriCorps members may choose to include other service participants, such as RSVP or VISTA as part of their plan for recruitment of volunteers. Lastly, member teams will work with the Educational Specialist to develop 30-second PSAs about the importance of serving as an AmeriCorps member, the value of service, etc. At the last training session in July, members will share their reflections with the group via their PSAs and in writing with project staff.

**Disaster Preparedness and Response:** All members will complete an online FEMA Disaster Preparedness course and receive a certificate of completion. During Member Orientation Training, we will identify a 12-person team of HT members to be deployed in the event of a natural disaster or national catastrophe that threatens our homeland security. These members will complete the on-line Disaster Preparedness course provided by the National Service Knowledge Network. Our Disaster Plan will include: 1) distribution of a checklist for each member with key contact names and phone numbers and email addresses, step-by-step instructions as what to do and where to report, travel forms, and time sheets; 2) training in CPR and First Aid, Disaster Preparedness, Shelter Management; and 3) quarterly updates and review of established procedures. The Project PD will ensure all necessary parties have been contacted and will notify the state office that the team is ready to deploy.

**Ongoing Dialogue and Activities Designed to Improve Race Relations:** The racial and ethnic composition of military personnel and their families closely resembles that of the US population as a whole, resulting in diverse schools and communities in the targeted counties. The CAMP curriculum that will be utilized during afterschool programming includes activities to help children develop interpersonal skills to help them deal with peers and adults both like and unlike themselves. CAMP activities that promote connectedness-to-others include discussions about racial prejudice, affirmative action, class prejudice, and gender bias.

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Super Saturdays will provide quarterly opportunities for racially and culturally diverse families, mentors and mentees to interact socially, broadening the relational network among program participants. The four Super Saturdays will include activities with civic and/or service objectives, aligned with AmeriCorps' National Identity Days. Civic and service projects will emphasize outreach to racially, culturally, and economically diverse populations within the community.

g. Volunteer Generation: One of our Program Coordinators will act as our Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator will work with members and other community agencies to recruit volunteers to serve at the designated Robotics Team advisors, assist with homework, and participate in the Super Saturday service projects. Specifically, the Volunteer Coordinator will meet with Members will work with local school district Military Liaisons, directors of Military Family Assistance Centers and Military Family Support Centers, veteran groups, and institutions of higher education to identify a pool of potential volunteers.

In addition, the Volunteer Coordinator will work with a representative of the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) to recruit S2S students to participate in community service projects with Operation LINK participants. A partnership between Operation LINK and S2S will allow us to expand the number of military children and youth engaged in volunteerism and community service activities. After recruitment, volunteers will undergo orientation training. During this training, volunteers will receive a Volunteer Guidebook on how to be an effective volunteer. The Guidebook will also contain information on AmeriCorps, a detailed description of Operation LINK, the list of prohibited service activities, and a list of emergency contact numbers. In addition, Program Coordinators and members will conduct: 1) quarterly training/support sessions, 2) site visits, and 3) maintain communication via email, phone, FAX, and a quarterly volunteer newsletter. We will provide certificates of appreciation at the end of the service year. We expect to recruit at least 650 community volunteers per year. These volunteers will play a major role in our sustainability efforts.

h. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: AmeriCorps is very important to our campus. Project HEART has been featured in university publications and the student newspaper on several occasions. The program has been cited in the Chancellor's address to the university and the public at large. The university has given special permission for the AmeriCorps logo to be displayed with the ECU logo for 1) public materials such as stationery, application forms, recruitment brochures, 2) on-line postings, such as websites and Face Book, 3) orientation materials, member curriculum notebooks, banners, press releases and publications. have carried the logo, AmeriCorps name, and the statement that funding comes from the Corporation for National & Community

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Service.

Our school and community partner sites have displayed signs signifying an AmeriCorps program is operating in the building. In addition to AmeriCorps service gear, the program has provided member name tags that identify members as AmeriCorps participants. Our expectation is that all of these commitments will continue with our new AmeriCorps program-Operation LINK.

### **Organizational Capability**

a. Organizational Background and Staffing: East Carolina University (ECU) has served as the major institution of higher education in eastern NC for more than a century. Founded in 1907 as East Carolina Teachers Training School, the University's mission has always included a commitment to serve the communities of our region. East Carolina has the largest teacher education program in our state and provides large numbers of highly qualified teachers for our state and across the country. The Brody School of Medicine, Allied Health programs, and School of Dentistry provide medical and dental care to the region. The University is a leader in Distance Education, offering the highest number of degree-granting online programs in the UNC system.

The University currently serves the largest number of Veteran's Supported Education (VETSED) cases of any state-supported university in North Carolina. The 1,400 VETSED cases include both veterans and eligible family members, constituting approximately 5% of the total student body. In 2010, ECU was honored by the Department of Defense with the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award, the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their outstanding support of employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. ECU has also received several Patriot Awards and the ESGR Pro Patria Award.

The program has been able to tap into faculty expertise for assistance in program design, implementation, member training, and evaluation. The PD has extensive knowledge of schools, curriculum, and instructional practices to help students achieve.

Project personnel include a Program Director (50%), one Lead Program Coordinator (100%), one Program Coordinator (100%), one Educational Specialist (50%), one graduate assistant (20 hrs/wk plus one summer term), and a Fiscal Manager (25%). Because Operation LINK personnel are considered ECU employees, we will use the university policies for recruitment and selection of new personnel. University HR personnel and the Program Director will provide orientation training, ongoing training, and support to staff and new staff who may transition within a budget period or program year. The accounting clerk will complete the university-required BANNER training to access to the ECU financial system. Specific responsibilities for the positions are:

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1. Program Director-Major responsibilities include: managing the entire project; working with external evaluator to implement the evaluation plan for monitoring compliance with program requirements and progress towards meeting performance measures; supervising graduate assistant in the execution of the evaluation study; developing strategic plan to sustain existing partners and recruit new community partners; and producing all required quarterly and yearly reports. The Program Director holds a PhD in Curriculum & Instruction and Administration, with more than 45 years of professional experience and more than 25 years of experience developing community partnerships and managing programs that have received state, regional and national recognition.
2. Educational Specialist-Major responsibilities include: serving as liaison with the Carnegie-Mellon Robotics Academy, planning and implementing the Internet-based robotics discovery program ;facilitating training activities for members and site coordinators; visiting sites to ensure the program is implemented effectively and members are supervised and supported; planning activities throughout the year to foster continuous improvement. Minimum degree requirement is a MS degree in educational technology or related field, knowledge of NC schools, curriculum, policies, and procedures, record of volunteerism and community service.
3. Lead Program Coordinator- Major responsibilities include: planning and implementing training activities for members and site coordinators; visiting sites to ensure the program is implemented effectively and members are supervised and supported; ensuring all documentation from members is sent to the Recruitment Office in a timely manner; ensuring all data entered in the AmeriCorps are accurate and that data entry meets program timeline, assisting PD in producing quarterly and yearly reports; developing PR print materials. Minimum degree requirement is a MS degree in education or related field, knowledge of NC schools, curriculum, policies, and procedures, record of volunteerism and community service.
4. Program Coordinator- Major responsibilities include working with the Lead Coordinator in carrying out the responsibilities identified above, plus working with the fiscal manager to ensure compliance with fiscal guidelines. Those duties include initiating requisitions, invoices, and purchase orders; processing reimbursements, travel, member living allowances; purchasing supplies and equipment; and maintaining all financial records. Minimum degree requirement is a MS degree in education or related field, knowledge of NC schools, curriculum, policies, and procedures, record of volunteerism and community service.
5. Graduate Assistant(s)-Major responsibilities include: assisting the PD and external evaluator in data collection and analysis, establishing and maintaining database.

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6. Fiscal Manager-Major responsibilities include: monitoring program fiscal policies and procedures to ensure compliance with federal and state guidelines, advising PD on appropriateness of all expenditures; and preparing required financial reports. The Fiscal Manager earned an MBA in economics and a PhD in Business & Marketing and has 35 years of experience overseeing state and federal budgets for the ECU College of Education.

For Current Grantees Only: (See same section Page 9)

b. Sustainability: In the new proposal development process, representatives of the Military Child Education Coalition, the Carnegie-Mellon Robotics Institute, military personnel (all parents), school-based military liaisons, representatives of military support groups, and Michael Karcher participated in conference calls and face-to-face meetings to identify community needs and develop strategies to address the needs.

The proposal creation process has created the Operation LINK Advisory Council, which will be composed of university administrators, Superintendents (or designee), university and public school staff, community leaders, military spouses, and military liaisons. The major functions of the Council are to assist with program implementation, plus provide oversight and assist the PD in seeking ways to sustain the program. The Advisory Council will work closely with the PD, the Finance Manager, and ECU Institutional Advancement to: 1) build and maintain donor databases, 2) develop relationships with businesses and industries in targeted counties, 3) identify other state and national organizations serving military youth and families that may be potential sources of new funding. Council members will meet in January of every year to review progress toward meeting performance measurements and identifying new funding sources. The Council will meet again in July to review information about the year's results and offer suggestions for modification for the coming year.

Project HEART has been able secure supporting real and in-kind dollars from the Provost's Office, the College of Education, ECU alumni, local businesses, and school and community partners. Our ability to secure funding and donations from multiple sources has enabled the Project to reduce the number of fund-raising activities needed to sustain the program.

Another way to sustain our program is through our volunteer recruitment efforts.

As previously stated, we expect to recruit 650 community volunteers. As we move forward with our volunteer efforts, we envision our community volunteers serving as volunteer leaders. By developing systems for volunteer recruitment and management--systems involving family resource personnel and services at military bases, other military organizations such as the VA and VFW, and community

## Narratives

organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs--the program will establish a model which can be sustained locally and replicated in other areas of the country.

c. Compliance and Accountability: Operation LINK will operate under two organizations: East Carolina University as the sub-grantee and CNCS as the funding agency. The university has an established system of checks and balances to ensure that any federally funded program on our campus meets the necessary fiscal guidelines and procedures. This fiscal oversight is important because Project HEART has been able to secure supporting real and in-kind dollars from several sources, as noted above. Each of these funding streams requires a separate account. The College of Education, Grants & Contracts Office, Sponsored Programs, and the Provost's Office must approve all decisions related to program and fiscal operating procedures. In 2011-12, East Carolina University successfully managed more than \$45 million dollars in federal grants and contracts for close to 500 awards.

To assure compliance with Corporation Policies and Procedures, the PD and program coordinators will meet regularly with all site coordinators and organizational administrators to discuss the mentoring program, the program performance measures, and the roles and responsibilities of the host site and the designated site coordinator. Program Coordinators will visit all sites monthly to ensure that: 1) Site Coordinators are providing support and supervision, and detecting and preventing prohibited activities, 2) mentors are working effectively with students, and 3) program performance measures are being met. If instances of noncompliance are identified during site visits, the program will work with the state Commission officers to resolve the issues within the Corporation Guidelines. Program Coordinators will send a weekly update to members and Site Coordinators via email and FAX, informing them of key dates, upcoming activities, and program issues related to the success of the project.

The Program Coordinators will collect formative and summative data via surveys and discussion groups from members, students served, parents, teachers, Site Coordinators, and community volunteers to ensure that we are making progress toward accomplishing our program performance measures. The data will include items related to concerns, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and suggested changes for improvement. The external evaluator will analyze the data; inform members, Site Coordinators, and other key stakeholders of results via progress reports and use the data to modify and improve the program.

Special Circumstances: N/A

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

## Narratives

a. Cost Effectiveness: The budget reflects expenditures in Sections I and II that are directly related to the delivery of services and aligned with the program narrative. Operation LINK has a new focus of working with family members of active duty military. Our mentoring program will operate afterschool in Craven, Cumberland, Onslow, and Wayne counties. The requested funds do not exceed the maximum cost per Member Service Year (MSY) for NC programs. Although our proposed budget requests slightly more funding than in the previous year, cost per Member Service Year (MSY) is very cost effective at \$13,160 and below the state MSY average of \$13,300.

The program represents a cost effective approach for addressing the community need(s) identified in the application. According to the National Military Family Association, approximately 80 percent of military children attend school in a civilian school district. The presence of a federal military activity in the district increases enrollment yet reduces the tax revenue to the schools by the removal of the military property from the overall tax base. This reduces the amount of money available to support after-school programs, strategies aimed at addressing the unique challenges to military children, as well as pushing the overall educational achievement of all students. We compared the cost-benefit of Operation LINK to other after-school programs in the area with the following findings:

- \* Operation LINK shows capability to support larger numbers of children with a lower cost per pupil expenditure--\$392/student for Operation LINK as compared to \$2,000/student for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
- \* Operation LINK incorporates active parental involvement in the model, increasing their participation in weekly learning activities with the expectation this will reduce some of the separation anxiety experienced by many military children during deployments.
- \* Operation Link expects volunteer and supervisory time to be generated valued at \$267,200, which will be added to existing resources available--resources to address the unique needs of these children at no direct added cost to the schools or the funding agency.

The amount of the investment in this proposed program represents only a fraction of the potential long-term benefit to the military children, their families, and society. The children and youth completing Operation LINK will be more resilient and connected to their families, schools, and community and they should exhibit fewer negative behaviors and mental health issues such as sadness and depression. Additionally, there is the expectation that participating students will become more interested in school motivated to succeed than their peers who did not participate in the program. USCG Commander Bryan Dailey from the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) noted that "the military is a reflection of society and the jobs that young people have entering the service are

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more technical and complex than ever. Having the opportunity....to challenge yourself .... will pay huge dividends as you move into the work force or seek higher education." These dividends, in the form of higher paying jobs, the potential for more students pursuing careers of high need to society, and the potential for greater career advancement, makes us more globally competitive as a state and nation.

Sources of Organizational Funding, including what percent the proposed AmeriCorps project represents--ECU and our community partners will provide the following support:

1) College of Education: \$6,000 in cash match and \$45,868 in in-kind match, and 2) Provost's Office/University Administrative Costs: \$9,000 cash match, \$1,365 in Unemployment Benefit contribution on personnel, and \$113,446 in-kind match of F&A waiver. The final budget represents 74% from CNCS and 26% from the Grantee and partners.

The applicant has received support from CNCS through state formula funding during the last five years. Funding supported a school-based tutoring program that has exceeded each performance measure, been in full compliance with all federal policies and procedures, and has been rated low-risk by the NC Commission for the entire period.

### b. Budget Adequacy

The budget is clear, reasonable, and aligned with the specific program activities for this project, including implementation of the CAMP Mentoring Program and the CS2N Robotics Environment. Personnel costs for salaries and benefits are \$236,288 from the grant and \$47,233 from the grantee. Member support costs that include training, educational supplies, robotics and related supplies, travel, gear, incentives, criminal history checks and FBI checks total \$181,003 from the grant. The program recruits 24 half-time at a cost of \$129,698 for living allowances, FICA, and unemployment contributions from the grant and \$15,000 from the grantee. The 150 MT-EAO members are high school seniors receiving no living allowance, yet their 300 hours of service permit them to mentor approximately 1,500 mentees. By employing this service model, the project multiplies the number of children effectively served by using MT-EAO members, at a cost significantly below the cost if all were served by half-time or full-time members (\$575,762 with HT and MT-EAO, compared with \$987,750 if all were half-time). Thus, the project believes the budget is adequate to support the program activities and desired outputs and outcomes.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

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### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

N/A

### Continuation Changes

N/A