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Executive Summary

The Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW) Veterans Coalition Outreach AmeriCorps Program (VCOAP) will place twenty full-time members in six Michigan urban areas (Flint/Saginaw, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids/Muskegon, Lansing/Mid-Michigan, and Marquette/Upper Peninsula) to connect military veterans and their families with services to reduce negative socio-economic consequences exacerbated by chronic diseases, substance abuse, and disabilities. Five full-time members will serve as regional contacts in each urban area to coordinate activities, recruit and manage volunteers, and to determine areas of need in partnership with veteran's service organizations (VSO). The remaining 15 full-time direct service members will provide information and outreach services in locations where veterans congregate and/or access services. They will refer veterans individually to service, and multiply their impact by educating VSO's, human service providers, and national service programs to utilize a simple 10-10 EZ Benefits Guide & Survey (10-10EZ) designed to assess veterans' status in order to better serve their day to day caseloads. This is a proposed three year project, with the first year beginning on November 1, 2013 and ending October 31, 2014. Twenty AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 200 community volunteers annually, focusing recruitment on veterans and family members of veterans to expand the use of the 10-10EZ to identify and serve veterans within the community. At the end of the one year program period, members will have provided information about a wide variety of veteran's resources and benefits to at least 15,000 veterans. In addition, at least 650 agencies, groups and organizations will be educated in using the 10/10 survey; at least 50% of those surveyed will report consistent use of the tool in order to increase referrals to necessary services and resources. At least 25 of those groups will be national service sites or teams. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Veterans Services. The CNCS investment requested is \$281,884 to be matched with over \$164,00 in cash, equipment, and services from Michigan funders.

Rationale and Approach

a. Compelling Community Need (the Problem)

The state of Michigan has the 11th largest veteran's population in the country; veterans make up 7.1% of its total population. Over half of these veterans range in age from 50 to 70, having served in Vietnam. Conversely, Michigan ranks 53rd, last behind every other state and territory, in the amount of total veterans benefits accessed. Contributing to that ranking, Michigan ranks 47th of 53 in accessing veteran's compensation and pension benefits; 31st of 53 in accessing medical benefits; and

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53rd of 53 in accessing educational and vocational rehabilitation. Moreover, a disproportionate number of military veterans experience negative socio-economic influenced conditions such as homelessness, hunger, unemployment, and un- or under-treated chronic diseases relative to the general population.

Even more of a concern is the fact that individuals defined as chronically homeless were the most likely to be veterans. Michigan's Governor Rick Snyder has identified unemployment, a prime factor in homelessness, as a critical issue. According to a December, 2011 Michigan Public Radio report, despite their skills and transferrable technical expertise, the 2010 unemployment rate of Michigan's Afghanistan and Iraq veterans was 29.4%, a drastic increase from 14% just one year prior. The rate is even higher for individuals who have recently returned to Michigan. This is in stark contrast to the 2010 national average of 11.5%. According to the Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness, 13% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Michigan are veterans, nearly double the proportion of veterans in the general population.

Resources, services, and benefits are available to reduce these issues, but in Michigan, they are not being accessed. According to Jason Allen, Director of the State of Michigan's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, this can frequently be attributed to lack of identification of individuals as veterans, especially those who are older; churches, schools, civic organization, and human service agencies often don't ask individuals if they are veterans. By not gathering this information, they are unable to steer individuals needing services and benefits to the most appropriate outlets for assistance. Governor Snyder has charged agencies with better connecting Michigan veterans with career opportunities, specifically identifying the Workforce Development Agency, Michigan Works! and the aforementioned Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to create a seamless delivery system for veteran's benefits and employment services that begins with identifying veterans.

In order to do this, the DMVA has developed the 10-10EZ, a brief, easy to administer assessment tool and guidance document. Currently, neither the infrastructure nor the "people power" exists to implement the 10-10EZ; thus, this tool has not yet generated results throughout Michigan communities. The MAUW Veterans Coalition Outreach AmeriCorps Program will deliver that people power through AmeriCorps members and recruited volunteers who will serve Michigan communities that are occupied by the highest concentration of veterans (68% live in 11 counties) as well as areas where need is most critical, such as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where regional unemployment for individuals returning from service is as high as 40%.

Michigan's veteran population has been selected for this program due to Michigan's critical need to

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provide better services to veterans and their families. As previously mentioned, Michigan ranks 53 out of 53 in this category. Moreover, the aforementioned partners who have been convened strategically possess the resources and expertise necessary to successfully engage Michigan's veteran population.

b. AmeriCorps Member Roles and Responsibilities (the Solution)

Twenty full-time members will plan, coordinate, facilitate, and provide outreach services and information about available benefits and resources for veterans and their families. Given the scope of the need to be addressed, all positions being requested are full-time. Members will educate communities about and train organizations to implement the 10-10EZ. As appropriate, members may implement the 10-10EZ with veterans and their families directly. Five full-time members will be placed strategically in geographic centers with high-density veterans populations as regional contacts: Detroit, the Flint/Saginaw/Bay area, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids and the Upper Peninsula. These members will focus on volunteer recruitment and training and establishing a network and database of community contacts within the veteran community in order to identify veterans. These members will serve mostly during typical business hours, liaising with staff at veterans' service organizations (VSOs), human service organizations, and national service programs. Regional contact members will each serve as a "hub" in the designated urban areas. They will liaison with VSOs, churches, schools, human service agencies, Centers for Independent Living, and various other partners that serve veterans. They will also serve as team leaders and facilitate effective and efficient communication among the team. This role will be carefully structured as a peer leader; members will not supervise other members. As part of the peer leadership role, they will develop and coordinate a schedule of activities in partnership with the community members in order to ensure that neither they nor volunteers duplicate existing efforts. Stationed capacity building members will meet with VSOs to identify locations and activities where veterans congregate. The program will train regional contact members in volunteer management and provide training to the community members. An additional role of each regional contact member will be to reach out to other national service programs operating in the same geographic area and provide training and resources related to veterans benefits. Regional contact members will recruit, train, and track volunteers, and will be responsible for gathering and reporting stories of program impact through interviews and observation.

The remaining 15 full-time field members will be assigned as follows: 3 Members in Flint/Saginaw area, 2 in Grand Rapids/Muskegon, 2 in the Upper Peninsula, 3 in Ann Arbor/SE Michigan area, and the remaining 5 in Detroit/SE Michigan area. Field members will attend events and meetings where

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veterans typically gather, coordinating outreach with information and leads provided from the regional contact members. Field members will develop networks within the veteran community and identify needs specific to their assigned communities. Activities for field members will include: identifying impediments to benefit access, the specific needs and precedence within each individual community and the best places to locate and provide outreach to the maximum number of veterans at a time. Field members will also be trained to enroll veterans into specific benefits by the program and will assist veterans in enrollment directly.

The following responsibilities will be shared among all 20 members: 1) to identify and help veterans navigate the system to access resources and benefits via outreach and utilization of the 10/10 EZ Survey; and 2) also distribute and teach volunteers and employers to utilize the 10/10 EZ Survey and the resulting information in order to insure that veterans access the resources and benefits they have earned. Members will identify personnel at the various locations they visit to provide information about the use of the 10/10 EZ. For example, if members provide an outreach session to a church study group, they might provide specific information about administering the survey to both the church's lead pastor, as well as recruit the group's leader or another participant to act as an embedded community volunteer with ongoing relationships who can continue to work to identify and assist veterans in the congregation. The 10-10 EZ Survey will be administered directly by members as appropriate. However, it is critical to the sustainability plan for Michigan's broader effort to serve veterans that members identify, train, and raise up key individuals who are already a part of the groups and organizations that they visit who will continue to serve beyond AmeriCorps support. Community volunteers who are already integral participants in local churches, civic organizations, and social groups will be identified, recruited and trained to utilize the survey when appropriate. Members will also work to identify nonprofits and agencies that are likely to provide services to veterans, and will provide the survey and applicable training to their personnel.

The Program Director will be placed in the Lansing/mid-Michigan area at the State of Michigan's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and will have one regional contact member co-located at this site. The Program Director will work with the Lansing member to serve as a liaison directly with DMVA staff. Part of the Program Director's role will be as "chief recorder," learning as much as possible from DMVA staff regarding the needs in various communities in order to increase outreach efforts, as well as to educate the public about what is being accomplished by the program. In addition, the Program Director will work with DMVA staff to assemble and distribute periodic electronic newsletters to members, site supervisors, and community volunteers to inform them of changes in

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benefits programs, and to provide educational materials regarding veterans services.

Organizational Capability

II. Organizational Capability. a. Organizational Background and Staffing.

Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW) is a leader in policy influence and capacity building to affect positive change in local communities. Founded as a 501(c)3 organization in 1947, MAUW's mission is to develop effective responses to current and emerging issues in local communities. The Association works directly with Michigan's 64 local United Ways which represent the largest network of non-governmental human service providers and funders in Michigan. Local United Ways are typically well-established community partners in the regions they serve and extend into every county of the state. They enjoy well-developed relationships with grassroots organizations and are working systemically under the United Way Worldwide 10-year goal to reduce the number of lower-income working families who are financially unstable. MAUW has successfully obtained and implemented the Community Resource Navigator Program in 2011 which developed an administrative and training mechanism for members. Within the first year of service this program exceeded outlined goals of organizations outreached, volunteer recruitment and client satisfaction. Currently, the Community Resource Navigator program is training and deploying the 2012-13 members and has made improvements to assure the second year of operation is more successful than the first. This program will provide the framework for the AmeriCorps requirements and, along with the collaboration with the Veterans Administration, will assure that the Veterans Outreach Program will fully equip its members for service.

MAUW has successfully managed public grants; examples include a \$200,000 Financial Assistance Award in 2010 for 2-1-1 from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, a \$100,000 grant from the State of Michigan for a 2-1-1 demonstration project FY 2007-08. That grant has been consistently renewed and increased to \$200,000 in FY 2008-09, \$500,000 in FY 2009-10 and \$550,000 for FY 2010-11. MAUW managed two grants from the Michigan's Office of Public Health Preparedness; a \$30,000 grant in 2004 and a \$42,000 grant in 2005. Currently, MAUW is managing a \$200,000 federal grant, Financial Assistance Award, for statewide 2-1-1 expansion from the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. Within the past eight years, MAUW has managed sizable grants from private foundations including the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Consumers Energy Foundation, Skillman Foundation and Steelcase Foundation. MAUW has received and managed Corporate grants by Ameritech and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan. MAUW is audited on a yearly basis by an

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external set of auditors, who provide reports to the Board of Directors. MAUW led the statewide development of Michigan's 2-1-1 system and oversees Michigan 2-1-1, the statewide entity providing governance, training and technical support for the state's 2-1-1 system. In addition to working through Michigan's network of local United Ways and 2-1-1, MAUW helps coordinate and mobilize the human service sector through participation in many statewide coalitions such as: Michigan's Voices for Action Poverty Reduction Initiative, Michigan Asset Building Policy Project, Michigan EITC Coalition, Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, The Campaign to End Homelessness, Foreclosure Prevention Taskforce, Michigan Early Childhood Corporation (ECIC), Michigan Coalition for Children and Families and Michigan's CHIP Coalition. In its public policy work, MAUW advocates with partner networks for improved community conditions in the areas of education, income and health.

MAUW is led by a fifteen-member Board of Directors, comprised of business, University, philanthropic and United Way leaders from across the state. Four committees comprised of statewide United Way leadership report to the Board. The AmeriCorps Community Navigator program is also housed at MAUW and fits under the Public Policy Committee which meets quarterly. It is also supported by the Financial Stability Partnership (FSP) Learning Circle; both the Public Policy Committee and FSP Learning Circle are staffed by Policy Director, Nancy Lindman. Lindman reports to CEO and President, Scott Dzurka who reports to the Board of Directors

b. Sustainability

The program is designed to be sustainable in three specific ways. First, members will educate a wide and diverse set of community entities in order to spread the use of the 10/10 Survey and to educate them on available veterans' benefits and how to make referrals. Procedures to follow-up with these organizations after the initial training in order to assess and ensure these new habits will help to make these practices sustainable. Secondly, members will identify individuals already embedded in these community organizations to serve as ongoing volunteers, and to continue to use the resources and tools available long after members have completed their service, and the program has moved to different communities. Finally, by comprehensively educating national service programs of all types, the assessment tools and referral resources can continue to be made available to a wide range of our state's most underserved and at-risk individuals. Members will literally infiltrate and create relationships with a full range of community groups and human service entities, as well as veteran's services organizations. This, in partnership with the DMVA which is working to create partnerships

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with large nonprofits and corporations to increase employment opportunities, will ensure that the efficacy of this program's activities is widespread knowledge. As mentioned, the community stakeholders and partners for this program are widespread and diverse. In addition to the DMVA and the Coalition, additional stakeholders are the State of Michigan itself as a result of veterans' services leading to increased unemployment being made a priority. Community entities--anywhere veterans congregate for personal, social, or assistance--are critical partners as the places where outreach will occur. Other nonprofits such as the Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, non-governmental Veteran's Centers, Centers for Independent Living, and any health-care providing entity can and likely will be impacted by member services. Finally, state entities such as the Department of Human Services will have a stake in the program, especially as veterans are able to transition from Medicaid/Medicare into the VA Health System. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation will have a vested interest in program impacts, as employment rates among such a large portion of the population affects the overall economic environment. Key funders have also been identified to support this program. In addition to addressing the federal (CNCS) priority of serving and engaging veterans, local funders such as the DTE Energy Foundation, the Council of Michigan Foundation, and MASCO have been informed of this application and have verbally committed to providing significant support in terms of cash and resources. For the members placed in the Flint/Saginaw area, upon CNCS approval program staff will seek match funding from the newly established Flint National Service Accelerator Initiative, an organization specifically working to support a growing number of national service participants in their under-represented area. The DMVA, Coalition Advisory Services Directors, and Michigan's AmeriCorps state-level staff worked together to develop and plan the program model, paying particular attention to state priorities as well as the existing community needs and the needs of the referenced stakeholders. Fundraising for this program has already been successful. DTE, Wal-Mart, and Consumers Energy committed funding in excess of \$100,000. Continued and future fundraising will be conducted primarily by the Council of Michigan Foundations. Created in 1972 at the request of grant-making organizations around Michigan, CMF was formed to represent foundation interests with state and federal officials at a time when private philanthropy was under intense scrutiny by Congress, and in response to the 1969 Congressional hearings on private foundations. Over its 35 year history, CMF has grown to become the nation's largest regional association of grant-makers, serving more than 350 organizational members - family foundations, corporate foundations and giving programs, independent and community foundations, and public charities of all sizes. CMF members represent 88% of the

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organized philanthropic assets in the state of Michigan.

c. Compliance and Accountability

The identified program director will be responsible for ensuring that applicable site staff and members are fully educated in the applicable AmeriCorps rules and regulations. The program model has provided for a high level of in-person and remote communication with sites and members. Weekly team meetings, quarterly all-team meetings, and frequent site visits, paired with frequent reflections and the team leader structure will allow staff to observe and rectify problems as they occur. The program director will use a formal assessment tool at in-person site visits with members and site supervisors individually to monitor compliance with grant provisions and AmeriCorps requirements. MAUW and DMVA are both statewide entities, which provide a strong infrastructure for member placement and support, as well as accountability and compliance. Host sites will be selected in part because of their demonstrated ability to successfully host and provide daily supervision to AmeriCorps members. United Way affiliates, VSO affiliates, and other affiliate community groups have already been identified as committed host sites. At least one compliance-focused site visit will be conducted at each site within the first 6 months of each program year by the Program Director. A formal assessment tool will be used in interviews with site supervisors and members. The program director will review each member's position description to monitor member activities, which will include a review of each prohibited activity. This structure and timeline for monitoring will allow the program to be very proactive in detection, especially in the early months of each program year. Formal tools for monitoring will be submitted to the MCSC for review and approval before they are used on site visits. In addition to site visits, weekly regional meetings and monthly all-project calls will allow the program director to detect any compliance issues that may arise. If compliance issues are discovered, the program director will work directly with the MCSC AmeriCorps program officer to resolve them. Program staff have already developed strong working relationships with commission staff. For member accountability, a formal plan will be laid out in the member agreement. For site accountability, a formal site agreement/MOU will be developed and implemented; per MCSC requirements, MCSC program officers will review site and member agreements to ensure compliance. If a compliance issue is detected, the program director will report to the immediate supervisor as well as the MCSC program officer immediately. Per the site agreement, sites will be made aware that compliance issues can result in the suspension and/or termination of placement. Per the member agreement, members will be made aware of prohibited activities and will be made aware that engaging in them can result in suspension and/or termination of placement, as well as the zeroing out

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of service hours. Program staff will audit member files within the first 30 days of member service to ensure compliance, utilizing the MCSC member file checklist. This will include a review of the My AmeriCorps Portal to ensure enrollments are complete within the 30-day compliance window. Additionally, a formal structure that will allow members to report any compliance issues or concerns will be built into the program's member reporting and reflection logs which will provide a safe place for members to engage program staff. At the program level, program staff will cooperate fully with MCSC monitoring activities, as well as any and all recommendations for continuous improvement and/or corrective action that may be required.

g. Operating Sites and Member Service Sites. Sites will be identified through a strategic and competitive process. Sites will be selected from existing networks of VSOs, United Way affiliates, and community organizations who have experience serving veterans. All selected host sites will have a previous affiliation/working relationship with the DMVA, the Veteran's Coalition, and or MAUW to ensure positive and successful member experiences. Sites will be selected due to current knowledge and relationship to Veteran organizations and their demonstration of quality of leadership, innovation, community involvement, and potential for sustainability. These sites have been selected in order to serve the most concentrated numbers of veterans needing the highest level of services, and to be placed with active members of the Veterans Service Coalition. Each host site will enter into formal Memorandum of Understanding establishing relationships that ensure full participation in this project, which has as its primary purpose to engage each other in providing services and outreach to veterans, their families, and survivors. Given the successful fundraising efforts of the program, a funding relationship with the host sites does not currently exist for this program. Depending on future fundraising efforts, the program may ask sites to contribute a cost share in future years. 1 regional contact member and 6 field members will be placed in southeastern Michigan to serve Wayne and Macomb counties. 1 regional contact and 4 field members will be placed in Grand Rapids, to serve Grand Rapids and Muskegon. 1 regional contact and 1 field member will be placed in the Saginaw/Flint area to serve Flint/Saginaw area. 1 regional contact member and 2 field members will be placed in the Ann Arbor/SE Michigan Area. 1 regional contact member and 2 field members will be placed in the Upper Peninsula. Finally, one member will be placed in mid-Michigan/Capital region at the DMVA.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

III. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy. a. Cost effectiveness.

The applicant respectfully requests \$281,884 in CNCS funding to create the Michigan Association of

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United Ways (MAUW) Veterans Benefits Access, AmeriCorps Program, representing only 63% of the total budget. The program addresses a key CNCS priority area, and requests \$14,094 per 20 member service years and below our state maximum of \$14,100 per MSY. Significant local funding is being committed to match the federal dollars, well above the required 24% minimum and 37%. DTE Energy Foundation, the Council of Michigan Foundation, and MASCO have been informed of this application and have verbally committed to providing significant support in terms of cash and resources. DTE alone has committed \$50,000 in cash as well as the use of two 16-passenger vans. For the members placed in the Flint/Saginaw area, upon CNCS approval program staff will seek match funding from the newly established Flint National Service Accelerator Initiative, an organization specifically working to support a growing number of national service participants in their under-represented area. In addition to the cash commitments, a great deal of local in-kind resources will be leveraged for this program that is not reflected in the budget narrative. Staff of the Veterans Service Organizations, local organizations and the DMVA participation in the Coalition will provide expertise, training resources, and supervisory time for members. Host sites will also provide space, office supplies, computer/telephone resources, and other items needed for members to be able to provide approved services. Finally, MAUW staff will assume bookkeeping and administrative/program assistant duties in order to augment the full-time program director. Every effort has been made to ensure that costs are reasonable, and the program is fiscally efficient. In-kind contribution commitment from site hosts have allowed us to maintain efficiency, budgeting only for the bare-bone necessities. Due to the local funding support already committed, salaries for staffing have been set at a level that should be attractive to highly qualified individuals. Both the program model and the budget have been developed in order to implement an efficient and effective national service program. As stated, the infrastructure and services that this program will create does not currently exist. All of the services that members will provide will be unique and unduplicated by existing organizations. While there is a statewide coalition committed to serving benefits, these organizations do not have the “people power” to address the scope of the problem. AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they will mobilize will provide unduplicated services that are not currently being provided. The 10-10EZ has been developed and is ready for use, but it has not yet been implemented. Moreover, in the targeted communities, the capacity to educate about and enroll veterans and families in their eligible benefits does not exist. This program will provide the additional human resources and compensation over and above the capacity of the VSOs and other partner organizations.

c. Evidence-Based Approach

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This program's design, including the interventions to be delivered by members and volunteers, has been modeled after the Washington Vet Corps (WVC), which seeks to provide support, resources, and information to veterans as they transition into civilian life. WVC is a relatively young program, inaugurated in 2009, but it has produced immediate results. In its first year of operation, 46 AmeriCorps members, all of whom were veterans, helped over 3,000 veterans access benefits related to the G.I. Bill and over 300 veterans access other services after discharge from service. 800 community volunteers were recruited to expand the programs reach in its first two years of operation. During year 2 of the WVC, family members and spouses of veterans were recruited and placed as members.

Several best practices that the successful WVC has published to the National Service Knowledge Network will be utilized by the VCOAP. According to Jason Allen, Director of the Michigan DMVA, veterans respond best to other veterans, and the early success of the WVC supports this. Therefore, the VCOAP will recruit veterans, the spouses of veterans, and family members of veterans as AmeriCorps members. During the first year of the program, at least 50% (or 10 full-time) of members will be recruited from this population. The program's goal will be that 75% of its members will be veterans or family members of veterans by year 3 of the program.

Second, the VCOAP will seek to create a statewide network and database of community organizations to serve veterans, and members will provide training and resources to these organizations. The WVC indicates that its "vet clubs" which were started on college campuses have been critical to its ability to identify and reach veterans. Similarly, the establishment of strong partnerships within communities will be critical to the success of the VCOAP. The VCOAP proposes establishing partnerships similar to the "vet clubs," but will utilize primarily VSOs and other community organizations rather than higher education institutions exclusively. This choice was made strategically given that the makeup of the veteran's service coalition consists primarily of these entities. As previously mentioned, by placing them in locations where veterans congregate and/or in organizations that intentionally engage veterans, members will have increased access to the veteran population which will increase the likelihood of identifying and providing services to more veterans.

Third, the WVC has successfully engaged community volunteers, which enlarges the reach of the program as a whole. The VCOAP will recruit at least 200 community volunteers annually (600 over 3 years) and train them to serve within community organizations where they will identify and refer veterans to appropriate services.

In addition to being modeled after the WVC, key stakeholders were convened to identify needs and

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solutions that are unique to Michigan and thus may not be addressed by existing national service programming in the country. In Michigan, a key barrier to serving veterans is identifying who they are, where they live, and where they gather. VSOs and other community organizations have not made it part of their intake protocols to inquire whether or not individuals have served in the military. As a result, veterans are processed through existing systems without ever being identified as a veteran and thus never considered eligible for certain benefits and services. Simply identifying which Michiganders are veterans and referring those individuals can have dramatic ripple effects for veterans and will be the first step in all of the program's efforts. For example, 82% of veterans who gain access to health insurance eventually get access to their previously un-accessed VA pensions. Thus, while the VCOAP is not a direct replication of the WVC, several best practices that enabled the WVC's success apply broadly to national service programs serving veterans, and will enable the success of the VCOAP. Veterans, their spouses, and their family members as AmeriCorps members will be serving other veterans, which will build trust between the parties; anecdotally, DMVA staff, including Director Jason Allen, and other members of the Veterans Coalition know that veterans are much more likely to respond to other veterans, thus increasing the program's ability to identify veterans. Members will engage veterans where veterans are already congregating, which will facilitate the largest possible number of veterans being reached, as well as deepen the sense of trust by meeting veterans on their own terms. Finally, members will recruit and train community volunteers, many of whom will be veterans or their family members, to engage veterans with the same trust-building approach as the members themselves, exponentially increasing the program's reach.

Research has shown that linking veterans to benefits upon their return and reintegration into civilian life has a dramatic impact on the overall quality of life of the veteran. Linking veterans to healthcare specifically helps address many of the mental health issues that can otherwise lead to employability and homelessness. Forty percent of reservists returning from Iraq screened positive for at least one mental health problem during the first six months post-deployment, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, nearly 200,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and well over 400,000 are at risk of experiencing homelessness over the course of a year. By addressing the healthcare aspect of veteran benefits, this program has the potential to addressing the mental health components that often lead to larger more exacerbated problems for the veteran, including lack of employment, decreased income and homelessness. Veterans who otherwise will not know about veteran benefits will have the opportunity to get more information, find and talk through issues with the right people and access a wide range of

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benefits that only they are eligible for. The return on the investment of this program has the potential to be life changing, both in addressing current individual situations and preventing new difficulties and impairments for the veteran.

By the end of the three-year grant cycle, the program will have achieved significant, measurable impact in Michigan communities. Members and trained community volunteers will reach at least 15,000 veterans with a wide variety of resources and information related to veterans benefits through the 10-10EZ, anticipating nearly half of the veterans reached will enroll and utilize a previously unused benefit. Additionally, at least 650 organizations will be educated in how to use the 10-10EZ; and, at least 50% of these organizations will report having used the survey with veterans. At least 25 of these organizations will be national service sites, teams, or programs. Performance measure data collection will be overseen by the Program Director, who will utilize OnCorps, the reporting and data collection system provided to all Michigan's AmeriCorps Programs by the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC). AmeriCorps members will be trained how to track interactions with volunteers and veterans using this online system, as well as simpler methods such as sign-in sheets for outreach and community events. AmeriCorps members will also be required to collect and report "great stories," which are testimonials that demonstrate the impact of the program on a personal level. Members will be trained to interview veterans who have been served by the program so that both qualitative and quantitative data are collected and reported. The program will report to the MCSC on a quarterly basis. The DMVA will lead annual reporting to key stakeholders, including the statewide Veterans' Coalition, and other public and private entities with a vested interest in serving veterans. Performance targets were determined by convening the key strategic partners (DMVA, MAUW, Veterans' Coalition) and conducting a comprehensive assessment of the existing statewide infrastructure and resources for serving veterans. Additionally, the available performance data from the WVC was taken into consideration. Given that this is a new project, performance targets will be assessed each quarter during the reporting process. Should targets need to be adjusted, the program will submit changes for approval to MCSC and CNCS in its continuation application(s).

Currently, the VCOAP is in its first year of programming with 14 full-time member slots. At the time of writing this application, host sites have been identified for all 14 members, and member recruitment is in process. However, there is not currently any performance data to report, as members will not begin their service until the middle of February 2013.

d. Member Recruitment

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Member selection, training, and supervision will be critically important in making this program successful. Because members will be interacting with a wide variety of community groups, agencies, and organizations, it will be most efficient to recruit and select members who are familiar with the community to be served, especially for the regional contact members. Thus, recruitment will begin in each target community. Program staff will work with host sites in each community to develop position descriptions for posting in a wide variety of formats, including social media, online and newspaper classifieds, local job boards, and any other available community resources. Special emphasis will be placed on utilizing resources from the VSOs in order to generate quality applications from veterans and families. Local host site staff will assist with recruitment, but the Program Director will ultimately be responsible for all final interviews and selections. The Program Director will also utilize the My AmeriCorps Portal for recruitment; however, the primary focus of recruitment efforts will be on local resources so that high numbers of applications from local communities will be generated. Selected host sites and the statewide VSOs have extensive experience working with veterans and will contribute years of expertise and knowledge that will benefit the recruitment process. In addition, program staff will seek to recruit members who are veterans themselves, family members of veterans, or individuals who have demonstrated a strong understanding of and commitment to addressing the issues faced by veterans. These characteristics may have been developed as a result of being a military family member, or through past work or volunteer experience with veterans' affairs. For regional contact members serving as team-leaders, prior national service or extensive volunteer experience will be a desirable asset. It is expected that the most successful candidates will have at least an associate's degree. Inclusive recruitment practices will be embedded in the entire recruitment process. In addition to recruiting veterans as an underrepresented population, the program is fully committed and expects to be working with older individuals, as well as individuals with disabilities, especially as these characteristics may be among veterans who are recruited and placed as members, as well as volunteers. All candidates will undergo the CNCS-mandated criminal history, national sex offender, Fingerprinting and State of Michigan DHS Registry checks.

e. Member Training

Program staff will provide an intensive 2.5-day orientation at the beginning of service. The program has received commitments from MCSC staff to provide an ¿AmeriCorps 101¿ orientation that will introduce members national service broadly, and AmeriCorps specifically. Given the statewide nature

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of the project, orientation to the placement site and the community will occur at the site level. The Program Director will provide sites with an orientation checklist that must be completed by the member and site supervisor within the first 15 days of service; the checklist will be submitted to the Program Director for review. Members who are already involved in the local community will also be tapped to assist with local acclamation. Members will meet at least weekly within their regions to problem-solve, which will further contribute community acclamation. Additionally, the Program Director will conduct at least one site visit to each site during the first 3 months. Members will receive initial skill-based training during orientation. Members will learn how to effectively and efficiently utilize outreach tools, including but not limited to; use of social media outlets, use of call lists, mailings, and administering surveys. Members will learn to record and compile data, as related to outreach efforts, and will also learn how to utilize reporting software; including the OnCorps online reporting tool. Members will develop and refine skills in volunteer recruitment and will also receive training in managing volunteers; including undergoing classes pertaining to Equal opportunity, sexual harassment and drug free working environments.

Next, members will learn about the organizations involved in the Veterans Service Coalition, and the systems for accessing resources and benefits. Topics will include (but are not limited to): an overview of the VA; how the members of the VSC and other partners work together; veteran's healthcare benefits and the claims process; VA forms; veteran's pensions and how they operate; National Guard Benefits provisions; survivor's benefits; and resources for educational and vocational rehabilitation services. . An overview of issues such as presumptive conditions, post-traumatic stress disorder and sexual trauma, and recognizing key indicators (red flags) of such conditions will be provided. A variety of training methods will be employed, such as lecture, sharing of stories among members, role-playing, and analysis of case studies will be utilized in order to keep members engaged and to increase learning. Throughout the orientation, teambuilding activities and relevant icebreakers will be utilized in order to help all members become acquainted and to start to develop a sense of team.

Members will be trained on prohibited activities during initial orientation. Prohibited activities will be listed in detail in the member agreement. During site visits, the Program Director will conduct structured interviews, which will include monitoring of prohibited activities at both the supervisor and member level. Volunteers generated by this program will be recruited and trained to play very specific roles. By program design, none of these roles will infringe upon prohibited activities. Additionally, members will utilize volunteer position descriptions that list prohibited activities for members and volunteers. Ongoing training will occur at the site and project-wide level. Supervisors will be

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encouraged to seek out professional development opportunities for members, and will be trained to monitor member performance and to identify training needs. The program director will implement an annual training calendar. During the first quarter of member service, meetings will focus on "debriefing" after the events of the previous week, and assessing where members need more practice and training in order to become both more comfortable in outreach efforts and more able to provide services. The program director will convene monthly project-wide conference calls/webinars in order to keep members connected and to convey information. A team listserv or email group will be maintained for similar purposes. All-team meetings will be convened on a quarterly basis, in order to provide perspectives of the operations of VSOs / host sites in different geographic areas. Diversity in the classroom has been proven to increase learning; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that diversity in the AmeriCorps team setting can increase not only learning but the richness of the AmeriCorps experience. In building a diverse team, including veterans and others from underrepresented populations, the program director and site supervisors will be intentional about assessing the different needs that members bring to the corps, and work to meet these needs on a continuous basis.

f. Member Supervision

The proposed program has been structured to provide a full range of supervisory and peer support for members. The program director will be located in the Lansing area and will travel to other regions regularly; he/she will also utilize technology, such as, web-based video conferencing, telephone conferencing and social media outlets, in order to provide communication and connection to the program. Members will be assigned to host sites in each region and will spend time at VSOs who are part of the Veterans Service Coalition. A site supervisor will be selected at each site to provide guidance, mentoring, and oversight for the members. Members will meet with the site supervisor on a weekly basis to gain information and insight into community events that may hold potential outreach benefits, as well as, formulate outreach objectives and courses of action. Site supervisors will assist members on a weekly basis should concerns or professional development issues need to be addressed. Additionally, the program director will maintain weekly (minimum) communication with all of the service areas served to ensure that members feel well supervised, and will perform quarterly in-person site visits to each site. Finally, the regional contact members, while not acting in a supervisory role, will serve as team leaders. As peers, there may be times when they are the first people sought out by community members needing assistance or coaching, especially in cases of interpersonal conflict. Anecdotal evidence from the MCSC and its AmeriCorps subgrantees shows that member attrition can

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often be attributed to problems at the site level, frequently between members and site supervisors. The program will run a strategic site selection process, and will place members at sites that best demonstrate the ability to utilize and supervise members to work toward the overall goals of the approved grant application. With the understanding that assignment as a site supervisor is typically an additional job responsibility assigned to a staff member, the program director will provide training at the beginning of each program year in the applicable policies of AmeriCorps (with an emphasis on understanding prohibited activities), as well as the approved grant activities.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

g. Member Experience. This program has been designed to provide a powerful service experience for AmeriCorps members as they are making a vital impact on their communities. First, members will receive comprehensive training on circumstances faced by our military personnel, and the resources and services that are available for those individuals. The program model provides an opportunity for individuals who have a strong connection to veterans issues, garnered from their own experiences or those of friends and family, to continue to give back by making positive changes in the lives of veterans. The program model combines this training with capacity building, infrastructure development, volunteer recruitment and management, and direct service, providing members with a 360 degree experience that will allow them to develop and hone a wide variety of skills, including networking, public speaking, and interpersonal communications. By providing in-person services at diverse organizations, events, and groups spanning the community, community recognition of the AmeriCorps brand will increase, and members will have the opportunity to become familiar with entities with which they may wish to remain engaged in in the future. AmeriCorps members working through MAUW on the Veterans program will also be connected with the other AmeriCorps programs run through MAUW, including the Michigan Benefits Access AmeriCorps program. This connection to additional AmeriCorps members will help to unite the members and allow them share their AmeriCorps experience with each other and learn different approaches, community impacts, and add quality to their overall experience. Members will share their experience on officially on a monthly basis with one another, as well as, with other program members and also through OnCorps, the online program management system utilized in Michigan, this program provides easy-to-use reporting modules that can be used in part to facilitate reflection. In addition, monthly conference calls between the members, facilitated by the program director will lead to in-depth reflection on their service and their impact. To that end, each month the Program Director will provide a reflection question for all members, and they will be required to enter their reflections in OnCorps. In addition,

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the team leaders will help to facilitate reflections during regional and statewide meetings. Because there is a clear potential for high stress situations, it will be important that the Program Director carefully monitor reflection activities, and use information gleaned to provide additional training, mentoring, and guidance for members, either directly or through site supervisors and the team leaders. During orientation, an important training module will be "AmeriCorps 101." Members will learn about the structure and history of AmeriCorps and national service. More importantly, members will learn how to talk about AmeriCorps appropriately, and will practice that in a team setting. They will develop "elevator speeches" with the help of Program Staff. They will learn how to best write their accomplishments for reporting purposes, and how to appropriately conduct themselves while in the role of AmeriCorps members. Members will be provided with "AmeriCorps gear," that will include AmeriCorps-branded items for members to wear and display while on service. In addition, all sites will be provided AmeriCorps signage. Veterans, and their families, have already made the ultimate commitment to service. For those who wish to continue to serve, AmeriCorps will be a natural outlet to do so, either as a member or as a community volunteer. VCOAP will connect with other national service programs at the local, regional, and statewide level. Educating other national service programs on veterans benefits is built into program design. At the regional level, members will use Michigan's National Service Directory, an online system that contains national service postings in Michigan, to connect with other members. Members will also participate in at least one statewide member even sponsored by the MCSC.

In addition to the multiplier effect that it will have is to help to foster a sense of connection and identity with the AmeriCorps brand, by demonstrating, on a daily basis, the sheer scope and breadth of AmeriCorps and what it is accomplishing in our state.

h. Volunteer Generation In order to broaden the reach of the program and to create sustainability, the program will leverage and train community volunteers to serve alongside members. Members will identify, recruit, train, and manage individuals who are personally invested and/or engaged in these entities (especially those who have been long-term participants), who are willing to take up the charge of advancing the utilization of the 10-10EZ to assess veterans' needs and to help them navigate the system. Volunteers will address the community need by directly engaging veterans, utilizing the 10-10EZ with veterans, and referring veterans to appropriate resources when they cannot assist veterans themselves. By the end of the first program year, at least 200 individuals will be identified as community volunteers, trained on use of the Survey, and will be placed on an electronic newsletter distribution list to receive periodic updates regarding survey use and veterans benefits and resources.

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AmeriCorps members themselves will have the opportunity to engage in a full range of volunteer recruitment and management activities. Both types of member slots will work to identify and recruit volunteers in the communities served, and will provide training and guidance (with supervisor oversight). They will also follow-up with designated volunteers at least monthly in order to keep them engaged and informed. Members will be trained in AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and the Program Director will monitor compliance via in-person site visits and weekly and monthly communication. The program has been designed so that volunteers will be recruited for roles that are in compliance with AmeriCorps guidelines; the proposed volunteer activities do not infringe on any prohibited activities. Additionally, members will provide volunteers with position descriptions that have been approved by program staff that will detail which activities are allowable and prohibited.

i. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: The legal applicant for the proposed program, the Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW) has a history of commitment to national service programs. Currently, MAUW hosts two AmeriCorps programs, AmeriCorps Community Navigators and the Veterans Coalition Outreach AmeriCorps Program. Both programs provide resources and guidance on how to self-identify as AmeriCorps placement sites. Site supervisors are trained on how to present AmeriCorps to their communities during supervisor orientation, sites are provided with AmeriCorps signage, and host sites who utilize social media will be given a toolkit to support featuring the VCOAP via Twitter, Facebook, etc. MAUW also maintains an active presence on social media, and AmeriCorps member projects have been promoted. At orientation, members will be provided with a standard gear package that will include at minimum an AmeriCorps t-shirt and pin/lanyard that will allow them to self-identify as AmeriCorps while on service at all times.

Amendment Justification

N/A.

Clarification Summary

N/A.

Continuation Changes

N/A.