

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Bonner AmeriCorps Program, a collaborative effort of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) and the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation, leverages the talents of college students, the resources of institutions of higher education, and the expertise of nonprofit organizations to address critical community issues using evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions. Working collaboratively with campuses and their nonprofit partners in 19 states, we seek to identify the most pressing needs within the targeted communities. Our program recruits and supports economically disadvantaged college students to serve as AmeriCorps members, generally in site-based teams and as part of a four-year developmental program. We are also increasing our efforts to engage veterans enrolled at our campuses in AmeriCorps and other service opportunities. Each year in the 2013-16 grant cycle, more than 1,000 Bonner AmeriCorps members will concentrate their efforts on providing services to address the capacity building needs of our partners in the areas of: a) Disaster Services, b) Economic Opportunity, c) Education, d) Environmental Stewardship, e) Healthy Futures, and/or f) Veterans and Military Families, especially related to volunteer recruitment and management. Members will also provide direct service in the area of education. By the end of the three year project period of 10/6/13-10/5/16, we anticipate that Bonner AmeriCorps members will manage 13,500 volunteers and implement effective volunteer management practices at 600 nonprofit organizations. Additionally, 900 economically disadvantaged youth will demonstrate increased levels of academic engagement. The Corporation's annual investment of \$239,816 will be matched with nearly \$2.58 million provided by TCNJ, the Bonner Foundation, and campus programs.

## Rationale and Approach

A. Need: Bonner AmeriCorps members will focus on addressing the capacity building needs of partner agencies with an emphasis on volunteer recruitment and management, as well as on developing new or enhancing existing programs. Members will also serve in after-school programs with the goal of increasing academic engagement among youth. We selected these focus areas after reviewing the Corporation's strategic plan, consulting with our campus and nonprofit partners, and reviewing relevant data sources. Space limitations prevent us from profiling all of the communities in which Members serve; thus below is a sampling of the need nationally and in several specific communities.

[1] Capacity Building: Our nonprofit partners continue to experience decreases in funding support while at the same time, demand for services is increasing. In its 2012 State of the Sector Survey, the Nonprofit Finance Fund concludes that nationally, "rising service demand is overwhelming a sector

## Narratives

still coping with a brittle economy and a barrage of funding cuts." [1] 85% of nonprofit organizations surveyed reported increased demand for services and 48% of respondents were unable to meet the demand for services in 2011. [2] State level data reveals similar trends. For example, in New Jersey, a 2012 survey conducted by the Center for Nonprofits found that "nearly three-quarters of responding organizations reported that demand for services had increased during the past year." [3] 37% reported their total funding decreased in 2011. [4]

Nonprofit agencies are responding to decreased funding and increased demand, in part, by strengthening efforts to build their base of volunteer support. 44% of organizations responding to the Nonprofit Finance Fund survey planned to rely more on volunteers in 2012. [5] Volunteers fill essential roles within the nonprofit sector as organizations struggle to offer enhanced services with flat and oftentimes, deflated budgets. The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that in 2011, the national volunteer rate was 26.8%. [6] The volunteer rate in 12 of the 19 states in which Bonner AmeriCorps members serve fell below the national average in 2011. [7]

Rising demand for services is requiring nonprofit agencies to develop new or enhance existing programming to meet critical community needs. In doing so, it is imperative for organizations to implement evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions to more effectively and efficiently deliver services.

[2] Education: The challenges confronting young people in the United States continue to mount, especially in light of continued economic difficulties. Serious issues related to poverty hinder the ability of youth to succeed academically. Nationally, the number of children living in poverty rose 30% to 15.7 million from 2000 to 2010. [8] Studies conducted by the RAND Corporation found that "the most important factors associated with the educational achievement of children are not race, ethnicity, or immigrant status." [9] The most critical are, in fact, socioeconomic factors including "parental education levels, neighborhood poverty, parental occupational status, and family income." [10]

The poverty rate in many of the communities served by Bonner AmeriCorps members exceeds the national average of 15%. [11] Given the elevated levels of poverty and its negative effects on academic success, youth in grades K-12 are in need of supportive services designed to increase academic engagement. Measures of academic engagement include increased school attendance, completion of assignments, class participation, and educational aspirations. We highlight several targeted communities below:

> Members at Carson Newman College serve youth living in Jefferson County, Tennessee, where 25% of children live in poverty. [12] The TN Department of Education reports that 65% of

## Narratives

economically-challenged school aged children in Jefferson County are not proficient in math for their grade level.[13]

> In the state of Kentucky, 27% of children live in poverty.[14] In Knox County, Members at Union College serve a population where 59% of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch.[15]

> In Los Angeles, California, home to the Bonner AmeriCorps Program at Cal State LA, 28% of children live in poverty and according to the CA Department of Education, one in five teens were high school dropouts in 2011.[16][17]

> Members enrolled at Rider University serve youth living in Trenton, NJ, a municipality in which 26% of residents live in poverty.[18] The NJ Department of Education reports that 71% of third grade students in the Trenton school district are not proficient in language arts literacy.[19]

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

[1] Capacity Building: In "Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations," the Urban Institute concludes that "at least six in ten charities indicate that their volunteers provide substantial cost savings and greatly increase the quality of services or program provided, public support for their programs, and the level of services they can provide." [20] Bonner AmeriCorps members (often working in site-based teams of three or more) play an essential role in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers at our partner sites. Volunteers serve in a variety of capacities related to the Corporation's focus areas. Sample activities include conducting financial literacy classes for low income community members and mentoring youth.

Specific Member duties related to volunteer recruitment and management include, but are not limited to: a) developing volunteer recruitment materials and campaigns, b) providing volunteers with necessary training, and c) organizing recognition events. Additionally, Members will implement volunteer management practices that "maximize the capacity of volunteers to have an impact on behalf of the organization." [21]. The Urban Institute study identifies nine effective volunteer management practices that research literature shows are best practices: a) regular supervision and communication with volunteers, b) liability coverage or insurance protection for volunteers, c) regular collection of information on volunteer numbers and hours, d) screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers, e) written policies and job descriptions for volunteer involvement, f) recognition activities, g) annual measurement of the impacts of volunteers, h) training and professional development opportunities for volunteers, and i) training for paid staff in working with volunteers.[22]

Members will also assist our nonprofit partners with developing new or enhancing existing programming, thus enabling our partners to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and reach of their

## Narratives

services. Members will accomplish this through their volunteer management efforts and implementing evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions. Leveraging the resources available on their campuses, Members will implement evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions. Our connection to institutions of higher education allows Members and Site Supervisors (staff of service site) to work collaboratively with faculty trained in evidence-based/evidence-informed practices.

[2] Education: Bonner AmeriCorps members will serve with after-school programs with the goal of increasing academic engagement among students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Members will serve with programs in which the majority of students meet the Corporation's definition of economically disadvantaged or having special or exceptional needs.

Members serving in after-school programs will work with youth, engaging them in a variety of activities designed to increase measures of academic engagement described above. Members will work with agency staff to support an environment in which school attendance is encouraged. They will implement a number of best practices identified by the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children including: a) Creating an environment where youth feel welcome and successful, b) Talking with youth and their parents about why youth were absent from school with a focus on helping families overcome barriers to school attendance, c) Rewarding and recognizing good attendance rather than solely perfect attendance.[23] Members will also provide youth with individualized assistance to help them complete their assignments. Oftentimes, youth may not finish their assignments because they do not understand the concepts needed to complete them. Bonner AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they recruit will provide valuable assistance by helping students comprehend difficult concepts and motivating them to complete assignments. Members will also engage students in service-learning projects and implement lesson plans to educate youth about higher education.

We feel it is important to note that Bonner AmeriCorps members will be available to assist with relief efforts following disasters. Our campuses have a long history of responding to disasters by sending teams of AmeriCorps members to conduct debris clean-ups and rebuild homes in communities such as New Orleans.

Bonner AmeriCorps members are particularly well-suited to the task of solving the community needs identified in this proposal because they serve in the Bonner Program for four years and, as a result of their experience serving and participating in ongoing Member training activities, they quickly rise to become trusted partners at their service sites with significant levels of responsibility. Additionally, our connection to institutions of higher education allows Members, Campus Administrators, and Site Supervisors to work with faculty trained in evidence-based/evidence-

## Narratives

informed interventions in an effort to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and reach of programs.

Bonner AmeriCorps members will serve either a minimum-time, quarter-time or two-year part-time term. These slot types align well with our program design. After-school programs generally operate between the hours of 3 and 6 pm, five days a week, totaling 15 hours a week. The slot types noted above require an average of 8 to 15 hours of service per week, thus a strong connection between the needs of the after-school program and the availability of Bonner AmeriCorps members.

Additionally, the project based nature of the capacity building activities outlined are ideal for a Member serving a less than full-time term of service.

### C. Evidence-Based, Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact:

[1] Capacity Building: The utilization of volunteers is an evidence-informed strategy that enables nonprofit organizations to provide valuable services designed to meet persistent community needs. In a study conducted by the Urban Institute (noted above), nonprofit agencies affirmed that volunteer efforts allow them to enhance the quality and level of services provided to the community.[24]

Furthermore, the Urban Institute study "concludes that investments in volunteer management and benefits derived from volunteers feed on each other, with investments bringing benefits and benefits justifying greater investments.[25] The study identifies nine effective volunteer management practices (highlighted above) that research literature shows are best practices.[26].

Additionally, increasing demand for services requires nonprofit organizations to develop new or enhance existing programming. When doing so, it is important for agencies to implement evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions.

[2] Education: Research literature overwhelming demonstrates a positive correlation between participation in after-school programs and increases in measures of academic engagement. For example, a 2011 study by Public Profit concluded that students enrolled in after-school programs operated by the Oakland Unified School District in California were "less likely than nonparticipants to be chronically absent from school, and as a whole, increased their school-day attendance." [27] In a study conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, teachers reported that over 50% of students enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Centers improved in their classroom behavior, participation, and attentiveness and homework completion.[28] Additionally, a study conducted by the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation revealed that students participating in after-school programs run by LA's BEST in California "reported higher aspirations regarding finishing school and going to college." [29] The studies noted above offer compelling evidence that after-school programs are an effective intervention for increasing academic engagement among youth.

## Narratives

In 2008, the Harvard Family Research Project conducted an analysis of research and evaluation studies related to after-school programs and consequently identified three factors "that are critical for creating positive settings that can achieve positive youth outcomes." [30] These factors include access to and sustained participation in programs, quality programming and strong partnerships with families, schools, and communities. [31] We will work to ensure the after-school programs supported by Bonner AmeriCorps members utilize the aforementioned practices.

By the end of the three year project period, we anticipate that Members will manage 13,500 volunteers and implement effective volunteer management practices at 600 nonprofit organizations. Participating agencies will report they are able to meet community needs more effectively and/or efficiency as a result of the capacity building services provided by our Members. Additionally, 900 economically disadvantaged youth will demonstrate increased levels of academic engagement. We determined our performance measure targets by examining a set of factors including: a) the number of Members we expect to enroll, b) historical data such as the number of youth served and volunteers managed, and c) information related to our anticipated service sites including the scope of their current programs. We will implement a rigorous data collection process to measure the impact of our Member activities and share our results with the Corporation via our biannual progress reports.

In our current grant cycle, Members focus their efforts on mentoring disadvantaged youth, providing job placement services, and facilitating nutrition education for youth. In 2011-2012, we met our performance measure targets related to mentoring and job placement services. Members engaged in sustained mentoring relationships with 1,541 youth, 476 of whom increased their school attendance. Members provided job placement services to 1,025 individuals, 221 of whom were placed in jobs. Thus far, we have not reached our performance measure targets for nutrition education. Members continue to provide nutrition education for youth and we expect to meet our target.

D. Member Recruitment: Bonner AmeriCorps members are generally recruited from the pool of 20-100 students who are engaged in the Bonner Program, a four-year service leadership program at each participating college. Our recruitment period runs from March-June with a majority of Members beginning their term of service in August-September. We have a strong track record of filling the number of AmeriCorps slots awarded to us. In 2010-11 we filled 99.9% of our awarded slots and in 2011-12 we filled 100%.

Many of the campuses in our network enroll a large percentage of students from the local community in the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. For example, 94% of Members at Burlington County College, 90% of Members at Concord University and 70% of Members at Western KY University are

## Narratives

from the counties immediately surrounding the school.

Because the Bonner Foundation has a 23 year history of providing financial support to low-income college students seeking to earn an undergraduate degree, more than 85% of the Members enrolled in the Bonner AmeriCorps Program qualify for the Federal Work-Study program. Our network also includes several campuses designated as Hispanic serving institutions by the USDOE including Cal State-LA, Notre Dame de Namur University and the University of New Mexico. We are also working with participating campuses to recruit veterans to serve in our program. At least 15 campuses employ staff devoted to supporting students who are veterans. Campus Administrators will connect with these staff members to engage veterans in AmeriCorps or other volunteer opportunities.

E. Member Training: Training is an essential component of a Member's term of service. Members engage in an intensive training plan developed by Campus Administrators in collaboration with Program Staff (TCNJ and Bonner Foundation staff.) Activities are designed to meet three essential goals: a) to ensure that Members understand the policies of the AmeriCorps program with an emphasis on the Prohibited Activities, b) to help Members develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet their service objectives, and c) to instill in Members a lifelong ethic of civic engagement.

Members begin their term of service by attending a multi-day orientation facilitated by the Campus Administrator, faculty members and community leaders. During the orientation, Members receive training on: a) the goals and objectives of AmeriCorps, the history of the national service movement, and AmeriCorps policies with an emphasis on the Prohibited Activities; b) background about the community in which they will serve including its history, population demographics, economic realities, and pressing social issues; c) an overview of the service activities performed by Members coupled with training on the evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions they will implement; d) professional development topics such as public speaking, time management and leadership.

Following the program orientation, Members receive an orientation at their service site from the designated Site Supervisor that covers (based on our guidelines): a) a tour of the organization's space; b) the history, mission and function of the agency; c) the duties and responsibilities of the Member's service position; and d) particulars on agency policies including hours of operation, dress code, etc.

On a weekly or every two week basis, Campus Administrators organize meetings that focus on additional knowledge- and skill-based training related to the focus areas and service activities identified in this proposal. Topics include: a) designing positions for volunteers, b) effective strategies for volunteer recruitment, c) positive reinforcement techniques for youth, d) integrating service learning projects into after-school program curriculum, e) broader professional development on topics

## Narratives

such as building coalitions, and f) post AmeriCorps service civic engagement opportunities. To support Campus Administrators in their training responsibilities, the Bonner Foundation offers more than 60 training modules that represent more than 120 hours of training. Campus Administrators also draw on the expertise of faculty to provide Member training.

F. Member Supervision: Campus Administrators and Site Supervisors collaborate on supervising Members. Campus Administrators are expected to have: a) experience managing campus-community partnerships, advising students, and facilitating training for students; and b) strong administrative skills to manage AmeriCorps paperwork.

Program Staff provide Campus Administrators with on-going training related to AmeriCorps policies and procedures, the Bonner Web-based Reporting System, AmeriCorps-eligible service and training opportunities, and performance measures. Program Staff also act a resource to Campus Administrators by helping develop service placements and training activities for Members. Campus Administrators are expected to: a) supervise Members by monitoring service placements and hours to ensure that they are on track to complete their term of service, b) meet with Members who are experiencing academic or personal difficulties that are inhibiting their ability to fulfill the program requirements, c) help Members identify resources on campus or in the community that may help Members overcome these challenges.

Service sites are required to assign one staff person to serve as the Site Supervisor for the Member. The Site Supervisor is responsible for: a) providing on-site orientation, training and support throughout the Member's term of service, and b) monitoring and verifying Member service hours.

Campus Administrators are responsible for training Site Supervisors who oversee Members. Campus Administrators meet face-to-face with Site Supervisors at least twice a year during which they review the policies and procedures related to AmeriCorps using a slideshow presentation provided by Program Staff.

G. Member Experience: The Bonner AmeriCorps Program seeks to provide a positive service experience for Members designed to achieve the desired community impact while also instilling in them a lifelong service ethic. We believe the use of evidence-based/evidence-informed practices combined with a strong emphasis on Member training and support allow us to achieve these goals. Members are trained to implement effective evidence-based/evidence-informed practices related nonprofit capacity building and education. Member training and reflection opportunities are offered to ensure that Members possess the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their service responsibilities, have a safe space in which to share joys and frustrations regarding their service

## Narratives

activities, and receive education on civic responsibility. A recent survey of Bonner Program alumni including Bonner AmeriCorps members found that 34% of alumni work in the nonprofit sector and 31% work in the government sector. Additionally, 90% of alumni voted in the last election and 78% had volunteered over the course of the previous year. The activities described above are key to promoting a positive service experience for Members.

We employ numerous strategies to ensure that Members identify with the AmeriCorps brand and the national service movement. During orientation, Members receive extensive training on the goals and objectives of AmeriCorps along with the history of the national service movement. As part of the orientation, Members are instructed to identify themselves as AmeriCorps members when speaking about their service work with community partners, the general public and the media. The AmeriCorps logo is included on all enrollment, in-service, and exit paperwork thus reinforcing the AmeriCorps identity throughout the Member's term of service.

Our strong network of campuses enables us to provide Bonner AmeriCorps members with opportunities to interact with Members from other participating institutions, both in joint service projects and at national and regional conferences. For example, the Bonner Summer Leadership Institute features a service track which enables Members from different campuses to collaborate on short term projects such as building a community garden.

We are thankful to be part of a strong network of AmeriCorps programs within our own organization and nationally. This network allows our Members to regularly interact with participants in other national service programs. TCNJ also operates an AmeriCorps State program and an AmeriCorps State VISTA program. Members serving in all three programs participate together in national days of service such as 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance. Bonner AmeriCorps members also have the opportunity to meet and interact with participants in other state and national programs by attending service and training events coordinated by State Service Commissions.

H. Volunteer Generation: Bonner AmeriCorps members form the backbone of campus-wide volunteer recruitment and management efforts. During the 2011-12 program year alone, Bonner AmeriCorps members recruited over 7,000 volunteers for one time, short-term and ongoing service opportunities. Members will continue to devote significant time and energy to engaging volunteers to serve alongside them at their service sites. Members will also continue to recruit and manage volunteers for episodic service projects such as Habitat for Humanity home builds and national days of service including MLK Day of Service. Our experience tells us that individuals who first commit to a short term volunteer assignment will often make a longer term commitment in the future.

## Narratives

We will continue to communicate that volunteers recruited and managed by AmeriCorps members may not engage in the Prohibited Activities. We will monitor compliance by reviewing Member position descriptions and conducting site visits.

I. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation are committed to enhancing the national service brand. We identify ourselves as an AmeriCorps program in all written materials and include the appropriate logos. In addition, Program Staff identify themselves as AmeriCorps administrators in public settings.

As part of our memorandum of understanding, participating campuses agree to: a) promote the AmeriCorps brand by using the AmeriCorps name and logo on printed materials, signs, and websites, b) ensure that Members are identifiable as AmeriCorps members by having access to and wearing tee shirts, sweatshirts, or other service gear bearing the AmeriCorps logo, and c) note that the campus operates an AmeriCorps program on written materials including press releases. Service sites are also asked to include the AmeriCorps name and logo on appropriate publications and on their websites. We monitor compliance during site visits and desk audits of participating campuses.

REFERENCES: [1-2] Nonprofit Finance Fund; [3-4] Center for Non-Profits; [5] Nonprofit Finance Fund; [6-7] Corporation for National and Community Service; [8] US Census Bureau; [9-10] RAND Corporation; [11] US Census Bureau; [12] Annie. E Casey Foundation; [13] TN DOE; [14-16] Annie E. Casey Foundation; [17] CA DOE; [18] US Census Bureau; [19] NJ DOE; [20-22] Urban Institute; [23] Colorado Foundation for Families and Children; [24-26] Urban Institute; [27-29] After-School Alliance; [30-31] Harvard Family Research Project

### Organizational Capability

A. Organizational Background and Staffing: TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation have successfully managed multiple AmeriCorps programs, including: a) a National Direct Education Award Only Program (15 years), b) a NJ State Formula Program (7 years), c) a NJ State Competitive Program (3 years), d) a NJ State VISTA Program (2 years), and e) a NJ State Recovery Program (1 year).

Founded in 1855 as a public institution of higher education, TCNJ students, faculty, staff, alumni, and board members constitute a diverse community of learners dedicated to free inquiry and open exchange, to excellence in teaching, creativity, scholarship, and citizenship, and to the transformative power of education. TCNJ fulfills its civic mission by engaging students, faculty and staff in service activities through the Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement.

The Bonner Foundation, established in 1989, is committed to building sustained partnerships with colleges and nonprofit organizations to improve the lives of individuals and communities by helping

## Narratives

meet the basic needs of nutrition and educational opportunity. The work of the Bonner Foundation has centered upon partnering with colleges and universities to provide four-year, service-based scholarships to students who could not otherwise afford to attend college and to support these and other students who serve in their own communities. The network of 65 colleges and universities operating the Bonner Program support a total of 3,200 students annually, with approximately 1,100 enrolling in the Bonner AmeriCorps Program.

TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation employ a staff team dedicated to the successful management of the program. The staff team is led by Patrick Donohue, Assistant Provost for Community Engaged Learning Programs and Partnerships at TCNJ and Robert Hackett, President of the Bonner Foundation. Mr. Donohue has led TCNJ's civic engagement activities since 2006 and is the co-author of several journal articles on civic engagement. Since 1997, Mr. Hackett has served as the Project Director for four Learn and Serve America grants, a series of AmeriCorps grants, and three Fund to Improve Postsecondary Education grants.

Christen Foell serves as the Project Director for the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. Ms. Foell provides programmatic oversight with a particular emphasis on ensuring compliance with AmeriCorps policies and implementing performance measurement systems. Ms. Foell began working on AmeriCorps grants in 2006 when she joined the staff of the Bonner Center.

Sarah Meadows and Janet Ashwood serve as our Enrollment Managers, responsible for developing and processing Member paperwork. Prior to joining the staff of TCNJ, Ms. Ashwood worked in contract administration and Ms. Meadows worked in accounting.

TCNJ also employs a Program Associate, Joshua Blair, who is responsible for providing training for Campus Administrators and reviewing service and training opportunities. Mr. Blair works closely with Senior Program Officer Ariane Hoy, to develop Member training resources. Mr. Blair, a Bonner AmeriCorps alumnus, recently completed the Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship.

Ariane Hoy, Senior Program Officer at the Bonner Foundation, provides training for Campus Administrators and reviewing service and training opportunities. She leads our efforts to develop effective training for Campus Administrators and Members. Ms. Hoy has an extensive background working with national service organizations like City Year, Jumpstart, and COOL.

TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation's management structure ensures that our program: a) meets its community impact objectives; b) has sufficient resources for program planning, implementation and evaluation; c) provides Members with a positive service experience, and d) complies with AmeriCorps policies and procedures. There is a high degree of coordination between TCNJ, the Bonner

## Narratives

Foundation, campuses, and service sites. TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation oversee all aspects of program planning, implementation, and evaluation. We implement a number of strategies to ensure that Program Staff described above are properly trained in all relevant AmeriCorps regulations. We allocate significant travel funds to allow for our Project Director Christen Foell to attend the Corporation's grantee meetings. In addition, Ms. Foell participates in all conference calls offered by the Corporation and reviews relevant documents such as the AmeriCorps Provisions. Ms. Foell is responsible for training other Program Staff on AmeriCorps policies. Program Staff develop training for Campus Administrators, using a combination of meetings, conference calls, and written materials.

Campus Administrators are responsible for working with their nonprofit partner sites to develop high quality, impact driven service placements for AmeriCorps members. Campus Administrators are required to enter position descriptions for all service and training opportunities into the on-line Bonner Web-based Reporting System, thus allowing Program Staff to review all Member activities. Campus Administrators are also responsible for providing training on Bonner AmeriCorps policies and procedures to all Site Supervisors. Site Supervisors oversee Members by providing orientation, training and ongoing support at their agencies. They also track and verify Member hours.

We are committed to implementing high quality Member training and conducting evaluations of the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. Member training efforts are described above in our Program Design narrative. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at TCNJ will be a valuable resource as we evaluate the effectiveness of the Bonner AmeriCorps Program moving forward.

We are pleased to report a strong track record of satisfactory performance and compliance. In 2010-11, we enrolled 99.99% of our awarded slots and 100% of our slots in 2011-12. For the 2010-11 grant year, we exceeded the targets for all our performance measures with the exception of improved school attendance for youth. We implemented corrective actions and exceeded our target in 2011-12. For our 2011-12 grant year, we have exceeded our targets thus far except in the area of nutrition education. Members continue to provide nutrition education for youth and we expect to meet our target. Additionally, a June 2012 site visit by our Program Officer yielded no compliance findings. One area of weakness identified in our most recent Grantee Progress Report is exits processed in the portal more than 30 days after the Member's last day of service. We recently submitted an explanation and corrective action plan to the Corporation.

B. Sustainability: TCNJ, the Bonner Foundation, participating colleges and service sites are committed to the sustainability of the Bonner AmeriCorps Program.

We rely on Campus Administrators to serve as the primary staff persons engaged in ongoing

## Narratives

dialogue with Site Supervisors. Campus Administrators meet with Site Supervisors to assess organizational needs and explore the ways in which Members can respond to the identified needs.

TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation have been successful in securing the financial and in-kind resources needed to support implementation of the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. The Federal funds awarded to TCNJ account for approximately 8.5% of the overall program budget. Federal funds are used to support salaries and benefits for the Project Director, the Program Associate, and the Enrollment Managers. TCNJ uses institutional resources to support the salary and benefits of Patrick Donohue. The salary and benefits for Bonner Foundation staff are covered by the foundation's operating budget.

The Bonner Foundation contributes approximately \$200,000 annually to cover other program operating expenses such as: a) staff travel to campuses for program monitoring, b) lodging and meals expenses for training conferences for Campus Administrators and Members, c) programming costs for improvement and hosting of the Bonner Web-based Reporting System. In turn, participating campuses make a significant financial investment to ensure the success of the program, including the salary and benefits for the Campus Administrator and travel, room and board for Campus Administrators and Members who attend a series of national Bonner AmeriCorps training events.

Participating colleges and universities have dedicated campus-wide centers that facilitate civic engagement, community service, service-learning, and community-based research. These centers have permanent staff, office space and program budgets provided by the institution, demonstrating strong evidence of the administration's commitment to the community. As these centers grow, they build capacity to solicit funding from state and local entities and launch revenue-generating projects to not only sustain but enhance the service activities outlined in this proposal.

TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation are also committed to helping participating nonprofit organizations build the sustainability of programs beyond the presence of AmeriCorps support. Our goal is to utilize the resources present within the higher education environment to assist nonprofit agencies with implementing evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions and rigorous evaluation models with the goal of building successful programs that garner long term public and private financial support.

We believe that in time, the funding streams described above and the increased capacity of campuses and community partners to manage volunteers can sustain our work in the absence of Federal support via AmeriCorps.

C. Compliance and Accountability: We have developed rigorous systems to ensure compliance with

## Narratives

all AmeriCorps regulations at the grantee, campus and service site level. Systems focus on prevention and detection of deviations from the regulations, and swift corrective actions if needed.

At the grantee level, all service and training opportunities are reviewed by Program Staff to ensure that the activities are appropriate for AmeriCorps and in line with program objectives. All Member paperwork is reviewed and processed by our Enrollment Managers to ensure compliance with applicable policies.

At the campus level, our efforts begin with training Campus Administrators on AmeriCorps regulations, who in turn train and monitor the Site Supervisors working with our Members.

Campus Administrators are asked to meet with Site Supervisors at least twice a year to provide education on AmeriCorps policies. We provide Campus Administrators with an AmeriCorps policies slideshow presentation to utilize during meetings with Site Supervisors. Additionally, all Site Supervisors sign a Service Site Agreement which outlines applicable policies and procedures. Campus Administrators meet regularly with Members and conduct visits to service sites to ensure that Members are receiving adequate support and engaging only in eligible service and training activities.

We employ a number of strategies to monitor campus and service site compliance with AmeriCorps rules, including: a) Member file management is centralized at our national office which allows us to ensure that the required paperwork is accurately processed; b) Our Bonner Web-based Reporting System enables Program Staff to review every service placement and training activity to ensure that all service sites and Member activities are appropriate for AmeriCorps; c) Site visits help us identify areas of noncompliance with program policies and continuous improvement needs; and d) Progress Reports from campuses allow Program Staff to gauge progress towards meeting our performance measures and, if needed, take additional steps to ensure that we reach our goals.

In 2011-12, many participating campuses did not provide us with exit paperwork within 30 days of the Member's last day of service, thus resulting in late exits in eGrants. We are utilizing several features in BWBRS to aid Campus Administrators during the exit process such as an automatic email to Members when they log their final hours in BWBRS prompting them to complete the necessary exit paperwork. We have also created an Exit Checklist to help Campus Administrators ensure that all necessary paperwork is completed accurately. Timely and accurate submission of paperwork is included in the criteria developed to evaluate future slot awards to campuses.

During the 2011-12 program year, we achieved an enrollment rate of 100%. At this time, we are unable to report on our final retention rate for 2011-12 as 87% of Members are still active. Of the 1,040 Members enrolled in the 2011-12 grant year, 123 have exited with an award and eight have

## Narratives

exited without an award.

As a multi-state program, we strive to collaborate with State Service Commissions in the states in which we operate the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. Prior to submitting our application, we completed the consultation instructions received from each Commission. When possible, Program Staff participate in conference calls coordinated by the Commissions. Additionally, we encourage our Campus Administrators and Members to participate in events sponsored by the Commissions.

We anticipate that the following colleges and universities will operate the Bonner AmeriCorps Program in 2013-2016: Allegheny; Augsburg; Bates; Berry; Burlington County; Cal State LA; Carson-Newman; Centre; Christopher Newport; College of Charleston; College of Saint Benedict; Concord; Converse; Edgewood; Emory and Henry; Guilford; Juniata; Lindsey Wilson; Lynchburg; Macalester; Mars Hill; Maryville; Middlesex County; Montclair State; Notre Dame de Namur; Notre Dame of Maryland; Oberlin; Oxford College of Emory; Pepperdine; Pfeiffer; Rhodes; Rider; Rutgers; St. Mary's College of California; Sewanee - The University of the South; Siena; Sonoma State; Stetson; The College of New Jersey; Tusculum; UC Berkeley; Union; U. of Dayton; U. of Louisville; U. of New Mexico; UNC - Chapel Hill; U. of Richmond; U. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Ursinus; Warren Wilson; Washburn; Washington & Lee; Waynesburg; Western Kentucky; Wofford; and Young Harris.

The campuses noted above have met a variety of program requirements, including: a) strong leadership at the executive level committed to community impact and upholding AmeriCorps regulations, b) adequate staff resources to properly support the program, c) adequate funding for Campus Administrator travel and Member training, d) demonstrated commitment to achieving community impact, and e) additional requirements as outlined in the AmeriCorps regulations.

We have a long standing relationship with many of the campuses noted above. A majority of the campuses have hosted the Bonner Program for between five and 23 years. Additionally, the Bonner Foundation has awarded 26 of the campuses with an endowment award for their Bonner Programs and another five receive annual program support grants.

We are currently working with participating campuses to identify Member service sites given our new focus areas of capacity building and education. Service sites are evaluated using much of the same criteria utilized in selecting campus programs. We plan to have Member service sites solidified by the end of May 2013. We anticipate that many of the selected sites will have a history of hosting Bonner AmeriCorps members.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

A. Cost Effectiveness: TCNJ and the Bonner Foundation respectfully request 299.8 MSY at a cost of

## Narratives

\$799.92 per MSY (slightly under the maximum cost per MSY of \$800) for a total administrative grant award of \$239,816. The cost per MSY is the same funding level we received in our current grant cycle (10/6/10-10/5/13).

TCNJ's fiscal year 2013 operating budget is \$219,050,777. Sources of funding include student tuition and fees, State and Federal appropriations, grant indirect cost recovery, TCNJ Foundation support, auxiliary enterprises including conference center operations and other miscellaneous revenue enhancements. The amount requested from the Corporation to operate the Bonner AmeriCorps Program accounts for less than .1% of TCNJ's total operating budget.

The annual Bonner AmeriCorps Program operating budget is \$2.8 million, of which Corporation funds account for 8.5%. The total operating budget includes the following expense categories: a) salaries, benefits, and operations for Program Staff (\$205K) and Campus Administrators (\$2.2M = 55 campuses x \$40K/per), b) annual meeting travel, room and board costs for Program Staff, Campus Administrators, and Members (\$366K), c) Criminal History Checks (\$35K), and d) programming and hosting costs for the Bonner Web-Based Reporting System (\$12K).

Therefore, we require approximately \$2.58 million in support from non-Corporation sources to operate the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. TCNJ has been successful in securing significant non-Federal resources for program implementation and sustainability. We describe these resources below.

TCNJ does not use any of the AmeriCorps administrative grant to support the salary and benefits of Patrick Donohue. His position is supported by institutional resources.

The Bonner Foundation's long term commitment to supporting the program is demonstrated in part, by its commitment to provide approximately \$200,000 in cash and in-kind financial support for the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. The Foundation's contributions are as follows: a) salary and benefits for Robert Hackett, Ariane Hoy, and a Program Associate; b) funding for lodging, meal, and other expenses related to training conferences for Campus Administrators and Members; c) travel funds for site visits to participating campuses and nonprofit organizations; and d) funding for the continued improvement and hosting of BWBRS.

Participating colleges are committed to providing institutional funds to support the following: a) salary and benefits for the Campus Administrator, b) travel for Campus Administrators and Members to attend required training conferences, and c) costs associated with ongoing Member training and recognition activities. Institutional funds also cover the cost of liability coverage for Bonner AmeriCorps members. Member service sites make valuable contributions in the form of the Site Supervisor's time devoted to Member training and supervision.

## Narratives

The costs associated with operating the Bonner AmeriCorps Program are steadily increasing as we seek to secure the resources needed to achieve the desired community impact, ensure a positive Member experience, and implement robust systems for program monitoring. As a result of escalating costs especially related to criminal history checks and travel, TCNJ, the Bonner Foundation and participating institutions will likely increase our share of program operating costs.

Our approach is cost effective because of the significant leveraging of institutional and volunteer resources for the amount of investment represented by the AmeriCorps administrative grant and Education Awards. First, as noted above, every \$1 in Corporation grant funding awarded to this project leverages \$10.75 of institutional support. From the standpoint of volunteer hour generation, every \$1 in AmeriCorps Education Awards to Bonner AmeriCorps members leverages \$6.68 in volunteer service (using the Independent Sector's value of volunteer time for 2011 which was \$21.79 per hour served).

B. Budget Adequacy: TCNJ, the Bonner Foundation, and participating campuses remain committed to providing adequate financial resources to support the program.

We begin by devoting significant staff resources to program development, implementation, and evaluation. The grant provides funding for the Program Director, two Enrollment Managers and one Program Associate. Additional staff dedicated to the program such as our Campus Administrators are funded through institutional resources provided by participating colleges.

Remaining grant funds are used to fund travel for Program Staff to attend Corporation grantee meetings and conduct site visits. Grant funds are also allocated to pay for criminal history checks.

Funding for training for both Campus Administrators and Members is provided by the Bonner Foundation and participating colleges. We host three conferences for Campus Administrators and two for Members annually, with a majority of the facility rental, lodging and meal expenses covered by the Bonner Foundation. Participating institutions are responsible for paying travel expenses for Campus Administrators and Members. Additionally, campuses provide funding for ongoing Member training.

Given the size and geographic distribution of our program, we rely heavily on our web-based reporting system and structured site visits to facilitate program planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. BWBRS enables us to review all service and training opportunities online to ensure that Member activity is aligned with the objectives of the program and appropriate for AmeriCorps. The system also allows us to track Member enrollments, hours, and exits. Funding for system enhancements and maintenance is provided by the Bonner Foundation. The Bonner Foundation also provides significant funds for Program Staff travel to participating campuses for the

## Narratives

purposes of program development, monitoring, and evaluation.

We believe that the resources described above will enable us to ensure that the Bonner AmeriCorps Program receives the financial resources needed to achieve program objectives, ensure a positive Member experience, and adhere to AmeriCorps policies and procedures.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

#### A. Member Recruitment

We are pleased to report that in 2010-11 we filled 99.9% of our awarded slots. In 2011-12 we filled 100% of our awarded slots. We work with participating campuses to engage veterans as Bonner AmeriCorps members.

#### B. Member Retention

Our retention rate for 2010-11 is currently 84% with 276 Members actively serving. For 2011-12, our retention rate is currently 93% with 848 Members actively serving.

#### C. Community Impact

(C1) Mentoring Disadvantaged Youth: In 2010-11, Bonner AmeriCorps members sustained 921 mentoring relationships, while in 2011-12, Members sustained 1,541 relationships. Our target was 400 relationships each grant year. In 2010-11, 161 youth improved their school attendance, while in 2011-12, 476 youth improved their school attendance. Our goal was 225 youth each grant year. (C2) Job Placement Services: In 2010-11, 1,025 economically disadvantaged individuals received job placement services facilitated by Members, while in 2011-12, 922 individuals were served. Our target was 200 persons each grant year. In 2010-11, 221 individuals obtained employment, while in 2011-12, 350 individuals obtained employment. Our goal was 40 individuals each grant year. (C3) Nutrition Education: In 2010-11, Bonner AmeriCorps members provided nutrition education for 1,601 youth while in 2011-12, 324 youth were served. Our target was 450 each grant year. In 2010-11, 1,063 youth demonstrated an increase in their knowledge of good nutrition habits, while in 2011-12, 194 demonstrated an increase. Our goal was 300 youth for each grant year.

#### D. Program Management

In 2010-11 and 2011-12, many participating campuses failed to provide us with accurate exit paperwork within 30 days of the Member's last day of service, thus resulting in Members exited late in eGrants. We have created an Exit Checklist to help Campus Administrators ensure that all necessary paperwork is completed accurately prior to submission to our national office in New Jersey.

With the implementation of the National Performance Measures Pilot, we recognize the need to provide additional training to participating campuses on performance measurement and implement

## Narratives

more standardized data collection tools and reporting forms to facilitate effective and efficient reporting on our performance measures. Moving forward we will devote more time during our training conferences for education around the National Performance Measures.

Given the size and geographic distribution of our program, we must remain committed to continually identifying strategies to ensure that Campus Administrators are knowledgeable of all applicable rules and regulations. To that end, we are developing an online certification program with the following modules such as Member Recruitment and Eligible Service and Training Opportunities.

### EVALUATION PLAN

We will continue to conduct internal evaluations of the Bonner AmeriCorps Program. Moving forward we plan to assess our performance in two additional areas: Member Development and Satisfaction.

A. Member Development: The Bonner AmeriCorps Program seeks to instill in Members a lifelong ethic of service. While the Bonner Foundation conducts longitudinal studies of students enrolled in the Bonner Program (including Bonner AmeriCorps members), we feel it is important to begin analyzing the data for certain subsets of students such as Bonner AmeriCorps members. This would allow us to assess the degree to which program alumni remain actively engaged in their communities.

B. Member Satisfaction: We developed a Member Satisfaction survey, however, we need to increase our efforts around distributing it and encouraging Members to complete it. The results will allow us to better understand the experience of our Members and take corrective actions if need be.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

N/A

### Continuation Changes

N/A