

Narratives

Executive Summary

AmeriCorps members serving with New Sector Alliance will complete service projects that build the capacity of community-based nonprofits to create, improve, and expand their services. 70 full-time AmeriCorps members will serve each year in economically disadvantaged Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago communities to complete capacity building service projects including volunteer engagement, performance measurement, and community assessment. During the one-year grant period, 60 distinct nonprofits will benefit from at least 56 projects that enable measurably more effective services; over the three-year project period, these outcomes will exceed 125 and 150 respectively. Service sites will represent all six CNCS focus areas, with greatest concentrations in Education and Economic Opportunity. CNCS investment will be \$8,600 per MSY, or \$602,000 total per year; as a fixed amount grant, we are not reporting match, but expect to continue on our past successes of generating over 65% of program costs as well as over \$500,000 of additional in-kind services for program purposes each year.

Rationale and Approach

New Sector Alliance is a proud member of the national service movement. Since 2002, we have placed over 600 AmeriCorps members at over 400 service sites in economically disadvantaged communities. Our successful partnerships have operated through AmeriCorps VISTA (2002-07), Massachusetts state funding (2006-10), and National Direct funding (2010-13).

New Sector AmeriCorps is a national service program through which AmeriCorps members serve in capacity building roles at nonprofits in CNCS' focus areas. Members complete projects that create, improve, or expand these nonprofits' services in measurable ways; in addition, these projects enable lasting impact beyond members' terms. Member service to communities is magnified by an intensive focus on member development, through training, peer reflection groups, and one-on-one mentorship from business professionals.

New Sector AmeriCorps members currently serve in economically disadvantaged Boston, MA and San Francisco, CA communities, and we are proposing a third site in Chicago, IL for the 2013-14 program term. Last year, over 97% of our service sites reported that New Sector AmeriCorps members' service has a measurable impact on their organization and communities they serve. Over 80% of our service sites reported increased effectiveness of services as a direct result of New Sector AmeriCorps members' service projects; over 80% also reported increased efficiency, and over 58% reported increased scale and reach.

Narratives

NEED: America's nonprofits address the most pressing challenges faced by economically disadvantaged communities across the country, from education to economic opportunity to health to veterans' needs.

New Sector AmeriCorps addresses two interrelated categories of need; our program is aligned to provide best practices in service delivery at their intersection. First, economically disadvantaged communities face pressing and increasing needs across CNCS focus areas, and especially in Education and Economic Opportunity, where we have historically placed over 85% of our members. Second, community-based nonprofit organizations are not able to meet the demand for services and need capacity to do more with less. Both categories of need are evident across the country, as well as locally in Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago communities. New Sector AmeriCorps enables nonprofit service sites to create, improve, and expand their services to meet community needs in measurably more effective ways. A nonprofit leader commented that "as resources decrease across the country, the request for basic needs continues to grow" and in order to meet needs, nonprofits must "continually transform [their] programs so that they are as efficient and effective as possible." New Sector AmeriCorps members serve at the intersection of increasing community needs, and nonprofit organizations' needs for transformations that maximize their ability to deliver services. The first need New Sector AmeriCorps addresses is widespread inequality. While federal, regional, and local efforts are helping communities recover from the recent recession, we know that our country is far from "catching up." In fact, the differences between the "haves" and the "have-nots" are larger than ever. Over 16 million U.S. children are living in poverty according to the 2011 Census, and over 20% of these children will not graduate from high school (Annie E. Casey Foundation). The lifetime earning potential of students who did not graduate from the high school class of 2011 totals \$154 billion, and the majority of these students will have limited income mobility (Alliance for Excellent Education). Across our nation, people working full-time for minimum wage cannot afford fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment (National Low Income Housing Coalition, U.S. Department of Labor). Suboptimal living conditions are correlated with lower access to early education, which can result in 39% greater chances of going to prison later in life and a greater educational gap than existed a generation ago, according to education experts (Chicago Longitudinal Study). These education and economic indicators of inequality form the backbone of the need we address.

Our operating sites evidence major local challenges. In Greater Boston, over 25% of children are living in poverty, and educational attainment and unemployment are distinctly tied to race, according

Narratives

to the Boston Indicators Project. This project found that people of color are less than half as likely to get a college degree and more than twice as likely to be unemployed, compared to white people. According to the CA Budget Project, Massachusetts ranks fourth in the nation for the largest gap between the rich and the poor.

The San Francisco Bay Area has one of the largest gaps between the rich and poor, as compared to all the communities of California, according to the California Budget Project. In their study, California shows substantial limits in terms of 'income mobility' based on family history. This means large populations of families live amidst a pattern of long-term, multi-generational poverty. Despite recent overall job growth, unemployment rates among African-Americans have risen in recent years, again pointing to the local disparities.

Among Chicago communities, census data show that a majority of neighborhoods have over 10% unemployment, higher than the national average, and that in several areas of Chicago the majority of the adult population lacks a high school diploma. As we expand to Chicago as a third operating site, we will concentrate on these geographic areas in most need, as indicated through a 'hardship index' score.

We select service sites to maximize impact on pressing local community needs. We assess local needs through discussions with local nonprofit, civic, and academic leaders, including intensive exploration of needs with members of our Community Advisory Boards. We apply local needs as a filter on potential nonprofit service sites in order to maximize the value of our impact on communities.

The second major need New Sector AmeriCorps addresses is the inability of community-based nonprofit organizations to meet growing demand. It is not surprising that there is increased demand for nonprofit services. Nonprofit Finance Fund's 2012 State of the Sector Survey found that 85% of organizations saw an increase in the need for services, on top of major increases in need in each of the prior three years; nearly 90% of organizations expected another increase in need in 2013, but a majority expected to not be able to meet the need.

Increased demand for the services of nonprofits is pronounced in the Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago areas. According to the Nonprofit Finance Fund, the majority of Massachusetts and California nonprofits reported problems meeting demand in 2011 and 2012. In Illinois, 70% of nonprofits expected increased demand in the upcoming year and state funding cuts and delays have caused substantial service delivery reductions.

In the midst of increased demand, nonprofits may invest all their resources in direct services, but this can actually impair organizational impact over time. To keep up with the demand for services,

Narratives

organizations are better served by improving upon programs and processes, according to TCC Group. A report by McKinsey and Company states that capacity building is especially relevant during difficult times, when economic realities decrease nonprofits' abilities to serve their communities. We find ourselves in this type of difficult time today, and are poised to respond.

New Sector AmeriCorps is aligned at the intersection of community needs and nonprofits' rising difficulty responding to these needs. We select service sites and projects to maximize the outcomes of creating, improving, and expanding services for economically disadvantaged communities.

In 2009-10, New Sector began conducting an annual needs assessment of nonprofit organizations working across AmeriCorps focus areas. We formed Community Advisory Boards of local nonprofit leaders who are experts in each area to help us identify key issues. In the past year, we have consulted with over 200 nonprofit leaders working across AmeriCorps focus areas in Boston and San Francisco, including more than 25 leaders of intermediary organizations. In preparing for expansion to Chicago, we have consulted with representatives of over two dozen local nonprofits, four intermediaries representing Chicago nonprofits, and Serve Illinois.

We maximize the value of projects by implementing best practices in capacity building. We individualize project scopes and position descriptions as recommended by TCC Group. Performance measurement, community assessment, and program operations projects are designed to increase adaptive capacity of nonprofits, described by TCC Group as the "most critical dimension of capacity" which enables them "to monitor, assess, and respond" to community needs. We "leave something behind" after each project by having members complete documentation or training for service site staff or volunteers, to ensure community impact beyond members' service terms.

AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: Nonprofits in the Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago areas are dedicating as many resources as possible to program delivery. While this helps meet the needs of economically disadvantaged communities today, it does not help organizations be more prepared for tomorrow's community needs. This is where New Sector AmeriCorps members provide a unique value-added service -- their service creates, improves, and expands services for communities with immediate impact for today, and lasting impact for tomorrow. By completing structured capacity-building projects that organizations could not otherwise accomplish through existing staff or volunteers, New Sector AmeriCorps members directly increase service site effectiveness, efficiency, and scale/reach. In partnering with service sites, we ensure New Sector AmeriCorps members serve in compelling, unique, value-add roles and in compliance with all relevant policies and regulations. If a service site

Narratives

requests a member for a pre-existing position, we inquire more deeply to ensure compliance with non-supplementation, non-duplication, and non-displacement provisions. Throughout the program, we provide training, guidance, and monitoring in order to ensure members are not participating in prohibited or unallowable activities.

Two examples of New Sector AmeriCorps members' impact illustrate our value-added services:

i) In Boston, New Sector AmeriCorps member Colin improved a community-based nonprofit's effectiveness. Colin served at a local education nonprofit dedicated to increasing "kindergarten readiness" among the growing population of preschool children living in poverty. Colin led a performance measurement effort resulting in an evidence-informed theory of change, measurement tools, and technology for tracking data that allows for real-time decision-making about delivering literacy services. Colin trained staff and volunteers and they continue to use the system to drive data-driven program delivery today.

ii) In San Francisco, New Sector AmeriCorps member Jeff expanded services for a community-based nonprofit by building efficiencies in program operations that enabled twice as many economically disadvantaged community members to be served. Jeff's project increased the automaticity of systems for program enrollment and management. Thanks to the efficiencies he enabled, the organization doubled the number of individuals for whom it can provide skill-building focused on financial independence.

A complete list of project types is below, with each project type focused on creating, improving, and/or expanding services, enabling organizations to achieve outcomes that they could not otherwise achieve.

These project types are built upon CNCS' strategic framework for capacity building, as well as research from The Bridgespan Group, TCC Group, and McKinsey and Company.

i) Technology projects include researching, designing, and providing training about technology to support program operations, performance measurement, and volunteer management. Like Colin's and Jeff's projects, they enable technology as a tool for improved and expanded services.

ii) Volunteer engagement projects include developing systems for enhanced volunteer recruitment, training, management, engagement, and retention and putting into place documentation, training or systems to enable lasting impact. Volunteer engagement supports creating, improving, and expanding services.

iii) Program management and operations projects include designing systems and procedures that directly improve or expand services (like Jeff's project).

iv) Community assessment projects identify unique community assets and needs, providing

Narratives

recommendations to nonprofits about opportunities to meet new or growing community needs, thus creating services.

v) Community engagement projects increase community members' awareness of and/or participation in programs designed to support them; these projects improve and expand services to economically disadvantaged communities.

vi) Program design projects pilot new, and strengthen existing, services to meet documented community needs; they focus on creating and improving services.

vii) Program outreach projects include research, partnership development, and training on systems to recruit community members in need, and focus on expanding services.

viii) Performance measurement projects, like Colin's, include development of theories of change, metrics and indicators, measurement tools, and processes to support organizations' use of data in improving services.

While Materials Development is noted in CNCS' strategic framework as its own project type, we embed it into all projects as part of our "tools for sustainability;" we provide specific training and resources on this topic during the program term.

While New Sector AmeriCorps members are primarily acting in indirect services roles as they complete capacity building projects as outlined above, all members engage directly with community members served by their service sites in order to build civic engagement. In addition, members engage in service activities during their service terms.

New Sector AmeriCorps members serve with organizations across CNCS' focus areas. Specific service sites are identified based on community need, organizational capacity, and alignment with our intended impacts of creating, improving, and expanding services to economically disadvantaged communities. We expect a majority of service sites to be in Education and Economic Opportunity, based on local need assessments. Specific projects are outlined through a collaborative process between service site leaders and New Sector staff. We have documented project development systems with a focus on transparency and process improvement around prohibited and unallowable activities and intended impact of projects.

We are requesting 70 full-time slots, and expect 25 members to serve in each of Boston and San Francisco, and 20 in Chicago. The slight differential is to lower the program management requirements in Chicago during our first program cycle there. Each full-time slot represents 11 months of service. This period provides a substantial training period for members and enough time at the service site for members to thoroughly understand the strengths and needs of the organization,

Narratives

develop their projects, and ensure staff/volunteer training or materials development to ensure lasting impact. We are moving to a full-time only model for our AmeriCorps program to maximize the impact of CNCS' investment on economically disadvantaged communities and on our diverse members.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT: New Sector takes an evidence-informed approach. In consultation with CNCS, McKinsey's Social Sector practice, and an independent consultant, we recently updated our theory of change, and we are proud of the increased clarity it provides us in creating impact through our AmeriCorps program. Specifically, it helps us engage with laser-like focus on placing members in service roles focused on creating, improving, and expanding services in economically disadvantaged communities, outcomes which are directly in-line with CNCS complementary performance measures for capacity building. Our theory of change is based on research by the Alliance for Nonprofit Management and Urban Institute, as well as best practices from leaders in the field including The Bridgespan Group, McKinsey's Social Sector Practice, and TCC Group.

Our theory of change also enables us to measure impact in an ongoing way and intervene to increase impact during and between service terms. We use aligned measurement tools a minimum of three scheduled increments during the service term to get feedback on outcomes embedded in our theory of change. Our program team considers these internal performance data as individual indicators for support needed and also in sum to demonstrate opportunities to increase our impact. We have successfully reacted to performance information through providing individualized coaching to members, group training on a common need, resources for ongoing member access, and connections to business professionals volunteering their expertise.

Our tools for measuring impact include pre-service, mid-term, and end-of-term measures of service site capacity, member development, and community impact, as well as monthly member experience surveys and annual alumni surveys. We are excited to move toward a stronger evidence basis, as described in the evaluation section below.

Our results to-date encourage us to set challenging targets for the next three years. In the last complete year, members completed capacity building projects for 70 different organizations. Over 80% of projects resulted in increased efficiency or effectiveness, and over 58% in increased scale/reach, as reported by service site staff (these were based on 42 full-time and 70 quarter-time members). For 2013-14, our targets include that members will complete capacity building projects with 60 distinct organizations, of which 56 will report increased effectiveness of services. We also expect 50

Narratives

organizations to report increased efficiency and 30 to report increased scale/reach, using CNCS's Strategic Framework for Capacity Building to define these outcomes.

MEMBER RECRUITMENT: We are proud of our 100% enrollment of members during our current three-year grant. Our theory of change drives our recruiting goals -- we seek emerging professionals who bring passion for social impact, leadership achievement, resourcefulness and learning orientation, and the ability to support and be supported by other members. Specific recruitment targets include members rooted in our local communities, first generation college students, and veterans. We also actively recruit members with disabilities, and ensure that New Sector AmeriCorps members with disabilities are able to access accommodations.

Our primary recruitment tools include general and targeted student and emerging-professional networks and word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth recruitment helps us target high-quality members while engaging alumni in growing the AmeriCorps network. Broad-reaching networks and postings allow us to widely advertise service opportunities, and we recruit at more than 50 colleges and universities, as our model requires members to have completed a college degree. We prioritize recruiting partnerships providing access to locally-rooted individuals and first generation college students, including the University of Massachusetts at Boston where over half the student body represents first generation college students. Last year, we began a long-term effort to include more veterans among our members by conducting outreach through student groups representing veterans.

We have demonstrated continuous improvement in our member management through enrollment and exit times.

MEMBER TRAINING: Member training is an extremely robust aspect of our AmeriCorps member experience. Members take part in four types of training: (1) group orientation, seminars, and workshops; (2) peer group collaborative learning, (3) mentorship, and (4) staff coaching.

1. Group training activities include Kickoff Training, seminars every other week, and eight full-day workshops.

Kickoff Training starts with an overview of AmeriCorps, including the mission and strategic goals of CNCS, an overview of the history and opportunities of the national service movement, and member rules and responsibilities, including timesheets, the importance of displaying the AmeriCorps logo at service sites, and prohibited and unallowable activities; we revisit these topics throughout the service term. Members are also introduced to panels of AmeriCorps alumni to discuss and consider their careers in civic engagement. Orientation to local communities includes pre-service resources as well

Narratives

as a group project during Kickoff Training through which members get to know communities and neighborhoods, to identify unique assets and needs. Members begin orientation to their service sites before Kickoff Training, through individual research. During Kickoff Training, members gather information about their service sites to share with one another, and have on-site orientation to their service sites. Position descriptions provide the first step in orientation to service site activities, and these are complemented by individual meetings between members and service site supervisors and a group training on developing service activity plans. We actively discuss how to ensure members are not engaging in prohibited or unallowable activities as related to each project. Finally, our Kickoff Training also provides topical sessions on professional communication competencies and key topics in civic engagement.

Biweekly seminars offer members ongoing professional development and provide a forum for member engagement and for staff to check-in with members. Units of training are: Impact and Influence, Overview of the Sector, Quantitative and Qualitative Skills, and Innovation. Eight full-day workshops provide an opportunity to engage more deeply using a case studies and for career development and reflection.

2. Peer group collaborative learning occurs through "Learning Teams," which comprise several AmeriCorps members and a staff member. Learning Teams meet biweekly and enable members to maximize their service experiences and impact through problem solving and reflection. Staff are aware of 'red flags' related to unallowable or prohibited activities, as well as signs of member disengagement, and our program team follows up or intervenes as needed.

3. Each New Sector AmeriCorps member is matched one-on-one with a mentor, who is a local business professional serving in a volunteer capacity to provide tools and resources to help members maximize community impact.

4. New Sector program staff is committed to supporting members across the service term. Staff engages with members on a weekly basis in order to provide effective support and monitoring. Our member training program enables both an orientation to AmeriCorps, including rules around prohibited activities, as well as ongoing monitoring. The importance of "indirect" in the prohibited activities is highlighted in the orientation, and as-needed based on "red flags" from Learning Teams or training sessions.

MEMBER SUPERVISION: We have seen that effective supervisors make a member's service experience and impact substantially greater. Support by New Sector staff is discussed above, and we ensure effective supervision at the service site as follows.

Narratives

Service sites must have a supervisor committed to regular check-ins with the member and regular interactions with New Sector staff. We screen out organizations whose supervisors don't evidence openness to providing active coaching, resources, and feedback to members. Service site supervisors attend a pre-service orientation, which includes an overview of New Sector, program expectations, and AmeriCorps (including prohibited activities). We stay in touch with supervisors through regular contact, three mid-term member evaluations and at least two service site visits during the program term. Additionally, we connect with supervisors as-needed, and always conduct outreach if any concerns arise.

Service site supervisors are invited to select program trainings to support the sustainability of project impact. For example, we have had supervisors attend trainings on performance measurement so they can better support members engaging in performance measurement projects.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE: New Sector AmeriCorps members have powerful service experiences, in which their community impact is both immediate and long term, and is complemented by our our commitment to member development. The depth of the member experience is strengthened by individual and collective reflections. We are committed to enhancing AmeriCorps member identity and a focused approach to developing active citizenship. We focus on AmeriCorps member identity through (1) Kickoff Training, (2) consistency of language, and (3) cross-program events.

1. Our members know they're AmeriCorps members from the member recruitment process, and this is formally documented in their member agreements and shared in Kickoff Training. In Kickoff, we've integrated a module showing that indirect service through capacity building creates more and better direct service, and when "rolled up" across our members, the "direct service" impact is large. We've also linked service values into our Kickoff Training. Members have reflected that these activities have increased their identification with the AmeriCorps service experience and they have been active in leading service activities outside of New Sector-organized events.

2. Perhaps our greatest tool for AmeriCorps member identity is ensuring that we're using language consistently and asking members to do the same to ensure consistency of the message within their service sites, networks, and communities. Our members appreciate being part of something "larger than themselves" by identifying consistently as AmeriCorps members. We work with members on using their "elevator pitches" and resumes to highlight their AmeriCorps service.

3. We collaborate with our State Commissions in CA and MA, other AmeriCorps programs including Citizen Schools, City Year, Jumpstart, Public Allies, and Teach for America, and our members attend cross-program activities including Massachusetts Opening Day and AmeriCorps Alumni events. We

Narratives

organize service projects on MLK Day and during AmeriCorps Week. Collaborations also occur organically, through our members introducing their friends who are serving as AmeriCorps members with other programs, to one another based on shared experiences and interests. We have been extremely pleased by our conversations to date with the IL State Commission, which have demonstrated their interest in partnering with us to identify the most effective service site partnerships to enable local community impact.

These efforts serve to strengthen AmeriCorps identity and build upon the co-branding we do, through providing members with New Sector/AmeriCorps service gear as well as "AmeriCorps serving here" signs for posting at their service sites. Going forward, we're excited to continue to build the depth of AmeriCorps member experience.

VOLUNTEER GENERATION: Our members engage in volunteer recruitment to extend their impact in three ways. First, some members complete volunteer engagement projects, and we ensure volunteers recruited do not support prohibited or unallowable activities, through training and monitoring. Second, we actively encourage members to recruit volunteers to engage in our service day projects. This activity serves the purpose of engaging more volunteers in community service projects and also highlights AmeriCorps for increased visibility in our communities.

Third, a key element of our program includes leveraging the skills of community professionals as Mentors and trainers. In each of the past three years we have received over \$500,000 of in-kind support from local professionals who volunteer their time to maximize our members' impact. This support comes in large part from our long-standing partnerships with organizations such as McKinsey and Company, The Bridgespan Group, Deloitte, and Oliver Wyman as well as more recent partnerships with Google and other companies with investments in social impact. In 2012, these individuals volunteered over 2,800 hours of their time with us. We project that in the 2013-14 year alone, we will benefit from over 4,000 hours of skilled volunteer support to enhance the impact our members' service creates.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: We are deeply committed to our partnership with AmeriCorps. Internally and externally, we've been committed to co-branding with AmeriCorps -- through service gear, our website and reports, recruiting fliers and displays, presentation templates used in trainings, and social media. We also include AmeriCorps identification as a requirement for service site partners. We explain the requirement and provide signage for service sites, as well as electronic copies of the AmeriCorps logo and standard phrases for use, to make implementation straightforward, and we look for AmeriCorps identification during

Narratives

service site monitoring visits. To date, our service sites have been very sensitive to the importance of the AmeriCorps brand.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: The mission of New Sector is to accelerate social change by strengthening organizations today while developing leaders for tomorrow. New Sector was founded in 2000 by volunteers to bring together community leaders from the business, academic, and nonprofit sectors to meet pressing community needs. In 2001, we incorporated as a 501(c)(3) and raised funding to hire staff and run volunteer programs in Boston and San Francisco. From 2002-07, we managed a VISTA grant and hosted 16 VISTAs who built the capacity of our organization and matched MBA students and business volunteers with poverty-alleviating nonprofits in Boston and San Francisco. In 2006, we were awarded an AmeriCorps State Education Award grant in MA to pilot a summer program for quarter-time members. In 2007 we were awarded a three-year MA State formula operational grant to support both full-time and quarter-time members, and in 2010 we were awarded our current National Direct grant. We have placed over 600 AmeriCorps members at over 400 service sites. Our Board and staff have gained significant experience managing AmeriCorps grants, and we partner with experts to ensure compliance and use of best practices.

Our staff structure is as follows:

Our Board of Directors oversees two senior management staff, our Executive Chair and our Managing Director. Our Executive Chair is primarily responsible for the vision and external relations of New Sector, and collaborates with the Managing Director to ensure program implementation supports mission advancement and leverages CNCS investment effectively. Our Executive Chair is New Sector's Founder, and has led our activities managing the VISTA, MA State, and National grants, and collaborates with leaders in national service at all levels. Our Managing Director is responsible for program, operational, and fiscal oversight. Our Managing Director has 1.5 years of experience managing our AmeriCorps grant and a decade managing programs and operations, in roles responsible for overseeing groups of emerging professionals in service roles. She has served two AmeriCorps terms. Additional staff members include Site Leaders and Communications and Operations staff.

Each site has a full-time Site Leader to support members locally and collaborate on our national program team. Our San Francisco Site Leader has 2 years of experience managing our AmeriCorps program successfully and was trained by our Executive Chair and Founding San Francisco Program Manager, and also has experience in a support role for an executive of a large national AmeriCorps

Narratives

program. Our Boston Site Leader is an alumna of our AmeriCorps program and has served in several mentoring roles. We have started recruiting a Founding Program Manager for our Chicago site, and are most interested in a professional with a demonstrated commitment to service and success building partnerships with individuals and between organizations. These Site Leaders take the lead role in recruiting, coordinating training for, and supporting members on a day-to-day basis. They collaborate daily and have formal weekly Program Meetings led by the Managing Director, which address program integrity and review monitoring needs, findings, and follow up.

Other staff include Communications and Operations Coordinators. They attend program activities and lead Learning Teams in order to stay closely connected to the program. Our Communications Coordinator is an alumnus of our AmeriCorps program, and our Operations Coordinator recently started a new volunteer effort focused on building service opportunities for emerging professionals. We conduct staff-wide training twice annually, which includes a review of AmeriCorps rules, and we discuss key initiatives, questions, and updates at weekly all-staff meetings.

Internal skill sets support program, operation, and fiscal management, as well as curriculum/program design. We work closely with experts in the field on an as-needed basis on specific areas including technology and career development curricula. We partner with a bookkeeping and finance firm with many clients who manage AmeriCorps grants; they provide day-to-day bookkeeping and inform decisions, and we maintain oversight. We have pro bono legal support familiar with our programs and funding model. While we have managed our performance measurement work to date internally, we are poised and excited to collaborate with an external evaluator and have dedicated resources to support this effort.

Aside from our staff and contractors, we gain substantial support and insight from our Board of Directors and Community Advisory Boards. Our Board comprises skilled professionals from the business, academic, and social sectors. Our Community Advisory Boards comprise social sector professionals who are experts in CNCS focus areas in each of our sites, including several who have managed AmeriCorps grants and programs. Advisory Board members provide input on all aspects of program delivery, design, and improvement.

We are excited about our expansion to Chicago, and have conducted deep market analysis to validate the need and opportunity there; the need is demonstrated by the existence of a wide variety of nonprofits with growing demand and shrinking resources, the lack of effective/sufficient capacity (per the IL State Commission, among others), and the opportunity represented by a strong interest among our target members in serving in Chicago, as well as existing partnerships with Chicago-based

Narratives

professionals, academics, and nonprofit leaders. We intend to hire a Chicago manager in February 2013, who will manage the partnership development activities under the supervision of the Managing Director. We have raised some local funds to support our expansion to Chicago. Partnership development activities will focus primarily on cultivating relationships with individual nonprofits and networks of nonprofits, professionals interested in serving as Mentors and trainers, and organizations with whom we can collaborate to deliver member support. We also intend to deepen our relationship with the IL State Commission to enable Chicago members to serve as part of a state-wide AmeriCorps network and connecting with other AmeriCorps programs in the area.

RECORD MANAGING AMERICORPS GRANT AND PROGRAM: As we complete our third year of our first National Direct grant, we are proud of our performance to date and our commitment to compliance. As discussed above, we over-achieved our performance targets last year, demonstrating over 80% achievement of increased service site effectiveness. A Training and Technical Assistance visit near the end of Year 1 of our grant identified several areas of compliance and monitoring that required improvement. At the same time, we had some staff transition, and we worked closely with our Program Officer to gain relevant training, and then undertook substantial changes to our operations management. This has resulted in a Program Operations Guide that provides sustainable and updated records of how we engage in all aspects of program management, from project development to criminal history checks, and beyond. We have refined the way we use highly secure technology to manage member and program information, allowing us to have "checks and balances" in place. We had a successful follow up visit in Year 2 and are confident that the updates we have made will enable us to effectively grow our programs, to Chicago in 2013-14, and beyond in future years.

Our AmeriCorps program is embedded as the largest activity we undertake as an organization. Our other major program has been a quarter-time AmeriCorps program, but will no longer be within the AmeriCorps portfolio, because our full-time program provides a bigger community impact as return on CNCS' investment given grant management requirements, as we indicated in our Year 3 continuation application.

SUSTAINABILITY: New Sector has a consistent record of financial sustainability, and we have recently secured funding for and invested in a project to diversify funding to support our long-term sustainability. Over the past three years of our current grant, we have achieved over 65% match funding, and also leveraged over \$500k in in-kind support for the program each year. These numbers attest to the value perceived by our nonprofit service sites and professionals who volunteer with us,

Narratives

and they provide a key foundation for our sustainability.

The impact of our members' service outlasts each service term, as sustainable impact is a key piece of every project. Each member's position description details the tools for sustainable impact, and we monitor success creating these tools through a mid-term check-in focused exclusively on this topic.

These activities attest to the sustainability of the impact at any given service site.

Finally, our community partnerships provide a third key to sustainability. We regularly consult our service sites as well as other community partners, including thought leaders and academic institutions focused on developing civic engagement leaders to assess the relevance of our projects and training.

These data -- as well as those gathered from member evaluations and service site satisfaction ratings -- drive our program improvement activities to ensure community alignment. We formally review these materials twice yearly, and engage in informal communications with our community partners on an ongoing basis.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: As mentioned above, we have undertaken substantial improvements in our compliance and accountability practices. We now have carefully documented processes, and the tools to update them as needed; for example when new criminal history check procedures were released, we were able to quickly react through process review and updates. In our response to our Training and Technical Assistance visit in June 2011, we identified several sets of procedures for compliance and accountability, especially around prohibited and unallowable activities.

1. We updated our outreach materials to be clearer about allowable activities, and we now share materials with potential service sites describing each project type, example projects, intended impact, and compliance risks that must be considered. We have also conducted staff trainings on a regular basis focused on assessing service site/project alignment and developing position descriptions.

Engaging regularly and in depth with our Program Officer has enabled us to address questions far in advance.

2. We enhanced our training and materials to prevent compliance issues. Internally, we use our Program Operations Guide and regular meetings to consistently address prevention of compliance issues. Externally, we have improved the clarity of the training delivered to members and service site supervisors to ensure complete clarity of rules, especially about prohibited and unallowable activities.

3. We are prepared to intervene in cases of noncompliance, and our proactive and prevention activities mean "red flags" of actual or potential noncompliance activities come to our attention much more quickly than they previously had. We monitor for noncompliance through staff participation in

Narratives

Learning Teams and training and service site monitoring visits, where we use a standard tool to track visits and follow up. We are committed to thoroughly looking into and addressing all compliance issues.

We have already seen benefits of our improved compliance processes, including staff, members, and service site supervisors proactively bringing compliance questions to our attention, so we could clarify requirements. We are firmly committed to maintaining compliance.

Our audits have received consistently unqualified opinions, including the past two years which included A-133 audits and were "clean."

DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE, ENROLLMENT, AND RETENTION: As described above, we have worked hard to address compliance concerns. The most exciting outcome of this is our staff-wide approach to compliance, which includes increased transparency with community stakeholders and consistent documentation and implementation of processes internally.

In the current year, we have worked to clarify the process and documentation of service site monitoring visits to address an area of weakness and ensure we're conducting these in a thorough and efficient manner, and early results show benefits of the updated tool and guidance we've developed. Another major focus this year has been on AmeriCorps member identity, as described above, and we are pleased with early results of these efforts.

We are proud of our consistent 100% enrollment as well as our retention rate of 98%. Of our relatively few members who have exited early, nearly all have been due to acceptance of jobs. We are disappointed with these members' decisions, and have tried to react both by clarifying the commitment members have made to their communities, and by working to improve member engagement in career development activities, so they can be sure they'll get their career building needs met through completion of their service.

CONSULTATION WITH STATE COMMISSIONS: We have consulted with the MA and CA State Commissions on an ongoing basis, and most recently have planned a meeting with MA commission program officers to discuss optimizing coordination of resources in the state. We have also consulted with the IL commission as part of our planning for expansion to Chicago, and have heard support and thoughtful guidance about local needs from the Executive Director. Upon hiring a Program Manager for Chicago, we expect to work closely with Serve Illinois to ensure we're targeting service sites meeting unique needs and in need of capacity.

OPERATING SITES AND MEMBER SERVICE SITES: We recently (February 1, 2013) began accepting applications from interested service sites for 2013-14. Potential service sites apply based on

Narratives

our Request for Applications with specific projects demonstrating aligned impact with our intended impact within CNCS focus areas; in the application process, they also answer questions about their organizational stability, leadership planning, and evidence basis of their programs as well as questions about their organizational capacity, measurable community need, and reasons their requested projects cannot be accomplished through staff roles. We screen each application using a standardized checklist and dual-review process to determine compellingness and compliance risks. We follow up with each site considered a possible fit with a phone call (returning sites) or a site visit (new sites) in which we review program policies and regulations and evaluate community need and alignment of project to the need.

At each operating site, we consider local needs based on our annual needs assessment survey and the input of our Community Advisory Boards. Through our discussions with potential sites and review of their written materials (website, annual report, etc.), we make determinations about the following areas that guide our decision about whether to include them in the pool of service sites: program quality and replicability, program sustainability, program leadership and succession planning, and whether the program receives other AmeriCorps or CNCS resources (or is a pending applicant) and its ability to separate the impact of New Sector from other aspects of the CNCS-supported program (e.g. based on size of program, project proposed, centrality of AmeriCorps funding to the program), and finally the impact of member's service on community members (as participants, leaders, advisors, etc.). Selected service sites will move forward with a position description process, which builds upon the determined project scope, and includes a dual-review internally to provide "checks and balances" to ensure compliance and impact. Once position descriptions are reviewed and finalized, we formalize partnerships with service sites through a comprehensive memorandum of understanding, which details mutual expectations (including but not limited to adherence to rules about prohibited and unallowable activities, participation in member evaluations, and non-duplication, non-displacement, and non-supplementation).

We have relationships with 44 distinct service sites as part of service projects active today, as well as many more from prior program terms. These relationships are most likely to lead to continued or new service site partnerships. Most service sites have contributed part of the costs of running our program, which we have used as match. Data indicate that the large majority (over 95%) of service sites would like to continue to partner with us pending financial capability and the availability of a relevant and aligned project.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

Narratives

To date, we have successfully secured a strong match of over 65% and our cost per MSY has been well below the maximum allowable. We are requesting \$8,600 per MSY, or \$602,000 for the 2013-14 term, which is a slightly lower cost per MSY than our current grant. With this lower cost, we will also be able to extend services to the Chicago area, and engage more total MSYs than under the current grant (70 MSYs versus 60). This CNCS request represents 22% of our total organizational budget, and 27% of the costs of operating the program. We have no State Commission requests for funding. Additional support for the program is expected from four sources: (1) service sites contribute financially toward hosting members, and we expect this to support 75% of the non-CNCS investment (consistent with past performance); (2) a private foundation has funded increases in our capacity, including startup costs for expansion to Chicago as well as other funds which may support up to 15% of non-CNCS supported costs; (3) our recent investment into revenue diversification has modest goals of providing 10-15% of non-CNCS covered expenses; and (4) we have a history of leveraging over \$500,000 annually of in-kind services that focus directly on program, and we expect to achieve at least 25% growth in in-kind support in 2013-14.

Thanks to our leveraging in-kind support, a relatively lower cash investment by CNCS results in substantial community impact through immediate capacity for organizations as well as lasting impact over time.

Our program and financial model has remained fairly constant over recent years, and we are confident in the adequacy of our budget projections to cover all necessary expenses, including but not limited to program support costs, training activities and personnel, and criminal history and FBI fingerprint checks.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

We are committed to pursuing an independent, external evaluation of our AmeriCorps program, and have secured a \$10,000 initial investment into the evaluation; we anticipate this funding to be sufficient for the first phase of the evaluation and value evaluation highly as we plan future priorities. We have discussed our plan with two possible lead evaluators, and expect to finalize a relationship by Summer 2013. We plan to partner with a lead evaluator who teaches at one of Boston's preeminent business schools, and who will engage student teams over four semesters to devise and complete an evaluation. We expect semester 1 and part of 2 to be devoted to planning, clarification of the evaluation questions and plan based on a program and literature review, and finalizing data collection tools. During the latter part of Semester 2 and throughout Semester 3, evaluators will collect and analyze data. Semester 4 will focus on deeper analysis, debriefing results and gathering qualitative

Narratives

clarification, and developing action plans. The end of Semester 4 corresponds with the end of year 2 of the grant period, and year 3 will be used to roll out agreed-upon action plans. Partnering with student teams supports our commitment to developing the practical skills of emerging professionals, and partnering with a consistent lead evaluator (faculty member) will provide a consistent, informed approach to managing our evaluation over time. We have been offered additional in-kind support through periodic reviews by management consultants specializing in measurement projects, including one from McKinsey and Company's widely respected Social Sector practice.

We are seeking this evaluation for reasons above and beyond funding requirements. In particular, we expect a strong evaluation to enable us to make better decisions about member supports, service site selection, and maximizing the long-term impact of our capacity building services. We expect to include process questions about program integrity and ensuring members and service sites are aligned with criteria driven by our theory of change. Expected outcome questions include the following:

- i) What measurable increases in efficiency and effectiveness are created as a causal result of member service projects?
- ii) How many more beneficiaries across CNCS focus areas do our service sites reach as a causal result of member service?
- iii) Are service site impacts visible 12 months after term completion?
- iv) What service site, project, or member factors predict greater impact on program efficiency, effectiveness, or reach, or sustaining impact?
- v) Do our members have more long-term civic engagement throughout their career trajectories?
- vi) What replicable practices support Mentors in contributing the maximum amount of impact to members and service sites?

The answers to these evaluation questions will enable us to set clearer targets, manage activities to support those targets, and identify and strengthen those program activities and practices that maximize impact. They will also enable us to identify opportunities to build scale or find efficiencies in ways that support impact.

We expect our evaluation design to include exploratory, descriptive, and quasi-experimental methods. Exploratory methods will be most relevant in semesters 1 and 2 to inform the final evaluation questions and plan and to inform the refinement of measurement tools. Descriptive methods support answering process questions and contributing to analysis on outcome questions. We expect to use quasi-experimental design (time series specifically) because randomly assigning members to serve or not and service sites to receive support or not seems contrary to our theory of change which guides

Narratives

our selection of members and service sites. We believe the choice of quasi-experimental design maximizes both the value of evaluation findings and also our program impact; of course we will work closely with our evaluator to finalize evaluation design.

We expect to collect data using surveys, and where relevant, focus groups and structured interviews where greater depth is indicated. Measurement tools will likely be refined based on our current performance measurement tools as well as the literature, and we expect to clarify staff versus evaluator roles in collecting data once the process is underway (likely in semester 1). We have identified several ethical considerations that we will explore more fully with our evaluator, including increased training on confidentiality (especially for service site data related to community outcomes) and informed consent to measure and report on secondary data gathered from service sites. Finally, we expect to clarify and mitigate various risks to validity, especially bias toward perceived impact of service that included substantial investment of time and resources.

We expect to clarify and build upon our evaluation plan during Spring 2013 in preparation for an informed hire of a lead evaluator in Summer 2013, and subsequent refinement of the evaluation plan.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A