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Executive Summary

Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC) AmeriCorps members will be primarily recruited from the local area. Our corps structure will be based on a youth corps model. Out of 45 members, 90% of our members will be 18-24, 20% will be economically disadvantaged, and 10% will have no higher education experience. CAC AmeriCorps serves in low income neighborhoods in Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee. The service impacts people who use public lands, waterways, public parks, greenways, and hundreds of acres of national park land. Our program begins in August 2013 and ends June 2014. CAC provides a multitude of services so that low-income people can be self-sufficient. Our AmeriCorps program's first priority is help get the economy moving forward through financial literacy and responsibility initiatives. We will train, coach and encourage CAC AmeriCorps members to be productive and engaged citizens. In addition, we will accomplish goals that will impact our community's need for a safer, cleaner and more beautiful place to live and work. Our fixed-grant request for 2013-14 is \$584,910 for 45 full-time members. Our local cash and in-kind match will be over 50%.

Rationale and Approach

B. 1. a. Need

As an agency, CAC specifically serves low-income neighborhoods, communities and community members in Knox County. Our agency's history is based upon building capacity, providing direct services and helping economically disadvantaged people toward self-sufficiency. The neighborhoods and communities we serve are some of the lowest income areas in the region which have high unemployment, poor health and few resources. According to U.S. Census data, Knoxville's poverty rate (23.9%) is 38% higher than the state average (16.9%) and is higher than regional counterparts Chattanooga, TN (23.4%), Johnson City, TN (22.5%) and Asheville, NC (20.3%). Lack of job training and employment opportunities is a reality in Knoxville's urban center. In 2011, Tennessee had an unemployment rate of 9.2%. According to the State of Tennessee's Labor and Workforce Development, Tennessee's youth unemployment rate in 2011 among 20-24 year olds was 18.3%. Moreover, unemployment among African-Americans in this same age group was 25.8%. Youth employment is double the average unemployment of older workers in Knoxville. Without work experience or higher education opportunities these youth fall closer to being chronically unemployed or underemployed. Across the region, food insecurity is a constant issue which amplifies our problems with obesity, poor nutrition and food related illness. In addition, environmental degradation disproportionately affects

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these communities. Low-income community members were selected to be served because they are disproportionately affected and must contend with poor air quality, erosion, water pollution and safety as an everyday issue which endangers human health.

Eastern hemlock trees are one of the largest and most common trees in the Great Smoky Mountains. They play an ecologically vital role in cooling mountain streams and providing habitat for many other species. Unfortunately, they are under attack from a non-native insect called the hemlock woolly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*). Without successful intervention, the hemlock woolly adelgid is likely to kill most of the hemlock trees in the southern Appalachian Mountains, an event which will trigger profound changes to forest structure and carbon cycling in the region. Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires that states develop a compilation of the streams and lakes that are "water quality limited" or are expected to exceed water quality standards in the next two years and need additional pollution controls. In June 2012, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation collected biological sampling data from US Army Corps of Engineers, US Geological Survey, Tennessee Valley Authority and Tennessee Wildlife resources Agency by which over 250 miles of Knox County's streams were found to be impaired. Many of these polluted creeks are posted for no human contact due to the presence of disease-causing pathogens. This stream pollution kills aquatic life and endangers human health. In addition, these streams flow directly into the Tennessee River, which is Knox County's only source for municipal drinking water.

In 2008, the Knox County Health Department conducted a Behavioral Risk Factor Survey in which 25.4% people surveyed were not "at all prepared" for a disaster. Moreover, 32.3% of people surveyed earning less than \$15,000 per year were totally unprepared in the event of a disaster. Low income communities need more resources, training and information in disaster preparedness.

In 2011, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service, Tennessee ranked 43rd in volunteer participation and 51st in volunteer hours. Among 75 mid-sized cities, Knoxville ranked 64th in volunteer hours served and 38th in percentage of volunteers mobilized during this same time.

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) from 2008- 2011, Tennessee ranked 6th in food hardship with 21.7% of people responding that they were unable to buy adequate food in the last 12 months. FRAC's report also ranked Knoxville 17th in all Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the nation for food hardship. Over 300,000 emergency food requests are reported by Knox County's food pantries each year.

1. b. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems

10 members will be serving in a youth conservation corps consisting of members that are

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economically disadvantaged, 18-24 years old, unemployed prior to their service, and need additional resources to begin a career after AmeriCorps. These members will receive specialized on-site training including an exploration of land and waste conservation jobs, work skills, and career management activities. The multi-faceted service that these members complete during their term will consist of maintaining greenways, creating trails, reclaiming urban riparian zones, developing urban agriculture, recycling, composting, cleaning neighborhoods and maintaining parks.

After their term of service, members will be tracked for successful employment and/or higher education attainment. 7 members will be serving in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in Gatlinburg, TN, Knoxville City Parks and Ijams Nature Center in Knoxville to improve 500 acres of public space by eradicating invasive species, planting and nurturing native plants, maintaining structures and enhancing accessibility in these parks. 10 members will be serving to improve and/or create 55 miles of multiple-use trails and greenways in Blount, Sevier and Knox Counties. In addition, members will clean, improve, monitor and/or reclaim 15 miles of impaired waterways in Knox County. 2 members will teach over 1,000 individuals about environmental stewardship. These members will create and facilitate workshops, curriculum and testing on several topic areas including: air quality, water quality, land use, conservation, native plants, urban agriculture and wildlife biology. The curricula has been designed in conjunction with professional educators in Knox County, and in the past year our members using these curricula have shown at least a 10% increase in knowledge in 25% of their students. 2 members will assist disaster management officials with Knoxville Emergency Management Agency and the City of Knoxville's Office of Neighborhoods to design and facilitate disaster preparedness trainings for 500 people associated with low income neighborhoods, university staff and students, community organizations and other AmeriCorps streams of service such as Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, RSVP and VISTA. Out of these 500 individuals, a group of 300 individuals will commit to create their own family preparedness plan. 8 members will create new and facilitate six (6) existing public composting, recycling and waste reduction programs throughout Knoxville and Knox County including at the University of Tennessee. These members will reduce or divert 600 tons of solid waste during their service term by coordinating volunteers and collecting recycling drives and daily recycling collections. 2 members will recruit, train and manage 5,000 volunteers during their service term. To help other organizations with volunteer mobilization, these members will provide at least 5 organizations with 3 best management practices; including processes and procedures for effective volunteer management. 3 members will grow, harvest and distribute fresh local produce to area food pantries as a way to enhance the nutritional content of emergency

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food bags which will feed 500 people in Knoxville's inner city neighborhoods. In addition, members will train community gardeners, provide free vegetable seeds to the public, and teach food preservation to better engage people in better nutrition and to alleviate childhood obesity. Of the people fed through our gardens, 200 people will be surveyed for the effectiveness of alleviating food insecurity during the service term. 1 member will serve with the University of Tennessee Outdoor Program (UTOP) community school project at 3 area elementary schools. This member will provide safe, physical exercise program activities for 40 at-risk or with childhood obesity issues. Students active in UTOP's program explore local parks and receive an education about Knox County's and East Tennessee recreational opportunities. Connecting children to the outdoors is part of the Whole Child Development approach which addresses all needs of students including health, family, and community engagement. In addition, this member will teach and train the students and their families in proper techniques for exercise and nutrition plans. We are requesting 45 AmeriCorps members that will serve in a full-time capacity for 2013-14.

1. c. Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact

Economic opportunities: Youth corps programs have been researched by CNCS to determine the effectiveness of creating opportunities for youth. Based on a CNCS-funded survey published June 2012 on the impact of youth corps programs associated with The Corps Network, service members reported making \$2.77-an-hour more 18 months following their service term than they did prior to their service term. When compared to a control group of their peers who did not participate in service activities they made \$0.86-an-hour more during their 18-month check-up. Of those youth corps respondents, 77% reported that their experience with their respective youth corps put them at an advantage when trying to find a job, and 86.1% of participants reported high satisfaction with skill attainment for job/career advancement. All of these indicators are shown to lead to successful employment for youth that are tracked at least 5 years after their service term (www.nationalservice.gov).

Environmental stewardship miles of trails and waterways: Members involved in environmental stewardship and conservation measures will follow best management practices (BMPs) adopted from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) case studies on stormwater practices. Members serving on the CAC Water Quality Team (WQT) follow an adapted version of Monroe County's (New York) "Enlisted Citizens to Monitor Water Quality" to educate and engage the public in watershed monitoring and repair. WQT members have been engaging in this practice since 2001, and have engaged students in service-learning based water quality activities such as sampling the Index of

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Biotic Integrity (IBI) and benthics in community watersheds and installation of rain gardens. Students monitor watersheds located near their schools and homes, participate in clean-ups and mitigation activities (e.g. rain garden installation), and are also tested on their knowledge of stormwater issues. WQT members and their student groups have been the stewards of more than 15 miles of watershed in the City of Knoxville, and they have had more than 1,500 students show a significant increase in knowledge (10% improvement) on testing. The 2009 EPA report "Building Vibrant Communities: Community Benefits of Land revitalization" states that "Planting trees can improve the feel of communities while absorbing and sequestering carbon, regulating temperature, and absorbing rain or snow to reduce runoff." In addition this report states that "Residential development that is coupled with public open spaces provides an opportunity for residents to socialize and share information and learn about their community. Simple landscape and building improvements beautify a neighborhood, generate resident pride and make it a more attractive destination for activity and entertainment." The impact of improving public spaces, trails, greenways and waterways will improve the low income communities we serve.

CAC has recently implemented methodologies based on Atlanta's study on "Reaching Citizens with Workshops and an Informative Web Site" for activities on the environmental stewardship miles and waterways improved national performance measure. Members have engaged in outreach activities and event-based recycling activities that provide information regarding littering, and the financial impact of recycling and ways to participate. Atlanta's study did not measure recycling, but reported a greater reduction in pounds of trash-per-mile during stream clean-ups over the course of 3 years. CAC AmeriCorps began promoting event-based recycling activities by members and workshops resulting in an increase of 15% (58.61 tons) from 2011 to 2012 (cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater). Stewardship: Acres of public land: The National Park Service (NPS) has identified the Asian hemlock woolly adelgid and invasive exotic plants as key ecological threats which interfere with the agency's mandate to preserve and protect resources unimpaired for future generations. The woolly adelgid is an insect capable of killing hemlocks, evergreens with a lifespan of more than 600 years, within 5 years. Exotic plants on public lands maintained by the NPS are similarly devastating to local plant life by rapidly proliferating and out-competing native plant species without their natural environmental inhibitors. NPS policy and Executive Orders mandate the agency to control invasive species and protect native ecosystems. AmeriCorps members will engage in NPS-approved forestry and vegetative BMPs through labor-intensive work, which can save hundreds of acres of hemlock trees each year. Members will also serve in Knox County developing Knoxville's Urban Wilderness with the intention

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to develop thriving inner-city recreational opportunities. The idea backed by the City's Mayor and local non-profits Legacy Parks and Ijams Nature Center operates under the presumption that land stewardship and improvement improves neighborhoods by increasing property values and increased services. Research conducted by Texas A&M University researcher Dr. John L. Crompton notes decades of proof for a positive proximate effect of public or open spaces. Dr. Crompton notes that being within three blocks of a community park can increase property values by up to 20% (www.cprs.org).

Disaster Services Preparedness: CAC Disaster Preparedness team members will work through Knox County Stormwater Engineering and the City of Knoxville's Office of Neighborhoods to provide community trainings to Knox County residents through the Office of Neighborhoods' Neighborhood Disaster Preparedness Plan (NDPP) and follows guidelines outlined in the County's Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) stresses community preparedness as a mitigation practice and necessary for a quick and effective response in the event of a disaster event. They note a significantly better chance of survival of such an event, and since only approximately 50% of events trigger Federal assistance then many communities must be prepared to handle a disaster on their own. The City of Knoxville's NDPP strives to make citizens an active piece of Knoxville's Emergency Operations Plan. Through partnerships with the Knoxville Emergency Management Agency, Knoxville American Red Cross, Knox County Health Department, Knoxville Fire Department, and Knoxville Police department members will organize monthly meetings to neighborhood groups and provide trainings for Knox County residents (www.fema.gov).

Capacity building leverage: According to the 2012 Volunteering and Civic Life in America report, volunteers provide crucial community services through their participation. To better leverage community volunteers, CAC AmeriCorps will develop its own strategic plan for leveraging volunteers in the area and provide workshops for organizations to better recruit and retain community volunteers. A similar plan has been implemented by North Carolina, who instituted a State Strategic Plan (SSP), for community organizations and provided informal training to leverage volunteers. Compared with Tennessee (24.4 hours per volunteer; herein hrs/vol) North Carolina reports 28.7% more hours per volunteer in service. Knoxville lags behind regional counterparts with 26.2 hrs/vol while Chattanooga, TN reports 31.1 hrs/vol (an increase of 22.5%) and Asheville, NC reports 37.8 hrs/vol (an increase of 44.2%) despite comparable populations and activities (www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/TN/Knoxville).

Childhood obesity: CAC and The University of Tennessee's Outdoor Program (UTOP) will provide

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afterschool ecological education and outdoor recreation opportunities to children and a member of the University of Tennessee's education department will assist in program development and academic curriculum support. Programming will follow the Whole Child Developmental Approach as an integrated focus on academics, services, and support. The Whole Child Developmental Approach was developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) to address comprehensive needs of school, family, students, and community. The whole child approach expands the education of students from solely academic to a more long-term development plan to create intelligent, healthy, and engaged citizens. Children in the program will receive ecological education about Knoxville's great outdoors.

The lifestyle encouraged is outlined in the Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights and includes hiking, outdoor play, wildlife watching, and gardening. The curriculum is designed to define and encourage healthy, low-cost physical activities and provides the children with the opportunity to participate in a wide array of recreational activities including biking, hiking, canoeing, climbing, and map reading on a weekly basis. Activities are based on the Let's Move Outside campaign's recommendation of 60 minutes of outdoor play improves a child's physical and mental health, and that outdoor activity helps children maintain a healthy weight. All of our performance measures have been researched and determined by CAC staff and community partners using CNCS Theory of Change worksheets at our annual training. The impact we want to see at the end of the three-year grant period is that all of our youth conservation corps members are successfully employed, neighborhoods and parks are improved, green jobs are created and sustained and the environment is healthier for our citizens. Since 1994, our program has exceeded all performance measures, goals and objectives. In the last year of operation, our program exceeded all national performance measures and our impact in the community has enabled our program to convert to a youth conservation corps model, which will provide additional supports to disadvantaged youth in our community.

1. d. Member Recruitment

CAC and CAC AmeriCorps place a high priority on providing opportunities for the residents of Knox County and surrounding counties. In 2012, 45% of members were residents of East Tennessee. CAC AmeriCorps believes strongly in the youth corps model that provides local, at-risk, out-of-school youth a variety of service opportunities that will bolster their work experience, skill development, and pathways to meaningful employment and postsecondary education. Using the my.AmeriCorps.gov portal, we will actively seek disadvantaged youth ages 18-24 to participate in our AmeriCorps program. As standard practice, at least one disadvantaged youth application will be considered for all

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positions in our corps. To ensure that we are reaching the disadvantaged youth population CAC AmeriCorps has partnered with CAC Workforce Connections (Workforce Connections), a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) agency. The WIA was introduced in 1998 to provide federal job training services and fund workforce education and career pathways programs. Workforce Connections has a proven track record of providing job services and programming for at-risk youth. They serve more than 26,000 individuals for job placement services annually, and their in-school youth programs have a 93% (138/147) average success rate of guiding at-risk youth to successfully graduating from high school from 2009-2011. Youth will volunteer with CAC AmeriCorps during their WIA enrollment, and work directly with peers that are currently enrolled in CAC AmeriCorps. During their service time they will be encouraged to consider AmeriCorps as an option for career training. Those youth that are enrolled with CAC AmeriCorps will continue to check in with their career counselors monthly during their year of service to allow more intensive contact to establish the foundation for long-term career success.

1. e. Member Training

AmeriCorps members will receive three phases of training: orientation, on-site training, and recurring professional development. All members begin their service term with three days of orientation using what we call the Service, Safety, and Self (3-S) method. The 3-S method is a blended strategy that incorporates lecture-style instruction with reinforcing group exercises. Our members have a chance to apply their lessons either through activity or facilitated discussion with their peers. During their first day of orientation the members will be trained on the history and the social importance of national service and local community service, CAC and AmeriCorps policy and procedures, expectations for the year, and diversity training. Their second day of orientation involves risk management training (risk assessment, personal and protective equipment, and blood-borne disease) and an American Automobile Association (AAA) defensive driver course. The final day of their orientation focuses on group development as members engage in several activities that are designed to demonstrate and make the members aware of the stages of group development, and their meetings and professional development activities are outlined for the remainder of the year. Upon the conclusion of their first three days they will begin on-site training where they will receive the specific trainings such as a reinforcement of prohibited activities, service expectations, risk management trainings, power tool operation and safety, herbicide application, and classroom instruction that are required to perform their service duties. All member site supervisors are required to attend a training prior to the member's start date to receive an annual training on the prohibited activities of both CAC

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and AmeriCorps, to discuss changes to performance measures, and to review their on-site training requirements. Members will receive training to reinforce our policies as it applies to community volunteer management including understanding the AmeriCorps prohibited activities and CAC policies. Member training continues periodically during monthly meetings that include a series of trainings and professional development workshops to prepare the members for life after their service term. The monthly trainings become progressively more intensive and begin with the basics of completing applications for both school and employment. By the end of their service year, members will have received individualized resume writing training, mock interviews, and career guidance.

1. f. Member Supervision

CAC AmeriCorps members are supervised daily by their on-site supervisor. On-site supervisors are selected by CAC AmeriCorps staff by their ability to supervise, adequately train, and provide meaningful service opportunities for members that is congruous with CAC AmeriCorps' goals. Site supervisors are required to attend annual trainings on the member supervision, prohibited activities, and metric tracking. Our current supervisors are a group of 20 working professionals with a combined 91 years of AmeriCorps member supervision. Seven of the twenty site supervisors have served in national service programs (AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, and Peace Corps) and have served for a combined 11 years. CAC AmeriCorps has imposed a 1-to-5, supervisor-to-member, maximum ratio to ensure adequate supervision of our members at their sites. We practice a multi-point method allows the members to voice their concerns on a regular basis so that we may make supervision accommodations to create an enriching year of service. As part of this plan, CAC AmeriCorps staff members meet with site supervisors once a month to check on member and project progress. The Program Director is the single point of contact for any issues, concerns or support for the members. Additionally, members also meet with CAC AmeriCorps staff once a month to discuss their progress on projects and to work on their professional development plans. In the final phase of our method, the members submit a personal progress report directly to CAC AmeriCorps staff members that outline any challenges or additional trainings they feel they may require at their service sites on a monthly basis between their scheduled monthly meetings.

1. g. Member Experience

CAC is recognized as a leader in Knox County, and the region, for its involvement in community action, national service, and developing community leaders. Our AmeriCorps members are immersed in their community through serving others and direct action. The components of our service experience are based on evaluating community needs and assets, leadership training, and direct

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service opportunities. These components develop the member and provide a rich experience which will be a part of the member's lifetime of service. The effectiveness of developing community leadership at CAC AmeriCorps is a combination of highly effective supervisors, with a wealth of experience in working with service members and community volunteers, and a year that features three cross-stream events corresponding to 9/11 National Day of Service, Make a Difference Day, and Martin Luther King Jr. Day to provide a comprehensive education of community action. As part of their orientation, members receive AmeriCorps uniform gear which includes AmeriCorps shirts, winter gear and buttons to wear during their service term and are taught to understand that they are AmeriCorps members and a part of national service. To effectively communicate the meaning of national service to the public and media alike CAC AmeriCorps members receive training from a local marketing firm on effectively telling strong stories and conducting interviews with members of the media. In addition to their formal training, our members have scheduled reflection activities every three months as a full corps. In addition, the members practice service-learning model reflection activities with their volunteers and students when facilitating service in the community. These reflections provide volunteers with the tools to understand the meaning of their service. In addition, AmeriCorps reflections are completed after cross-stream events with other service members in East Tennessee. Their reflection is led by AmeriCorps staff and through a peer committee and focuses on connecting their service in Knox County with the service of other AmeriCorps members across East Tennessee and the United States.

1. h. Volunteer Generation

As an agency, CAC depends upon volunteerism to perform services to our clients. In 2011, CAC AmeriCorps members mobilized 6,143 volunteers who gave 17,863 hours of service. Outside of the AmeriCorps program, CAC relied on 11,978 volunteers who generously gave 313,599 hours of service to 10,007 at-risk adults, 27,640 seniors, 18,182 persons with disabilities, 8,998 youth and infants. AmeriCorps members recruit volunteers through community organizations, faith-based groups, and schools. This recruitment is usually done in person through university classrooms, college fairs, fraternity and sorority chapter meetings, community organized events, at the Tennessee Career "One-stop" Centers, and volunteer information sessions. Members use Volunteermatch.org or service site volunteer databases for recruitment, placement and retention of volunteers. Through AmeriCorps member interaction, volunteers can impact thousands of people in their community, thus working on issues that can affect the volunteer directly. We leverage volunteers to perform tasks that can make a larger impact over a much greater service area versus a concentrated effort of a relatively few CAC

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AmeriCorps members. In addition to the breadth of service being provided, the depth at which our volunteer youth and adults interact with AmeriCorps has a profound meaning to community members that feel left behind or forgotten. Our volunteers help to organize service events, perform clean-ups, beautify neighborhoods and parks, develop curriculum, and provide support to local environmental non-profits. All of our members are trained in volunteer management and service learning techniques during orientation. Members manage episodic and regular volunteers throughout their service term. Our members and operating site supervisors are trained on CAC policies and AmeriCorps prohibited activities. We provide guidance, support and oversight to all service sites so that they will produce volunteer assignments based on meaningful service while avoiding prohibited activities.

1. i. Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

Since 1994, our service program has identified itself as Knoxville- Knox County CAC AmeriCorps. With the inclusion of AmeriCorps in our program name, we are cognizant of the use and branding of AmeriCorps National Service as part of a local solution to important local issues. Our program has a public relations policy in place for CAC AmeriCorps. This policy includes guidelines for use of the Corporation of National Community Service and national service logos and terminology to express national service as it relates to our local host agency and the region. During pre-service orientation, our staff and a local public relations firm provide training on properly branding AmeriCorps. In addition, we train our members and partners about the relationship Knox County CAC AmeriCorps has when being interviewed by the media and when corresponding with the public through newsletters and other publications.

Organizational Capability

2. a. Organizational Background and Staffing

Our Mission: Knoxville- Knox County CAC is a public agency serving the citizens of Knoxville and Knox County especially seniors, low to moderate income families, the unemployed and underemployed, persons with disabilities, and other individuals with special need for services. Our motto is "Helping People. Changing Lives." Since 1965, CAC has operated through a tripartite board made up of representatives from the low-income neighborhoods that CAC serves, from the public sector, and from the private sector. Part of our Community Action Agency's success in meeting compelling needs in our community is due to the efforts our 20 plus advisory councils which consist of more than 400 committed individuals who bring their unique perspectives, experiences and skills to help guide our work. To do that, CAC utilizes caring staff and volunteers to deliver efficient services to

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help people achieve self-sufficiency and independent living through intervention, education and empowerment. The Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee has more than 40 years of experience in operating federal, state, and local grants successfully. The agency receives financial and purchasing support from Knox County and uses the single audit system. In 2011, CAC managed \$45 million in federal, state and local dollars annually. Of this amount, \$8.2 million was given through private local contributions. CAC has hosted, operated, and directed CAC AmeriCorps since 1994. Since 1994, CAC AmeriCorps has provided environmental education, weatherized homes, provided mentoring, fed the hungry, revitalized neighborhoods, diverted tons of solid waste, taught via service-learning, and beautified local schools, vacant lots, greenways and parks. The Knoxville- Knox County CAC Executive Director, Barbara Kelly, supervises the CAC AmeriCorps Program Director providing counsel, direction, and support to the program. Barbara Kelly has 46 years of experience with Community Action and has supervised an AmeriCorps program since 1994. The Knox County CAC Management Services Director, Sue Campbell, maintains financial accountability and program oversight. Sue Campbell has 28 years of experience at Knox County CAC overseeing finances, purchasing, and programs. The CAC AmeriCorps Program Director, John Harris, manages the overall AmeriCorps program. Management of the program involves problem solving, project planning, motivating members and partners, developing partner relationships, working with members and partners to meet all outcomes, recruiting quality members, conducting member training, securing grants and matching funds, and working with financial department to develop financial reports and reporting program progress. John Harris, US Air Force veteran, an alumnus of CAC AmeriCorps and the AmeriCorps Leaders Program, has been the CAC AmeriCorps Program Director for 10 years. Brian Blackmon, CAC AmeriCorps Program Specialist, a former VISTA volunteer and CAC AmeriCorps alumnus, is responsible for new partnership development, member recruiting, member progress reporting, member time and attendance and alumni relations. Brian Blackmon has been CAC AmeriCorps Program Specialist position for 3 years. Our Operating Site Supervisors, who have a combined 90 years of AmeriCorps experience, are focused on program implementation, provide daily oversight of members, facilitate team reporting, maintain program standards and actively plan with their specific team to insure effective service congruent with CAC AmeriCorps national performance measures. Each year, our program provides training and program management manuals for all site supervisors and each new supervisor receives an individualized new supervisor training and guide prior to having an AmeriCorps member at their site.

For Current and Former Grantees Only: We have a record of compliance and outstanding production

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in direct service activities since 1994. Our state commission, Volunteer Tennessee, has received reports of our program's ability to enroll, retain, train and develop members into leaders for success in career oriented fields. Our record of compliance is outstanding. Management of the program is performed by alumni of the CAC AmeriCorps program, who understand the importance and responsibility of being responsive and timely in all aspects of the program management.

2. b. Sustainability

Over the last five years, CAC AmeriCorps has sought out partners outside the scope of services offered at Knox County CAC. For 2013, only 13 AmeriCorps members will be serving at our host agency (Knox County CAC), the other 32 members will be serving at partner service sites. Each partner organization is required to provide a minimum \$7,000 cash match per member and a substantial in-kind match. This diverse system of match is a departure from earlier years of CAC AmeriCorps, in which most of the AmeriCorps members were serving within Knox County CAC departments: Head Start, Green Thumb Community Gardens, Office on Aging, Senior Nutrition, or Project LIVE. AmeriCorps helped to explore additional service avenues of these departments and assisted in developing young AmeriCorps members into future CAC service providers. However, our environmental focus came into being through our first outside partnerships with Ijams Nature Center, Knox County Solid Waste, and University of Tennessee Water Resources Research Center. These strong outside partnerships forged our diverse streams of contributions and have laid the groundwork for other local organizations to become involved in National Service. Since 2003, our AmeriCorps program has grown from 3 partner sites to 19 partner sites in 2013. Our program has actively recruited community and regional partnerships that align with CNCS National Performance Measures and Knox County CAC. These community partners have been involved in the visioning, planning and supervision of the services we provide through AmeriCorps service. Non-financial support has grown through these non-profits and government organizations and as a result our formal partners are able to coordinate and share resources with thousands of community members. To meet long-term sustainability of our program, we have developed a long-term strategy of diversifying our funding stream to include a youth conservation corps model and a fee-for-service project structure for 2014-16. This structure will help to sustain the program's impact if AmeriCorps funding was less available. However, the impact of our service would be severely limited if AmeriCorps funding or National Service Trust education awards were unavailable to our program participants. Special Circumstances: N/A

2. c. Compliance and Accountability

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Our monitoring plan consists of training, regular meetings and regular monitoring of service sites. Each year, our program trains staff, supervisors and members about CAC policies and AmeriCorps rules and regulations, with specific detail given to understanding the AmeriCorps member prohibited activities. Our program staff regularly monitors service sites for compliance and requires members to attend a monthly meeting that is focused on understanding prohibited activities and risk management. Our program staff is able to make regular monitoring visits to service sites given that these 90% of our sites are within 5 miles of our main office. In addition to the site's performance measure report, members complete a monthly personal progress report that provides feedback to our office ensuring that we are aware of potential prohibited activity, safety, challenges or barriers at their sites. Our program uses monitoring visits, member progress reports, performance measure reports and monthly meetings to address any potentially non-compliant activity. Using staff's experience in the field, our agency is able to anticipate potentially non-compliant or difficult service scenarios and help guide members through these situations. If risk or non-compliance is detected, our process is to address the issue quickly and with open communication. Part of our program's compliance plan is to also focus on national performance measure attainment and create an environment where members and service sites are accountable in progressing toward these measures. To ensure compliance, our service sites are required to prepare a monthly performance measure progress report specifically designed to track member activities. Our AmeriCorps program in the last full year of operation did not have any compliance issues at our service sites or at our agency. We take precautions and anticipate any pitfalls or difficult situations well in advance and communicate our strategy for avoiding issues with not attaining performance goals or having prohibited member activity occur. Enrollment was 100% in 2011- 2012. Member retention rate in 2011-12 was 96%, 39 out 40 members exited with an education award. One member left early in the service term to become a researcher in an AIDS/HIV laboratory. Our plan for successfully retaining members is dependent on providing outstanding training, retaining staff with service experience, training quality supervisors, developing meaningful service opportunities and recruiting service-minded people into the program. Our program's success is based on enrolling members that have a passion for and want to serve low income people and use the service term as a way to be a positive force in our community.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

3. a. Cost Effectiveness

Our program's requested funds per MSY have not increased for several years despite increases in the minimum living allowance, health insurance rates, and expansion of the scope of services provided in

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the region. Over the last ten years, our program design has expanded in member size, project scope and area served in East Tennessee. In 2003, our program had twelve members providing environmental service-learning at three local Knoxville service sites: Ijams Nature Center, CAC Beardsley Community Farm and UT Water Resources Research Center. In 2013, our program is requesting 45 members at 19 service sites. Over the last five years, our program has received AmeriCorps funding from CNCS through the competitive process at \$12,999 per member service year. Our program has participated in a CNCS- piloted fixed-amount grant award for the last three years, which does not require an in-kind match to be reported. However, cash match has been 34% during this time period. Our 2013-14 cash and in-kind match is conservatively estimated at 54%. Prior to 2010 fixed- amount grant, our match was calculated, reported and audited to be 54% or greater each year. In 2013-14, CNCS funding represents 46% of our program's total operational budget. Our program has reached out to local non-profit organizations, the University of Tennessee, local government, and National Park Service to diversify our in-kind and cash resources. This has also made our program model more diverse and helps to keep more people involved in solving community issues. Our partners have committed to our goal of 33% in cash match and an additional 21% in-kind match for a total of 54% to implement our programming in 2013. Our non-CNCS resource commitments are from Knoxville- Knox County Community Action Committee, Ijams Nature Center, Goodwill Industries, Knox County Stormwater Engineering, Water Quality Forum, CAC Beardsley Community Farm, Knox County Solid Waste, East Tennessee Clean Fuels Coalition, Keep Blount Beautiful, Socially Equal Energy Efficient Development, Knoxville Recycling Coalition, University of Tennessee Recycling, University of Tennessee Outdoor Leadership Program, University of Tennessee Water Resources Research Center, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, City of Knoxville Solid Waste, University of Tennessee Sustainability Department, City of Knoxville Community Development Office, City of Knoxville Parks and Recreation, Little River Watershed Association, Farragut Stormwater Engineering and Keep Knoxville Beautiful. We collect these funds from our community partners through a contracted fee-for-service model. Making Knoxville a more livable city is one of the goals of this program. Having a community that is clean, safe and beautiful, which can function as a place of community action leading to self-sufficient prosperity for every citizen is our intention. This community needs job training, environmental repair, waste management assistance, disaster preparedness training, and nutrition education. Our community has assets, however, with the infusion of enthusiasm, skills, passion and dedication that an AmeriCorps member brings to solving our issues makes our community stronger. The cost benefit of having an AmeriCorps

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program to work on these issues is that small environmental non-profits, governmental departments and community organizations, which have strained budgets can have access to a talent pool of energetic people to create and maintain community inspired projects that would otherwise lay dormant. In addition, these local organizations can provide training and real world work experience to people that have very little or no experience in the field. AmeriCorps enables partnerships with organizations so that they can give a training opportunity to members with the understanding that the member will use this service experience as a launching board toward a career. In the current employment landscape, young workers that have an AmeriCorps experience are able to confidently apply for jobs, go to college and pursue a career. This return on investment in the young work force is exponential in effect. People with quality experiences with a peer group pursuing a positive career path are collectively able to establish a future of greater earnings and higher quality of life. Our programmatic design of facilitating environmental stewardship with economically disadvantaged youth is a model that has worked for decades to bring about a realistic breaking of the cycle of poverty for these opportunity youth. In our region, organizations with WIA and other funding spend three times the resources to provide results that a youth service model, like the one we propose, can show. In addition, the successful and documented environmental stewardship outcomes of our program show that our AmeriCorps members are making a difference in cleaning up, repairing, reducing waste, teaching others and building community. As a current grantee, our share of the cost of the AmeriCorps program has increased in the last ten years. The federal share can only support the member living allowance at \$12,100 and a portion of the federal withholding of that living allowance. All other costs associated with the program are supported through local funding and all of those costs have risen in the last three years. Health coverage is exponentially the largest cost increase for full-time only programs. The cost of coverage in 2003 was \$979 per member service term. In 2012, the cost of coverage for each member was \$1,672. In 2003, our partners provided a \$5,400 cash match per member and now in 2012 provide a \$7,000 cash match per member, which is an increase of 30% in cash match. Currently, we have 40 members serving in 19 service locations, sites which provide more in-kind match than ever before. We have cut costs by being more efficient in training, recruiting and administrative tasks. We have local partners that can train our members instead of doing all the training in-house. Our recruiting efforts are more computer focused by sending emails, internet and social media campaigning. In the past, our staff needed to attend more than 10 job or college fairs each year. In addition, our program conducts searches for members in the area through the AmeriCorps recruiting site. Through the use of the my.americorps web based

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recruiting system, our recruiting has become more efficient and less time can be spent trying to recruit members and more time on cultivating relationships with prospective members. The largest cost savings has been our ability to have a fixed-amount grant the last three years. The administrative workload is lessened by having to track our partner's in-kind match. The financial forms are easier to navigate and complete on-time. In addition, four years ago, our program invested in a new computer program, Replicon TimeAttend, that could easily manage the member's service hours, leave requests and attendance. This new program gave our staff the ability to work on other projects instead of completing data entry. After streamlining our program's administration, a staff member position that used to provide support for tracking time and attendance, in-kind match, mileage reimbursement, and leave requests can now focus serving our partners, evaluating service sites and providing members with professional development.

b. Budget Adequacy

Our program is requesting a fixed-amount grant and is not required to submit a line-item budget with this application. Since 1994, our program has created, developed and evaluated a detailed line-item budget to support our vision, mission, programmatic narrative, activities and performance measures. This line item budget assists our advisory board, staff and partners in understanding the expectation for cash and in-kind match to support our service activities. Adhering to a line item budget in-house helps with accountability. A budget helps staff to find efficient processes to save funds or find local funding streams for program activities. Our agency has been very proactive in the background screening of applicants. In fact, we had adopted strict policies on enrollment via state background screens, driving records, drug screens, fingerprinting and FBI checks before most AmeriCorps programs. We budget for the necessary background screenings and have found reputable vendors for this purpose. Our community partnerships with local non-profits, government and university departments are the reason CAC is able to fund an AmeriCorps program. Without local funding to match the federal share, this program would not be possible. After completing a comprehensive line-item budget, we determined that our 2013-14 program will operate with a total budget of \$1,374,370. This total amount includes \$584,910 from CNCS; \$341,460 in local cash match and \$448,000 through in-kind donations from partners. Our program is a cost effective approach for providing work readiness opportunities for youth, cleaning and repairing environmental degradation, providing sustainable waste management practices, teaching science to students, providing fresh emergency food and providing long-term solutions to food security, mobilizing volunteers and providing disaster preparedness training. The most telling statistic is that these community services are almost non-

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existent without the intervention of Knoxville- Knox County CAC AmeriCorps in the classroom, at a food pantry, in the field and in the communities that we serve. AmeriCorps funding allows low income communities to have access to talented, dedicated, energetic young people that can make a dramatic positive change in the lives of community members. The benefit of having AmeriCorps members serving in our positions is that they will gain valuable work experience, work readiness skills and relevant training to break the cycle of poverty in their families and communities. Having communities and AmeriCorps members working together on tough issues through direct service is important. Most of our members will never have an opportunity to solve a real community problem, if they do not serve with AmeriCorps. Knoxville's return on investment through AmeriCorps has been incredible over the last 18 years. Our program has been able to be very efficient in educating youth, providing service learning and developing leaders over the years. This work is enabling our program to change our program design for 2013. Our new focus aligns more with agency's goals and our community's need for job training, work readiness, and mentoring youth so that they can achieve a career path that is sustainable and meaningful. Moreover, these youth will be able to serve in low-income communities and facilitate environmental service work that will improve quality of life for everyone in the region.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

2013-2016 Evaluation Plan: President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative on April 16, 2010 to develop a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda. After 51 listening sessions and over 105,000 comments, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chair and EPA Administrator delivered the AGO Report to the President on February 7, 2011. The Report's first recommendation is to "catalyze the establishment of a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) to engage young Americans in public lands and water restoration." In late 2011, Secretary Salazar established a Federal Advisory Committee charged with "providing recommendations to the AGO Council through the Secretary of the Interior on how to create a 21CSC." One of the Committee's recommendations was to establish an accreditation process to ensure high quality service programs which provide youth and veterans with training, service and conservation opportunities. The Corps Center of Excellence (CCE) will begin facilitation of this accreditation process in 2013. CAC AmeriCorps will participate in the 21CSC provisional accreditation process starting in April 2013 with a plan toward full accreditation of our program. Full accreditation is a more in-depth review than the provisional accreditation process and will last for 3-6 years with annual updates. The CCE will develop the process for full accreditation in early 2013 and

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make it available for programs with provisional accreditation. The CCE will assemble an independent advisory body made up of former/retired conservation corps leaders, retired/former federal land management agency staff and other experts to oversee the accreditation process and review of applications.

Previous Evaluation summary: The Corps Network: Excellence in Corps Operations December 5, 2008 (successful completion in February 2009)(All recommendations listed here were completed and /or in progress) CAC AmeriCorps needs to develop an Advisory Council. Corps needs to create a five year plan which includes Advisory Council, succession plan and funding sustainability plan. Part of succession plan is to train an assistant for program operations and management. Plan to provide service opportunities and job skills for local urban youth that may enroll into the AmeriCorps program. CAC AmeriCorps will target local high school students in the areas in which we serve. Corps will recruit two advisory council members from this targeted group. Corps will use Advisory Council as a recruiting resource and have at least 2 AmeriCorps members enrolled and retained as a yearly goal for the council. Corps has developed 5 year planning process (or guideline) to be acted upon by new advisory council. Knox County CAC AmeriCorps will consider working with The Corps Network to identify Corps programs with similar components to enable the CAC AmeriCorps program to compare their results with similar programs and to establish benchmarks for success. Corps will contact directors and CEOs at Corps Network Forums about successful corps performance measurements.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A