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Executive Summary

Twelve (12) AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 120 event and leadership volunteers to increase vulnerable children's knowledge of, engagement with, and access to healthy food, at 10-12 local partner organizations in five counties in Connecticut. At the end of the 2013-2014 program year, after delivering food and nutrition education, cultivating school gardens, and sourcing and promoting local food for K-12 students in communities of need, beneficiaries will measurably improve their attitudes toward fruits and vegetables, setting them on an enduring path toward maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Healthy Futures. The CNCS investment of \$150,000 will be matched with \$210,000 for a total program budget of \$360,000.

Rationale and Approach

A. NEED: Across the U.S., the consequences of dual epidemics of childhood obesity and food insecurity are grave. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in three American children born in the year 2000 is on a path toward type 2 diabetes. Among children of color, the figure approaches one in two (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2003). Childhood obesity is a key indicator of negative health and wellness levels, meaning that this increased prevalence signals a rising tide of health care costs, lowered productivity, and premature disease and deaths. Retired [military] Generals describe a coming crisis of national security: already, 27% of 17-24 year olds are ineligible for military service because of excess body fat ("Too Fat to Fight, 2012." Mission Readiness.). At the same time, over 23.2% of children don't know where or how they will access their next meal ("Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2009." USDA.). The terrible irony is that the child suffering from obesity-related illness and the child facing food insecurity are often one and the same. The prime culprit for each of these crises is lack of knowledge, engagement, and access to healthy food. Cash-strapped families often find nutritious meals to be too expensive. Cheaper foods, such as highly processed meats or pre-packaged pastries, can alleviate hunger temporarily, but cause diet-related health problems in the long-term, often with obesity as the visible indicator of these poor health conditions. Reversing this dual epidemic of childhood obesity and child hunger has become a priority for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the nation at large.

Though broad in its reach, these problems do not affect all parts of our country equally; even within individual states indicators can vary widely. While Connecticut overall has one of the lowest rates of

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obesity and diet-related disease in our country, the incidence of those indicators rise sharply in areas where poverty is higher. Connecticut is 49th in the nation in income disparity, signaling that statewide statistics do not paint an accurate picture of the state's poorest regions. FoodCorps proposes to serve in 10 communities, focusing on cities with some of the highest free-and-reduced lunch eligibility, such as Norwich (70.1%), New Britain (72.2%), Windham (75.5%), New Haven (77.8%), Waterbury (79.8%), New London (85.1%), Hartford (90.7%), and Bridgeport (98.8%) (End Hunger Connecticut!, 2012). Overall, 55% of Connecticut children are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, free school meals, or the Commodity Supplemental Food Program. The general community characteristics informing food security - the community food resources on hand, the accessibility to these resources, and the ability for these towns to produce their own food - are dramatically lower in these abovementioned cities than in most of the state. The five counties to be served by FoodCorps in Connecticut have the following child food insecurity rates: Hartford-18.7%; New Haven-19.1%; New London-16.9%; Fairfield-15.5%; and Windham-21.2%. Adding to the picture of food insecurity, adult obesity rates range from 22% to nearly 30% in these counties (Centers for Disease Control, 2009).

Food insecurity, diet-related disease, and poverty are indelibly linked. Not only do low-income families face the same challenges as other Americans in maintaining a healthy lifestyle (sedentary behavior, increased portion sizes, etc.), families living in poverty are also subjected to unique challenges that increase their risk of obesity and diet-related disease, such as lack of access to healthy food, fewer opportunities for physical activity, cycles of food deprivation and overeating, higher levels of stress, increased exposure to marketing of obesity-promoting products, and limited access to health care ("Fighting Obesity and Hunger, 2012." Food Research and Action Center.). The U.S. Census Bureau states that Connecticut experienced a statistically significant increase in poverty from 2010-2011. Approximately 17.4% of children in Connecticut are living in poverty. While poverty rates are relatively low compared to the rest of the nation, significant increases are concerning and warrant preventative measures to offset potential increased negative (and correlated) health conditions. Additionally, poverty rates are misleading as the income disparity between Connecticut's most wealthy and most impoverished citizens is one of the highest in the nation. Statewide poverty, and thus food insecurity and health, statistics mask pockets of deep poverty, severely limited access to healthy foods, and heightened rates of childhood obesity and diabetes. FoodCorps focuses human capital in these pockets, specifically on children at risk for limited access to healthy food and lifetime of diet related diseases. According to a 2007 survey by the Connecticut Commission on Children, "Unhealthy food choices and eating behaviors are major factors contributing to overweight and obesity. Only one in

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five Connecticut high school students (21.5%) eats the recommended five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables." The adult obesity rate in Connecticut is currently 24.4%, which experts predict will rise to 46.5% by 2030 if the status quo is upheld ("F as in Fat, 2011." Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.). What we feed our children, and what we teach them about food, affects how they learn, how they grow, and how long they live. Considering that when last studied, only 2% of school children met the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans daily ("State of the Plate, 2010." Produce for Better Health Foundation.) the school food environment has significant need for improvement. Schools - their classrooms, cafeterias and playgrounds - are the logical frontlines in our nation's fight against childhood obesity epidemic and food insecurity.

B. (AND C.) AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS and EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED and MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT: FoodCorps, in alignment with the funding priorities of both CNCS and Serve Connecticut, believes that by changing the health environment of the public schools where many of these most at-risk kids attend by increasing students' knowledge of, engagement with, and access to healthy food, we can have a positive impact on long-term individual and community health. The FoodCorps model mirrors CNCS' Healthy Futures priority; to meet health needs within communities through investment in public service.

FoodCorps began with an inaugural class of 50 full-time National Direct service members in August of 2011. In 2012, those numbers increased to 80 corps members nationwide, including five service members in Connecticut. In the 2013 program year, with additional support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and other philanthropic partners, FoodCorps seeks to expand nationwide to 130 service members, including doubling the Connecticut cohort from five corps members to a total of 12 as a new Serve Connecticut grantee. All 12 full-time service members will dedicate their 1,700 hours to delivering informative and engaging nutrition education, developing hands-on connections to fresh food through school gardens, and increasing awareness of and access to healthy meals in school cafeterias. These 12 corps members, providing a service unavailable to most resource-poor schools, will build school environments that make healthy choices the norm, not the exception, among vulnerable kids. In collaboration with our statewide Host Site partner, the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension, service members will be placed with community partners in Fairfield, Hartford, New Haven, New London, and Windham Counties. By awarding 12 full-time AmeriCorps members to FoodCorps for the 2013-2014 program year, Serve Connecticut will invest in deepening the impact in those counties, building capacity for healthy futures across Connecticut, and reversing

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the trends toward obesity and negative health conditions before they become insurmountable.

Specifically, serving in public schools, school districts, and school-focused organizational settings, service members will divide their service hours among three mutually reinforcing pillars of work, developing a robust Service Plan with proportions of each activity adjusted to local needs:

1) They will conduct food and nutrition education (Knowledge). Dedicated instruction in nutrition and physical activity is required in most states, yet median figures from elementary schools show teachers spending just 3.4 hours on these topics all year ("School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity." National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.). Service members will strive to increase both the quality and the quantity of this education, arriving armed with hands-on curriculum materials; working with teachers to integrate nutrition and physical activity lessons into classes as diverse as Health, Math, English and Science and implementing effective teaching strategies, such as cross-grade mentoring, to ensure their students are engaged in the lessons.

2) They will establish or expand school garden programs (Engagement). As studies have demonstrated, engaging children in the process of growing food increases their dietary preference for and consumption of fresh vegetables ("Food Growing in Schools Taskforce Report, 2012."). Service members will break ground on new gardens, help incorporate garden programs into curricula, and engage parents, community volunteers and kids in the active outdoor play of growing fruits and vegetables. Though garden harvests are rarely sufficient to supply most school cafeterias, even taste-tests conducted with garden produce have been shown to help children build positive relationships with fresh food (Ibid).

3) They will increase children's access to and information about healthy food, offering them regular servings of the nutritious meals they've now studied and grown (Access). Through holistic "farm to school" programming, service members will help transform public school cafeterias into educational environments where healthy food choices are promoted. They will also facilitate relationships between food service directors and local farmers who can supply nutritious ingredients at scale. Research demonstrates that kids participating in farm to school programs often consume one more serving of healthy fruits and vegetables each day ("Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time, Farm to School Initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization." National Farm to School Network.)

Through this three-pillared approach, corps members serving in resource-strapped public school systems will be the primary drivers of well-designed and well-researched interventions aimed at increasing the health of students at risk for lifetimes of diet-related illness and disease. This holistic

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approach addresses both the childhood obesity epidemic and the growing trend of childhood hunger with the same mechanism - targeted investment in the human resource of AmeriCorps members. These passionate, committed, engaged, and selfless leaders will envelop the students they serve in a wrap-around environment of health and wellness through strategies identified across health and human services agencies as critical in reversing the well-marked course toward diabetes and obesity. Additionally, service members will recruit, train, and place an army of community volunteers, ensuring that projects built are projects sustained, and that FoodCorps' human resource investment is mirrored by investment from members of each community we serve. Without these corps members as change agents, these services simply will not exist in largely under-served yet over-burdened schools and communities. Imperatively, these solutions require an investment of human capital - in the form of service members - in order to achieve success. These evidence-based methods are built on a clear set of strategies endorsed by the CDC, the USDA, and The White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity addressing the obesity epidemic's underlying causes. From the Task Force Report to the President:

*"More, and better, nutrition education is needed in schools. . . The time spent on nutrition and dietary behavior has declined in recent years, and funding has been limited."

*"School gardens offer opportunities for fun and physical activity while also serving as an important educational tool to help students understand how healthful food is produced."

*"Most children eat at least one meal at school. . . Use farm-to-school programs, where possible, to incorporate more fresh, appealing food" ("Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation." White House Task Force On Childhood Obesity, 2010.).

Corps members will ensure measurable community impact by translating these mandates into a service plan focused on the reinforcing pillars of knowledge of, engagement with, and access to healthy food that integrates school-focused projects with civic engagement.

Placement of AmeriCorps members has already proven to be an effective mean of service delivery in Connecticut. The current cohort of five service members serving in Connecticut under our National Direct grant have, in just three months of service, addressed the goal of increasing knowledge by providing 239 educational activities (classroom lessons, cafeteria taste tests, garden meetings, etc.) to 4,311 children (unduplicated); they increased Engagement by helping to build seven new school gardens, two new community gardens, and by revitalizing six existing gardens. This work resulted in 195 pounds of produce harvested and provided to children and families in just a few short months. Most impressive is the way that AmeriCorps members have increased access to healthier foods, by

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bringing 730 pounds of food into school cafeterias; donating 68 pounds of food to families of students; interacting with 58 farmers; and leveraging 178 community volunteers to donate 675 total hours of service to meet FoodCorps' goals. These accomplishments over a very short period of time demonstrate the efficacy of placing AmeriCorps members to address FoodCorps' goals of increasing knowledge of, access to, and engagement with healthier food. Increasing our force to 12 in Connecticut will translate into more concentrated service in high-need areas, with communities rallied together to build sustainable projects addressing child health in fun and engaging ways. All-in-all, service members will be the catalysts for building and supporting partnership and coalitions of local stakeholders working together for a common goal.

FoodCorps will measure our success by assessing the attitude change of children receiving at least 10-hours of garden-enhanced nutrition education, through counting process measures, and through measuring the change in the school environment over time. Research into the effects of this type of environment change is new - there are under 20 peer-reviewed studies to date - but preliminary findings suggest that school garden and farm to school programming of the type that service members help implement, have a positive impact on students' attitudes about, knowledge of, and behavior towards fruits and vegetables ("Nourishing the Nation One Tray at a Time, Farm to School Initiatives in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, 2012." National Farm to School Network.). Through evaluation conducted during FoodCorps' first year as a National Direct grantee, classrooms receiving at least 10-hours of garden-enhanced nutrition education improved their attitudes toward healthy fruits and vegetables by 6.1% across the country. Overall, 46.6% of classrooms showed improvement of some amount, measurably above our target number of 40%, a target based on existing research. Narrowing the focus to specific groups revealed even more statistically significant results: first graders improved their attitudes by 18.2% and 9-12th graders improved by 11.7%. This groundbreaking research is the first in national scope, and FoodCorps expects to continue improving on these results by deepening our service forces in the states where we serve.

At the end of our three-year grant cycle, FoodCorps expects to see a measurable improvement in students' attitudes towards fruits and vegetables in the schools where we serve. Additionally, FoodCorps collects data on each schools' food environment annually, measuring improvements in things like presence of nutrition curriculum, integration of school gardens into state standards, frequency of local purchasing by school food service, and receptivity of wellness committees, amongst others. This data helps FoodCorps understand the impact of corps members' service over time, helping identify areas for long-term improvement and indicating when FoodCorps is able to transfer more and

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more program responsibility to the engaged and committed volunteers who have been recruited and trained by our service members.

In order to effectively demonstrate our impact and align our program with national priorities, FoodCorps will report on Healthy Futures National Performance Measure H6 in Connecticut, which we will sync with the data collection and reporting strategies of our proposed 14 other Host Sites, as well as the USDA, CDC and National Farm to School Network. Targets have been established through an electronic survey of Host and Service Site Supervisors, reassessed based on the data from FoodCorps' current National Direct grant, and compared against benchmarks from existing research. In FoodCorps' first year as a Connecticut Commission grantee, service members will teach at least 10,000 unduplicated children with at least 1000 children and youth from at least 12 schools receiving at least 10 hours of garden-enhanced nutrition education from service members. The 10-hour exposure benchmark is accepted by the school garden and farm to school community as the minimum amount of time necessary to change beneficiaries' attitudes - many of our students receive a much higher dose of exposure. At least 400 (40%) of participating students who receive at least 10-hours of exposure in 12 classrooms or student groups will demonstrate improved attitudes toward fruits and vegetables. Due to the prohibitive cost and time of conducting pre- and post-surveys with 1,000 children, FoodCorps will assess our impact on a representative sample group of at least 200. This attitude shift will be measured through changes in fruit and vegetable neophobia - the reluctance to eat novel fruits and vegetables. Food preferences and eating patterns in childhood have been shown to carry into adulthood, impacting long-term health. This method was developed by a team of researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill and has been vetted and used by similar programs across the country, based on the knowledge that food preferences and eating patterns in childhood have been shown to carry into adulthood, impacting long-term health. Over a three-year grant cycle, FoodCorps expects these efforts to result in a measurable shift in the dietary preferences of participating students.

Additionally, FoodCorps will track the impact service members have on: 1) Strengthening Communities: Generating volunteerism is woven throughout the service descriptions of members and they are trained on volunteer management. Service members in Connecticut each play a critical role bolstering efforts in communities that have emerged as leaders in changing the school food environment. In our first commission grantee year in Connecticut, service members will recruit, train and place 120 new volunteers in community-led school garden and farm to school initiatives. This number represents 10 volunteers recruited and trained for each of the 12 members and was determined based on prior averages for service members nationwide as well as programmatic research

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indicating 10 committed volunteers as an efficient and manageable cohort. Within three years, we expect volunteer networks to have assumed enough management of established programs that service members can increase the portfolio of schools with which they work. School gardens implemented by FoodCorps members will be assumed by school and community volunteers over time.

2) Member Development: In the program's first Commission year in Connecticut, all 12 service members will receive career training and mentorship in food, agriculture, education or public health. Over three years, we will track the number of alumni actively entering fields that contribute to the state and the nation's wellness. We expect at least 40% of service members to continue serving with FoodCorps for a second term (or to apply for a Fellowship position), based on data from our National Direct grant. Of those who choose not to continue on in service with FoodCorps, we expect at least 50% to pursue career or academic opportunities in the fields of health, food systems, agriculture, education, or public service. These targets are based on surveys of current service members, research into targets of comparable service organizations, as well as information from their applications indicating their career aspirations.

Corps members will report on the above outcome measures in required weekly impact logs that accompany their time sheets. Data from all sites will be compiled by the FoodCorps national office on a monthly basis and used to evaluate areas for improvement among sites and service members. Annual reports will be shared with Serve Connecticut and other funders. With its focus on results-driven deployment of resources, FoodCorps stands ready to be a critical player in achieving the larger goal established by Let's Move and the National Prevention Council: bringing childhood obesity rates back below 5% by 2030 ("Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation." White House Task Force On Childhood Obesity, 2010.).

D. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: MEMBER RECRUITMENT: FoodCorps' secondary goal, beyond reversing the trends of childhood obesity and food insecurity, is to provide a valuable and lasting member experience, preparing service members for careers in public health, education, agriculture, food systems, and public service. Through serving needy communities and engaging in the development of community agency, members will develop a strong sense of civic engagement, nurtured by FoodCorps.

FoodCorps recruits service members nationwide. In both 2011 and 2012, FoodCorps received over 1,000 applicants for the 50 (2011) and 80 (2012) positions funded through our National Direct grant and state commission grants in Maine and Montana. FoodCorps' Service Program Staff uses both traditional (networking events, newspaper ads, career fairs) and modern (social media, blog posting,

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mobile technology) to reach potential candidates and has launched a proactive campaign to broaden FoodCorps' pool of applicants, with the goal of matriculating a diverse corps. FoodCorps has enlisted the help of leadership consultants, Koya Partners, brand manager Tumis, in developing attractive recruitment messaging and materials aimed at increasing FoodCorps' presence in the diverse communities we serve.

Woven in to this national strategy is the corresponding recruitment campaign of our statewide Host Site partner, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension. Host and Service Site Supervisors (Service Sites are our community service locations) receive physical and electronic recruiting materials, coaching on how to cultivate service members from within the communities FoodCorps serves, and media training on how to earn local press coverage of FoodCorps service opportunities. FoodCorps respects the place-based knowledge of our partners in determining the types of experiences and skills that will best serve our unique site communities. Therefore, local networks are relied upon to spread our service opportunities and recommendations of community members well-suited to serve with FoodCorps are taken into account during the selection process. In Connecticut, the 30+ member statewide Advisory Team functions as a key mechanism to informing a broad universe of stakeholders in universities, state agencies, and private non-profits about service opportunities.

Applications to Connecticut's FoodCorps positions are submitted through the national FoodCorps online application portal. Applications are vetted through an initial review by national staff and alumni, with approximately 30% of candidates advancing to second-round review by Host and Service Sites. Given the high value that FoodCorps places on honoring the individuality of our community environments and partners, FoodCorps asks state Host and Service Sites to interview semi-finalists and submit rankings to national staff for final placements, ensuring that candidates offered FoodCorps placements will enter their new positions as seamlessly as possible, with full support of and knowledge about the communities and organizations with which they will be serving. Given this process, FoodCorps does not evaluate candidates for minimum requirements beyond those required by AmeriCorps (though does do initial evaluations based on demonstrated experience, commitment, and potential to contribute). Instead, FoodCorps relies on our Host and Service Site partners to determine the specific qualities, experiences, and characteristics that indicate success for service members in their communities and organizations.

E. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: MEMBER TRAINING: FoodCorps' third program year of its National Direct award will commence on September 1, 2013, with six days of intensive service member Orientation during the month of August in Portland, Oregon. All State Commission funded service

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members will attend this Orientation. At this national training, FoodCorps staff will facilitate team building, external trainers will lead diversity workshops, and representatives from the nutrition education, school garden, and procurement fields will conduct courses on school garden and Farm to School program implementation. Topics will include food and garden safety, fresh-food procurement, classroom management, community engagement, effective communication, conflict resolution, diversity and equity, volunteer management and impact evaluation. The policies and procedures of FoodCorps and AmeriCorps (including prohibited activities, rules of conduct, and grievance procedures) will be closely covered in seminars rooted in the FoodCorps Member Manual, the substantive written guidebook that all service members receive upon enrollment.

In addition to the national orientation that service members receive, Connecticut Host Site Supervisor and UConn staff member, Jiff Martin, and the FoodCorps Fellow, will organize an interactive, multi-day state orientation exploring relevant concepts including cultural and agricultural ecosystems of the state. The state orientation will include representatives from school gardens, state and local organizations providing cultural exposure and insight as well as training on Connecticut-specific gardening and food procurement policy and an introduction to nutrition education resources - all topics that prepare service members for activities at their Service Sites. Once on-site within their communities, service members will receive a third orientation by their Service Site Supervisor, which includes topics ranging from important relationships within the community to how to use the copy machine. This intensive, three-pronged orientation structure builds relationships among service members nurturing their internal community, and also exposes them to numerous individuals in the state and communities they serve who offer resources to our corps members. Orientation training will also focus on service member citizenship.

On a monthly basis, service members will also participate in a series of trainings and professional development opportunities coordinated by the Connecticut Host Site Supervisor and planning team. In 2012, these monthly events have included: volunteer management training, Food, Land & People curriculum training, an interview with the UConn Food Service Director, agriculture education training at Jones Family Farms, team meetings with School Food Service Directors, guided farm tours featuring farm-to-school programming, as well as "FoodCorps family meetings" to gather all Service Site Supervisors and AmeriCorps members for sharing and learning together.

F. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: MEMBER SUPERVISION: FoodCorps service members are supported and guided by three mutually-reinforcing levels of supervision: FoodCorps, the UConn Cooperative Extension (Host Site), and our network of community Service Sites. These three levels of support

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offers years of experience in the fields of food systems, agricultural education, public health, education, community development, and public service. As the current Host Site Supervisor for FoodCorps' national direct placements in Connecticut, UConn Cooperative Extension's Associate Extension Educator for sustainable food systems, Jiff Martin, will monitor data collection, organize statewide trainings and orientation, coordinate Service Sites, and manage the scope of service of corps members in Connecticut. Service Site Supervisors in each of the 10-12 Service Sites where FoodCorps will serve will sign and certify electronic timesheets, and manage the day-to-day service for members. In order to maintain a high level of consistency and quality in this program, Jiff has assembled a planning team to help manage Host Site decision-making and activities that includes Dawn Crayco, Deputy Director of End Hunger CT!, Christiana Jones of Jones Family Farms, and the FoodCorps Fellow.

Service Site Supervisors have been selected for their experience implementing school garden and farm to school programming, their deep community knowledge, and their ability and desire to oversee early career service members as they embark on their terms of service. Service Site Supervisors guide the day-to-day service of corps members and ensure that their service hours are in compliance with FoodCorps and AmeriCorps policies, certifying detailed timesheets to this end. To ensure maximum alignment of program areas and compliance with AmeriCorps regulations, FoodCorps plans and funds a focused training of Host Site Supervisors over a three-day in-person retreat each April to prepare for the upcoming term of service, as well as day-long pre-service trainings in each state for all Service Site Supervisors. These trainings review and are supplemented by robust Host and Service Site Manuals. Throughout the year, sites are monitored through formal and informal Site Visits, file audits, and individual check-ins. Each site is given a risk assessment rating of low, moderate, or high based on these checks and a continued monitoring and guidance plan is established for moderate and high risk sites. The effectiveness of trainings will be evaluated through participant and supervisor surveys.

The FoodCorps Fellowship program places one full-time FoodCorps staff member per state to assist the Host Site with service member support as well as to build capacity for school garden and Farm to School programming. The Fellow provides an additional level of support, guidance and oversight for service members throughout their terms of service. FoodCorps Fellows conduct quarterly informational site visits, develop state-wide training and reflection opportunities, compile state-specific resources for service activities, represent FoodCorps in the state and region, and act as each service member's first line of communication should a problem arise. Fellows receive their own training in advance of the service term, with sessions focused on peer-to-peer counseling, volunteer generation,

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service member training development, and conflict resolution.

G. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: AMERICORPS MEMBER EXPERIENCE: FoodCorps instills a commitment to service starting with the service member application - where candidates answer questions regarding their motivations to serve - and continuing through training, service, and life after AmeriCorps. Corps members are given a robust introduction to AmeriCorps and public service as soon as they arrive at Orientation, where speakers such as Director of AmeriCorps John Gomperts, CNCS Program Officer Lora Pollari-Welbes, and Director of Communications for Golden Gate National Recreation Area Howard Leavitt have welcomed service members and imparted their philosophies on public service. Moving through their terms of service, FoodCorps members are given opportunities to reflect on the impact they are having in their communities through weekly logs, group check-ins, in-person gatherings, and public appearances and press, sharing stories of success as well as challenges. AmeriCorps identity is promoted through participation in state and national service networks and events such as National Days of Service and AmeriCorps Week, and connection to AmeriCorps Alums post service. FoodCorps uniforms are worn by all service members and proudly display the AmeriCorps logo. Additionally, FoodCorps has developed relationships with other service programs operating in our communities and fosters connections between service members, including Coach Across America, Teach for America, and Citizen Schools.

FoodCorps deeply values the support corps members can offer one another as peers, providing opportunities for connection between members through FoodCorps Buddies, as well as broad connection through intra-corps and state-based emails listservs. Additionally, FoodCorps offers programmatic components that instill a sense of community engagement, including: a career mentor, pen-pal programs, podcasts with industry leaders (Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Merrigan was a guest this past year), quarterly care packages, and an opportunity to reconvene via the Mid-Year Gathering mentioned above. Host and Service Site Supervisors, as well as Fellows and corps members, will rely on an expansive Service Plans developed in collaboration between FoodCorps, the Sites, and the service members to help determine specific, attainable, and measurable goals for each term.

H. PROGRAM COMPONENTS: VOLUNTEER GENERATION: An integral part of FoodCorps' member service is to recruit, train, and place an army of community volunteers, ensuring that projects built (such as community gardens) are projects sustained and that FoodCorps' human resource investment is mirrored by investment from members of each community we serve. In Connecticut, the five current service members have recruited 180 unduplicated volunteers for a total of 697 work-hours with projects ranging from one-time events to weekly commitments. Corps

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members generate volunteers through outreach to local colleges and universities, parent groups, and volunteer management organizations (such as Groundwork Bridgeport). Members also attract volunteers through online, newspaper, and radio media publications, and through representation of FoodCorps and site-specific service projects at community and state-wide events. Intensive volunteer management training is part of the annual professional development requirements for FoodCorps service members in CT. This training is conducted by University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension 4-H staff who have broad expertise in volunteer management. Training occurs early in the service term, with an emphasis on concrete tools and resources for creating a climate for volunteerism, identifying needs and creating volunteer positions, recruitment strategies, volunteer education and recognition, accessing existing volunteer groups, obtaining and maintaining proper records, risk management, and evaluating volunteer contributions/experience.

Additionally, the Connecticut Fellow facilitates volunteer matching with service projects through community outreach, publicity events, and by continually expanding relationships with individuals and organizations throughout the state. In general, the role of volunteers is to increase capacity, spread the word, and generate a higher level of community involvement around building healthy school food environments.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: Corps ethos and pride in public service are at the heart of FoodCorps' service program. From the start of service, corps members are encouraged to seek connection with one another and with other AmeriCorps participants through multiple avenues, including group listservs and weekly inter-corps emails; weekly communication of creative strategies developed by and for service members; encouragement to attend National AmeriCorps and state commission gatherings and trainings; connection to other AmeriCorps members serving in their communities; service gear and signage that proudly displays the AmeriCorps logo; and a Service Member Manual full of resources. FoodCorps provides uniforms displaying the AmeriCorps logo, posters identifying the school or site as an AmeriCorps location, and AmeriCorps logos for websites, newsletters, and other press materials. In addition, FoodCorps requires all service members to participate in National Days of Service. For example, service members organize community Sunday Suppers in collaboration with Points of Light to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. In all that FoodCorps does, the civic and professional development of our service members is a priority.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: FoodCorps' mission is to give all youth an

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enduring relationship with healthy food through the hands and minds of emerging leaders. FoodCorps was formed solely to create service-based solutions to food-related problems, including childhood obesity and food security. While November of 2010 marked the beginning of FoodCorps' nonprofit status, the organization's staff, partnerships, and resources give it the capacity of a seasoned program. Six founders brought FoodCorps to life in 2010 while a staff of fourteen lead and direct the organization's work today, bringing more than six decades of experience building community food systems and administering federal grants from the USDA, DHHS, CDC, CNCS, NEH, and the Montana and Maine Service Commissions. Nine Board of Directors oversee FoodCorps. With representatives from agricultural law, organizational management, community development, and non-profit leadership, the Board directs the long-term strategy and vision for the organization.

Co-Founder and Service Program Director Cecily Upton is the full-time Service Program Director, managing the AmeriCorps program and directing the submission of all fiscal reports, which will be prepared by Finance and Operations Director Lauren Burnham. As Service Program Director, Upton develops and supports FoodCorps' AmeriCorps program in all our states. Upton's primary responsibilities include: maintaining FoodCorps' relationship with AmeriCorps (both CNCS and State Commissions); ensuring compliance and accountability of our program to AmeriCorps; supervising performance measurement; overseeing relationships with and training of all Host and Service Sites; directing the recruitment, selection, training, enrollment and exit processes for all service members; contributing to and implementing the long-term strategy of FoodCorps' Service Program, from program development to evaluation; and managing the Service Program staff.

FoodCorps' Service Program department staff dedicate a percentage of their total time to each of the twelve states in which we operate, including Connecticut. The FoodCorps Fellow who serves in Connecticut is a full-time FoodCorps staff member who is dedicated to the programmatic implementation in the state and serves as the first point of contact for Connecticut corps members. With program duties managed at the state level and administrative responsibilities centralized at the national level, the FoodCorps model ensures a lean, cost effective approach without compromising the quality of our service members' experience and our program. Other full-time staff in the Service Program department include: Service Program Manager, Lucy Flores; Training and Professional Development Manager, Erica Curry; and Research and Evaluation Manager, Eva Ringstrom. Additionally, FoodCorps will be hiring a Recruitment and Alumni Manager in early 2013. All Service Program staff report to Ms. Upton. Finance and Operations Director, Lauren Burnham, will prepare all fiscal and financial reports for FoodCorps. Ms. Burnham possesses an MPA from NYU and is

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currently finishing coursework for her CPA licensure.

All staff are trained in the programmatic and financial management of AmeriCorps grants both in-house and externally. Upon hiring, staff are given a thorough introduction to AmeriCorps rules and regulations, as well as guidance in where to find information regarding AmeriCorps program administration through the statute, FAQs, Knowledge Network, and grant contacts such as Program Officers. Externally, FoodCorps invests in staff participation in the annual AmeriCorps Grantee Meeting, National Conference on Volunteering and Service, the AmeriCorps Program Start-Up Institute, and the CNCS Financial and Grants Management Institute, as well as other opportunities provided by our state commission partners.

Since being awarded our Planning Grant, FoodCorps has been an invested AmeriCorps grantee, participating in the AmeriCorps conferences and meetings listed above as well as working closely with AmeriCorps program officers Jennifer Brown and Lora Pollari-Welbes and Program Development Coach Thenera Bailey, with additional guidance from Acting Deputy Director Rob Glazier and former Director of AmeriCorps, John Gomperts. Under our National Direct grant, FoodCorps boasts an enrollment rate of 100% and retention rates of 96%. In both 2011 and 2012, we received over 1,000 applications for positions. FoodCorps' record of compliance and responsiveness is exemplary, with a recent educational compliance visit yielding no measurable findings. As we are a fixed amount grantee, FoodCorps does not report on match to CNCS, however additional funding received for our service program well exceeds the minimum match requirements. Programmatically, FoodCorps invests in continuing to develop our organization and model through ongoing evaluation. Both for AmeriCorps and for other grants, FoodCorps has developed relationships with external evaluators, such as Headwaters Group. External evaluations, as well as on-going internal evaluations, are managed by FoodCorps' Research and Evaluation Manager, Eva Ringstrom.

B. SUSTAINABILITY: The Connecticut Commission share of \$150,000 will represent approximately 42% of the total \$360,000 we expect to invest in the FoodCorps program in Connecticut in the coming program year. Serve Connecticut's grant will help us leverage significant additional resources from philanthropic and corporate partners in the state to support important healthy food access work serving communities in Connecticut. While FoodCorps' growth plans nationwide are ambitious, and private fundraising efforts have been successful (see Budget Adequacy section), constraints on funding through our National Direct grant mean that it is unlikely that FoodCorps can grow our effective, evidence-based model in Connecticut without support from Serve Connecticut. The investment we request will more than double our current force to 12 in the state for our second program year in

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Connecticut, a rate of growth that would likely take several years through our National Direct grant. Investment into FoodCorps' expansion in Connecticut will ensure that we can take advantage of the significant cultural, political, and financial interest in supporting proven programs like FoodCorps.

As we leverage corporate and philanthropic support into the work of combating childhood obesity and hunger in school environments, AmeriCorps provides a trusted framework to build on. However, we expect federal and state support to always comprise a minority of our budget, and we are building a model of high-impact national service that is prepared to stand on its own. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation anchors FoodCorps' growth with a 3-year, \$3.5 million grant, and grants have been committed or invited from other high-capacity funders. Much of the work service members will do is designed to be institutionalized and sustained by local partners at a minimal cost. The University of Connecticut Extension has secured \$30,000 in state funding for the first three years of the program to cover service member trainings and host site cost sharing (\$5,000 per year). Another \$50,000 in state funding was awarded by the CT Department of Agriculture to Common Ground (a FoodCorps service site in New Haven) for service member travel and to reduce the cost share for organizations acting as service sites in 2012 and 2013.

Programmatically, FoodCorps emerged from the grassroots up, and serves as a national organization that local voices have shaped according to real needs in their communities. Long-term, FoodCorps will measure success against performance measure outcomes, baseline/landscape assessments, progress reports, service members reporting and reflection logs, and monitoring visits to assess when the programs developed and supported by service members are ready to be assumed by community members. Through the establishment of School Garden Committees, Service Site teams, invested volunteers, mutually beneficial farmer-food service relationships, and teacher advocates, FoodCorps continuously strives to put itself out of business. The FoodCorps CT Statewide Advisory Board is a strategic commitment by the Host Site to strengthen collaboration among existing stakeholders working to improve school food environments over the long-term.

Our Service Site partners all work with underserved schools: those that display significant overweight or obesity challenges and financially disadvantaged students. The sites all meet the requirements for office space, computers, and accouterments needed to implement service, evaluation, reporting, and follow-through. Each Service Site is committed to a long-term partnership and willingness to serve as a hub site and in a mentoring role to other organizations as the FoodCorps program expands. The expansion of FoodCorps from 5 service members to 12 service members is strategically intended to 1) reach additional high need communities, 2) broaden the program's

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geographic mix across the state; and 3) deepen the program's impact in service sites that have large school districts. In all cases, school districts and service sites have been selected for high probability for program success. Service Site organizations will include (full descriptions available on request): Norwich Public Schools; Community Health Center of New Britain; Common Ground (New Haven, 2 members); Wholesome Wave (Bridgeport, 2 members); Windham Regional Community Council/Windham Youth Services Bureau; Hartford Food System; FRESH New London; VITAHLS/Griffin Hospital. Additional placements in Waterbury and Rockville are being solidified.

In Connecticut, FoodCorps looks forward to expanding our relationships with an extensive network of existing partnerships. Specifically, statewide supporters include: the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; USDA; The UConn College of Agriculture & Natural Science; CT Department of Agriculture; CT Department of Education; CT Department of Administrative Services; CT Agriculture Education Foundation; CT-Cooking Matters; CT Steering Committee for Action for Healthy Kids; CT Northeast Organic Farming Association; CT 4-H Program; State Nutrition Association of CT; farmer associations; and community-based organizations. On the National scale, FoodCorps boasts partnerships with: The Whole Kids Foundation; Cooking Light; USDA; The National Farm to School Network; Let's Move; and many more. These partnerships demonstrate that FoodCorps, nested into the existing organizational landscape, is the rare national NGO that can avoid duplicating existing work as it makes a game-changing national impact.

C. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Service members are trained, supported, supervised, and held accountable by three coordinated tiers of oversight. The first tier is the Service Site, which provides day-to-day service management at each of the organizations where corps members will serve. Service Sites provide on-site orientation and safety training, monitor progress toward the goals of the Service Plan, and sign and certify electronic timesheets. Host Site Supervisors and the Connecticut FoodCorps Fellow make up the second-tier of oversight, ensuring compliance of Service Sites, executing state-level orientation, training, and teamwork for the service members, and generally administering the FoodCorps program. The administrative processes of service members' enrollment and exit, background checks, payroll, and benefits are centralized at the third tier, the national office of FoodCorps. FoodCorps' staff compile compliant electronic and paper Member Files and signed Member Contracts from service members, maintain the Memoranda of Understanding with Host Sites, ensure coverage for child- and healthcare, and process biweekly stipend payroll for service members.

Through prevention, detection, and enforcement, FoodCorps ensures that AmeriCorps rules and

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regulations are complied with at all links in the chain. We provide robust training in Prohibited Activities, time tracking, programmatic deliverables, and reporting to Host Sites, Service Sites, and service members through in-person training, detailed manuals, weekly emails, webinars, and conference calls. Each year, FoodCorps' national staff members conduct monitoring and training visits to each state where we operate. Discussions during these visits are guided by a detailed monitoring tool outlining expectations in terms of program management, service member management, and AmeriCorps compliance. Host Sites, Service Sites, and corps members submit reports annually describing programmatic successes and challenges and progress toward performance measures, amongst other topics. Each week, service members submit detailed timesheets listing the amount of time spent on direct and indirect service, as well as outlining specific activities. These timesheets are approved by Service Site Supervisors and spot-checked by FoodCorps' national staff to ensure service members are not inadvertently engaged in any Prohibited Activities. Monitoring visit reports, progress reports, and timesheet check-ups all contribute to an annual risk assessment through which FoodCorps determines what sites are at higher risk for a compliance infraction. Sites with a higher risk assessment are subject to increased monitoring and check-ups. Specific areas for concern are identified and a plan for corrective action is determined, implemented, and followed-up on.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS: FoodCorps' program design seeks to be cost efficient, but more than anything it seeks to be effective at achieving our goal: building school food environments that foster healthy kids. We do not seek to invest valuable resources in duplicating work other organizations already do well. In our AmeriCorps program, we cost-effectively centralize administrative functions with our national staff while empowering our Host Sites and the state-dedicated FoodCorps Fellows to direct the service of our members on the ground. FoodCorps seeks implementation support of \$12,500 per MSY, which is below the \$13,300 cap. This represents a relatively modest contribution to the program's overall cost: FoodCorps will pay its service members annual stipends of \$15,000, cover the operating costs of background checks, health insurance, and childcare reimbursements, fund the program's national office and staff, and sponsor multiple in-person trainings for Site Supervisors and service members. FoodCorps anticipates program implementation costs in Connecticut of \$30,000 per Member, 42% of which will be supported by Serve Connecticut funds. The balance will be supported by Host Site cost sharing (\$5,000 per service member) and by the third installment of a three-year, \$3.5 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, amongst other contributions. Additional start-up support is described in detail below.

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As discussed, FoodCorps has built a strong, recent history of investing CNCS and other funding to build effective programming. The program was formulated with planning grant funds of \$44,213 from CNCS, and then implemented in 2011 when awarded a \$625,000 National Direct AmeriCorps grant. FoodCorps also receives funding from Serve Montana and the Maine Commission for Community Service.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY: In 2013, implementation of the FoodCorps program (at a nationally requested 130 MSY) is expected to cost \$6.1M with specific program budgets set aside for service member stipends and benefits (representing 45% of our program budget), and a smaller share for national staff, office expenses, communications (including recruiting), evaluation, technology (including time and impact tracking systems), meetings and conferences (including trainings), travel, and trainers. These numbers parallel the budget for Connecticut, which is \$360,000 total for 12 MSY, with \$150,000 (42%) obtained from Serve Connecticut. The remainder of the funds have been raised from an anchor, 3-year, \$3.5 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, as well as grants that have been committed or invited from the Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation (3 years, \$300,000) the Woodcock Foundation (3 years, \$300,000), the David Rockefeller Fund (2 years, \$60,000), and others. Not captured in the budget is the significant in-kind support our Host and Service Sites provide, including staff time, office space, and equipment for service members as well as funding and infrastructure for program implementation. With a program design that combines a focused national organization, empowered Host and Service Sites and well supported corps members, FoodCorps stands ready to cost effectively grow its operations to a 50-state scale, while still investing significantly in Connecticut over time. The proposed 12 MSY size of the Connecticut FoodCorps class is amply supported by contributions from partner funders and will join our almost doubled force of FoodCorps' service members nationwide in 2013. The size reflects what we, and our philanthropic partners, believe to be a high-impact, cost-effective response to one of the Connecticut Commission's and CNCS' primary priorities.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

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N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A