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Executive Summary

100 Full Time AmeriCorps members will leverage 5,000 volunteers each year to develop the organizational capacity of 100 high need non-profit and educational organizations in 13 counties throughout California. At the end of the 3-year period, the program will have engaged 15,000 volunteers and supported the development of 100 sustainable volunteer programs. The CNCS focus area is Capacity Building. The CNCS investment of \$1,300,000 will be matched with \$ \$1,453,745.

Rationale and Approach

1. PURPOSE. Napa County Office of Education (NCOE) proposes to continue and build upon the current, successful VIP, Volunteer Infrastructure Project, an AmeriCorps program that increases the capacity of nonprofits and educational organizations struggling to meet community needs. VIP will provide teams of 6-12 AmeriCorps members to 13 Supervising Organizations (SO) serving 13 California counties. These supervising organizations act as a bridge for smaller community agencies and educational organizations to connect volunteers to service opportunities, assigning members to local nonprofit or educational Partner Sites (PS) that serve low-income children, youth, and families. The proposed partnership will utilize AmeriCorps members to implement an intensive recruitment effort targeted to "High-Value Volunteers" (HVV) and to cultivate business partnerships for PS. VIP AmeriCorps members will support the development of volunteer program infrastructure within the PS, leaving behind a legacy for future volunteer development. Based on historical performance, the VIP will collectively:

- a. Generate >5,000 volunteers serving more than 52,500 hours each year;
- b. Build business support for the PS, adding a total of >80 business partners; &
- c. Generate >\$50,000 in cash and in-kind donations for the PS.

2. NEED. The combination of the unemployment rate, foreclosures, and state budget cuts has created the perfect economic storm for low and middle-income families in California. In September 2012, California had the third-highest unemployment rate in the U.S., at 10.2%. Even for those employed, average weekly wages decreased in 24 of 26 CA counties from 2010 to 2011, and continued to decline in 2012 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013).

Funding for social services took the deepest cuts of any department in the enacted budget in 2012-2013, particularly impacting those who rely on state supported services. CalWORKs, the state welfare program, was cut \$428 million, and benefit eligibility was reduced from four years to two. State-supported childcare programs were forced to eliminate 14,000 subsidized/free slots for low-income

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families, dramatically impacting the working poor. Furthermore, Medi-Cal lost \$1.2 billion in funding, limiting low-income families and children's access to vital medical care (CA Dept. Social Services, 2012).

Children and families who otherwise would look to their community and educational organizations for support are facing significant hardships as programs are cut, hours reduced, and staff members laid off. As the economy continues to flail for the most needy, the demand for services grows, further harming already vulnerable populations who don't have a safety net. With fewer resources, struggling families turn to local nonprofits like food banks, after school programs, health clinics, and shelters to fill the gaps in essential services.

However, nonprofits are facing the same hardships as government programs, compounded by declining revenue sources and an increased need for their services. Many are closing their doors. Compared to 2010, there was a 15.6% decrease in the number of charitable organizations in 2011 (Giving USA, 2012). Additionally, charitable giving to nonprofits is recovering at a glacial pace; \$37 billion less was fundraised in 2011 than in 2007 (Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 2012). From 2010 to 2011, donations to nonprofits overall increased by less than 1%, with a similar forecast for 2012 (Flandez & Lopez-Rivera, 2012).

Need and demand for services has sharply increased while shrinking budgets have meant reduced staff and smaller programs. In one striking example, national Food Bank usage rose by 46% from 2006-2011, and the majority of clients are receiving food assistance for longer periods--six or more months. Food Banks have seen a shift in clientele as well, with the numbers of working poor and underemployed utilizing their services growing significantly (Food Banks Expand Beyond Hunger, NY Times, Nov. 8 2012). With nonprofits facing closures, layoffs, and reduction in services to make ends meet, our most vulnerable populations turn to educational organizations for support.

Educational organizations are particularly in need of support and compose approximately one third of identified partner sites, including tutoring, afterschool programs and schools. While student need has increased with record levels of English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students (www.dataquest.cde.ca.gov), funding for education in California remains at an all-time low, with 2011 revenue limit sources to districts down by \$3.4 billion over 2008 levels. Per pupil spending in CA ranked 43rd out of all states in 2011 (Education Week, Feb. 21 2011). School programs, such as ESEA Title I and USDA meal programs that assist children from low-income families have seen a dramatic increase in the proportion of students benefitting. For example, over half of all enrolled students in California now qualify for free/reduced price meals (Education Week, March 29 2012).

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The rapidly deteriorating number of school staff and faculty hired each year demonstrates the great need for school support. From 2010 to 2011 alone, 23,886 fewer FTE employees (administrators, pupil services, staff, and teachers) were employed in public schools, and the pupil-to-teacher ratio increased by 8.9%. It is no wonder that California seriously lags behind other states in quality of education, ranking 30th in 2011 (Education Week, Jan. 11 2011). VIP's target population experiences these challenges at higher than average rates. With nonprofits and schools struggling to meet the client demands, communities are left without vital support services for these families.

3. TARGET SCHOOLS/COMMUNITIES. Participating SO communities were selected for their high levels of economic need. They include the lowest income communities in: Contra Costa, Fresno, Kings, Los Angeles, Monterey, Napa, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma. Poverty impacts a high proportion of families with children in each targeted county; for example, 30% of families in Fresno County are below the poverty line, nearly double the statewide average of 16.5% (Census Bureau, 2012). All participating counties have foreclosure rates in the state's highest 30%, and San Bernardino County has a foreclosure rate in the top 10 of all U.S. metropolitan areas. Further, 74% of 3rd grade students Santa Cruz County's high need communities scored below proficient on the CST-Language Arts test; 92% of children participated in free or reduced price meals in the Sonoma County communities served; and the number of households utilizing food stamps in Napa County increased by over 100% last year, all key indicators of community need (CA Dept. Social Services, 2013). All 13 counties in this application have higher than average percentages of children who are free/reduced meal eligible; 8 have higher than average increases in households with food stamps/SNAP benefits; and all have higher than average percentages of students scoring below proficient on the State Language Arts test (CDE, 2012).

In November 2012, a comprehensive needs assessment was conducted with SO which, in turn, surveyed their current and potential PS. The 13 SO that comprise VIP include volunteer centers, state universities, and branches of government across the state. All participants in the survey cited major budget cuts in recent years; the majority noted a decrease in staff and quality of programs.

Additionally, decreases in funding led to the closure of programs and offices. One typical comment noted that the decline in funding came at exactly the time when "the low-income people served have also experienced declines in their ability to pay for basic necessities."

Concurrent with this declining revenue and increasing demand for services, a significant need for organizational capacity building was identified.. When asked to rate volunteer program areas where the organizations needed the most improvement, SO and PS alike identified their greatest needs as 1)

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utilizing volunteers for fundraising, 2) recruiting and retaining highly-skilled/highly valued volunteers (HVV), and 3) establishing and maintaining business partnerships. While the program includes a diverse pool of nonprofits and educational organizations, the type and size of the organization have a small part to play in volunteer outcomes: research shows that the cultivation of a well-managed volunteer program leads to organizational gains regardless of mission or size (Hagar, 2004).

Utilizing volunteers effectively for fundraising and creating business partnerships represents a huge return on investment for nonprofits and educational organizations, and attracting and retaining skilled volunteers with extensive experience offers very cost-effective human capital. However, without the infrastructure to run a high-quality volunteer program, nonprofits and educational organizations will struggle to take advantage of these opportunities--and without the help of these volunteers and businesses, they will surely fall short of meeting the burgeoning needs in their communities.

Skilled volunteers and business partnerships provide much needed assistance, however many nonprofits and educational organizations have difficulty finding volunteers and retaining them once they do. Creating a program that uses volunteers to address long-term needs rather than shortening a to-do list requires a cultural shift for most nonprofit and educational organizations (Hurst, 2012). This dilemma led to the focus of the VIP on HVV and business partnerships to maximize support for local nonprofit and educational organizations, enabling them to leverage more resources and provide the required services to meet the growing needs of low and middle-income families.

RESPONSE TO THE NEED. To address the critical needs faced in the communities described above, 100 full-time VIP AmeriCorps members will dedicate their time to two primary activity areas:

1) building an infrastructure by recruiting, screening and placing >2,500 HVV, serving a minimum of 20 hours each, and >2,500 one-time volunteers; & 2) establishing and maintaining sustainable local business partnerships to provide resources through direct funding, in-kind donations, and corporate volunteers.

Member roles will provide capacity building support that is otherwise lacking within the PS organization they are serving, clearly distinguishing their role from that of other staff. Members will follow a detailed workplan based on the Volunteer Capacity Assessment (VCA). Built on the work of the Urban Institute's "Volunteer Management Capacity Study" and Michigan State University's "Achieving Success Through Volunteers", this assessment and the resulting comprehensive member workplan identifies critical needs of the organization and provides the member with a pathway to bridge the divide between people willing to volunteer, the mechanisms to recruit them, and the ability

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to use them well (Nelson, 2009). NCOE and the program collaborative has proven that, by utilizing AmeriCorps members in this way, it is possible to both deepen and widen the impact of the critical services community organizations are able to provide to children and needy families.

The evidence-based activities described below provide PS with the resources they need. Member activities are agreed upon by all partners and specifically defined in the MOU. NCOE monitors adherence through regular site visits and reviews.

a. Member Training & Coaching makes up 10% of member service and includes statewide, regional, online, and local approaches, as well as participation in National Days of Service.

b. Volunteer Infrastructure & Capacity Building Activities make up 45% of member service.

Infrastructure and capacity building activities, such as developing appropriate position descriptions and procedures to match potential volunteers to these positions, creating a database to track volunteers and record their contributions to the PS, and establishing volunteer training and recognition plans, will take place on a daily basis throughout the term of service.

c. Volunteer Recruitment encompasses 35% of member service and includes activities such as tabling at community events to find individuals interested in volunteering at the PS, and interviewing potential volunteers to secure a mutually beneficial fit.

d. Business Partnership & Fundraising Capacity Building Activities make up 10% of member service and include activities such as developing written requests for cash or in-kind donations.

Effective volunteer utilization is a result of two important components: 1) staff support and 2) relevant administrative procedures (Hager, 2004). To this end, each PS conducts an internal review of its capacity using the VCA as part of the application process. VIP members only work with selected PS that lack capacity to to effectively utilize volunteers, as indicated by a score of 30% or lower on the VCA year 1 standard. The VCA measures achievement of appropriate standards each year: year 1--strategic plan development addressing volunteer roles within the organization; year 2--strategic plan implementation as it relates to staff working with volunteers; and year 3--integrating volunteers fully into the organizational structure and culture to achieve the mission. Detailed indicators are associated with each standard, resulting in a specific workplan. Activities include:

* Assess PS capacity to support HVV, one-time volunteers, and business partnerships. * Implement a volunteer program focusing on HVV to address needs, including the development of position descriptions, assessments, policies, training programs and tracking mechanisms. * Recruit community members as HVV for programs that support children, youth, and families. * Contact local businesses to establish and nurture relationships that augment PS programmatic and fiscal resources.

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* Integrate the volunteer program into multiple levels of the PS, defining roles relevant to the organizational structure and defining staff roles in volunteer management. * Participate in all required national days of service, trainings, program meetings, and development opportunities, including those detailing prohibited activities.

The 100 AmeriCorps members will be placed in teams of 6-12 at the 13 SO. Members will then be assigned a high need PS in their region where they will dedicate their service, while maintaining a strong connection to the larger SO team. To ensure that members are placed in the most strategic locations, each SO conducts an extensive PS application process to select sites that lack the administrative infrastructure and support to effectively utilize volunteers; only those organizations that have 70% or fewer of the identified indicators on the VCA are considered. Once chosen, each PS is provided with ongoing training on important topics like member support, reporting guidelines, and volunteer leadership. Additionally, site visits are conducted regularly to ensure that the member is being utilized properly.

Further support for ensuring the development of volunteer and business partnership capacity will come from the group of 13 VIP Leaders, selected to provide training to PS staff and AmeriCorps members on best practices. One Leader will be based at each SO and will serve as mentor and coach to the other AmeriCorps members by leading team meetings, making weekly check-in calls, and providing support as needed. Leaders will serve in the same activity areas as other members but will focus their capacity building efforts on the SO, rather than the PS.

These Leaders provide the SO with the ability to develop systems of support for each of the PS. Collaboration between the SO and PS is an important component of the program and requires time and effort to develop the necessary infrastructure to support the project. The SO has the responsibility of supporting the VIP efforts at each PS in the areas of training, volunteer recruitment, volunteer retention, and volunteer management. The Leaders dedicate their service toward supporting this process and also to building the SO capacity to maintain the program in the future.

EVIDENCE BASE FOR ACTIVITIES. While the identified PS offer diverse services, from after school programs to homeless shelters, VIP members across the state will focus on the same goals: 1) building quality, sustainable, and effective systems of recruitment and support for HVV; and 2) developing partnerships with local businesses to make a difference in the lives of California's struggling families. These evidence-based interventions don't just provide additional services; they also build sustainable volunteer programs that will have benefit for years to come, truly "teaching how to fish."

HVV are quickly becoming the social sector's most valuable asset. Volunteers who offer their expertise

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to nonprofits not only generate costs savings on essential projects from branding to program delivery; they also strengthen ties to corporate supporters, increase the nonprofit's marketing, and offer strengthened strategic planning and evaluation measures. The pro bono effort allows nonprofit staff to increase focus on program delivery (Hurst, 2004). However, charities have not been able to develop effective programs to utilize skilled volunteers (King, 2010) and creating pro bono programs and other programs that attract HVV requires a "culture shift" in a nonprofit that is not easy to achieve (Hurst, 2004). Worthwhile volunteer programs meet the needs of the organization and of the volunteers themselves. Successful programs thus clearly require strategic planning about long-term needs and developing a system to ensure consistency and quality control (Hurst, 2009).

Volunteer retention is an important consideration for any successful volunteer program which is why it is so problematic that more than a third of volunteers do not return a second year--adding up to an estimated loss of \$38 billion in lost labor (Eisner et al., 2009). However, research shows that volunteers who use their skills when they volunteer are more likely to continue from year to year (CNCS, 2008). VIP members will capitalize on this, ensuring that volunteers use their skills and experience optimally at the PS.

VIP impacts will be assessed with the following performance measures and instruments:

- 1) Volunteers. 25 long-term and 25 one-time volunteers recruited and managed per member, in total, 2500 long-term and 2500 one-time volunteers, amounting to 5000 volunteers overall.
- 2) Volunteer Hours. Each long-term volunteer will serve at least 20 hours; each one-time for at least 1 hour, in total generating >50,000 hours for long-term volunteers and >2500 hours for one-time volunteers, amounting to >52,500 hours served overall). Volunteers will be documented using a Volunteer Log, which tracks the number of volunteers as well as the length of time each volunteer dedicates to the organization. Logs are collected monthly by the SO and submitted quarterly to NCOE.
- 3) Fundraising. Each member will raise > \$500 in cash and in-kind donations for PS through establishment and maintenance of >2 business partnerships per member. Business partnerships will be tracked using Donation Logs detailing the prospective business partner, the number and type of contact made, and the result, including the value of the donation and are also collected by the SO monthly. This information is then compiled into a quarterly report and sent to NCOE for additional analysis, and to ensure that goals are being met.
- 4) Volunteer Capacity. 70% of 100 partner sites (64 nonprofit and 35 educational organizations) receiving at least 510 hours of capacity building services will demonstrate proficiency in the established volunteer capacity standard for the corresponding year, as defined by implementation of

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80% or more of the identified indicators on the VCA. The VCA measures the PS progress toward specific yearly standards and is completed three times annually by the PS. The SO compiles this information for its regional group and sends it to NCOE for analysis.

5) Member Development. 70% of 100 members will exhibit an increase in their skill development and overall effectiveness of 20% as measured by the Member Performance Review.

Member Time Logs are used to track member hours to ensure that service terms are completed in a timely fashion. Members submit their Time Logs to their PS supervisor who reviews and signs off for accuracy. These logs are compiled and reviewed again at the SO level and checked to ensure program compliance and appropriateness of activities. Once this process is complete, time logs are submitted to NCOE where they are reviewed a third time and entered into a FileMaker tracking system that allows program staff to monitor progress on hours to date by activity type and location. Training Logs are used to track member development and include records of all statewide, regional, local, and online training. Member Performance Reviews track skill development. Member evaluations are completed by PS supervisors in collaboration with SO staff three times/year.

These performance measures were determined based on 4 years experience in operating a VIP capacity building program. Similarly, as a result of NCOE's extensive annual evaluation of the effectiveness of that program, the following adjustments have been made to the service design in the current application: 1) Added the generation of volunteers specifically to support fundraising efforts to the list of member activities; 2) Increased the amount of time each volunteer is required to serve to be considered a HVV; & 3) Lengthened the amount of time members are placed with an organization to 3 years and expanded the VCA to reflect this change, to ensure that volunteer management systems are secure and well-founded before the PS stops receiving AmeriCorps support.

DATA. Valid documentation of effectiveness can be a challenge in a program of this size. Fortunately, NCOE has the services of an internal evaluator who has assisted CalSERVES in developing a thoughtful and effective system of data collection and evaluation. Data collection tools and systems have been developed and honed over time through extensive field testing for accuracy, validity, and ease of use. All data is submitted to the Program Manager, who reviews and forwards it to the evaluator for analysis. The Program Manager will oversee the data collection process and monitor the consistent implementation of all tools and instruments, as well as ensuring that the program is on track to meet all performance measure targets and reporting deadlines.

ASSESSMENT. NCOE strongly believes in the importance of constant assessment, analysis, and mid-course corrections to ensure continuous improvement. To this end, program staff will 1) Ask for, and

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listen to, feedback from ALL stakeholders, including volunteers, AmeriCorps members, SO, PS, funders and community members; opportunities to give feedback will be included in surveys, conference calls, trainings, meetings, focus groups, and informal settings; 2) Utilize all data and analysis to inform and refine the program; 3) Share all assessment and evaluation results with stakeholders; and 4) Convene formal quarterly strategic planning meetings with SO and conduct an annual planning retreat.

In addition to support from NCOE's internal evaluator, VIP will work with an external evaluator, JBS International, Inc., for superior evaluation objectivity and rigor. Evaluation methodologies include database counts, document review, key informant interviews, project-developed evaluations, and criterion-referenced assessments. Data will be compiled/aggregated in a FileMaker Pro database with means tests run in SPSS.

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE. NCOE has successfully managed AmeriCorps programs for 15 years and statewide programs for the past 12 years. During this time, we have developed a wide array of support tools including one-on-one coaching, trainings and handbooks for SO and PS that operate at a geographic distance from NCOE. For instance, during the recruitment and selection process, NCOE works with all partners to create and post appropriate position descriptions, conduct telling interviews, and complete the necessary paperwork to enroll members. NCOE's previously funded VIP program (2010-2013) has shown great success in improving volunteer capacity of partner sites. In the 2010-2011 year, volunteer capacity, improved substantially, exceeding program goals. Non-participating comparison reported much smaller, and sometimes negative, effect sizes. The VIP program also exceeded performance targets for the number of volunteers recruited and number of clients served in every year of the program to date, further proving the impact of VIP in increasing volunteer infrastructure and building organizational capacity. In the most recent year of operation, VIP was able to recruit a total of 52,117 volunteers, who served a total of 515,289 hours, far exceeding the goal of 15,400 volunteers serving 67,000 hours. Additionally, 77% of program participants improved their skill sets by 20%, surpassing the performance measure of 75% improving by 20%. PS also improved dramatically with more than 75% showing an improvement of volunteer utilization by 20% or more as measured by the VCA.

MEMBER PLACEMENT, RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT. NCOE has 15 years experience in developing comprehensive member recruitment, training and support plans and implementing them in Statewide, multisite, and intermediary settings. These plans have been honed and updated over the years, leading to the highest quality member experience.

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PLACEMENT: The 100 full time AmeriCorps members will be placed in teams of 6-12 at each SO. The SO will assign each member to a PS nonprofit or educational organization in their region. Members will be in direct communication with the SO and their teammates through weekly meetings hosted by the SO to generate a strong connection with the regional team. Each team will include one Leader (a second year member) who will, in addition to serving the same function as her peers at a PS, will provide additional support and guidance to members of the team. This invaluable peer leadership will take the form of a regular meeting, social activities, 1-to-1 coaching and troubleshooting, and organizing member recognition events.

RECRUITMENT. An overarching goal of VIP is to connect individuals with meaningful opportunities to make a difference in their local communities. NCOE will support SO in recruiting members from the communities where the PS are located, encouraging them to utilize their vast networks to advertise positions and reach out to the low-income individuals they serve.

The program manager will lead VIP Recruitment. SO, in consultation with PS, will select their own AmeriCorps members from the applicant pool. NCOE will post positions for each community on the AmeriCorps website to recruit nationwide, and staff will maintain postings, emailing potential applicants inviting them to apply and promptly following-up with all applicants. In addition to the national AmeriCorps recruitment website, NCOE will utilize internet resources, including craigslist, idealist, and volunteermatch. The SO will also take an active role in recruitment by recruiting a diverse corps reflecting the community, including distributing multi-lingual flyers, airing public service announcements on local radio; collaborating with key ethnic/community leaders, and reaching out to community and government organizations, faith-based groups, and service clubs.

SCREENING & SELECTION. Potential members from all recruitment sources will undergo a rigorous selection process, overseen by the SO. Screening of applicants will include an informational meeting, extensive application, basic writing assessment, interview process, & reference and background check. Desirable qualities for the VIP members include a demonstrated understanding of under-served groups, the character to serve as a role model, and the ability to build and maintain strong relationships with partner agency staff and other partner organizations. Specific qualifications include: 1) Leadership ability and interpersonal skills to engage volunteers and community organizations; 2) Interest in, understanding of, and dedication to the ethic of service; 3) Volunteer experience; and 4) Strong written and oral communication skills.

TRAINING. ORIENTATION/TRAINING PLAN. NCOE has a rich history of providing excellent professional development and training to AmeriCorps members, and the new VIP initiative will be no

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exception. SO and PS will provide a weeklong orientation at the beginning of member service terms, including a comprehensive review of prohibited activities. SO will utilize a standardized training curriculum developed by VIP that teaches members about AmeriCorps, best practices in recruiting HVV and establishing business partnerships, and how to effectively measure and achieve VIP's overall program goals. PS will teach members about the community they serve and their specific roles as VIPs within the PS, as well as organizational needs concerning volunteer capacity and business partnerships. In addition to the SO and PS orientation, NCOE will utilize interactive webinars to efficiently train new members in volunteer management, event planning, and working with the public. Members also attend a weeklong statewide training conference in the first 2 months of service, during which outside consultants provide workshops on topics like volunteer management, developing strategies to recruit specific volunteer populations and professionalism.

During their term of service, members will develop professional skills applicable to a wide variety of future careers. In particular, members will acquire skills related to communicating effectively, establishing positive relationships, managing time for maximum efficiency, and maintaining a professional attitude. Additionally, members will gain knowledge in volunteer program management, nonprofit organizational structure, professional business relationships, and building nonprofit capacity to serve clients. Members will participate in 170 hours of professional development that include online trainings, team meetings at the SO, one-on-one coaching at the PS, webinars, the statewide training (including training on prohibited activities), and National Days of Service. These trainings will serve them well throughout their term of service and into the future.

SUPERVISION. VIP members are supervised by a professional member of the PS staff who will provide daily support. SO are responsible for screening and monitoring the PS to ensure they have the staff capacity to provide excellent supervision and that the staff member selected is appropriate for the position. PS supervisors work directly alongside AmeriCorps members, ensuring a constant flow of support and guidance throughout their terms. Through the SO and PS partnership, SO provide regular training and meetings to build a supportive network for PS supervisors and give them the resources they need to understand AmeriCorps programs, including restrictions and approved activities. Additionally, SO are responsible for day-to-day monitoring of all PS which includes conducting site visits and providing ongoing coaching.

SUPERVISOR TRAINING & SUPPORT. NCOE will provide training and support to all supervisors. NCOE will ensure partners receive information from all state commission trainings and have access to CNCS on-line training resources. Regular training and support is provided to supervisors, beginning

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with an orientation where supervisors participate in a 2-day intensive training in how to effectively supervise an AmeriCorps Program. The Program Manager calls all SO monthly to check in on progress towards goals, using a standard monitoring tool, and to troubleshoot any difficulties. The Program Manager also conducts statewide online and in-person required trainings as well as site visits to all PS semi-annually.

MEMBER EXPERIENCE. VIP integrates AmeriCorps members into communities by placing them in PS that serve local and high-need families and children. PS are carefully screened to ensure that they have a high need for an AmeriCorps member as evidenced by an increased demand in services, as well as the organizational/fiscal capacity to host a member. This selection process guarantees that AmeriCorps members have a high-quality experience and make a concrete impact in the local community.

Quarterly, SO visit each PS to check on the quality of experience being provided to AmeriCorps members and will ensure that the PS are in compliance with VIP and AmeriCorps guidelines. Additionally, placing AmeriCorps members at nonprofits that match their experiences and interests engages members and affords them a unique view of how nonprofits operate, gives them the opportunity to work directly with volunteers and high-need clients, and teaches them about the value of civic engagement.

The team-based structure of VIP also encourages collaboration between members. SO will facilitate monthly gatherings, ongoing training opportunities, and online member trainings to ensure members can look to each other for support and inspiration, thus avoiding the challenges of single-placement sites. Members come together at their SO for monthly meetings, which include teambuilding, and reflection activities.

The AmeriCorps 101 training is initiated in the first week of VIP members' service terms. This training covers basics of the AmeriCorps program and reinforces their identity as AmeriCorps members. Members also are required to wear a uniform with the AmeriCorps logo whenever they perform service and are continually encouraged to positively identify with the AmeriCorps program. At the end of their service term, the Life After AmeriCorps training curriculum includes the multiple methods of staying involved and connected with AmeriCorps, national service, and civic engagement. NCOE has developed strong relations with educational organizations, nonprofits, and volunteer centers throughout the state. All of our sites have previously hosted AmeriCorps members, and a quarter of them have another national service program within their organization. In this way, VIP members will be provided the opportunity to connect cross-stream with other programs including VISTA, RSVP,

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Senior Corps, and AmeriCorps members through the Economic Opportunities Commission.

All members will also collaborate with other national and community service programs through shared attendance at local trainings and National and Community days of service. The VIP Leaders at each SO will initiate collaboration with other local national service and volunteer programs to plan and coordinate participation in at least 3 National and Community Days of Service throughout the year.

VOLUNTEER GENERATION. VIP primarily focuses on the recruitment of HVV to increase organizational capacity. Specifically, members will recruit and manage highly skilled and professional volunteers to provide PS with the expertise they need to increase services to high need children and families. Volunteers within organizations will work with organizational staff to improve operations by utilizing their specialized skills. For example, an accountant has helped a nonprofit with effective budgeting, a carpenter has repaired building dry-rot, and a web designer has improved web site navigation. Most importantly, the VIP program brings together a partnership of organizations that share the goal of building high quality volunteer programs as a strategy to effectively carry out their objectives.

NCOE and SO view volunteers as essential to their mission and have extensive experience in supporting and effectively engaging diverse groups of volunteers. The program structure includes a rigorous training program for SO and PS on allowable volunteer activities, as well as a tiered system of continuous oversight that ensures SO and PS are meeting these standards.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING. NCOE has a 15-year history of managing high-quality AmeriCorps programs. NCOE is well regarded for its training and technical assistance programming, curricula development, assessment systems, and professional development activities in the fields of early childhood education, after school, nutrition education, community service, volunteer program development, and service learning. Each year the project has met/exceeded projected outputs and outcomes. For example, in 2011-12, NCOE's Sonoma County AmeriCorps project alone provided 200,000+ service hours to 1,400 struggling K-8 students resulting in reading gains exceeding all projections.

NCOE is well aware that program quality is directly related to personnel quality. VIP benefits from the experience of Director Julie McClure, a dedicated professional who is often consulted by other programs and is considered a state leader in volunteer programs. With an MA in Public Administration, Ms. McClure has directed NCOE's AmeriCorps program since its inception. She has

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been involved in the successful service of over 2,500 AmeriCorps members! She is responsible for program oversight, fiscal compliance, coordinating/maintaining partnerships, supervising staff, and timely/accurate reporting.

In addition to its Project Director, VIP benefits from the guidance of Project Manager since 2009, Sara Sitch. An AmeriCorps VISTA alumna and former senior project manager for an international mentoring-focused foundation, Ms. Sitch holds an MA in Public Administration from San Francisco State. She reports to the Program Director and is responsible for oversight of day-to-day activities, including monitoring service sites for compliance, developing and leading trainings, and maintaining strong relationships with supervising organizations, partner sites, and all program stakeholders. Additional key staff: Project Assistant, Kathleen Chosa, provides vital services including maintaining databases, tracking member hours, monitoring participation in member development, and setting up training event logistics. Ms. Chosa was an AmeriCorps VISTA member herself 1998-2000 and provides excellent guidance to AmeriCorps members and supervisors on AmeriCorps rules and responsibilities.

In a statewide program, ensuring adequate supervision and support for members is a key aspect of program success. VIP will ensure this by budgeting a .15 FTE position for each SO for the supervision and support of the AmeriCorps team. These dedicated professionals have been involved in the ongoing development of VIP and are either currently serving in or are ready to take on their supervising roles. In addition, each PS will provide a .10 FTE position to work directly with the member and coordinate with their SO.

Plan for Effective Orientation, Training & Technical Assistance: NCOE project staff are in place and fully trained in both financial and programmatic policies. Program manuals, training agendas, and protocols are available to ensure any new staff are quickly oriented. Extending this level of support to SO and PS, regular training and guidance is provided to sites, beginning with a 2-day intensive site supervisor orientation in how to supervise an AmeriCorps Program.

The program will provide extensive member training through multiple formats, as detailed in the member development section, pp. 13-14, including a well-developed resource center hosted on the program's website, www.calserves.org. Regular site visits and email/phone communication are additional important tools for providing T/TA to all partners, members, and other stakeholders. NCOE will ensure partners receive information from all State commission trainings and have access to CNCS on-line training resources. NCOE also takes advantage of the CaliforniaVolunteers (CV) Summer Institute, as well as regular CV conference calls and periodic trainings. The program also utilizes

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Corporation sponsored TA as well, particularly the online trainings such as inclusion of members with disabilities and use of the Resource Center to access supplementary training resources.

Capacity to Conduct Evaluations: NCOE is committed to the evaluation process as essential to informing program activities and continuous improvement. VIP has established Filemaker Pro databases to track all data, established protocols for collecting results (a published yearly data calendar, proven instruments/forms, process for reviewing and correcting errors in data collection, etc), and an effective working relationship with internal and external evaluators.

Prior Experience Administering AmeriCorps Grants and other Federal Funds: NCOE draws on its 15 years of experience operating both local and state-wide AmeriCorps programs, as well as extensive experience managing multiple grants, including \$11 million in federal funding in the 2011-12 fiscal year. NCOE has managed over 30 federal grants in the last decade from the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and the Corporation for National Service, among others. The Director and project staff have continuously managed large AmeriCorps partnership programs, with annual budgets now exceeding \$3.5 million--10% of NCOE's total budget.

Management Structure: NCOE is led by Superintendent Barbara Nemko, Ph.D. The Assistant Superintendent, Tony Apolloni, Ph.D., reports to the Superintendent and supervises both the Program Director, Julie McClure, and the Chief Business Officer. The Program Director and Asst.

Superintendent meet twice-monthly to discuss program activities and review progress towards achieving goals. The Program Director also provides annual program reports to NCOE's Board of Trustees.

The agency provides supervision and support as needed to successfully meet all Performance Measures. All activities are tracked and monitored using the effective protocols already in place for the office's multiple state and federal grant programs. NCOE is covered by the State Single Audit Act and has strict fiscal controls in place, as well as written policies regarding cost allocation, procurement, and personnel expenses, and is in good standing with local, state, and federal funders. NCOE maintains a business office with a full-time CPA, a Fiscal Manager, and 6 Accounting Assistants. With this capacity, NCOE successfully tracks Corporation funding and manages all aspects of the program to the highest standards.

For Current Grantees Only: AmeriCorps programs are a central aspect of NCOE's identity and integral to the work of the organization. A majority of VIP staff are themselves AmeriCorps alumni and bring a deep knowledge of what it takes to run a successful program. For over a decade, NCOE has field-tested and fine-tuned systems that support a quality AmeriCorps program, resulting in a

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track record of success as evidenced by performance measures consistently met/exceeded (see section C below), AmeriCorps member retention above 90% and a growing network of committed community stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including volunteer centers, universities, and nonprofit organizations in rural and urban settings.

SUSTAINABILITY. NCOE has a proven track record of success in securing matching funds for all its AmeriCorps programs. The VIP funds needed to meet total program costs for the project term have been secured from the SO with Letters of Commitment signed by each agency's authorized representative. Each of the 100 participating PS provide \$10,000 per member in in-kind and cash match, an expression of their commitment to AmeriCorps and this program.

As a capacity building project, all activities are designed with sustainability beyond federal support as a key goal. VIP AmeriCorps members will be charged with leaving a legacy, including the creation of a structure to effectively support and retain volunteers, the establishment of relationships with partners who will be regular sources of HVV, and the evolution of long-term business partnerships.

When selected as a PS, nonprofits and educational organizations make a 3-year commitment to the program. Experience has shown that the organizations most successful at developing sustainable programs have had the opportunity to have three years of consistent attention to volunteer utilization and capacity building. For example, because of the consistent attention brought to the Food Bank Coalition of SLO County in Paso Robles, California, the organization has not only been able to create more efficient tracking systems, meet their own recruitment goals, and increase services in their preexisting programs, but also was able to create an entirely new, volunteer-generated gleaning program called GleanSLO, which now provides tens of thousands of pounds of additional produce to families in need annually.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY. NCOE has extensive experience overseeing and monitoring multi-site, statewide AmeriCorps programs. The protocols, systems, and tools are in place to ensure sites receive the oversight necessary to maintain high-quality programs. NCOE provides training for partner site staff as detailed above, as well as materials useful in member management, and keeps a full copy of each member file to ensure compliance in eligibility and service hour completion.

Site monitoring is thorough and ongoing, including 1) file reviews to ensure all documentation/paperwork is in place, 2) phone calls to troubleshoot and check on progress towards goals, and 3) site visits by the program manager who uses a scoring rubric to provide regular feedback, assessing site compliance in terms of adherence to the program design, member

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management (including prohibited activities), and fiscal issues. Site back-up includes financial activity reports and personnel time logs.

As outlined in a formal MOU with NCOE, SO and PS are responsible for payment of member stipends and are fully trained in the necessary policies and procedures by NCOE staff who have many years successful experience. In addition, SO are responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of all of their PS, which includes regular meetings, structured observations, site visits, and ongoing coaching. This monitoring process identifies any areas of weakness, addresses the identified issues immediately in collaboration with partner sites, and makes use of lessons learned in the quest for program improvement. If an issue of non-compliance is identified, the program manager will report it to the program associate at CaliforniaVolunteers, along with a plan of action addressing the issue.

DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE. NCOE's 2 current AmeriCorps programs, CalSERVES and VIP, have excellent track records. CalSERVES regularly exceeds its performance targets. In the 2010-11 Needs and Services PM, for example, participants gained at least one performance level on the state CST, exceeding the target of 25%. Similarly for the 2011-12 service year, in VIP's Needs and Services PM, 79% of agencies receiving services exhibited targeted gains, exceeding the target of 75%. NCOE has worked with CaliforniaVolunteers to ensure an effective system to quickly identify members who are behind in hours and getting them caught up. All partners and service sites are held to the same high standard and given the tools they need to comply with all CNCS, CV and program guidelines. Enrollment: NCOE has had 100% member enrollment for all previous programs.

Retention: Retention in 11-12 was 94.4% in CalSERVES and 91.7% in VIP, markers of a high quality program. Always seeking to improve retention, staff interview any member not completing; in the past, reasons have primarily been family emergencies, medical issues, and financial hardships.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. NCOE has always taken AmeriCorps identification very seriously and trains the sites to support the culture of AmeriCorps at each of the placements. All the AmeriCorps member service gear, orientation materials, and training resources are provided by NCOE to partner sites with the AmeriCorps name and logo. SO are required to use the AmeriCorps name in their recruitment efforts and receive standard applications and resources from NCOE with AmeriCorps branding. Additionally, NCOE requires that participating SO and PS include the AmeriCorps and VIP name and logo on their websites as well as in communication with the press or general public.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

COST EFFECTIVENESS/CORPORATION COST PER MEMBER SERVICE YEAR (MSY). The

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collaborative is applying for a fixed-amount grant with a proposed cost per MSY of \$13,000, a level which allows the program to provide the training and face-to-face support needed to implement a successful statewide project. Each VIP member will provide at least an additional 50 volunteers to support the mission of the organization; those volunteers, in turn, will serve a minimum of 525 hours at each PS. This time is valued at \$21.79 per hour by the Independent Sector, resulting in a contribution of at least \$11,439.75 per PS. Multiplied over the state, VIP will thus generate \$1,143,975.00 of volunteer time. In addition, members will provide much needed systems and infrastructure to ensure the program continues to offer increased levels of service long-term. VIP is a cost-effective and important investment in California's nonprofit and educational institutions during this time of economic recovery.

Diverse Resources Secured to Manage and Operate the Proposed Program: Both the supervising agencies and the PS provide in-kind and cash support at 52.79%, an increase from the already substantial 49.13% in the current funding cycle. Participating agencies will provide in-kind contributions in the form of salaries and benefits for supervision and costs for on-site member training. They additionally provide a cash match of \$6,214.20 of each member's living allowance. The intermediary, NCOE, provides match in the form of forgone indirect costs.

NCOE has a history of successfully generating and obtaining the funding needed to address the total cost of a thriving AmeriCorps program and will support the expansion of funding.

In keeping with NCOE policy, both in-kind and cash commitments are documented by a letter of intent during the application process followed by a formalized MOU. Agencies provide the in-kind match through a variety of non-federal sources, such as their general fund and donations. In-kind match comes from NCOE and its partners and includes a portion of administrative costs, as well as time for PS and SO staff to supervise and support the program. NCOE's AmeriCorps programs have over a decade of success in acquiring and increasing matching funds by working collaboratively to build local, regional, and state-wide partnerships.

BUDGET ADEQUACY. NCOE has had significant experience in creating budgets for AmeriCorps and many other programs, including large statewide and national projects, and is informed by the experience of managing the current VIP. With a total program cost of \$2,753,745, 47.21% of which is CNCS share, the budget for this proposal reflects what is needed to support a successful AmeriCorps program in a manner both adequate and within the program guidance. The budget reflects the total funding necessary to achieve and exceed program goals.

Personnel Costs are designed to support a strong management team based at NCOE and to ensure

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that sites throughout the state are well managed and supported. At NCOE, Julie McClure will devote 20% of her position to VIP, bringing her many years of experience as an AmeriCorps director to the oversight of the program. This time allocation enables the Director to liaison with CaliforniaVolunteers and partners across the state to ensure program success.

NCOE has found that having an experienced, full-time manager is essential to program success, and Sara Sitch will continue to fill this role. Ms. Sitch will coordinate the daily operations of the program, engage in long-range planning, stay in close communication with SO and PS, troubleshoot problems as they arise and ensure the program is following all guidelines and regulations. The Program Assistant, Kathleen Chosa, assists the Program Manager in ensuring all member files are complete and up to date and in handling the large volume of paperwork that comes with a program of this size. At the SO level, the budget allows for Supervisors to devote 15% of their time to working with their network of Partner Organizations, member recruitment, supervision and support, as well as communication with NCOE. The Partner Sites provide 10% of a supervisor position as match; this allows for daily on-site supervision and coaching for each member.

Travel is necessarily a large expense for statewide programs, particularly in California. The travel sections of the budget, both staff and member, reflect the partnership's efforts to ensure that adequate funds are available for 1) NCOE staff to travel to support sites and monitor program compliance; and 2) members, staff and partners to come together for a statewide kick-off training. The amounts allotted are based on the program's up-to-date knowledge of travel costs and rely on careful research to ensure that expenses are kept as low as possible. Funds are also set aside for staff to travel to the CaliforniaVolunteers sponsored training.

There are no funds in the budget for Equipment purchases, as the program will be able to benefit from equipment already purchased by the program partners. The Supplies budget will cover the cost of member service gear (AmeriCorps logo shirts) and basic office supplies necessary for program operation.

Funds for Training are set aside for all three layers of professional development: 1) whole group statewide face to face training, 2) maintenance of the existing on-line training modules, and 3) on-site trainings. The budget includes money to pay for outside trainers, facilities, and supplies, as needed. The SO provide the funding for on-site trainings as part of matching funds.

The Evaluation section of the budget allows for 100 hours of expert support and guidance from an external evaluator. NCOE has found that this input is invaluable for ensuring the effectiveness and continuous improvement of the program. The on-going support of NCOE's internal evaluator is

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provided as part of the in-kind match.

Other Program Costs provide funds for communication, printing and space rental, as well as the costs of member background checks, which are covered by the SO.

The Member Living Allowance is set at \$14,000 plus benefits including FICA, Worker's Comp, and Health Care--an amount the partnership has found to be adequate to cover the basic costs of living members encounter across the state, allowing full dedication to their year of service.

Through the combination of Corporation funding and the matching commitments from community partners, NCOE has been able to design a highly effective program with a track-record of continued success. The AmeriCorps VIP program will continue to promote a significant statewide expansion in volunteering through infrastructure development and meaningful interventions in struggling nonprofits and educational organizations, resulting in 100 PS and SO receiving needed services.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

CalSERVES VIP will conduct a comprehensive evaluation. All members of the program's partnership have already met to discuss evaluation questions and expected outcomes. The partnership will meet again at the onset of the program and quarterly thereafter to review program progress and discuss outcomes. External evaluator, JBS International, will provide expertise. A comprehensive evaluation plan has been submitted to the State Commission (CaliforniaVolunteers).

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A