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Executive Summary

The International Rescue Committee, Inc. (IRC) proposes to implement a national program in which 26 AmeriCorps members will leverage the work of more than 2,600 volunteers to support economic empowerment activities in Abilene, TX; Atlanta, GA; Charlottesville, VA; Dallas, TX; Elizabeth, NJ; Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; New York, NY; Oakland, CA; Phoenix, AZ; Sacramento, CA; San Diego, CA; and Tucson, AZ. At the end of Year I, a total of 2,400 refugees, asylees, and other new Americans will have participated in job training, skills development, ESL classes, and other counseling and mentorship opportunities designed to prepare them for the workplace. The project will indirectly benefit a further 7,200 economically disadvantaged individuals; lead to improved economic conditions in the wider community; contribute to a stronger evidence base on early employment programs; and provide professional development opportunities for AmeriCorps members themselves. This project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Economic Opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$345,799 will be matched with \$126,607 from IRC funds, for a total budget of \$472,406. The project will begin on September 1, 2013, and conclude on August 31, 2016.

Rationale and Approach

Every year, the United States offers sanctuary to thousands of people who have experienced persecution abroad. In 2013, an estimated 70,000 refugees will be resettled in the United States with the full benefits of legal residence. While these individuals bring extraordinary resilience, fortitude and ingenuity to their new lives in the United States, they also face a number of challenges that can limit their capacity to participate fully in community life. Many refugees arrive in the United States with little formal education. Others have spent years in refugee camps or have experienced profound physical or emotional trauma. Limited English language proficiency, minimal exposure to a professional work environment, and a lack of familiarity with cultural norms and expectations combine to prevent many of these new Americans from obtaining employment and achieving financial independence. Although refugees are legally authorized to work and possess many of the aptitudes most valued by employers, too many fail to live up to their full potential because they have not had the opportunity to develop the skills that are critical for success in the American job market.

All refugees receive a basic assistance package from the federal government during their first three to six months in the United States. Most refugees between the ages of 18 and 65 also enroll in the federal Matching Grant program or similar state-level job preparation programs, which are designed to help

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new arrivals obtain paid employment as soon as possible. These initiatives have shown impressive results: in FY11, data from the Office of Refugee Resettlement indicates that 71% of all Matching Grant participants achieved self-sufficiency (defined as not being dependent on any form of cash assistance) within their first 180 days in the United States. Yet the fact that nearly one-third of all Matching Grant participants still rely on cash assistance, six months after arrival, illustrates the difficulty that many refugees face in finding appropriate employment. First jobs are generally entry-level, pay minimum wage, and do not offer benefits; many are temporary or seasonal. Programs such as Matching Grant often do not have enough slots to accommodate the number of clients who require assistance. Moreover, the lack of long-term and intensive services represents an important service gap: even those refugees who successfully enroll in an employment program generally receive a limited package of services that does not include in-depth case management or address ongoing job development needs.

The International Rescue Committee, Inc. (IRC), the largest non-sectarian resettlement agency in the United States, has resettled over 125,000 refugees since 1975. Through its network of 22 field offices, IRC offers a wide array of services for refugees, asylees, and other new Americans, including mentoring, job training, career counseling, English language instruction, and cultural orientation. For the proposed project, IRC has selected 13 field offices that are located in areas where economic constraints and the relative scarcity of services have made it particularly important to broaden the depth and reach of economic empowerment initiatives: Abilene, TX; Atlanta, GA; Charlottesville, VA; Dallas, TX; Elizabeth, NJ; Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; New York, NY; Oakland, CA; Phoenix, AZ; Sacramento, CA; San Diego, CA; and Tucson, AZ. The majority of refugees in these cities are resettled in neighborhoods where at least one-third of the population lives at or below the poverty level. Many face unique challenges in their job search: in Atlanta, for example, nearly one in five refugee families is headed by a single mother, many of whom come from cultures where women are not expected to work outside the home. In San Diego, 82% of jobs obtained by newly arrived refugees since 2011 pay less than \$10/hour, and 64% are part-time, while rent for a one-bedroom apartment costs an average of \$800 per month. In New York City, the average wage for new arrivals is just over \$18,000/year, significantly less than the \$24,000 recommended annual living wage, and in Oakland, the median 3.5-person family supported by IRC has one adult worker who earns \$20,833/year, below the 2012 poverty line and less than one-third of the average income among the general population. Moreover, in locations across the United States, the recent economic downturn has made the employment

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process much more challenging: today, it takes significantly longer for IRC clients to find jobs than it did before the onset of the crisis in 2008, and many employers have become more selective, capitalizing on the soft labor market to require that candidates demonstrate increasingly advanced skills.

If new Americans are to achieve self-sufficiency in contexts such as these, they will need greater access to English language courses, job training initiatives, workplace-orientation sessions, and other targeted interventions. Expanded support to economic empowerment activities will pay a double dividend, helping to lift refugees out of poverty while also boosting economic indicators in the communities where refugees live. When a Matching Grant client becomes self-sufficient within a month after their arrival in the United States, for example, they leave the program to make space for another client, making it possible for federal dollars to stretch twice as far. And when refugees find jobs that pay above minimum wage and provide benefits, they are less likely to require any form of government assistance, thus reducing the burden on the public sector. Most importantly, economic empowerment activities help refugees and other new Americans actively contribute to the vitality of their new communities, fostering integration as well as financial independence.

AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems:

IRC requests support for 26 full-time AmeriCorps members under the 'Multi-State' application category. At 13 sites across the United States, AmeriCorps members will participate in a range of economic empowerment activities that have been proven to: a) increase client capacity to obtain and retain employment during their first six months in the United States; b) improve client capacity to identify and successfully apply for jobs that pay above the minimum wage and offer potential for advancement; and c) ensure that clients acquire knowledge in critical areas, including language skills and financial literacy, that will contribute not only to their immediate economic independence, but also to their successful cultural integration over the long term. IRC will also dedicate intensive resources to recruitment and professional development activities for AmeriCorps members, thus building a cadre of trained personnel drawn from traditionally under-represented communities. Where possible, IRC will actively recruit former refugee clients to serve as AmeriCorps members in order to build their capacity to enter social service professions. The proposed project will therefore deliver benefits for three distinct groups: refugees, the wider community, and AmeriCorps members themselves.

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Proposed AmeriCorps activities have been selected in close consultation with key field staff in order to ensure that members fill service gaps and provide necessary support to expand existing programs. Each activity reflects priorities that field staff have identified through extensive consultations with clients, partners, local government representatives, and other stakeholders at the community level. Specific proposed activities include:

FINANCIAL LITERACY: IRC clients come from countries as diverse as Burma, Eritrea and Iraq. Most have little experience with the American banking system and are unfamiliar with basic concepts such as direct deposit, savings, credit and debit cards, checks, income taxes, and credit histories. IRC financial literacy classes therefore focus on the fundamentals of personal finance, and include one-on-one mentoring to ensure that new arrivals are able to develop and maintain a household budget. AmeriCorps members will help facilitate financial literacy classes; support and supervise volunteer instructors; and engage in mentoring. Placement sites: Abilene, Charlottesville, Dallas, Elizabeth, Miami, New York, Oakland, Sacramento, Tucson

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): Most refugees have had limited access to formal education and face daunting communication challenges when they seek employment. While ESL classes are available in most of the locations identified for this proposal, either at private educational institutions or through public assistance programs, they are often fee-based, over-subscribed, and located outside refugee population centers. IRC-supported ESL classes, on the other hand, are free of charge, and are located in the neighborhoods (and sometimes even the apartment complexes) where refugees live. Unlike most programs, IRC also has the capacity to leverage its diverse staff and volunteer base to offer instruction in many low-incidence languages spoken by clients. Through the proposed grant, AmeriCorps members will help facilitate classes; support and supervise volunteer instructors; and develop curricular materials where appropriate. AmeriCorps members will be assigned to both basic ESL classes, which focus on grammar, pronunciation, and conversational skills; and vocational ESL classes, which emphasize work-related oral and written communication skills. Placement sites: Abilene, Dallas, Elizabeth, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES: The proposed grant will enable IRC to deepen and expand its existing employment services at each of the 13 proposed locations. IRC offers job-seekers an integrated

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package of services that covers the preparation, placement, monitoring, and follow-up phases of the employment process. Sample AmeriCorps activities under this category include:

Orientation to the workplace: Train and support volunteers to conduct orientation courses through the World of Work program, which introduces clients to the unspoken business and social codes in the American workplace by covering topics such as punctuality, personal hygiene, and appropriate work attire. Placement sites: Abilene, Charlottesville, Dallas, Elizabeth, New York

Job counseling: Provide pre-employment and job readiness training; work directly with clients to conduct intakes and assessments, develop employment plans, conduct practice interviews, and write résumés; and lead career counseling sessions that convey key messages about the importance of employment in becoming self-sufficient. Placement sites: Atlanta, Charlottesville, Elizabeth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Oakland, Sacramento, Tucson

Job training: Recruit, train and supervise volunteers from specific sectors (such as retail sales, maintenance, and food service) to conduct individual mentoring and implement vocational training courses, creating lesson plans and other instructional materials as necessary. Placement sites: Abilene, Atlanta, Dallas, Oakland, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Diego, Tucson

Job development: Build relationships with local businesses, raise awareness on the benefits of hiring refugees, and help identify and cultivate potential employers in order to increase the number and quality of employment opportunities that are available to IRC clients. Placement sites: Abilene, Atlanta, Charlottesville, Dallas, Elizabeth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Oakland, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Diego, Tucson

Job placement: Assess potential employment opportunities, match clients with opportunities, help clients complete job applications, schedule job interviews, and follow up with prospective employers. Placement sites: Atlanta, Charlottesville, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, Tucson

Monitoring and assessment: Maintain files in a central database that tracks client progress through all economic development services; monitor and assess client progress; and contact both clients and employers within the first two weeks of a job placement to identify any adjustment problems or

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further training needs. Placement sites: Atlanta, Charlottesville, Elizabeth, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, Tucson

CAPACITY BUILDING: While most of the proposed AmeriCorps members will concentrate their efforts on a specific client population, at least one will be dedicated to capacity-building efforts that benefit IRC offices across the United States. The capacity-building AmeriCorps member will be based in San Diego, home to one of the largest IRC resettlement offices, and will help develop training tools and curricula (such as webinars, e-learning modules, conferences and job manuals) for volunteers, AmeriCorps members, and IRC employment staff. Placement site: San Diego

CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES: Within the framework outlined above, AmeriCorps members at several offices will support economic empowerment activities that are specifically tailored to the local environment. In Charlottesville, for example, AmeriCorps members will work with volunteers to support the Women's Refugee Craft Cooperative, oversee operations at a local community garden, and use the VITA tax preparation program to prepare tax returns for refugees. AmeriCorps members in the Atlanta office will capitalize on a strong volunteer program to develop a 'service learning' initiative that promotes volunteerism at schools, hospitals and other local institutions, enabling clients to build relationships with potential employers, obtain on-the-job training, and help foster community development. In Dallas, one AmeriCorps member will liaise with IRC staff responsible for in-kind donations to ensure that job candidates have access to business clothing and other items necessary to make a positive impression at interviews and in the workplace. AmeriCorps members in San Diego will support existing programs that a) connect young people with jobs and educational financial aid; b) help new arrivals acquire the skills necessary for careers in health care; and c) start up a small business. In addition, AmeriCorps members will support a variety of programs that target populations with specialized needs. In San Diego, for instance, Iraqi refugees make up more than 70% of new arrivals: with relatively high education levels but few certifications that are accepted in the United States, this group requires a particular focus on individual casework and referrals to external service providers and accreditation boards. In cities with high unemployment rates among clients under 35, such as Elizabeth and San Diego, AmeriCorps members will help develop economic empowerment programs that target at-risk youth.

Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed and Measurable Community Impact:

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IRC utilizes an evidence-based approach that relies on both internal and external research. IRC's extensive experience in refugee services indicates that clients are stronger candidates for employment when they have access to resources such as job training, English language courses, and individualized mentorship. Reports from the field consistently suggest that clients who do not obtain a job within six months of arrival are, over time, increasingly likely to transition from IRC support onto public assistance.

These observations have been substantiated by a number of external surveys. In its 2005 Annual Survey of Refugees, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) found that 63% of refugees who had English language skills had jobs, while only 45% of refugees with no English language skills were employed. Another study found that ORR and refugee provider staff identified pre- and post-employment services as the most important factor affecting refugee employment rates (Peggy Halpern, 'Refugee Economic Self-Sufficiency: An Exploratory Study of Approaches Used in Office of Refugee Resettlement Programs,' U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008). It is important to acknowledge, however, that there is a significant knowledge gap on the types of interventions that have proved most effective in boosting self-sufficiency outcomes among refugees and other new Americans. A recent report by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) drew attention to the need for improved quantitative data on the effects of employment services on refugees and other immigrants who arrive in the United States with minimal job skills (GAO, 'Refugee Assistance,' March 2011). For this reason, IRC has actively prioritized monitoring and evaluation initiatives that will help determine the efficacy of discrete economic empowerment activities.

IRC recently piloted a web-based database, entitled 'Efforts-to-Outcomes' (ETO), that was developed by SocialSolutions to help service providers track information about changes in knowledge and behavior across multiple services and groups of participants. ETO has the capacity to sort data according to nationality, level of English proficiency, gender, or any other distinguishing characteristic, as well as specified time periods. Pre- and post-test scores and participant surveys can also be recorded in ETO for easier data aggregation and analysis. During job training, for example, attendance at each class session is recorded separately, giving IRC the flexibility to seek patterns in employability and self-sufficiency indicators according to total classes or class time attended. ETO has been launched successfully in the San Diego and Phoenix offices and is expected to be fully operational

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across the IRC network by September 2013. The projected outcomes from the proposed AmeriCorps program therefore include not only direct benefits to refugees, communities, and AmeriCorps members, but also a body of qualitative and quantitative evidence that will help inform research and good practice on social service programs for refugees and other new Americans.

IRC will use the following monitoring tools, among others, to measure and report on project impacts, using ETO wherever possible to ensure systematic data collection and analysis:

Pre- and post-tests: Pre-tests establish a baseline; post-tests help determine the progress a client has made as the result of a specific activity, such as ESL classes or job training.

Pre- and post-assessments: Clients complete questionnaires before and after IRC workshops and other activities, evaluating their own knowledge and capacity. Assessments offer a qualitative, self-reported perspective that helps to balance quantitative data elicited through pre- and post-tests.

Case file documentation: Intake forms, enrollment and attendance records, case notes, referrals and other forms of follow-up documentation are retained in each client's case file.

Field visits; client, instructor and employer surveys: Qualitative feedback from multiple sources helps IRC staff adapt activities, refine client self-sufficiency plans, and triangulate quantitative data.

Activity and outcome tracking: All IRC activities for each client, together with their job placements, attendance records, self-sufficiency achievements, self-assessments, and other information are entered into ETO in order to analyze the progress each client makes over time.

AmeriCorps Feedback Survey: In addition to monitoring client outcomes, IRC will also monitor the quality of each AmeriCorps member's experience at their field placement. IRC will adapt its existing Volunteer Feedback Survey for the AmeriCorps program, focusing on member satisfaction; placement outcomes; the quality of supervision; and training needs. The survey will include 10-15 questions and will be completed on a quarterly basis, using the SurveyMonkey online tool to ensure that each member has the option to respond anonymously. IRC headquarters staff will analyze survey results and develop comprehensive reports, including graphics that illustrate issues by theme or by office.

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Through the proposed project, AmeriCorps members will directly contribute to improved economic self-sufficiency outcomes, as measured at the 180-day mark, for at least 2,400 clients. Because their work will also benefit each client's family members, AmeriCorps members will additionally reach at least 7,200 indirect beneficiaries (using a conservative estimate of 3 people per family) while also benefiting the wider community and providing an important basis for future best practices. Specific targets and expected outcomes are described in the Performance Measures section.

Member Recruitment:

IRC's first priority is to identify AmeriCorps candidates who fit the position requirements. Within this overarching goal, however, IRC also aspires to recruit members of under-represented communities, including former refugees, and to foster their career development, thus creating a cadre of professionals who are uniquely qualified to understand the cultural context surrounding new Americans as well as the challenges and potential opportunities that confront them. During the recruitment process, IRC will actively encourage applications from the following groups: former refugees and asylees; new Americans; young adults; economically disadvantaged people; and members of ethnic minority communities.

IRC will recruit AmeriCorps members through its extensive networks in each of the 13 proposed project locations, leveraging, among others, its existing relationships with local colleges and universities, especially those where large numbers of new Americans are enrolled; local Refugee Forums; partner agencies serving low-income communities; local ethnic community-based organizations; non-profit resource networks; and programs for young adults. With over 30 years of experience in refugee resettlement and economic empowerment issues, IRC has developed an excellent reputation at the grassroots level. Its credibility with local communities will help ensure that it is able to tap into a strong pool of potential applicants. In Charlottesville, for example, IRC will advertise through its network of 50 qualified interpreters, who serve as important liaisons to the local community. In San Diego, IRC will advertise through a monthly e-newsletter that reaches 5,000 people, and in Elizabeth and New York, through a network that has been established to connect current and former clients. IRC will also publicize the AmeriCorps program through its frequent presence at community events, and IRC staff will be encouraged to identify former clients who may be appropriate for an AmeriCorps position. All 13 project sites will advertise the program to current

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and past IRC volunteers and clients. As IRC specifically encourages clients to engage in volunteer activities, this approach will help raise awareness of the AmeriCorps program among former refugees while also reaching a wider pool of applicants who are committed to resettlement principles and seek opportunities to professionalize their work. Each of these initiatives will complement advertisements through widely-used recruitment portals such as the AmeriCorps website, the IRC website, idealist.org, volunteermatch.org, and local print publications.

Member Training:

AmeriCorps members will be introduced to the program, IRC, and their new position through an intensive orientation process that will be complemented by ongoing supervision and professional development. At the outset of their assignment, AmeriCorps members will travel directly to their assigned placement site, where they will participate in a multi-day induction that includes individual meetings with IRC staff, program managers, volunteers, and other AmeriCorps members. In 2012, IRC launched a new orientation program for volunteers that offers site-specific packages with information on IRC's mission and history; office protocols; office programs; community demographics; local information on target populations; and the Refugee 101 video module, which introduces key resettlement facts and concepts. Each AmeriCorps member will be trained on this package at his or her place of assignment. Sessions will include information on IRC's code of conduct, called The IRC Way, and will address topics such as appropriate behavior with beneficiaries; appropriate dress codes; punctuality; and cultural awareness. AmeriCorps members will be held accountable for ethical practices by their supervisor.

Following the orientation period, AmeriCorps members will be trained on specific technical topics through a 'mentorship model,' in which supervisors teach new employees the skills necessary to successfully fulfill their terms of reference, and then work alongside them until the employee has gained the confidence to operate with greater autonomy. Throughout the duration of their service, AmeriCorps members will attend weekly or bi-weekly program meetings with IRC staff; work closely with their supervisors to refine their skills and reflect on their experiences; and participate in ongoing thematic trainings on subjects such as monitoring and evaluation, community referral systems, and working with victims of trafficking and special needs populations. IRC headquarters staff will also develop a three-part webinar series that is specifically designed to support AmeriCorps members through their first year of service. The first webinar will take place within two months of the start of

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the placement, and will include introductory information on IRC national and international programs. The second webinar will take place at the 6-month point and will examine AmeriCorps activities within the overall context of the IRC strategic plan. The third webinar will take place at the end of the service year and will focus on AmeriCorps members' experiences, challenges, and plans for the way forward.

Overall, AmeriCorps members will have the opportunity to develop skills in the following areas: program management; research; curriculum development; public speaking; cultural sensitivity and awareness; program coordination; program facilitation; teaching and training; case management; needs assessments; program evaluation, including impact and outcome tracking; community development; partnership building; database management; volunteer coordination and supervision; individual employment counseling; report writing; and cross-cultural communication. Moreover, during numerous opportunities for reflection with supervisors and peers, AmeriCorps members will be expected to evaluate their own professional development in light of their exposure to the refugee resettlement process. Field placements will enable members to become intimately familiar with the economic landscape of the communities in which they work, providing important context for each member's post-AmeriCorps career choices.

Member Supervision:

The Executive Director at each IRC field office will assign a supervisor to each AmeriCorps member. Supervisors will be selected based on their strong technical skills and their proven capacity to manage volunteers and interns. Sample supervisor positions for the proposed program include Employment Specialists, Case Management Specialists, and Resettlement Services Managers. At the same time that they work to introduce AmeriCorps members to key resettlement concepts, supervisors are also expected to engage in ongoing training and professional development, ensuring that they are familiar with current trends and fully up-to-date on best practices in economic empowerment and employment services. Each AmeriCorps supervisor reports to his or her Executive Director, who reports, in turn, to the relevant Regional Director based at IRC headquarters in New York.

Supervisors will use techniques such as job shadowing and mentorship to help AmeriCorps members adjust to their new positions, enabling AmeriCorps members to acquire key skills while also developing their capacity to undertake activities independently. AmeriCorps members will work together with

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supervisors to devise a training schedule that is relevant to their personal interests as well as the responsibilities of the position, and supervisors will be expected to identify external resources, such as mentors and training courses, that will help AmeriCorps members gain critical skills. Supervisors will meet weekly with AmeriCorps members and will evaluate their progress on a bi-monthly basis in order to recognize accomplishments and troubleshoot emerging issues. Many of the staff members who will serve as AmeriCorps supervisors have experience implementing AmeriCorps VISTA programs and have attended CNCS trainings, developing proficiency in eGrants, recruitment methodologies, and reporting tools.

Member Experience:

AmeriCorps members at every field site will be treated as IRC staff members, and will benefit from the same degree of client interaction and program development experience as full-time personnel. While all IRC staff bear responsibility for some administrative tasks, IRC will endeavor to ensure that AmeriCorps members benefit from a powerful service experience by undertaking substantive program-related work and participating in opportunities for learning and reflection. AmeriCorps members will be fully integrated into the IRC structure, but their unique terms of reference will also be clearly acknowledged and supported by supervisors and colleagues.

AmeriCorps members will have access to a variety of professional development opportunities, including IRC's Learning Portal, an online learning system that offers over 400 courses from well-known institutions such as Harvard University and Microsoft. The Learning Portal covers a wide range of project management and business skills development courses and includes modules on resettlement-specific topics such as casework management. IRC will also adapt its established internal 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) model to ensure that a forum is available for AmeriCorps members to share their experiences with a wider group of practitioners. CoPs are groups that meet online or by conference call on a monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly basis in order to share new ideas, brainstorm, collaborate on new projects, disseminate best practices, and learn from others who are engaged in similar types of work across the IRC network. The US Programs Department at IRC currently hosts CoPs on topics ranging from immigration and anti-trafficking to early education and volunteer coordination. Upon award, IRC will initiate a new Economic Empowerment CoP. The Economic Empowerment CoP will be facilitated by IRC staff and will include AmeriCorps members as well as other staff members working on economic empowerment initiatives across the network.

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Volunteer Generation:

Each year, approximately 3,500 IRC volunteers, including more than 2,600 volunteers in the 13 locations identified for this proposal, spend tens of thousands of hours helping refugees learn new skills, adapt to a new cultural context, and prepare for their first job in the United States. Among other tasks, volunteers who focus on economic empowerment issues assist clients with job applications, résumé development, and interview preparedness. With an overall staff-to-volunteer ratio of 1:7, IRC depends on volunteers to ensure that programs reach as many clients as possible.

All IRC field offices employ volunteer management staff who are responsible for identifying priority work areas for volunteers; developing job descriptions; and conducting volunteer recruitment through the IRC website, local universities, and other community-based organizations. In order to become a volunteer, a candidate must complete an application, attend an IRC orientation, participate in an interview with IRC staff, and undergo a background check and a reference check. Once on board, volunteers are provided with an in-depth orientation package and one-on-one training on their specific area of work, including information on goals, expectations, and resources. Each volunteer signs a hire letter confirming their commitment to the principles outlined in *The IRC Way: Standards for Professional Conduct*.

Through the proposed project, AmeriCorps members will contribute to volunteer trainings and ongoing volunteer management, and will work closely with selected volunteers who are supporting economic empowerment activities. In doing so, AmeriCorps members will utilize the Volunteer Operations Manual, which was launched in 2012 and includes standardized tools, resources and metrics to improve the consistency and effectiveness of volunteer operations. Specifically, AmeriCorps members will recruit skilled professionals for volunteer mentor positions; assist volunteer management staff with the interview and selection processes; ensure that, where appropriate, volunteers are trained in ETO and have the capacity to track refugee client outcomes; and provide general oversight and support for volunteers working as teachers, job trainers, coaches, and facilitators for ESL classes, job training courses, and other economic empowerment activities.

Organizational Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification:

IRC is fully committed to promoting national service and will work closely with CNCS to support

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appropriate branding for all AmeriCorps initiatives. IRC will ensure that the AmeriCorps name is used on recruitment materials, online job advertisements, orientation materials, member curricula, press releases, and publications related to the AmeriCorps program. Furthermore, through CoPs and other resources, IRC will encourage AmeriCorps members to share their experiences with a wider audience -- contributing to the IRC blog on www.rescue.org, for instance, in order to bring more visibility to the AmeriCorps program. Each host office will also be encouraged to include a story related to the AmeriCorps program in the monthly newsletter that they develop and distribute to local donors and community stakeholders.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Background and Staffing:

Founded in 1933, the IRC is one of the oldest non-profit organizations providing global emergency relief, protection, advocacy, and resettlement services to refugees and other victims of oppression and violent conflict. IRC is also the largest non-sectarian resettlement agency in the United States and has partnered with the U.S. Department of State since 1955. The IRC national headquarters in New York directs the work of 22 field offices. Senior staff in the US Programs Department (USP) include the Senior Vice President; the Director of Grants and Programs; the Senior Director of Development and External Relations; three Regional Directors; the Director of Processing; the Director of National Programs; and the Senior Director of Resettlement Programs. Senior staff at HQ are supported by a team of Technical Advisors, Program Officers, and Program Assistants, along with a dedicated Volunteer Operations Officer. Headquarters support also includes a Regional Controller, Controller, three Human Resources Specialists, and other administrative support staff. IRC staff in the Finance and Payroll departments will liaise with Executive Directors and support staff at the field level to provide health care and other federally mandated benefits to AmeriCorps members, track expenditures, and distribute payroll. The USP resettlement network is vertically integrated: IRC is a single corporate entity and each field office is a branch of, and is directly accountable to, HQ. USP field offices receive funding from IRC HQ and operate under the direct supervision of HQ staff, who provide ongoing guidance and direction on refugee processing, core services provision, and other issues related to resettlement and community integration.

The proposed project will be managed by the Volunteer Operations Officer, who is based at HQ and will have responsibility for general oversight and quality control. The Volunteer Operations Officer is currently implementing a comprehensive volunteer management model in all 22 USP offices by

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standardizing forms and processes; creating an IRC Volunteer Community to facilitate the sharing of best practices; and developing a volunteer management database system, using a Salesforce platform, which will allow volunteers to track their hours by date, position, and activity. The volunteer management system will be rolled out to all 22 USP offices between June-October 2013. If the proposed grant is awarded, the Volunteer Operations Officer will integrate AmeriCorps members into the volunteer management system in order to monitor their activities and overall progress, and will serve as the principal point of contact for the AmeriCorps national program. The Volunteer Operations Officer will communicate regularly with AmeriCorps members through, among other channels, bi-monthly conference calls and individual follow-up discussions, and will work closely with AmeriCorps supervisors and Executive Directors to ensure that projects remain on task, on time, and within budget. The Volunteer Operations Officer reports to the Senior Director of Development and External Relations, who reports to the Senior Vice President for US Programs.

With its decades of experience implementing volunteer-supported programs and newly re-launched volunteer management system, IRC has the capacity to provide effective support and supervision to the proposed AmeriCorps members. IRC also has a strong track record of successfully managing AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers. In 2001, IRC was awarded a national AmeriCorps VISTA grant, which ran for five years and facilitated the placement of nearly 120 VISTA volunteers in IRC resettlement offices. A number of IRC offices, including Charlottesville, Phoenix and San Diego, continue to successfully host and cost-share AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers through agreements with state CNCS offices. Finally, IRC has a strong institutional commitment to monitoring and evaluation methodologies that help inform best practice. In 2006, IRC HQ created a dedicated Research, Evaluation and Learning (REL) Technical Unit that has since conducted numerous rigorous impact evaluations in a wide variety of contexts. IRC has also developed relationships with several external evaluation organizations that can be quickly accessed to help shape project design, monitoring systems, and evaluations.

Sustainability:

IRC receives funding from a wide range of federal, state, local and private partners. The USP budget for FY13 is over \$70 million, within a total IRC budget of approximately \$390 million for both national and international programs. IRC expects to support AmeriCorps program implementation through its diversified funding base; its network of over 3,000 volunteers; and strong community

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buy-in to project activities.

IRC works with numerous stakeholders during the resettlement process, including: State Refugee Coordinators; state employment programs; local government authorities; other resettlement agencies; school districts and social workers; housing authorities and landlords; medical, dental, and mental health professionals; law enforcement; youth programs; community-based organizations; educational institutions; and faith-based organizations. Each IRC field office holds ongoing discussions with stakeholders at the local level in order to identify service gaps and ensure non-duplication of services. While many AmeriCorps member activities will be mainstreamed into the IRC structure, others will serve as model 'demonstration projects' that can be adapted and utilized by other organizations that are active in resettlement and economic empowerment issues. IRC's excellent credibility and strong community relationships will enable it to share best practices and lessons learned through channels such as State Refugee Forums, expanding the impact of AmeriCorps member activities beyond the IRC client base.

IRC's extensive network of volunteers will also be a critical element of project sustainability. AmeriCorps members are particularly valuable to IRC field offices because of their capacity to initiate new activities: expanding ESL course offerings, for example, or developing curricula and other instructional materials to support existing training modules. Once these initiatives are launched and evaluated, and AmeriCorps members have developed the systems and materials necessary to support them, IRC will be able to recruit volunteers to undertake long-term project implementation. Toward the end of their service term, AmeriCorps members will conduct training-of-trainers sessions for volunteers, ensuring that IRC successfully retains key knowledge, skills, and best practices after the conclusion of the AmeriCorps project cycle.

Compliance and Accountability:

The proposed program will utilize a multi-tiered management structure in order to maximize accountability, ensure compliance with IRC and CNCS rules and regulations, and enable both AmeriCorps members and IRC clients to derive the greatest possible benefit from the AmeriCorps program. Each AmeriCorps member will be supervised by a designated IRC staff member who has been specifically selected for their leadership capacity and trained on management skills. AmeriCorps supervisors, in turn, report to their Executive Director. The Executive Director ensures overall

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compliance with rules and regulations, while also providing an additional layer of management oversight in the event that conflicts arise between the supervisor and the AmeriCorps member. At field sites that host more than one AmeriCorps member, both supervisors and Executive Directors will engage in group supervision activities that provide opportunities for peer learning. Upon award, the Volunteer Operations Officer will also work with CNCS and local field offices to develop a training for AmeriCorps supervisors and Executive Directors that covers expectations for the program as well as rules and regulations.

At New York HQ, the proposed program will be managed remotely by the Volunteer Operations Officer, who reports to the Senior Director for Development and External Relations. The Volunteer Operations Officer will utilize quarterly reports from both supervisors and AmeriCorps members to track progress and address emerging issues, including any issues involving compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations. The Volunteer Operations Officer will work closely with Executive Directors at each office location, as well as Regional Directors covering the Atlantic, Pacific, and Central Mountain regions, to assess overall project developments and ensure quality control and program compliance. The proposed program will also benefit from ongoing monitoring visits by Program Officers and other HQ-based staff. Through its work with the federally-funded Matching Grant and Reception & Placement programs, IRC undertakes formal monitoring visits at each field office. Upon award, IRC will expand these visits to allow for monitoring of the AmeriCorps program. IRC staff will develop additional evaluation tools that focus specifically on AmeriCorps rules, regulations, and activities, and will incorporate these tools into its existing monitoring protocols. In the event that a program is not found to be in compliance, Program Officers and other HQ-based staff will develop and share a report with senior IRC staff, field offices, and the Volunteer Operations Officer. The report will include specific recommendations on corrective action and future monitoring visits will assess compliance with these recommendations.

Every IRC staff member is expected to adhere to clear ethical policies and regulations. IRC's standards for professional conduct, which focus on its three core values of Integrity, Service and Accountability, are summarized in a one-page document -- The IRC Way -- that also incorporates the IRC Beneficiary Protection from Exploitation and Abuse Policy. At any time, IRC staff can report their concerns via telephone or email to EthicsPoint, an independent firm that specializes in providing a confidential and anonymous reporting tool for employees and has been specifically contracted by IRC

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for this purpose.

Consultation with State Commissions:

IRC has consulted with the State Commissions in all states where it is requesting AmeriCorps member placements, including Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Texas and Virginia. IRC consulted with State Commissions by phone and by email, and where requested, has submitted the relevant consultation forms.

Operating Sites & Member Service Sites:

Due to IRC's vertical integration structure and strong history in implementing large and complex federal grants, all IRC field sites have the requisite programmatic and financial capacities to successfully implement the proposed program. The 13 proposed locations were identified on the basis of: 1) the degree of need for expanded economic empowerment initiatives among the IRC target population of refugees, asylees, and other new Americans; 2) supervisory capacity at the field office level; and 3) the potential of each placement to offer a rewarding experience for AmeriCorps members. The following operating sites have been selected for the proposed program: Abilene, TX; Atlanta, GA; Charlottesville, VA; Dallas, TX; Elizabeth, NJ; Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; New York, NY; Oakland, CA; Phoenix, AZ; Sacramento, CA; San Diego, CA; and Tucson, AZ.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

Cost Effectiveness:

IRC proposes a total budget of \$472,406, including \$345,799 from CNCS and \$126,607 in matching funds, to support 26 full-time AmeriCorps members in 13 locations. IRC has already secured the 24% match for the first year, largely from private individual donors and foundations, and staff will continue to raise funds in support of the program in the coming months. It is also expected that the proposed AmeriCorps members will help recruit new volunteers and solicit in-kind donations and other types of support for IRC clients. In order to meet the increase in match responsibility in the subsequent years of the project, IRC will pursue public-private partnerships and other collaborative funding opportunities.

The investment from CNCS and IRC will help significantly expand and deepen IRC's existing programs, enabling IRC to improve self-sufficiency outcomes among refugees, asylees, and other new Americans; improve economic conditions in the communities where clients live; reduce the burden on

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the social safety net; and contribute to a growing evidence base on the efficacy of early employment programs. At \$13,300 per AmeriCorps member service year, the proposed project offers an extremely cost-effective approach to improving self-sufficiency outcomes for refugees, asylees, and other new Americans.

Budget Adequacy:

The proposed budget reflects an effective use of the Corporation's funding and provides a clear explanation for each expense. The budget provides an adequate living allowance and supports a range of complementary services that will enable AmeriCorps members to develop professional and leadership skills. IRC headquarters and local staff will support the AmeriCorps program through recruitment and training, technical assistance, and overall supervision and management. IRC has the capacity to cover the initial costs of a national AmeriCorps project. IRC also has the necessary personnel, payroll and accounting systems in place to administer a cost-reimbursement grant; track expenses; provide AmeriCorps allowances, accounting for federal and state taxes; and provide health care coverage in alignment with federal requirements.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A