

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Corps Network (TCN) is the national association of Service and Conservation Corps (also referred to as Youth Corps). TCN's Opportunity Youth Service Initiative (OYSI) is designed to unite two Corporation priorities - the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps program and Opportunity Youth - into one powerful program. The OYSI includes 14 diverse TCN member organizations serving 14 states. States served include: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Corps will utilize the OYSI to engage almost 400 diverse youth and young adults, primarily 16-24 yrs old - of which at least 320 (80%) will be from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds - in environmental stewardship projects designed to increase access to open spaces and outdoor recreational opportunities, add economic value, and promote healthy lifestyles among both the OYSI members and the communities in which they are serving. Corpsmembers will serve their term within a program year beginning October 1, 2013 and ending September 30, 2014, and will build or improve at least 640 miles of trails, improve or restore at least 2,700 acres of public lands, and improve living conditions for at least 3,500 low-income households through home repair, retrofitting and energy audits.

The OYSI will accomplish these goals through a program centered on fostering environmental stewardship and preparing youth and young adults for careers related to energy efficient construction and public lands conservation. By participating in professional development and training, Corpsmembers increase their college and career readiness skills; they are able to explore career opportunities and earn industry recognized credentials required for entry onto a "green" jobs career pathway. TCN's OYSI will also address the alarmingly high levels of youth unemployment by providing Corpsmembers with access to educational services, life-skills development, workforce preparation, supportive services, personal and career counseling, and post-program placement assistance.

An investment of \$2,928,891.00 from CNCS will leverage \$3,933,663 in matching funds to support this initiative.

Rationale and Approach

The critical needs that the OYSI addresses include: (1) opportunity youth disengagement from

Narratives

employment and education pathways; (2) labor market needs related to public lands restoration and conservation; and (3) lack of affordable housing available to low-income individuals.

NEED: Effective and relevant services to reengage opportunity youth in the labor market.

America's youth (16 - 24 year olds) have fared particularly poorly in the economic downturn, enduring an unemployment rate that is nearly double the national average [Bureau of Labor Statistics (August 5, 2011). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey]. Currently, there are 6.7 million youth ages 16 to 24, or almost 17% of their age group, who are out of school, out of work [Belfield, C.R., Levin, H.M., & Rosen, R. (2012). The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth. In association with Civic Enterprises for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation]. This sub-population has been termed, "opportunity youth," coined in part due to their enormous untapped potential as well as the optimism they display regarding their own futures.

These 6.7 million young people are projected to cost taxpayers \$1.6 trillion in public expenditures related to crime, welfare and health over the course of their lifetimes [Bridgeland, J. & Milano, J. (2012) Opportunity Road: The Promise and Challenge of America's Forgotten Youth. Civic Enterprises and America's Promise Alliance: Washington, D.C.]. With 1 million more youth becoming disconnected from education and workforce development systems each year [Corcoran, M., Hanleybrown, F., Steinberg, A., & Tallant, K. (2012). Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth. FSG with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation], there is an urgent need to re-engage these young people - to build connections to education and career experiences that are relevant and empower young people to become more productive community leaders so that they may choose to contribute to the health of their communities.

More than half of opportunity youth (51%) reported that they did not have enough work experience or education (47%) required to get the kind of job they wanted (Bridgeland & Milano 2012). However, according to the report, despite these obstacles, youth surveyed recognized the importance of having a good career. It is our collective responsibility to provide a roadmap that provides multiple pathways to secondary and post-secondary success and effectively reconnect opportunity youth [Andrew Sum and Joseph McLaughlin, Out With the Young and In With the Old: U.S. Labor Markets 2000-2008 and the Case for An Immediate Jobs Creation Program for Teens and Young Adults, Center for Labor Market Studies, 2008]. Bridgeland and Milano stress the need to re-enroll opportunity youth in "back on track" schools or programs focused on dropout reengagement and preparation for the labor market. The report asserts that there is a need for, "strong pathways to community through service

Narratives

and mentorship."

NEED: A green-skilled, career ready workforce to address upcoming deficits in the conservation field. The Opportunity Youth Service Initiative will help create a green-skilled, career-ready workforce which is desperately needed as the baby boomer generation enters into retirement and leaves the US Department of the Interior and the US Forest Service with substantial human resource deficits. By 2012, a full 38% of Interior's workforce, 35% of Agriculture's workforce, and 25% of the Bureau of Land Management's workforce will be eligible to retire. These agencies will seek a trained and diverse workforce, making Corps alumni, including many young people of color, valued applicants. One critical labor market need is public lands maintenance. The Federal Public Land Management Agencies currently report backlogged maintenance needs totaling more than \$25 billion. These needs at state and local parks add billions more to this total. Each year, as only a fraction of the necessary work is completed and as more facilities fall into disrepair, the list grows and we risk losing some of our most cherished natural, cultural, and historical treasures forever. Our public lands and waters, "provide essential ecosystem services that benefit all Americans" (America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations, Feb 2011). They clean our air, purify our water, absorb pollution, prevent flood and erosion and provide habitat for diverse species of wildlife. "Access to the great outdoors through our public lands and waters improves our quality of life, while also bringing economic benefit to local communities" (AGO, 2011). Our natural resources are under pressure and face threats to sustainability.

NEED: Assistance to low-income individuals and families to create and support affordable housing. Another issue related to natural resource conservation and sustainability is that, at present, 40% of US energy consumption comes from buildings, and over half of that from residential buildings. This trend also represents a financial impact that is carried largely by low-income people that lack the ability or resources to address the problem as effectively as possible. The primary barriers to residents' shift to energy efficiency are informational, transactional, and financial. Homeowners are not always aware of measures that can lower usage (informational), lack assistance in sorting through options, some more reliable than others, that connect to hardware and services (transactional), and are reluctant to spend what they believe is the cost of improvement (financial). Nationwide, from the winter of 2006-07, to the winter of 2009-10, there was a 48% increase in households reporting energy assistance receipt [Bean, J. Household Reports of Energy Assistance Receipt Increased 48 Percent During

Narratives

Recession. Carsey Institute. 2011]. This is just the households reporting receipt; an estimated 84% of eligible households did not receive assistance (Bean, 2011). Solutions need to address all issues to be deployed at scale. Once energy efficiencies have been gained, state and local investments in renewable energy - investments that will benefit the state economy by generating power at home, employing green collar workers, and preventing pollution - can be much more effective and impactful. Unfortunately, not all communities are aware of or have the capacity to take advantage of existing energy conservation and efficiency opportunities.

WHY THESE NEEDS WERE CHOSEN AS PRIORITIES:

The Corps Network has chosen to address environmental needs in the local communities in which opportunity youth Corpsmembers will be serving also, in part, because, "within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically. The polarity of the relationship has reversed. Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume, to wear, to ignore" [Richard Louv. (Algonquin, 2005). Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder]. A 1998 study by Dr. Stephen R. Kellert of Yale University, with assistance from Victoria Derr, examines the effects of participation in outdoor activities on teenage youth. Results indicate the majority of respondents found the outdoor experience to be, "one of the best in their life." Participants report positive effects on their personal, intellectual and, in some cases, spiritual development. Pronounced results were found in enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, autonomy and initiative [Kellert, Stephen R., with the assistance of Victoria Derr. A National Study of Outdoor Wilderness Experience. New Haven: Yale University, 1998].

Opportunity youth collectively represent multiple unmet national needs that national service, and The Corps Network specifically, is uniquely positioned to effectively address.

WHY AMERICORPS IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO ADDRESS THESE NEEDS & EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO UTILIZE:

A structured, long-term service program is a viable path for opportunity youth to connect to post-secondary education and the workforce. Despite their circumstances and the obstacles presented, 53% of opportunity youth saw themselves graduating from college and 69% want to make a difference in the lives of others (yet only 3% currently volunteer) [White House Council on Community Solutions. (2012) Final Report: Community Solutions for Opportunity Youth]. National service opportunities

Narratives

provide the most effective solution to address this disparity because young people can gain work experience while making a difference in their local communities and in the lives of others. With the use of their AmeriCorps Education Awards, these same Corpsmembers can continue their path where the foundation has already been laid. Overall, CNCS alumni from low-income backgrounds are more likely to continue on the path laid by their national service experience: 44% of minority and 46% of disadvantaged alumni are employed in public service careers versus only 26% of comparison groups [Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development. Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni. Washington, D.C. 2008].

Youth become disconnected at various ages and stages and for a variety of reasons. To successfully re-engage opportunity youth, there is a need for programs to provide a sense of belonging, positive role models and access to a holistic menu of social and emotional supports (Corcoran, Hanleybrown, Steinberg, & Tallant 2012) - all of which are incorporated into the Corps model. The Corps Network promotes crew-based service, a team-based culture that instills a group identity and connects Corpsmembers to a larger purpose and movement - AmeriCorps and national service. Corps provide programs that include elements that are recognized as best practices in successfully engaging youth, including high expectations, wrap-around support, work-relevant learning opportunities, and a connected, caring adult (White House Council on Community Solutions 2012). Therefore, engaging opportunity youth in Corps programs that focus on outdoor and environmental activities is an ideal scenario. Corpsmembers will develop soft skills necessary for career and post-secondary readiness as well as valued labor market skills that will position them to pursue living-wage careers in the green economy.

At that intersection of labor market needs and a willing and capable workforce, AmeriCorps members will rise to the challenge and help our nation recover valuable public spaces and become more aware of the importance of conservation.

The Corps Network, for the past 25 years, has represented America's Service and Conservation Corps. Today, 150 member Corps engage over 33,000 Corpsmembers in service to community and the environment. The Corps Network is particularly well positioned to address the widening education and employment gap as Corps work at the intersection of three fields of practice: education, workforce development, and youth development. Unemployment and underemployment in younger years creates an employment gap that cannot be bridged. The time between ages 16 to 24 - the typical age of youth participants in most Corps programs - represents a critical period for developing labor market

Narratives

attachment and skills. Early work experience positively correlates with future labor market success and earnings. Through the Corps model we will revitalize communities by empowering and educating the members of the community; to identify ways that the youth as empowered community members can play a significant role in the redevelopment of their communities, so that they, as well as others, can become partners and producers of impact.

Corps will exponentially increase the likelihood of successful reengagement for opportunity youth by addressing their most commonly cited obstacles directly: not enough education or experience for the jobs desired; lack of support services such as transportation, childcare and financial literacy; costs associated with education attainment; difficulty in balancing work and school; lack of engaging, relevant credit-bearing learning experiences; and difficulty navigating complex systems and application processes. In terms of community and conservation efforts, in a study administered by researchers at Texas A & M, Corpsmembers reported significantly increased community engagement, positive attitudes towards public lands, and environmental activism. Participants also experienced significantly higher developmental outcomes, with Corpsmembers reporting increases in their ability to work in teams, leadership skills and self-responsibility.

Corps programs will design Individual Development Assessments and Plans with Corpsmembers upon the Corpsmembers enrollment into the program as part of the Orientation process. Corps will develop individualized action plans that cater to the Corpsmembers needs, personal and professional goals and provide specific, measurable milestones to celebrate completion along the way. Corpsmembers whom enroll without a GED/High School Diploma will be provided opportunities, as part of their service requirements, to obtain the credential. Of those Corpsmembers, 75% will obtain their GED/Diploma. This target has been aggressively set higher than data collected from experiences with similar populations (average rate of about 60%). We feel with a more intentional focus required and support services identified to meet individual Corpsmember needs as well as a year follow-up period allowed, this can be an achievable target. 60% of Corpsmembers that are unemployed within a month prior to their service will obtain employment within one year of completion of their term of service. A recently released study on Youth Corps by Abt Associates reported that 77.1% of Corpsmembers asserted that experience in the Corps gave them an advantage when looking for a job. Many Corpsmembers go on to careers specifically in public service and conservation. According to the US Forest Service, more than 12% of their current employees spent time in a Corps.

The Corps Network's community impact outcomes will address Environmental Stewardship needs in each of regions selected for participation. This focus will serve two purposes: (1) Affecting positive

Narratives

change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors towards local conservation issues, thereby creating stewards of natural resources; and (2) Improving local community health through improved access to, and increased use of, public lands. These activities will be designed to meet local communities' most pressing needs in one or both of two arenas: housing costs for low-income people related to energy efficiency through residential audits, weatherization, and retrofits, and/or public lands conservation work. Programs will address local needs with local resources with local stakeholders, contributing to environmental health and creating informed citizens and a future "green" workforce. Expanding upon the success of The Corps Network's Clean Energy Service Corps, The Corps Network plans to intentionally expand the initiative into greater impact with public lands conservation work. Our larger purpose is to advance the field by creating a robust national program model which shows the value gained by elevating opportunity youth as community leaders, environmental stewards and a skilled workforce addressing pressing community needs.

Specifically, Corpsmembers will: improve and/or fully restore 2,700 acres of National, state, city and county parks, and other public and tribal lands through various service projects including invasive species removal, planting seedlings, trees and native plants, constructing fences, mitigating the potential for wildfires and restoring, rehabilitating and enhancing areas of high recreational use in order to create a quality experience for users, and create a healthy ecosystem which fosters a stable economic base for communities dependent on recreation and tourism; engage in environmental stewardship projects to create/construct, improve or fully restore 640 miles of trails owned/maintained by national, state, county, city or tribal governments; and improve living conditions for at least 3,500 low-income households through home repair, retrofitting and energy audits.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IMPACT:

Measuring the number of miles of trails built and maintained, acres of public land improved and protected is straightforward. TCN will collect and compile this output data from sub-grantees quarterly and report it to CNCS as required. We will also collect survey data from land management agency partners related to specific improvements and services completed that added value.

Additionally, TCN as an organization is developing a system to measure the ancillary benefits of these environmental stewardship activities - the evidence that increased access to outdoor recreational opportunities increases economic development and investment in communities, improving the health of the community and its residents.

Narratives

Corps will have systems in place to support, track and measure Corpsmember Development related to workforce development specifically. Internal databases will track unemployment rate before enrolling, employment readiness activities provided, job placement post-term and follow-up supports provided.

PAST PERFORMANCE:

The Corps Network has a successful track record of performance with CNCS grants and projects. Most recently, TCN has reported on our EAP, Clean Energy Service (CESC) Program and Civic Justice Program (CJC). We have met, are on track to meet, or have exceeded targets set for all programs we administer. A summary of the CESC progress to date includes 141/150 Corpsmembers received credentials to date (the program is still operational), over 4,000 households have been provided energy efficiency information and services (target 2,000), 1,138 structures have been weatherized/retrofitted (target of 600), and 1,117 of 1,200 target energy audits have been completed to date. We are currently in year three of the CJC three-year grant. Of the 49 Corpsmembers who have graduated to date, 18 (37%) have been successfully placed into jobs. In addition, 8 of the 11 (73%) Corpsmembers that enrolled without a high school diploma or GED, obtain one during the program.

MEMBER RECRUITMENT:

Further defined, Opportunity youth are 16 - 24 years of age; ethnically 43% white, 27% African-American, 25% Hispanic, 18% Multi-racial, and 5% other; 60% female versus 40% male; 49% have a GED/HS Diploma, 40% have less than a high school education and 11% have some college (Bridgeland & Milano 2012) and 18% have been arrested (Belfield, Levin & Rosen 2012).

Each Corps has a recruitment plan in place that will target a diverse group of Corpsmembers, and in particular opportunity youth, to participate in the program. Local, state and national partners help advertise the positions and Corps utilize a variety of media to help get the word out. There are Corps in the portfolio that specialize in recruiting from communities of color, people with disabilities, and all Corps focus efforts on youth that are underemployed and low-income.

MEMBER TRAINING:

All 14 Corps selected to participate in this project have plans in place to assist in preparing

Narratives

Corpsmembers for successful transition into employment opportunities post-graduation from the program. Approximately 20% of the Corpmember's time will be spent in education and training. Systems in place include: local partnerships with employers, community colleges, universities, training providers, and community organizations providing wrap around support services; dedicated staff for coaching, career counseling and/or transition support; Career Pathways curricula; and opportunities for on-the-job, hands on job skills development.

Specific training & certifications available include: GED/Diploma attainment, OSHA (Occupational Health & Safety) 10-hour Cert, S212 Wildland Fire Chainsaw Cert, Wilderness CPR & First Aid, ProjectWild Educator, ProjectLearningTree Educator, ADA Trail Design, OSI Trail Building, Red Card (Wildland Firefighter to include S130, S190, L180), EPA Worker Protection Standard Herbicide Applicator Credentials, 40-hour Chainsaw Training based on the USFS B-Faller Certification, Workplace Safety, 1-week CERT (Community Emergency Response Team, disaster preparedness & response training), hazardous materials safety, Land Navigation & Orienteering, NCCER (National Center for Construction Education Research) Instruction, Farm Management, BPI (Building Performance Institute) Energy Efficiency Certification, BPI - Residential Building Envelope Whole House Air Leakage Control Installer, Lead RR&P Awareness & Identification, Energy Surveyor Training with local utility department, Forklift and Flagger Certifications, Dept. of Transportation HAZMAT Training, 40-hour HAZWOPER Training, Solid Waste Management & Clean-up, and water/boating safety.

Soft-skill, workplace readiness development opportunities are also provided and include topics such as Leadership, Civic Engagement, Volunteer Management, Time Management, Financial Literacy, Conflict Resolution, and others.

Organizational Capability

Founded in 1985, with a mission to "promote the growth, quality, and sustainability of Corps" and support "well-funded, high-quality Corps in every community," The Corps Network (TCN) represents more than 150 state, local, and non-profit organizations, many of which have been in existence and changing lives and communities through service for several decades. Since it was established, TCN member Corps have engaged more than 750,000 young people in service. At present, our member Corps enroll more than 30,000 Corpsmembers a year, the majority of whom come from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are looking for a second chance to succeed in life. Corpsmembers receive a wide range of personal and professional development opportunities and services including, but not limited to: guidance from adult leaders who serve as mentors and role

Narratives

models, academic programming designed to lead to a high school diploma or GED, opportunities to pursue in-demand certificates and credentials, and a modest stipend - all to prepare them for postsecondary education and labor market success.

The founders of what is now The Corps Network (formerly the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps) drew their inspiration from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Depression-era program that engaged and supported three and a half million young men in natural resource conservation and development. Similarly, today's Service and Conservation Corps - the heirs of the CCC - engage youth and young adults in community service and service learning; provide training, education, and full scope of supportive services; and set young people on a defined pathway leading to post-secondary education, sustainable employment, and a lifetime of civic engagement.

The Corps Network advocates for policies and resources, establishes and develops partnerships, provides technical assistance and training, facilitates a peer review process and regular learning exchanges of best practices, and administers pilot and national programs (including an Educational Award Program), for the primary purpose of improving the quality and increasing the capacity of existing corps, and helping establish new Corps in underserved communities.

The Corps Network has managed multiple major federal awards involving collaboration at sub-sites, most recently a \$5.7M National Emergency Grant from the US DOL, requiring detailed evaluation data tracking as well as detailed fiscal reporting and reimbursements. The Corps Network has managed requirements and complex reimbursements for awards including US DOL, CNCS, Bureau of Reclamation ARRA funding, and the second largest Segal Education Award program in the AmeriCorps portfolio. Findings in over a decade of A-133 audits have been none to minimal. The result is strong database systems and trusted support to sub-grantees ensuring all reporting is clean and accurate.

Carolyn Benard, Grants and Agreements Manager, is experienced in grants management, monitoring and compliance, and evaluation and reporting related to logic models and performance measures. In September 2012, Ms. Benard completed a Federal Grants Management Certificate with a focus on pass-through entities from Management Concepts, a recognized trainer for the federal government. Ms. Benard has over nine years of experience with CNCS grant programs. Director of Finance and

Narratives

Administration Nancy Siegal has over 25 years of non-profit financial management experience, oversees financial management/fiscal oversight for this grant. Leslie Wilkoff, Director of AmeriCorps Grants, will also provide oversight and consultation to the project with her expertise, widely recognized, in AmeriCorps. Over the past 11 years Ms. Wilkoff has been recognized as one of the leaders of the Education Award Program serving on numerous CNCS working groups, including those focused on member satisfaction survey, Annual Grantee Meeting, eGrants Portal, and national performance measures. Ms. Wilkoff has worked with TCN since its inception in 1985, and is an expert in CNCS grants management. Emilie Rafael, TCN's Data Collection Systems Coordinator, will support this project's data collection and evaluation needs. Ms. Rafeal has been with The Corps Network almost a year now and is responsible for the organization's development and implementation of shared measurement data collection and reporting. She managed the 2012 Annual Profile processes, including updating the survey to reflect common measures among Corps, ensuring valid data entry, and analyzing the results and has implemented a strategy to capture the current status and outcomes of the Post-Secondary Education Initiative, which includes monthly dashboard metric updates and biannual participant outcomes reports. She currently serves as lead for the Accenture partnership, starting with the documentation and assessment of the current data systems and ultimately culminating in the implementation of a comprehensive database.

TCN, which is approaching its 28th Anniversary, currently boasts more than 150 member Corps and an annual operating budget of \$3,898,478. Individual Corps have extremely diverse revenue sources. Collectively, they receive nearly \$550,000,000 annually from a number of sources, including federal, state, and local government, foundation, and fee-for-service. Many member Corps have long-standing partnerships with the Federal Land Management Agencies and others receive funding from the US Departments of Education, Labor, and Transportation and/or state and local support. Almost all Corps solicit individual and corporate donations and many hold fund-raising events. Corps are entrepreneurial and nimble, and take advantage of a wide variety of funding streams.

Sustainability comes in many forms. For one, Corps generally select projects that are long-lasting and will serve the public for many years to come. All levels of government rely on Corps, as well as private industry, as a source of work-ready young people. They have a reputation for completing highly prized and much-needed projects in a very cost-effective manner. This is the greatest sustainable component any non-profit or for-profit organization can achieve.

Narratives

TCN is looking to further leverage "non-governmental" resources in the coming years and is developing national initiatives, attractive to the private/corporate world that will fund TCN, its local Corps, and will focus on very sustainable/legacy type projects.

The Corps Network has secured in-kind resources from Accenture. A team of 7 will be assisting us on a data analysis project that will last 5-6 months. The Corps Network and Accenture have agreed upon the following deliverables: Membership Data Management and Analysis Assessment. Including a.) Analysis of current data and processes (types, location, gaps); b.) Recommendations for data management improvement: including processes, tool enhancements and data capture for improved decision making; and c.) CRM/Data management tool requirements. By understanding our data, TCN will be able to optimize our service-delivery model by focusing on data elements in our program models that have the greatest impacts on Corps youth.

The Corps Network will pursue additional funding to support technical assistance, creation of a learning community among sites, and the establishment of OYSI as national program model for CNCS. Funds will support site visits by a dedicated Program Manager; a mid-year shared learning convening regarding technical issues, encouraging spread of effective practices; dissemination and guidance in training tools; web-based social networks for learning and sharing trends; and publication of effective practices tools, policies, and procedures.

The Corps Network has notified all affected State Commissions of the Corps included in this project.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

The headquarters portion of this current proposal, if awarded, would constitute about 10% of the operating budget. Most of this award would be passed through to Corps across the country that are organizational members in good standing with The Corps Network. TCN is requesting less than \$1,000/MSY in CNCS funds to administer this project which represents nearly a doubling of our current efforts. We are looking to add staff to assist with this effort. We aim to pass on the maximum amount possible to our sub-grantees who are serving a high-needs population and have allowed them to submit budgets that are \$12,300/MSY requested. All budgets look to be in compliance, reasonable and necessary. Matching funds are identified. The budget clearly outlines required staffing to support headquarters administration of this project, necessary supplies to implement it and resources to effectively support the 14 organizations identified as high quality Corps to participate in this project.

Narratives

There is a tremendous potential return on investment related to providing opportunity youth services that successfully reengage them in the workforce and educational systems. Belfield and Levin (2012) take this proposition to a large scale: If we assume (generously) the average cost of participation in Corps programs is \$25,000/Corpsmember, with total funding of 7 million, we could serve 280 opportunity youth. And, if these programs were only effective for half of all Corpsmembers, then the total fiscal gains would be almost 33 million (\$32,995,200). This is calculated at a benefit rate of \$235,680/effective youth [see report for detailed analysis]. The benefits would therefore exceed the costs by a factor of 4.7 - each dollar invested yields a return of almost five dollars to the tax payer over a lifetime. CNCS funds would represent 75% of the investment with The Corps Network and its sub-grantees contributing at least 25% (on average Corps contribute 40% of costs). This means that the return on investment for CNCS is even greater for the funds invested in The Corps Network's programs serving opportunity youth Corpsmembers. According to a recent analysis by the US National Park Service, Service and Conservation Corps can complete environmental projects at 60% of the projected cost. As a result, AmeriCorps members can accomplish more with less.

The Corps Network has received the following support from CNCS in the last five years:

(1) Corps Respond. October 2007 - September 2010; 75.5 MSY; approx \$980,000 annually. This was an emergency response, disaster relief and community preparation project. All Slots were filled and the average retention was 78%.

(2) Civic Justice Corps. January 2009 - Dec 2012; 24 MSY; \$312,000 annually. Civic Justice Corps focuses enrollment on formerly incarcerated and court involved youth/young adults who serve their communities in teams, engage in education, develop "green" career skills, earn credentials required for green jobs. They serve by enhancing public lands and open spaces, building/ maintaining trails, restoring natural habitat, rivers and streams. All slots were filled and the average retention was 68%.

(3) EAP. July 2009 - June 2012; 1,360 MSY annually @ \$590-800 per MSY per year (each year was different). This project focused on environmental and conservation projects on public, city, state, federal lands. Most years The Corps Network filled 100% of our slots, however one year it was about 99%. Average retention rate was 90% although it was a little higher for 2011.

(4) Recovery Corps. June 2009 - May 2010; 99 MSY; \$1.28 million. This project focused on energy efficiency and weatherization and led to the creation of the CESC (below) All slots were filled and retention was 64% due to one program that entered all members late and they were not able to

Narratives

complete the hours.

(5) Clean Energy Service Corps. October 2010 - Sept 2013; 191 MSY; (we are not renewing this particular grant as it is evolving into this expanded proposal). Approximately \$1.2 million annually. Filled all slots and average retention rate is 79%.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A since this is a new application/project for The Corps Network. We do, however, plan to include this project in a larger Public Lands Corps evaluation being conducted by Texas A & M University.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

N/A

Continuation Changes

N/A