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Executive Summary

Through Points of Light's VetSuccess on Campus AmeriCorps program, 20 AmeriCorps members to will enhance the work of VSOC Counselors and to increase access to supportive services for veteran-students, while working in teams of two at 10 campuses in Alaska, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Tennessee. At the end of the service year, 500 veterans will have received referrals, 1,000 volunteers will have been engaged in volunteering to celebrate the service of veterans, and 200 veterans will have received support for their education specific objectives. Therefore, this project will focus on the CNCS focus area of Veterans & Military Families. The CNCS investment of \$265,907 will be matched with \$359,043.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

One focus area of AmeriCorps is supporting and enhancing community efforts to aid veterans and military families around education, specifically at the college level. Placing AmeriCorps members on college campuses to assist veterans in their academic pursuits directly aligns with the mission and goals of AmeriCorps.

As 2.3 million veterans return home from operations overseas, many will look to gain a higher level of education by enrolling in a college degree program - and they will require help and support as they enroll and engage in their educational experience. Many will be older than the traditional student. Many will have families. Colleges and universities are faced with the challenge of keeping veterans enrolled and engaged in their programs. This fall, tens of thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans will enroll in colleges and universities across the country, courtesy of the GI Bill. It is estimated that close to 80 % will drop out by the summer of 2014. Points of Light's (POL) VetSuccess on Campus AmeriCorps program will be committed to working with the Veteran Success on Campus Counselors (VSOC Counselors) to bridge the gaps between the military, academic life and achievement.

We will place 20 full-time AmeriCorps members, in teams of two, on 10 college campuses to enhance the work of VSOC Counselors and to increase access to supportive services for veteran-students. The work of POL's VetSuccess Corps will support three stated focus areas of the V.A.: Reducing Veteran Dropout Rate; Helping veterans deal with adjusting to the academic climate; & Supporting Veterans that suffer from PTSD.

As outlined in the Notice of Funding Availability, POL's VetSuccess Corps will support the services of the VSOC Counselors and directly serve the needs of Veterans on campuses through the following

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activities: 1. Refer Veteran-Students to VSOC Counselors for career, academic, or adjustment counseling and/or provide supportive services to assist and encourage Veteran-Students to seek and receive counseling services; *2. Coordinate with VSOC Counselors to build an on-campus mentor and tutor program, including engaging Veterans in student organizations and assist with campus employment outreach for Veteran-Students needing part-time or full-time jobs; 3. Provide VSOC Counselors with Careerscope Assessment Reports and other activity data reports; 4. Coordinate outreach and marketing events to publicize VSOC services in order to encourage Veteran-Students to engage with VSOC Counselors; 5. Provide advice to Veteran-Students on the registration process for utilizing campus resources; **6. Assist in building and enhancing efforts that help create and sustain a Veteran-supportive campus; 7. Provide guidance to Veteran-Students on support resources available on their college campus and from VA; *8. Refer Veteran-Students to other on-campus Veterans programs (e.g. health care, counseling, education benefits); *9. Coordinate and assist with campus internship/fellowship placement programs that lead to employment; *10. Assist Veteran-Students with programs including, among other things: online testing using Careerscope portal; Employment Workshops focusing on "Translating Military Skills into a Civilian Resume"; Coordination of vocational testing; New Student Orientation; On campus Veteran-Student mentoring program; On campus Veteran-Student tutoring program; Town Hall Meetings; Job Fairs; Health Fairs in collaboration with VA Medical Centers; "Boots to Books" Workshops; and Yellow Ribbon events; and 11. Report issues or concerns regarding Veterans on campus to VSOC Counselors and complete monthly reports requested by the VSOC Counselors.

*We interpret that activities #2, #8, #9 and #10 provide educational opportunities and relate to our third performance measure, though these support activities may vary from site to site based on the local needs of the campus veterans and the VSOC supervisor.

**A core principal of POL is that volunteer leadership is a force multiplier and that volunteers can be leveraged to lead others in service. We will enhance our work under Activity #6 above by working with each of POL's VetSuccess campus locations to create volunteer-led group service opportunities, ideally on two veteran-focused holidays--Veterans Day and Armed Forces Day. Throughout their term of service, each POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps member will recruit, train and support volunteer leaders for these days of service.

While our Corps will focus on stated activities and supporting VSOC efforts, we want to provide a model for sites to employ to further assist, should they chose. In our model, we will structure the local campus program in way that mimics a military organization. The purpose of this model is to allow

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for a more structured flow of information and support that will be familiar to veteran-students. The design of this system will be multi-level, mirroring a "company-level" military structure. Each "company" will be led by a VetSuccess Corps Member. In summary, one "company" will engage veteran Volunteer Leaders (VL) who will manage all student veteran volunteer engagement. The intent behind this structure is to empower student veterans to lean on each other for support during their transition to civilian campus.

The program will result in the following:

-500 student veterans will be receive non-academic support from VetSuccess member. A student veteran will be considered a service recipient when they have either been referred to available services, received guidance on additional student services, or assisted with any student service by a VetSuccess member. -1000 student veterans will participate in service opportunities as volunteers or participants, as measured by an unduplicated count of student veterans, their families and veteran corps members. -200 student veterans will receive academic support from a VetSuccess member in pursuing educational opportunities.

Recruitment of POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps members will tap into our vast national network. POL has a history of recruiting underrepresented populations, such as people of color, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, and veterans. POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps national program staff will recruit talented, diverse and traditionally underrepresented candidates from the campuses and local communities -- prioritizing veterans and members of military families who have some college experience. To support recruitment, POL will utilize a toolkit with interview questions and processes. We feel confident that we can leverage relationships and our proven process to recruit the 20 full time members and launch the program on 10 campuses by December 2, 2014. The 10 campuses will be identified from the following states: Alaska, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Tennessee.

Timeline: 6 Sept 2013: Application Submitted; 9-19 Sept 2013: Approval process; 1-14 Oct 2013: Onboard new Coordinator; 15 Oct-15 Nov 2013: Corps member recruitment, program planning, outreach to VA/VSOC's ; 18 Nov-29 Nov 2013: Implementation & Member onboarding; 2 Dec 2013: Full Corps in place; Sept 2013: End of Corps member service year

Our current best practices to ensure retention across these program sites include: standardized screening processes for members ensuring better alignment with program mission; member training; and ongoing efforts to build esprit de corps and strengthen member identification with the programmatic mission. To kick-off the program, POL will offer trainings on regulations/prohibited

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activities, reporting and communication requirements to VetSuccess AmeriCorps members in addition to training that they receive from the Veterans Administration and the VSOC Counselors.

We will also support members as they onboard at respective campuses, while they learn to work within the site level culture to engage a wide range of individuals and groups on campus and begin the activities described previously. Members will be required to attend training calls throughout the year. Topics will include: Service Reflection, Diversity, Time Management, Conflict Management, Building Service Portfolios, Translating Your AmeriCorps Experience and Life After AmeriCorps. Members will also be invited to one-on-one and team calls to provide additional support and more specific training.

Organizational Capability

As the nation's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service, POL is uniquely positioned to successfully launch the VetSuccess on Campus AmeriCorps program. Over the years, CNCS has been a key partner in our citizen engagement efforts. Time and time again, our collaboration has proven the power of service in communities.

Serving and engaging veterans and military families has become a strategic priority of POL. The Community Blueprint Advisory Council asked POL to house and scale the Community Blueprint (CB) they had developed in June 2011. Now led by POL, the CB has developed tools and resources through a coalition of national experts with representatives from: Amer. Legion Auxiliary, Amer. Red Cross, Amer.'s Promise Alliance, Armed Forces Services Corporation, Blue Star Families, Department of Defense, Give an Hour, Military Child Education Coalition, Military Officers Association of Amer., National Military Family Association, Office of the Joint Chiefs, Operation Home front, Service Nation: Mission Serve, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors and the Veterans' Innovation Center.

The CB is a program housed under the Military Initiatives Dept. at POL. The focus of this program is to help communities help veterans, military members and their families by providing tools and resources, as well as fostering collaboration with organizations at the local level. One of the primary issues addressed by organizations within this program is improving a veteran's transition from active duty to campus life. The efforts of two particular CB communities clearly demonstrate the success of this model in relation to higher learning. The Arizona Coalition for Military Families (ACMF) has formalized partnerships to strengthen support for military-affiliated students in higher education around the state. Activities include training/TA and events, such as community summits, in-service training with staff and faculty. Additionally, the ACMF has partnered with the Arizona Department of Veteran's Services; now schools that are certified by the department as Arizona Veteran Supportive

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Campuses (a process governed by Arizona statute) are simultaneously approved as partner organizations with the Coalition. In Alabama, Still Serving Veterans (Opelika) has appointed a CB Education Representative who has established an education round-table in Opelika in conjunction with several universities, including Southern Union State Community College, Birmingham Southern, Alabama State, Faulkner University, and Huntington College. This Rep. has also established points of contact with local colleges and facilities where veterans are trying to transfer credits or programs.

One additional component of the CB is our Veteran Leader Corps--an AmeriCorps program consisting of 71 members placed in 19 of our 50 current CB Communities. These members are assisting local efforts in implementing solutions around Volunteerism and Job Readiness. This program has recently received continuation of funding for Yr. 2.

Our national staff is defined by a strong and vibrant leadership team guided by co-founder and CEO Michelle Nunn (who has been a groundbreaking leader in the development of the service movement) as well as President Tracy Hoover. The Military Initiatives Team is comprised of dedicated individuals, led by the Vice President, Mike Monroe (former Marine), and the Director, Tony Dale (current Marine reservist), who will provide guidance over VetSuccess. The VetSuccess Program Coordinator will serve as the day-to-day facilitator of programmatic activities and efforts. The Coordinator will be the liaison and primary POC for Corps Members, and will offer trainings, additional resources and opportunities, as well as address any other general items that may arise. The onboarding of a Coordinator for the VetSuccess Program will further increase our capacity to oversee and support Corps Members and site supervisors via monthly 1:1 calls and reports, quarterly desk audits and critical on-site monitoring visits. Furthermore, there is cross-functional support from many departments within POL, which allows us to provide consistent, high-quality support to the field and complete effective data gathering and reporting.

POL's fiscal oversight is led by CFO, Kristina Tecce, who has led 7 unqualified A-133 audits without findings, and her background includes regulatory, GAAP and financial analysis. Kris once led CNCS's Cooperative Agreement for Finance Training and Technical Assistance, providing training and technical assistance to CNCS grantees in federal grant compliance.

POL has strong management systems developed in collaboration with CNCS that ensure federal compliance requirements are met. POL has established Government Grants Compliance Team Based on past experience, we implement a preventative and proactive approach to program oversight. In the event non-compliance or risk is determined, immediate action is taken, including written documentation of the issue. We will inform CNCS of any concerns immediately upon discovery.

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Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

As they work to coordinate delivery of on-campus benefits assistance and counseling to help Veterans maintain focus on their educational goals, POL's VetSuccess Program Coordinator will encourage Corps Members to connect with relevant existing services on campuses and in communities to leverage the investments of the program.

The POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps program's budget was developed based on a design to achieve this vision. As a new program, significant investment will be made to ensure that members are fully trained and supported. The budget reflects the support of a cross-functional team of organizational experts who will enable programmatic support, evaluation efforts, highly effective training, and grant compliance. These investments are important to the success of POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps and are adequately budgeted based on POL's past experience.

POL is confident that we will be able to secure the financial resources to support our match requirement. Organizationally, corporations and foundations have been eager to support our veterans work. The budget for the VetSuccess AmeriCorps program represents 2% of our overall annual budget. POL has managed almost \$29 million in federal grant funds since 2007 and received a clean audit following its latest site visit. In partnership with CNCS over time, we have created sustainable social capital by training thousands of volunteer leaders and by bringing together citizens to tackle problems and revitalize the civic life of their communities. We have an exceptional record of raising resources from diverse sources, growing that funding over time and raising matching funds for federal grants. Total funding from the corporate sector, private foundations, individuals and government has steadily risen over the past several years, despite the nation's economic challenges. Since the 2008 merger, POL raised more than \$74 million. We also hold more than \$5 million in reserve funds.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

n/a

Amendment Justification

n/a

Clarification Summary

Selected Campuses

University of Michigan - Ann Arbor-MI0005; Ann Arbor, MI

University of Alaska Anchorage-AK0001; Anchorage, AK

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Kellogg Community College-MI0002; Battle Creek, MI
Cleveland State University-OH0001; Cleveland OH
Portland State University-OR0001; Portland, OR
University of Texas - San Antonio; San Antonio, TX
Texas A&M University - Central Texas; Killeen, TX
Salt Lake Community College-UT0001; Salt Lake City, UT
University of Utah-UT0002; Salt Lake City, UT
University of Maryland University College-MD0001; Adelphi, MD

Start date

POL will begin recruitment immediately, but cannot commit to an October start date until we have a sense of the momentum that we'll experience on campuses and in communities. We are certainly willing to start the program as soon as recruitment allows.

Arizona State University

Arizona State University was not chosen as a site, despite our other connections in the state of Arizona, because our research showed us that the region is already saturated with services for student veterans. We prefer to serve campuses where need and interest will be greatest.

Job Description for Program Coordinator vs Director of Grants

Program Coordinator provides daily VetSuccess program management and compliance in coordination with Corps members and VSOC Counselors.

Director of Grants primarily oversees fiscal compliance on federal grants to ensure timely financial reporting, expense review on federal grants, maintenance of member records, invoice management on federal grants, and is the convening lead for federal grants compliance for the organization.

Company Structure

Each company will consist of 74 student veterans, of which ten will serve as Volunteer Leaders (VL) at differing levels of engagement. The VL for the respective level will manage all student veterans at that level and below. Each company will have two platoons of 32 members. In each company there will be two platoons. Each platoon will be overseen by a student VL. These platoon leaders will serve as the liaison between students the VetSuccess members. They will be charged with disseminating

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information to students, scheduling appointments with the VSOC for their platoon members, and identifying other educational opportunities for students. Underneath the platoon leader there will be four section leaders. These section leaders will serve as mentors to new students coming on campus. They will help students get acclimated to the campus and ensure that students are aware of all available resources that they can use during their time on campus.

Recruitment of veterans and military family members

Recruitment of POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps members will tap into our vast national network that includes our Community Blueprint Advisory Council members--a coalition of eighteen nationally recognized non-profits that serve veterans, military members and their families. We will use the Advisory Council to members to help us with marketing positions and spreading the word about the program.

POL has a history of recruiting underrepresented populations, such as people of color, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, and veterans. POL recognizes that veterans supporting veterans is critical to the success of student veterans on campus. POL VetSuccess AmeriCorps national program staff will work in conjunction with local VSOC chapters to recruit talented, diverse and traditionally underrepresented candidates from the campuses and local communities -- prioritizing veterans and members of military families who have some college experience. We will utilize respective college's and VSOC chapter's existing network to promote the VetSuccess program and availability of AmeriCorps positions. To support recruitment, POL will create and deploy an onboarding toolkit with interview questions and processes to ensure the selection of a group of candidates that will best support the goals of the VetSuccess program. This toolkit will directly address the identified objectives and assess a candidate's skills and abilities in relation to those objectives. We will also strive to provide clear and comprehensive information on the VetSuccess program to selected candidates in an effort to support Corps member retention. We feel confident that we can leverage current relationships and employ our proven selection methods to recruit the 20 full time members and launch the program on 10 campuses by December 2, 2014. The 10 campuses will be identified from the following states: Alaska, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Maryland.

Tracking of outputs and outcomes

Step One: Training

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Members will receive training from the POL Evaluation & Performance Measurement Team on how to use the VetSuccess Engagement Tracker and administer the VetSuccess Engagement Survey during member training and webinars.

Step Two: Intake Forms for Services

Members will have student veterans complete an intake form prior to receiving services from the members and/or VSOC. If a similar intake form is already developed and being utilized by the local VSOC, members and POL will be sure to review to assure that all necessary information is being collected. The intake form will include but is not limited to general demographic information, information regarding services they are interested in receiving, and general perceptions on feeling connected to campus.

Step Three: Data Collection for Services and Projects

Services: Members will have sign-in sheets available at all VetSuccess events (i.e. service projects, workshops, 1:1 counseling sessions). The sign-in sheets will include the student veterans' contact information- name, email address, phone number and will be used by the members to record participation data into the VetSuccess Engagement Tracker.

Projects: At the end of each project, participants will receive a volunteer survey either on-line or paper. The survey measures project organization, attitudes about the campus, and skill development.

Step Four: Data Tracking

Services: Members will transfer all information on the VetSuccess Tracker hosted on Google Docs. The VetSuccess Engagement Tracker is confidential; only members, supervisors and POL evaluation staff will have access to the tracker. Each student veteran participant will have an email address as a unique identifier (if they do not have an email address; a fake email address will be connected to the participant). The tracker will allow members to keep track of each student veteran, student veteran engagement activities, and student veteran service hours for each activity. The tracker will also have an analytical component that will automatically calculate key variables (such as number of participants, number of service hours, etc.) that members are required to track and submit in performance reports to POL for grants monitoring responsibilities. ...

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Projects: Members will input the results from the survey into a VetSuccess Survey Database hosted on Google Docs. The database will be confidential, and only members, supervisors, and POL evaluation staff will have access to it. Each participant will have an email address as a unique identifier (if they do not have an email address; a fake email address will be connected to the participant). The database will look like an Excel Spreadsheet that will automatically calculate the survey respondents' answers.

Supervisors and members will be given guidance on how to delegate data tracking. For example, one member may be responsible for the VetSuccess Engagement Tracker and one member may be responsible for the VetSuccess Survey Database.

Step Five: Reporting

Members will complete quarterly reports to include both quantitative and qualitative data which were tracked in the VetSuccess Tracker VetSuccess Survey Database. These reports will be reviewed by program managers to facilitate performance monitoring against program objectives, provide context about project and service implementation and quality, as well as feedback on member interactions with student veteran participants.

Continuation Changes

n/a

Grant Characteristics

- AmeriCorps Member Population - Communities of Color
- AmeriCorps Member Population - Low -income Individuals
- AmeriCorps Member Population - Native Americans
- AmeriCorps Member Population - New Americans
- AmeriCorps Member Population - Older Americans
- AmeriCorps Member Population - People with Disabilities
- AmeriCorps Member Population - Rural Residents
- AmeriCorps Member Population - Veterans, Active Military, or their Families
- AmeriCorps Member Population - economically disadvantaged young adults/opportunity youth
- AmeriCorps Member Population - None of the above
- Geographic Focus - Rural
- Geographic Focus - Urban
- Encore Program
- Community Based Organizations
- Faith Based Organizations