

Executive Summary

TITLE: NJ Commission on National and Community Service

LEAD APPLICANT: NJ Commission on National and Community Service, Governor's Office of Volunteerism, NJ Dept of State, Trenton, NJ

COMMISSION CONSORTIUM MEMBERS of the Atlantic Cluster: Connecticut (Hartford, CT), Delaware (New Castle, DE), Maine (Augusta, ME), Maryland (Baltimore, MD), Massachusetts (Boston, MA), New Hampshire (Concord, NH), NY (Rensselaer, NY), Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, PA), PR/VI Commission, -- To be invited; Rhode Island (Providence, RI), DC (Washington, DC), Vermont (Williston, VT)

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES: The NJ Commission on Nat'l and Community Service (NJ Commission) offers this proposal, "Stronger Together," to CNCS as the lead applicant of the Atlantic Cluster to plan and implement the 2013 Atlantic Cluster National Service Training Conference. The NJ Commission, in collaboration with 11 other commissions propose this regional conference for AmeriCorps State and National program directors and staff, Senior Corps program directors and staff, Volunteer Center directors, Commission staff and Board. The conference will feature a virtual component. Topics to include: performance measures and evaluation, grant administration and compliance, inclusion, and financial management. Topics will include: recruitment and fund development, military families and veterans, and disaster response.

The NJ Commission and Atlantic Cluster have partnered with America's Service Commissions (ASC), the association of 53 state service commissions, in the development of this proposal. Further, this proposal has the support of the National Service Inclusion Project, NJ Senior Corps Assn., and NJ Assn. of Volunteer Center Directors.

FUNDING REQUESTED: The amount of funding requested for the planning, implementation, and execution of the 2013 Atlantic Cluster Conference is \$50,000; sponsorships and registrations will provide \$31,000 to enhance program elements.

Program Design

PROGRAM DESIGN

APPLICANT INFORMATION: The NJ Commission on National and Community Service (NJ Commission) has been operating since 1994. The NJ Commission and its fellow Governor-appointed commissions in the Atlantic Cluster, provide training, technical assistance, monitoring, and outreach to national service programs in the region. Therefore, each entity has extensive knowledge of the

training needs of programs and board and director leadership. Each has experienced new challenges -- as to the breadth and depth of responsibilities, numbers and diversity of programs, and reinventing old concepts and processes. The conference will provide tools and talents to support the commissions, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs and volunteer centers in meeting these challenges and advancing funding and resource development.

REGION PROPOSED: The NJ Commission proposes to lead a collaborative of commissions in the Atlantic Cluster in responding to the CNCS Notice of Funding Opportunity. The commissions include CT, DC, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NY, PA, RI and VT. Though the administrative staff of the Puerto Rico commission is in transition, we invite participation of Puerto Rico in the conference. Leaders from this consortium conferred during the planning process, and indicated their support for NJ to serve as lead applicant, and to encourage their programs to attend this training should the funds be awarded.

APPLICANT EXPERIENCE: The NJ Commission will provide both leadership and a collaborative approach in the planning and implementation of the conference. The Commission, within the NJ Governor's Office of Volunteerism (GOV), located in the NJ Department of State, led by our state's first Lieutenant Governor, is well placed to bring together the many entities that will contribute to the conference. The Commission has lengthy experience in working in collaboration with national service programs, including AmeriCorps and the Senior Corps, the volunteerism community, service-learning and NJ Campus Compact, NJ Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and all governmental agencies that respond to emergencies and disasters including the NJ Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The GOV plans and implements the Governor's Volunteerism Conference every other year; in 2012 the conference had 650 participants and presented 29 different workshops, including several presented by staff of the NJ Commission and CNCS State Office: performance standards, senior service corps, and social media. The conference also included the AmeriCorps Launch; the AmeriCorps program officer provided the orientation on rules, contracts, responsibilities, prohibited activities, the portal, timekeeping, and educational awards.

Moving forward, the various regional cluster conferences are intended to replicate successful regional conferences of commissions in partnership with ASC to meet their specified training goals. Along with the NJ Commission, the following commissions have been designated as lead applicants in their own regions: Tennessee, Colorado, Iowa, and Oregon. Each lead applicants intends to partner with ASC to replicate and improve the pilot model of the previously well-received 2012 North Central Cluster Conference. With the common leadership of ASC in each region, the lead applicants--including NJ--

will be equipped to provide an excellent conference experience. Each conference will be similar in structure and content -- though responding to varied regional needs - to allow for participants to select the best date, location, and overall cost appropriate for their circumstance.

SELECTION OF HOST CITY AND FACILITY: The Atlantic Cluster, ASC and the NJ Commission propose to host the conference in the Trenton area in central NJ, that provides proximity to State Government, the OEM state-of-the art Regional Operations Intelligence Center (ROIC), and Rider University, which has been offered as a location by the NJ Commission Chair, who is Dean of Students at Rider. There is also the opportunity to spend one afternoon/evening visiting the shore locations most affected by Super Storm Sandy. The choice of NJ was approved by all members of the consortium. Trenton is also accessible to both Newark Liberty and Philadelphia Airports and has a train station. ASC and NJ Commission staff will research the facilities for lodging. There is a Marriott in downtown Trenton, and several hotels, in various price ranges, along the Trenton to Princeton Route 1 corridor. However, it is our intention to host the conference events at locations that will not charge for program events, including the ROIC and a university, each of which has large group accommodations, as well as break out rooms for a minimum of 200 persons. Facilities will be assessed on their accessibility for persons with disabilities and their ability to host the virtual components of the conference.

OUTREACH, MARKETING, AND ENGAGEMENT: ASC will promote the 2013 conference to CNCS Area Managers, State Officers, the RSVP Association, state commissions. NJ will work with the Hands On Network to reach its affiliates. ASC and the NJ Commission will provide these parties with a proposed agenda, trainer credentials, registration information, and local attractions. The NJ Commission will reach out to all Cluster partners to seek presenters for training sessions. Materials and their key content will be posted on ASC's and NJ web sites, and, ideally, on the CNCS website. Each commission will agree to share this information with their grantees and key contacts.

The target enrollment is 200 participants: 60 AmeriCorps State and National program directors and managers, 50 state service commission staff and commissioners, 50 Senior corps directors and staff, 10 VISTA Directors, and 30 Volunteer Center Directors.

CONFERENCE DESIGN METHODOLOGY: The NJ Commission will facilitate an inclusive planning process to prepare the themes, content, curriculum, and logistics. A committee will be formed to represent each state in the region, ASC, and the various constituent groups. The committee will be co-coordinated by the NJ Commission and ASC. The committee will meet regularly upon CNCS' notice of intent to award a cooperative agreement to NJ.

The conference will be 2-3 days in length, with the potential for half days of conference content on either end to allow for travel flexibility. Each day would begin with a common opening session, followed by a series of tailored breakout session options, and concluding with a large group reflection and/or networking activity. Pre and post conference activities are being considered including service projects and state or program specific meetings, and/or trainings.

The Atlantic Cluster, along with the four other lead commission/ASC proposed regional conferences, will plan for the use of technology and e-participation at a reduced rate by streaming a select series of workshops through an internet based program like Livestream, Adobe Connect, or GoTo Training. This technology would offer a different track of workshops online to allow participants unable to travel to receive all the available content that would be offered at a single conference, but in more manageable increments for effective on-line learning.

The following tracks of learning will be offered for participants: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, commission staff and Commissioners, and volunteer directors. Sessions addressing CNCS competencies will be included: performance measures data collection, application of evidence-based theories of change, evaluation, grants and financial management, as well as needs identified by Cluster partners and CNCS State Offices. Thus far, the NJ Commission has received guidance from the NJ Senior Service Corps Association and NJ Association of Volunteer Center Directors, which recommended addressing the "new Senior Corps," and how to bring corporate resources and volunteers into partnerships. A major area of interest is how NJ and other Cluster states responded to Hurricane Sandy. We are considering replicating a simulated Volunteer Reception Center, which was presented at the CNCS/Hands On training on disaster response in February.

Recognizing that many of our region's best human resources are active field members of the national service family, the NJ Commission and ASC will seek peer trainers and presenters when appropriate, from the national service and Hands On networks. We would also reach out to outside vendors, experts and noted academics in the field. CNCS senior leadership will be requested as potential keynote presenters. Post conference, learning materials (slides, handouts, recordings) would be offered for posting on the National Service Knowledge Network website.

OUTPUTS, EVALUATION, AND KNOWLEDGE GAINS: Cluster states will work with CNCS to adopt the required assessments of gains in competency for performance measures and compliance. This assessment will be administered pre and post conference. Additionally, there will be a post conference evaluation to measure participant satisfaction, effectiveness of training delivery, and ability to apply new learning. Assessment data, including conference outputs, will be delivered to CNCS

within 30 days of conference conclusion. Evaluation may be conducted on-site or later, electronically, via an on-line survey design and results aggregation tool. Also, a mid-year assessment is being considered to capture how participants have applied their knowledge. Information will be shared to improve future training events.

TIMELINE: The Atlantic Cluster is being surveyed as to the best time for the conference. Early fall, would appear to be a good time for program training, while providing sufficient time to complete plans once the CNCS award decision is made. If, for example, October were chosen, the benchmarks within this timeframe are itemized below:

- May/June 2013: CNCS notification of intent to award, negotiation, and execution of agreement;
- June 2013: Regional planning committee convenes regularly, facility contract executed, trainers recruited and secured, marketing materials developed and save-the-date released;
- July 2013: Registration system opens and logistical coordination continues;
- Early September 2013: Deadline for registration;
- Conference in early October: Approximately 2 and 1/2 days in length;
- Within two weeks after event: Learning materials to National Service Knowledge Network;
- Within 30 days of event: Outputs, evaluation, and knowledge gains data returned to CNCS;
- Within 90 days of event: Financials reconciled and reported to CNCS
- Six months after event: Follow up evaluation sent, collected, and analyzed

HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY AND ROLES: NJ Commission staff will serve as the point of contact with CNCS and will submit required reports, evaluations, and learning materials. They will manage the conference budget and collect all registration fees; will secure meeting facility and negotiate per diem rates for lodging and meals. NJ staff will co-manage conference planning committee; will be responsible for printing conference materials; will be responsible for furnishing all requests for reasonable accommodations.

The ASC Director of Programming & Training will create and manage an online conference registration system. The system will contain messaging for persons with disabilities to request accommodations for equal access. ASC will support the NJ Commission in development and submission of all required reports and evaluations to CNCS. ASC staff will assist with creation of conference materials and co-manage the conference planning committee.

The NJ Commission Board, Governor's Advisory Council on Volunteerism, and ASC will identify and secure cash and in-kind resources for the conference. These contacts will also assist with promotion of the conference to the association's network. All parties in the Atlantic Cluster will assist with keynote

speakers, invited guests, presenters and facilitators. All parties will promote the conference to their network of programs.

RATIONALE FOR APPROACH: The Atlantic Cluster represents Governor-appointed Commissions and varied national service and volunteer programs in states with great diversity in demographics, urban/suburban/rural composition, community needs and service focus. The aim of the planners is to meet these individual state needs, while providing a level of uniformity in addressing competency needs in areas required by CNCS; sharing insights and expertise in areas that require new or renewed attention, such as disaster response and veterans service; and providing opportunities for like constituencies to meet, share, and strategize together looking at the wider horizon and future sustainability of service and volunteerism.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS AND EXPERIENCE: The NJ Commission has been a leader in the national service Program Development and Training field for many years, and the Commission and Governor's Advisory Council on Volunteerism have included topics on national service and volunteerism in all state training conferences. The NJ and CT Commissions pioneered cluster-wide trainings in the mid-1990s targeted to Commission boards and staff. The NJ Training Officer and CT ED have served on the CNCS T/TA Working Group. The Training Officer is also Director of a Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and knowledgeable about training for that program. The Governor's Volunteer Conferences in 2010 and 2012 had strong corporate tracks, developed by the Business Volunteer Council of Northern Jersey, staffed by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. Since its establishment in 1997, ASC has convened national and regional conferences for commissions and national service programs, including: State Service Commissioner Institute (2008); Volunteer Generation Fund Grantee Meetings (2010, 2011, 2012); State Commission Leadership Strategy Summits (2011, 2012, 2013); North Central National Service Convention..

EXPERTISE OF KEY STAFF: The NJ Commission intends to contract with ASC staff to supplement the efforts of the NJ and Cluster team.

- ASC's Director of Programming and Training, Christy Venable, has 9 years of experience working with national service programs and commissions; has organized and/or supported several national and regional conferences for service programs and commissions.
- Donna Teel has 16 years providing t/ta to AmeriCorps and FGP in NJ. She has organized orientations, content and competency-based training for AmeriCorps members; training for program

managers; and training for FGP staff and volunteers.

SYSTEMS, STRUCTURE, AND STAFFING: The NJ Commission staff contains a balanced and diverse team of national service subject matter experts.

- Executive Director Rowena Madden has served since 1994, providing leadership, oversight, and vision to the NJ Commission; and the Governor's Office of Volunteerism since 2007.
- Senior Program Officer Pat Schwartz, with AmeriCorps at the local and state levels for 15 years, provides overall program compliance and is an expert in CNCS requirements.
- Grants and Fiscal Officer Ivette Ramos, with the NJ Commission for 18 years brings expertise in grants, fiscal and program administration.
- Training and Disabilities Officer, Donna Teel (see above).

FISCAL OVERSIGHT: The NJ Commission, within the NJ Department of State, has managed the following federal grants: AmeriCorps, Admin, PDAT, and Disability, Learn and Serve America, and FGP. The current budget of the NJ Commission is \$4,700,000 and this cooperative agreement would represent just over 1% of the total budget. The Commission budget is developed on an annual basis and expenditures and revenues are tracked and allocated appropriately in the state's financial management system. All registration checks would be made out to the Treasurer, State of NJ and sent to the NJ Commission, which will process them with Department of State Division of Administration, and deposit them into a conference account.

PROJECT MANAGERS: The project management duties of event planning and training design will be designated among the core team that includes Christy Venable (ASC), Rowena Madden, and Donna Teel.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY

REASONABLE COST FACTORS: The fixed expenses for five meals per attendee are estimated at \$90 per person. To cover these costs and additional revenue, the registration fee proposed is \$100. We expect to serve a minimum of 200 participants. Registration for virtual conference attendees is not expected exceed \$25/person.

The primary expenses of the conference covered by the cooperative agreement are designated to provide a portion of salary for each project managers who will allocate a major percentage of their time to the planning and execution of the conference for approximately 2-3 months. Other built-in costs include facility expenses for rental, meals, and lodging for presenters. Another reasonable cost factor includes use of live-streaming technology for virtual participants. Costs are included for trainers

who are contracted with a fee for service. Finally, travel cost allocations have been included in the budget for peer and contracted trainers.

Additional conference cash and in-kind resources will be raised by the Governor's Advisory Council on Volunteerism and ASC.

SUFFICIENCY OF BUDGET: The budget proposed is sufficient to provide the participants with an excellent conference and effective learning experience. The offer of university space and State government locations at no charge will enable funding to be focused on program content, presentations, and virtual capacity. The \$50,000 requested for the conference will allow us to enhance the overall conference experience and learning environment, include virtual attendees, serve more participants at a lower rate, and include the professional services of three project managers (two local, one regional) to devote their attention to the conference full time for 2 - 3 months. The addition of \$8,000 will be raised through sponsorships and \$5,000 for virtual attendance.

SUFFICIENCY OF FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT: The NJ Commission is hosted by the NJ Department of State, and grants and fiscal matters are led at the Commission by Ivette Ramos, assisted by a CPA. Oversight and authorizing administration is provided by the Department of State Division of Administration. The Department adheres to the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and undergoes regular financial reviews and an annual audit, conducted by the Auditor of State. As a state agency, IEDA/ICVS has sound fiscal, program and personnel policies that are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Clarification Summary

N/A

Required Documents

<u>Document Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Letter of Support Ķ Atlantic Cluster Commissions	Sent
Letter of Support Ķ NJ Senior Corps Association	Sent
Letter of Support Ķ NJ Association of Volunteer Center Directors	Sent
Letter of Support Ķ National RSVP Directors	Sent
Letter of Support Ķ National Service Inclusion Project	Sent
Letter of Support Ķ Consultant Trainers	Sent
Document Ķ AmeriCorps Core Competencies	Sent