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Executive Summary

The Indianhead Community Action Agency's Wisconsin Fresh Start program (ICAA-WFS), will have 20 members who will be engaged in building affordable housing, participating in community service, and earning high school equivalency diplomas (HSED) in Rusk and Sawyer counties in Northwestern Wisconsin (WI). At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for building two units of affordable housing while earning 8 HSEDs within one year of exiting the program. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 50 volunteers who will be engaged in affordable housing construction.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Economic Opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$113,292 will be matched with \$62,650 in public funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

a. PROBLEM/NEED. ICAA-WFS members will build two housing units in Rusk and Sawyer counties in Northwestern WI during the first year of the grant period, which will be rented or sold to low-income individuals or families. This service project was selected based on a lack of decent, sanitary, energy efficient and affordable homes in relation to population, income, and numbers of housing units available in the target communities. The recent economic recession has been characterized by a massive loss of jobs in the region's primary manufacturing, woodworking and tourism industries, resulting in rising numbers of housing foreclosures and high unemployment rates (currently 7.3% in Rusk and 9.5% in Sawyer, compared to 5.8% statewide). Consequently, the average wage in the region has fallen more than 11% since 2008. (WI-Worknet.) The resultant decline in homeownership has led to a corresponding increase in low-income individuals and families seeking, stable, affordable housing in the region, hence the need for additional affordable rental units. The housing conditions in Hayward (Sawyer Co), and Weyerhaeuser (Rusk Co) are poor. According to the 2010 census, 64.3% of the housing stock in the region was built prior to 1969, in contrast to only 49% nationwide. Given this high percentage of older homes, there is a shortage of housing that meets HUD's Housing Quality Standards for safe, sanitary and affordable housing. In Sawyer Co, with a poverty rate of 18.2% and 58% of students considered economically disadvantaged by the WI Dept of Public Instruction, a similarly low average wage juxtaposed with high-value homes means that 50% of families cannot afford fair-market rent (2010 Census), and nearly 22% of households pay over 30% of their income for housing, the second highest in WI. Finally, in Rusk Co (poverty rate of 17.1% and 62% of students

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economically disadvantaged), with an average wage at only \$12.38, affordable rental units are in high demand (WI DPI.) The population in Sawyer Co has increased by 9.6% since the 2000 Census, whereas the number of housing units in these counties has only increased by 8.7%, resulting in a shortage of affordable housing in these counties (WI Dept of Administration, 2011). ICAA-WFS AmeriCorps members are disaffected young adults aged 18-24, who may share these common characteristics: 1) economically disadvantaged; 2) negative schooling experiences in the formal K-12 setting, subsequently dropping out of school and consequently having lower academic skills and the perseverance necessary to have success in higher education or find gainful employment; 3) criminal histories; 4) single parenthood (38%); 5) lack a strong and supportive family; and 6) dealing with multiple behavioral health/substance abuse issues (up to 90% of current enrollees). ICAA-WFS provides these young people an opportunity to acquire needed skills and make critical behavioral changes in the context of community service. In fact, the percentage of adults over age 25 who did not complete HS is 13% in Sawyer Co (19.5% on the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe reservation), and 16% in Rusk, compared to 11% statewide. In addition, the population of 18-24 year olds has increased by 12% in Rusk, and 52% in Sawyer since 2000 (WI Dept of Health Services, 2010), so there is an increasing number of young adults who may be eligible for the program and are in need of basic education and job skills training.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS: EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASUREABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT. The theory of change on which our program is based is: "When disconnected and disaffected young people are provided with a nurturing, rigorous environment, authentic learning experiences, and comprehensive, integrated community support services, they develop the skills and self-efficacy needed to become productive and self-reliant members of their community, while simultaneously addressing many problems of our society." There is a considerable body of research demonstrating that WFS' proposed interventions ultimately lead to the outcomes enumerated in our theory of change. New construction and rehabilitation have proven to affect their neighborhood's property values positively, as well as lower crime rates, especially when affordable housing projects are small-scale and dispersed as in WFS. (www.mnhousing.gov/idc/groups) Research has also shown that the stability of an affordable mortgage or rent can positively impact childhood development and school performance (Lubell and Brennan 2007) and can improve health outcomes for families and individuals (Lubell, Crain, and Cohen 2007). Our communities are also impacted via the development of the young adults enrolled in our program. WFS is designed around best practice grounded in asset-

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and strengths-based principles, research and a holistic approach that addresses social, academic, psychological, and career-related needs for participants throughout their involvement in WFS. Our WFS program is designed around an evidence-based YouthBuild USA model that "engages disconnected youth who have no apparent path to a productive future by teaching them basic academic, life, leadership, and employability skills through work on community housing rehabilitation projects" and attendance in an alternative academic setting (Pines, 1999). The purpose of YouthBuild, a proven, effective alternative education program, is "to unleash the positive energy of unemployed young adults to rebuild their communities and their own lives with a commitment to work, education, responsibility, and family" (Conescu, Lewis, MacKinnon & Weissberg, 2000). In fact, independent national research shows a lifetime return on investment of at least \$7.80 for every dollar spent on YouthBuild students. If a youth was court-involved, this increases to a minimum of \$10.80 and up to \$43.90 for every dollar spent (Cohen and Piquero, 2008). The research identifies eight factors as consistently recurring in effective alternative education programs, all of which are core principles in the way we have structured our WFS program. These include: 1) caring, knowledgeable adults as teachers, mentors, community members, etc., who understand and deeply care about youth and provide significant time and attention; 2) a sense of community; 3) an assets approach that reinforces protective factors; 4) displaying respect for youth through giving them a sense of voice and ownership in the teaching/learning process; 5) holding high expectations for academic achievement and responsible behavior; 6) providing a holistic, comprehensive, multidimensional, developmental curriculum; 7) providing authentic, engaging learning that connects school and work; and 8) support and long-term follow-up services (Kerka, 2003). Additionally, WFS classroom instructors will integrate the Common Core Standards into instruction, to align curricula with nationally accepted educational standards to help ensure that WFS members have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning. These standards, informed by highly effective models from across the country, will help WFS members in HSED attainment and provide a foundation for future success in post-secondary education (www.corestandards.org). Through these methods for instruction, WFS staff has integrated the basic skills and educational component with occupational skills training, incorporated higher-order thinking that enables participants' construction of meaning and knowledge, and helps participants to make deliberate connections between skills acquired on the building site to the academic outcomes needed for HSED completion. Community/service-learning activities also provide a rich context for learning and an opportunity to make academic learning relevant to the real world in that participants are actively engaged and

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knowledge is constructed through interacting with the physical world and the social context of the learning environment (Goodman, 1999; Hill & Smith, 1998). One strategy involves developing participant Ecomaps as part of the member selection process. Developed in 1975 (Hartman), and validated in later research (Rempel, Neufeld, & Kushner, 2007; Calix, 2004), the ecomap provides an aerial view of the relationships and influences between individuals, families or collectives, and their ecological environment, including their social and support networks. Given the tenuous nature of many of our participants' nuclear families, this tool will enable WFS staff to determine the resources, interventions and social support systems that are necessary and important factors in student retention (Mallinckrodt, 1988), enhancing WFS participants' self-efficacy and academic achievement (Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992), and follow-up once they complete the program. The pedagogical and curricular approaches, highlighted above, represent our quality assurance standards. Our evaluation process will be used to continuously monitor implementation to ensure fidelity to these standards.

c. MEMBER TRAINING. ICAA-WFS' AmeriCorps program will be part of the solution in solving the significant local problems of inadequate affordable housing for low-income people and disaffected youth by incorporating an Economic Opportunity focus for both participants and community beneficiaries. WFS members will have the opportunity to become self-sufficient, contributing community members through the AmeriCorps experience by constructing housing for low-income individuals or families while completing a HS education, receiving additional training in citizenship and independent living skills, and completing personal development goals during their term of service. WFS further provides members with an opportunity to serve their own communities within the context of a comprehensive training program that links service with pre-employment and work maturity training, as well as classroom instruction in basic skills, GED/HSED preparation, conflict resolution, citizenship and civic engagement, behavioral health and AODA counseling, health and nutrition programs, independent living skills classes, career and post-secondary education exploration, and placement in jobs and/or post-secondary education. Service thus becomes a springboard to long-term self-sufficiency and active citizenship. The homes in which youth are involved in all phases of construction, are then sold or rented to low-income individuals/families living in these communities. Because the academic and community service construction project occurs Monday through Thursday of each week, Fridays are an opportunity for participants to engage in multiple other community and service-learning opportunities. Addressing authentic community needs, youth voice, and reflection are central components of community service-learning in the WFS

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program. Service-learning also provides WFS participants with opportunities to assume responsibility and channel their leadership skills in a positive direction. As part of the curriculum, Youth Corps members study Civics and then apply what they learn with each site electing two representatives, during the first and third quarter, to serve on the Youth Policy Council (YPC). The YPC meets quarterly with staff members to help develop participant rules, select service projects, review program direction, and discuss participant concerns. Reflection is an integral part of WFS community and service-learning with youth engaging in pre-reflection prior to their service experience and multiple reflection activities upon completion of the experiential component that reinforces their learning. Participants will accrue multiple benefits from their involvement in community service-learning: 1) they will see themselves as assets to the community who are able to make useful contributions; 2) service activities will enable them to see the relevance of academics to the real world; and 3) this experience, as shown with prior WFS participants, will instill in them an ethic of life-long service and community involvement. Youth are also publicly recognized for completion of individual service activities and crew accomplishments; when houses are completed, each site's crew plans and hosts a public Open House event where members have opportunities to reflect on and speak to the public and press about their AmeriCorps service experience. This kind of public acknowledgment helps to negate erroneous perceptions and stereotypes the public often holds of disaffected young adults, whom they come to see as true assets to their communities. Our WFS program has been an effective program model that now for nearly fifteen years has enabled disaffected youth, the majority of whom are low income themselves, to come to see themselves as community assets and as individuals that can actually make positive contributions to the community through providing a valuable service. Many of these youth have no sense of direction in their lives and often feel hopeless and helpless, and don't know how to turn their lives around. Through our WFS program model, incorporating research-based principles shared above, we are able to build members' sense of self-esteem by helping them to realize that they can impact change, which has literally changed the lives of individuals involved in this program. In their interactions and relationship building between Youth Corps members and the community volunteers, reciprocity is created and realized in that Youth Corps members are giving back to the community while learning valuable skills in the process. At least 75% of WFS' Youth Corps members will be HS dropouts. Consequently, 20% of Youth Corps members' time will be spent working towards attaining a GED/HSED and/or achieving competency in adult basic education with the assistance of classroom teachers and volunteers. Other portions of the educational component include instruction in construction skills, citizenship training, CPR certification, basic first aid,

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leadership development, conflict resolution, pre-employment skills, career and post-secondary education planning, independent living skills, health, and nutrition. All classroom instruction will occur in construction trailers on each job site. Members who complete terms of service will advance to further job training, post-secondary education, employment, or a second AmeriCorps term of service. Following their initial interview, applicants serve a minimum of four full days on site as volunteers before committing to enrolling in the full term of service. During orientation, new members are familiarized with the member contract, pay schedule, benefits, prohibited activities; schedule crew meetings to discuss service projects; receive OSHA safety training; and receive uniforms. WFS requires conflict resolution, financial literacy, and basics of home rental and maintenance (RentSmart), in the first quarter of the year; CPR/first aid certification, nutrition, and post-secondary education preparation are scheduled in the second quarter. Achievement of other WFS competencies, including work maturity, interpersonal relations, transportation, pre-employment skills, work maturity skills, recidivism prevention (when applicable), and HSED/GED attainment are achieved at an individual pace according to each members' Individual Service Strategy (ISS). Progress is tracked during monthly evaluations of individual performance, and is recorded on a Member-Driven Performance rubric. Evaluations are reviewed with members, providing an opportunity for reflection on the progress they have made, and identifying what additional steps they need to take, and necessary support, in order to achieve them. Eighty percent of member time is spent on new home construction. A staff site supervisor, serving as a trainer, mentor, and counselor, leads each crew. Members begin their term of service by participating in rigorous training and orientation on the construction site. The supervisors spend as much time as possible working with those who have the least ability; level of skill is measured by a tool identification and basic construction skills test. When skilled trades people are working on the site (e.g., plumbing, electrical, and HVAC subcontractors), members will have an opportunity to shadow them as part of their career development training. The construction site supervisors will begin each day with a technical education session in skills needed for the current construction phase. Tool and material handling skills will be modeled by the site supervisors or by experienced volunteers. All members will receive hands-on opportunities to practice and carry out the tasks. Skilled members will be teamed with members who are less skilled, and site supervisors will ensure that safe/proper practices are followed. Each week, crews schedule reflection time in which they discuss project progress, next week's schedule, anticipated project challenges, and the value of the project to the community. The Classroom Instructor supervises members during the academic instruction component of service. Twenty percent of member time, (e.g., six to eight hours/week), is

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spent on basic skills and HSED/GED instruction. Qualified volunteers and staff from Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Community College provide additional academic instruction and support to the classroom instructors, especially when a member requires more intensive remedial instruction. Instructors will also help members prepare for the ACT, SAT or other college admissions tests as necessary. All Youth Corps members without a high school diploma will receive HSED/GED instruction. Staff team members (Site Supervisors, Classroom Instructors, and Transitions Coordinator) will meet with each AmeriCorps member to develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) within the first month of service, using a series of standardized written and oral assessments. Members' performance on these tests helps staff to identify areas of strength/weakness and provides the basis for development of member goals. The staff meets with members on a monthly basis to monitor their progress toward the goals of the ISS, including HSED test scores, career development plans, monthly service and training hours, and retention. The Program Director assesses all competency and educational achievements and addresses any areas of weakness in the expected outcomes with the program staff. ICAA-WFS Youth Corps members will also spend 80% of their time constructing one single-family home in Weyerhaeuser (Rusk Co) and one single-family home in Hayward (Sawyer Co) as their primary service projects, adding to the stock of safe, healthy, quality, energy-efficient and affordable housing in these communities. A construction site supervisor will be located at each site to supervise and provide hands-on construction training to the members, as well as safety and supervisory oversight. The crews will learn about and execute the following construction phases: rough framing, roofing, installation of windows, doors, cabinets, and interior trim, drywall installation, priming, painting, siding, and landscaping. Excavation work, foundation pouring, carpeting, electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilation and air conditioning will be subcontracted. WFS staff, along with counselors from WITC, the Northwest WI Concentrated Employment Program (NWCEP) and Wisconsin Job Centers will assist members with enrolling in post-secondary education, job placement, or enrolling in a second AmeriCorps term of service. WFS staff and community partners will link members to potential job leads and/or further education in high-growth occupations and will expose members to a range of continuing education options, including short-term career credentials, two-year associate degree programs, four-year universities, and formal apprenticeships. After members complete their term of service and exit the program, the WFS Transitions Coordinator will conduct monthly follow-up calls for the first year after exit and quarterly for a second year. Additional volunteers and community partners will assist AmeriCorps members in constructing two Energy Star-certified affordable housing units, take part in additional

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community service projects, plus participate in CNCS national and local days of service. Members are also encouraged to share their program experience, successes, and "Great Stories" that are sent to Serve Wisconsin via the OnCorps reporting system. ICAA- WFS has developed a strong network of community partners over the past fifteen years of program operation from whom additional resources are leveraged and mobilized that contribute to minimizing development costs (e.g., donated materials, in-kind services, and volunteer labor). AmeriCorps members direct these resources to meet our communities' need for additional quality affordable housing, and these disaffected youth are simultaneously re-engaged in adding value to communities they are disconnected from. There is little incentive for private developers or even local governments to invest in affordable housing in our region largely due to the fact that low-income households cannot afford fair market rent. Thus, the AmeriCorps experience will simultaneously add to the stock of quality, affordable housing in the region, and provide an opportunity for the communities' disaffected youth to become contributing community members.

d. MEMBER SUPERVISION. Youth Corps members are organized into two 10- member crews, with one Construction Site Supervisor and one Classroom Instructor each. Classroom trailers are located at each construction site and crews are divided between the construction site and classroom instruction. The ratio of members to supervisors is no greater than 6:1 at all times. Members typically serve four eight-hour days/week, or 32 hours/week, with opportunities to serve up to 8 additional hours. Construction site supervisors are chosen based on construction experience and other experience relevant to their duties supervising and instructing disaffected youth. Classroom Instructors are certified by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) as teachers, and have Bachelor's degrees in education, as well as teaching experience. One Transitions Coordinator oversees members in fulfilling the pre-employment competency requirements and placement in employment and/or post-secondary education. All WFS staff has diverse backgrounds that uniquely qualify them for their positions working with disaffected youth. The Program Director provides supervisory oversight of WFS staff. The WFS program provides ongoing training and professional development as well, including national and regional trainings through YouthBuild USA and ongoing technical assistance provided by YouthBuild USA and Operation Fresh Start. ICAA also sponsors training opportunities such as behavioral health support training, and Hazelden workshops on dealing with youth addiction. Other staff professional development activities include: 1) an annual Better Buildings, Better Business conference on the latest construction techniques, 2) three energy conservation measures workshops/year provided by a local Energy Start consultant; 3) quarterly emergency trainings on

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evacuation, safe work and health practices; 4) WI's High School Equivalency Diploma Conference; 5) training provided by NWCEP about job placement services, internships, career and employability assessments; 6) alcohol and other drug abuse, poverty, and youth crime prevention training, 7) University of Wisconsin Extension training on practical food, nutrition, budgeting, community building, youth development, and problem prevention; 8) training and certification in delivering Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT) curriculum in construction skills.

e. **COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION.** ICAA-WFS is currently a sub grantee of YouthBuild USA AmeriCorps, was a Serve WI grantee for the past five years, and was previously awarded AmeriCorps MSYs via the WI Dept of Commerce WFS grant program in 2000-2007. WFS ensures that our members identify as AmeriCorps members by identifying the program as an AmeriCorps program to applicants during the interview process, by reading and verbally reviewing the AmeriCorps member contract that members sign upon enrollment, and by wearing the program's uniforms that include the AmeriCorps logo. The program provides four logo t-shirts and one sweatshirt so that members have one to wear each day; members are sent home if they arrive without a uniform. All WFS members have attended Serve Wisconsin's Opening Ceremonies, at which emphasis was placed on AmeriCorps' impact in Wisconsin, and members were able to connect with other AmeriCorps and Youth Corps members from around the state to place their involvement within the context of national service. Further, the public, partners, and community members can identify WFS as an AmeriCorps program via the AmeriCorps logo displayed on signage at each WFS site, and on the program's brochures, website, and other publications. CNCS is listed as a funding source in these as well. The program's AmeriCorps affiliation is always included in press releases and interviews. Open House celebrations are held at the completion of each housing project, at which members have the opportunity to speak publically about their AmeriCorps experience to members of the community. In 2011, one of the program's past members started a local AmeriCorps Alumni Association chapter that participates in local community service and promotes the AmeriCorps brand throughout the region.

Organizational Capability

a. **ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING.** ICAA is a 501c(3) private non-profit organization, founded in 1966 with an annual operating budget of \$17 million. The ongoing mission is to assist individuals in achieving self-sufficiency by providing the resources, education and services necessary to develop healthy families, sustainable communities and strong local businesses. ICAA is a community-based organization with the flexibility to identify local problems and needs and develop

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programs to address them. We continuously assess the needs and problems within the Northwest WI counties we serve: Burnett, Clark, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor and Washburn, including the St. Croix and the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservations. The ICAA has a 47 year history of providing direct services as a one-stop center to clients through multiple program areas: 1) a public Transit Service; 2) Head Start; 3) Home Health Services; 4) Community Services, including outreach centers for emergency food, clothing, shelter, and referrals; 5) Business Development for small business start-up/expansion; 6) Rental Housing Development; 7) Housing Weatherization; 8) Housing Rehabilitation; 9) Supportive Services for Veteran Families; 10) Adult Literacy; 11) Legal Assistance to Domestic Violence victims; and 12) Youth Development programming, including WFS and an alcohol and drug abuse prevention program. WFS operates within the context of ICAA's mission by providing HSED instruction, job training, and opportunities for community service to low- income, out-of-school youth. In 1998, the WI State Bureau of Housing initiated the WFS program, a comprehensive educational and employment training program for at-risk, out-of-school youth aged 18-24 similar to the YouthBuild program model. Funding for the program has been provided by US Department of Labor YouthBuild, AmeriCorps, WI state funds, and private foundations including Otto Bremer, Wal-Mart, and Great Lakes Higher Education. ICAA has operated the WFS program for fifteen years. In 2008, 2009, and 2011 ICAA received three nationally awarded DOL YouthBuild grants with annual operating budgets between \$366,666 to \$525,000. The 2008 grant involved 20 youth building 4 homes; and the 2009 and 2011 grants involved 66 youth building 6 homes. WFS first received CNCS funding in 2008 with a budget of \$71,820 for seven MSY. In 2009, ICAA was awarded \$35,153 in Recovery Act Funds, and \$102,600 in regular program funds, for a total of 12 MSY. In 2010, 2011, and 2012, \$152,600 provided programming to support between 16 MSY and 11.5 MSY. The program's historically strong outcomes and attainment of all performance measures discussed in the next section evidences the high quality of ICAA's WFS program, which has also received high marks for compliance and responsiveness in the last year. Although the program's retention rates have sometimes been problematic, the Program Director and staff are working with an evaluator and multiple technical assistance providers to develop and implement a corrective action plan discussed below in 2.c. This request of \$113,292, if awarded, will represent 74% of the WFS program's \$152,292 annual budget for 10 MSY. Given this experience and history of successful program management, we are able to effectively raise funds to provide continuing support service activities and initiatives. ICAA, with a 47-year history of successful program operation, has a uniform, double entry and full-accrual accounting system. Fiscal staff prepares monthly financial statements through an in-house computerized

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accounting system (MIP). An independent, certified public accounting firm conducts yearly audits in accordance with provisions of FAS and OMB circular A-133. The Finance Department has an Operations Director with more than 15 years experience at ICAA, two additional individuals with accounting degrees, one who is the Accounting Supervisor, an accounts payable specialist, accounts receivable specialist and a payroll specialist. The finance department currently accounts for more than 66 different Federal, State, local and private foundation funding streams, with an annual budget of nearly \$17 million. The agency maintains a thorough fiscal management program inclusive of detailed financial policies, internal control structures, independent and internal auditing procedures and as a result has remained in good standing with all funding sources. ICAA's board of directors and CEO has been strongly supportive of the WFS program since it began in 1999. WFS is able to leverage additional resources and in-kind services from other ICAA departments. The Weatherization program has provided training and job placement for WFS members. Community Services provides tuition support, emergency food, clothing and housing, and case management to WFS members. Transit has provided transportation for the program's group community service projects, and Adult Literacy provides intensive remedial tutoring services for those members in need. ICAA's Chief Executive Officer, Pamela Guthman, maintains oversight of agency operation. Program Director Caroline Loyas will be the manager overseeing the WFS sites, and responsible for overall AmeriCorps program operation. Ms. Loyas manages an annual budget of over \$3.9 million, with fifteen separate funding streams. In overseeing the AmeriCorps program, her responsibilities will include hiring and supervising staff, public relations, long-range planning and evaluation, fiscal oversight, maintaining compliance with funding source requirements, and generating funds to support the project. The five FTE staff people and their qualifications are as follows:

Caroline Loyas, Program Director. B.A., Community Development. Nine years diverse management experience, including at-risk youth programming, substance abuse prevention, grants management and fiscal oversight. Responsibilities: Administration of the WFS program, staff hiring, securing and managing funding and funding sources, program planning and evaluation.

Responsibilities of Classroom Instructors: HSED instruction, assessment, assistance with ISS, life skills/leadership training, data collection and reporting, case management, post-secondary education preparation and placement, follow-up.

Carly Moline, Classroom Instructor, Rusk County: B.S., Education. Five years teaching environmental education. Kristina Lazorik, Classroom Instructor, Sawyer County: B.A. Education. Twelve years teaching secondary English.

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Responsibilities of Construction Site Supervisors: Supervision, instruction, and training of at-risk youth on the construction site, assistance with ISS, procures bids and construction materials, supervision of site volunteers.

Dan Gunderson, Construction Site Supervisor, Sawyer County. Eighteen years construction experience, thirteen years youth programming. Chad Olson, Construction Site Supervisor, Rusk County. Fifteen years construction experience, seven years youth programming.

Mary Schmocker, Transitions Coordinator, all sites: M.S. Education. Ten years adult remedial education. Responsibilities: Counsels students meeting with them bimonthly; tracks member participation and progress; facilitates programming with partnering agencies focusing on college preparation, job placement, and transitioning into independent living; organizes job shadowing and mini internships, and conducts follow-up services for participants exiting the program.

To enhance WFS staff pedagogical and curriculum dissemination skills, we will provide continuous opportunities for quality professional development.

b. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY. After five years of AmeriCorps program operation, the program has been given high marks for programmatic and fiscal oversight, and is in full compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations. Our evaluation process, which is also formative in nature, will ensure that we are addressing our quality assurance standards. The Program Director will maintain close oversight for compliance purposes and communicates on a weekly or as needed basis with Site Supervisors regarding construction progress. HSED/GED attainment progress is tracked by staff, and outcomes are entered in a database each month. The Program Director receives information on performance measure progress monthly, and uses the information to complete the quarterly progress reports. ICAA owns and operates each construction and classroom site, and thus will ensure that each site has adequate programmatic and financial capabilities through staff training and selection, and implementation of proper internal controls.

c. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEEES AND FORMER GRANTEEES ONLY. ICAA has been successfully operating a WFS program since 1999 and in that time frame has worked with more than 250 enrollees with an average completion rate of 71% with our YouthBuild program, and have built 27 housing units that have been sold and/or rented by low- income individuals and families. In the 2012-2013 program year, ICAA-WFS successfully met its performance measure goals with the following outcomes: 4 housing affordable housing units developed, and 100% of AmeriCorps members received academic instruction leading to 71% of members' earning an HSED. Enrollment, 2012 -- 2013: 100%; Retention, 2012-2013: 73.1%. From 2009 - 2012, 49% of members earned a

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GED/HSED (23% entered with a HS diploma), 59% increased their literacy/numeracy scores by the equivalent of two grade levels, and 64% were placed in employment following program completion with a 73% employment retention rate. These strong outcomes are evidence of effective delivery of academic instruction and job placement services. WFS successfully implemented a retention rate improvement plan in this past year and achieved a 21.3% improvement in retention. However, we recognize the need for continuous improvement in this area and will continue to implement the following strategies with which we have thus far achieved success. The first focuses on being more selective in the applicants we enroll via: 1) soliciting more applications by advertising heavily; 2) interviewing more applicants to pick those who voice the strongest commitment to success; 3) constructing ecomaps with applicants to determine support systems; and 4) adding additional pre-enrollment requirements that applicants must complete prior to beginning the program. We believe these strategies will further demonstrate responsibility and dedication and result in enrolling members who are more likely to retain enrollment and achieve successful completion. The second strategy involves requiring additional service hours on Fridays. A third strategy now in place is the addition of a full-time Transitions Coordinator, who will work closely with all program youth, meeting with each member on a bi-monthly basis, tracking their progress, and facilitating their transition to work and higher education once the member successfully exits the program. Finally, in 2011 WFS initiated an ongoing qualitative improvement process. Our evaluator is working with staff to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program, and to make suggestions for improvement, with a major focus on improving retention rates. Our WFS program has proven to be extremely effective, given the fact that there are no other options available for these young adults in our rural area. Our program is a last chance for many of these youth to transform their lives with hopes of having a successful future. The WFS program provides this sense of hope.

d. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT To provide feedback for continuous improvement, ICAA will utilize Dr. Jim Wheeler, a school psychologist with a Ph.D. in Special Education and more than 20 years of experience in evaluating state and federal projects, including programs for disaffected youth and programs that involved students with special needs. Multiple methods, or triangulation, will be used to collect qualitative and quantitative data from multiple stakeholders, which will then be used in a formative sense to provide feedback to WFS staff for program improvement purposes, as well as summative evaluation to determine program effectiveness. The evaluation will assess to what extent the two primary goals of WFS, community service and academic achievement, have been realized. Evaluation findings will be analyzed and listed as either program strengths or areas needing

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improvement. These will be shared with the Program Director who will then use the findings in a formative sense to develop a set of recommendations that will be the basis for a program improvement plan.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS The proposed cost per MSY is \$11,329, which is adequate to provide for AmeriCorps program operation, and a reduction from the PY2012-2013 MSY cost of \$13,212. Further, WFS has increased our match share to more than 34%. Additionally, WFS has leveraged over \$100,000 of in-kind support from its community partners and volunteers in the past year.

b. BUDGET ADEQUACY. Our proposed budget is cost effective and adequate for program operation, and aligns with the above program narrative. AmeriCorps funds will be used to pay Classroom Instructor wages and fringe, a key component of the program, staff travel to CNCS/Serve WI sponsored trainings as well as community service activities, OnCorps reporting system costs, member service gear that includes the AmeriCorps logo, and the cost of CPR/First Aid certification for members. The cost of required criminal history background checks will be paid for with Wisconsin Department of Corrections funds.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. Grant Capacity and Compliance

ICAA will update its CCR Registration prior to the 9/16/14 expiration date.

B. Budget Clarification

Criminal History Checks on members and grant-funded staff will be paid for with Wisconsin Department of Corrections funds.

C. Programmatic Clarification

1. If ICAA is funded directly by AmeriCorps we will discontinue participation with YouthBuild USA's national direct AmeriCorps program.

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2. Our desired grant award and member enrollment period start date is 8/15/2014.

D. Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification

1. ICAA's Wisconsin Fresh Start program specifically targets young adults with disabilities; in past years up to 90% of slots have been filled by members with disabilities. Recruitment and outreach to disabled applicants is accomplished through school districts, local Departments of Correction, and word of mouth.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics