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Executive Summary

The Granite State Education Corps of Goodwill Industries of Northern New England will have 43 AmeriCorps members: (22) 1700 hour stipended, (3) 675 hour education award only, (3) 450 hour education award only, and (15) 300 hour education award only), who will implement the Check & Connect mentoring program (a research-based intervention for academically disengaged K-12 students) in nonprofits, Title 1 schools, and schools not meeting adequate yearly progress in the No Child Left Behind Act. AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing student academic engagement, ultimately increasing economic success. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 100 volunteers to engage in Check & Connect mentoring and in-school/ afterschool service-learning, academic support, and enrichment interventions. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education, K-12 Success. The CNCS investment of \$343,213 will be matched with \$351,750, \$100,250 in public funding and 251,500 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. Problem/Need

Goodwill proposes a strategic AmeriCorps intervention designed to address the most pressing educational needs of students in both urban and rural communities in NH. The Granite State Education Corps aims to increase student academic engagement in order to impact the future workforce success and economic stability of these students, and therefore their communities. The project utilizes the proven "Check & Connect" mentoring model (a research-based intervention for academically disengaged K-12 students) to decrease truancy, tardiness, behavioral referrals, and dropout rates while increasing attendance, persistence in school, accrual of credits, and school completion rates. This model increases educational attainment rates among students in selected community organizations and schools. Such interventions are critical to mitigate persistent unemployment, incidences of poverty, welfare dependence, and economic instability.

The societal and economic costs of a high dropout rate for the U.S. are gigantic. It is estimated that approximately 12 million students will drop out in the next decade costing the U.S. about \$1.5 trillion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Dropouts are far more likely to experience reduced job and income opportunities, chronic unemployment, incarceration, or require government assistance (American Psychological Association, 2012). High school dropouts are bearing the brunt of the ongoing recession more than the rest of the population. In 2009, the average annual income for a high school dropout was \$19,540, compared to \$27,380 for a high school graduate. While the national

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unemployment rate as of January 2012 is 8.3%, for individuals without a high school diploma it is 13.1% compared to 8.4% for high school and 4.2% for college graduates (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). It has been estimated that if dropouts from the Class of 2009 had graduated, the nation's economy would benefit from nearly \$335 billion in additional income over the course of their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010).

The New Hampshire Union Leader, in a November 21, 2011 article reports, "New U.S. Census numbers suggest more people are struggling to make ends meet in New Hampshire than the official poverty rate would lead one to believe. The state level data, showing a difference of 2.5% between the official and supplemental poverty rate in New Hampshire, came in a separate analysis. Public policy experts said it wasn't surprising that New Hampshire would fare worse in a measure of poverty that included the value of public assistance and local costs of living."

"When you include the cost of living in New Hampshire, for housing and utilities, you dramatically increase the number of people having difficulty making ends meet, which is really what we're talking about when we measure poverty," said Steve Norton, the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies (Ted Siefer, New Hampshire Union Leader, November 22, 2011).

This confirms not only what many families in New Hampshire know to be true, but also what Goodwill AmeriCorps partner schools and nonprofits deal with each and every day. New Hampshire has deceptively low overall indicators of student barriers, but looking beyond the initial numbers reveals a different portrait of poverty and low student success in New Hampshire. For instance, in Bedford, NH there is a free and reduced lunch rate of only 5%, however if you travel less than five miles into Manchester, NH you will find a free and reduced lunch rate of 49%. The rates of poverty in Manchester are by no means unique, and these challenging conditions exist in many forgotten communities both in rural and urban school districts of New Hampshire.

In Laconia, Berlin, Claremont, and Manchester about one-half of the child population is eligible for federally-subsidized and reduced-price meals through schools and other programs, reflecting the high number of low-income families that live in these communities. Although the dropout rates in NH overall are lower than most states, "four school districts: Manchester, Berlin, Claremont, and Rochester with the lowest performance on NECAP standardized tests, also had the highest drop-out rate" (NH 2013 Kids Count).

Despite high statewide rankings in test scores, graduation rates, and other measures of success, stark differences in student outcomes exist across New Hampshire. College enrollment rates among high school graduates in 2010 ranged from as low as 40 percent in some schools to nearly 90 percent

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in others. Scores on the annual NECAP exams, the state's standardized tests of student achievement, vary greatly across districts, especially in the areas of math and writing ability (Student-Centered Learning in NH: An Overview and Analysis, NH Center for Public Policy, February, 6, 2012). Granite State Education Corps members serve the neediest students in the state of New Hampshire; the areas served by members comprise over half of the total drop-outs recorded in the state of New Hampshire (Cohort Graduation and Dropout Rate, NH Department of Education, February 1, 2013). Granite State Members provide students mentoring supports which increase academic engagement resulting in increased educational attainment and improved economic success in the future.

AmeriCorps members placed at Seymour Osman Community Center serve a population of students who rely on the center not only as a safe place to go after school, but also for the homework help and additional academic support they receive. The Seymour Osman Community Center is an afterschool learning center which is part of the Dover Housing Authority and is located within a public housing complex. 100% of the kids that AmeriCorps member Jacqueline Boudreau serves are living below the poverty line. AmeriCorps members address a variety of needs including behavioral, social, familial, and academic. Since only 40% of Dover students go on to earn four-year degrees, they will be at a marked disadvantage in the job market compared to their peers with higher education.

Unique examples of the pockets of need in NH occur in the urban areas of Manchester/Nashua. These are the largest Metro areas in Northern New England struggling with true urban issues. Working within large pockets of poverty and crime (City-data.com reports that Manchester has a significantly higher crime rate than the national average) Granite State Education Corps members are focused on providing a safe place for students while providing afterschool academic support.

Granite State Education Corps members serve at the Boys and Girls Clubs in Nashua and Manchester and at the YMCA in Manchester. The YMCA STAY program targets at-risk middle school youth in Manchester, NH, which has the 5th highest school dropout rate in the state. STAY provides a comprehensive solution to prevent school dropout and enhance school success for at-risk youth providing daily contact, educational support, and mentoring. 67% of families in STAY are defined by federal guidelines as extremely low, or very low economic status. 58% of students stated their parents or siblings are, or have been, incarcerated. 45% of STAY students have one or more parents without a high school degree; 95% of parents did not have a college degree. 58% of parents surveyed reported being single, separated, or divorced. These are high-risk factors that contribute to poor school performance, as well as unsatisfactory relationships and social skills, all of which may lead to school dropout and chronic instability. STAY provides in-school support for middle school students at risk of

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dropping out and turning to substance abuse, violence, and other high-risk behaviors. These students do not have Individual Placement Plans (IPPs) or receive other school services. STAY serves 56 core students and an additional 140 alumni. By strategically partnering with selected schools and non-profits in both rural and urban communities, Granite State Education Corps AmeriCorps members target the students most in need of support.

Dropping out of high school severely limits the chances of future success for far too many children. It deepens and continues the cycle of poverty into future generations. Receiving a good education is the lifeline by which many youth can lift themselves out of poverty. America's future depends on the delivery of a high-quality education to all children regardless of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or disability so they may develop to their fullest potential (American Psychological Association, 2012).

B. AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems

Evidence Base

AmeriCorps Members are highly effective means to solve student engagement needs, and ultimately increase economic success for New Hampshire's neediest students. High school dropouts are bearing the brunt of the ongoing recession more than the rest of the population. While the national unemployment rate as of January 2012 is 8.3%, for individuals without a high school diploma it is 13.1% compared to 8.4% for high school and 4.2% for college graduates (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

To meet this need, the Granite State Education Corps is utilizing AmeriCorps members to implement the Check & Connect program model. The core of Check & Connect is a trusting relationship between the student and a mentor. The mentor both advocates for/challenges the student and partners with the family, school, and community to keep the student academically engaged. There are four core components which are key to the fidelity of the program: 1) A mentor who works with students and families over the course of at least two years; 2) Regular checks, utilizing data such as behavior referrals, attendance, tardiness, and grades; 3) Interventions to establish students' connection to school/learning, and to enhance social and academic competencies; and 4) Engagement with families. The Check & Connect mentoring model will be implemented by (22) 1700 hour stipended AmeriCorps members under the guidance of school and nonprofit staff. AmeriCorps members will leverage community volunteers as mentors and facilitators of intensive services such as service-learning, afterschool/ in-school academic support, and enrichment activities. Education

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Award only positions (3 675 hour, 3 450 hour, and 15 300 hour) will supplement the service of the stipended members through placements which will provide support to the Check & Connect programming and intensive services. These positions will also serve as an opportunity for at-risk high school students to commit to a leadership role, completing their hours of service through service-learning projects, mentoring, and community outreach. Utilizing AmeriCorps members and volunteers is a highly-effective means of meeting this need. This model will allow for focused attention on required mentor training, family engagement, and dedicated passionate student support.

The Check & Connect model was created by the University of Minnesota and has been evaluated and research since 1990. After five years of funding support from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), US Department of Education and continues with current efficacy studies examining 1) ongoing theory development on student engagement and 2) understanding and improving assessment-to-intervention linkages. Development of Check & Connect was a collaboration between researchers at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI) and professionals in Minneapolis Public Schools. In 2006, Check & Connect met the evidence standards of the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) of the Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education and is the only program found to have strong evidence of positive effects on staying in school (WWC, 2006).

Through rigorous research at ICI, Check & Connect has been found to lead to increased credit accrual, persistence rates, graduation rates, and perceived parental participation in school; and reduced absences, tardiness, dropout rates, and behavior referrals for students with and without disabilities (Lehr et al., 2004; Sinclair et al., 1998; Sinclair et al., 2005). Research includes two randomized control trials with high school students with disabilities (1998 and 2005); four replication studies with elementary and secondary students (2004 and 2002); and currently, four efficacy trials are underway in large urban school districts (2010-2015).

WWC reviewed six studies on Check & Connect that were designed to assess the program's effectiveness and found the research models to be well-designed and well-implemented. Four of these studies passed WWC relevance screens-they focused on the program's effectiveness among middle and high school students and examined outcomes from at least one of the three relevant domains: staying in school, progressing in school, and completing school. Two of the studies found positive effects on staying in school (statistically significant increase of 18 to 31 percentile points) and potentially positive effects on progressing in school (statistically significant average increase of 30 percentile points). Both studies were random assignment research designs and included 94 high school students in the first

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study and 144 high school students in the second study (WWC, 2006).

Current efficacy studies include: 1) American Institutes for Research: Assessing the Efficacy of Check & Connect for Improving Outcomes for At-Risk High School Students (2011-2014); 2) Stanford Research Institute: Efficacy Study of Check & Connect to Improve Student Outcomes (2011-2015); 3) Quebec Adaptation and Validation of the Check & Connect Dropout Prevention Program (2010-2013); and 4) Preventing Truancy in Urban Schools: The Chicago Public Schools and the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago (2011-2015).

In a pre-post intervention design and replication study, Check & Connect was shown to improve engagement, specifically attendance, for elementary students. 147 elementary students who were absent or tardy to school 12% or more of the time received Check & Connect for two years. At the end of two years, about 40% of Check & Connect students were engaged and regularly attending school (the equivalent of 0-1 day absent per month), an improvement of 135% over baseline behavior. Incidence of tardiness to school declined. About 86% of Check & Connect students were engaged and arriving to school on time (the equivalent of 0-1 day tardy per month), an improvement of 104% over baseline behavior. This same study revealed Check & Connect works to actively engage students and families at school and with learning. 87% of parents of Check & Connect students in grades K-8 were rated by teachers as more supportive of their children's education (defined as parental follow-through, communication with school, and homework completion). Teachers' perceptions of students' behavior were also positive -- 90% indicated that students in grades K-8 were showing improvement in homework completion, interest in school, and attendance. Teachers' observations of students who received two years of sustained intervention were very positive; teachers rated these students significantly more likely to be eager to learn, follow school rules, think ahead about consequences, get along with others, show respect for others' rights and feelings, and persist when challenged by difficult tasks, all critical competencies for school success (Lehr, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2004).

In a pre-post intervention design, 363 chronically truant secondary students showed improved attendance and academic performance as well as a reduction in the number of skipped classes and out-of-school suspensions. About 65% of Check & Connect students who were referred before their absences exceeded 25% of the school year were successfully engaged (defined as less than 0-1 days absent per month), with no incidences of course failures (Sinclair & Kaibel, 2002).

Since the 1990's, Check & Connect has been implemented across the United States in over 27 states, and internationally, including successful utilization of AmeriCorps programming. Programming has been successfully adapted to work within afterschool settings both within non-profits and schools.

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Boys & Girls Clubs of America has successfully adapted Check & Connect through BE GREAT: Graduate, a program serving Club members in grades 5-8 since 2009, aiming to improve academic success. Similarly, in 2012 Folwell Middle School Mentoring Model adapted Check & Connect to a school-based afterschool program. In Southwest Colorado, across every school district in five rural counties, Check & Connect has been implemented in elementary, middle, and high schools. In the 2011-2012 school year, this program reported that 74% of students improved their engagement, as measured by the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI).

C. Member Training

Every member participates in an in-depth orientation/ initial training led by Goodwill's AmeriCorps program staff over the course of the first three days of a member's term. This includes an orientation to: AmeriCorps History; Program Structure; Goodwill AmeriCorps Policies; Prohibited Activities; Benefits; and Local AmeriCorps Programs in the Region. Initial training focuses on member service activities and professional development needs, including topics such as mentoring at-risk youth, the Check & Connect model, and a comprehensive and interactive introduction to youth mentoring programs. Mentoring topics covered include: personality and mentoring relationships; developing safe boundaries; handling difficult situations; coaching; building positive relationships; expanding career awareness; confidentiality and trust; and child abuse and neglect.

In the initial weeks of service, members receive an orientation to their placement site and the community they are serving. Each stipended member placed at a school attends "New Teacher Training," the same training each new instructor completes. The orientation includes agency policies, staff, the community, and key partnerships. Written guidelines for orienting a member are given to supervisors annually, and signed by member and supervisor verifying understanding. This ensures that members are immersed in agency and community culture, comply with AmeriCorps staff expectations, and are aware of prohibited activities.

In addition to Orientation and Initial Training, stipended members are required to attend monthly Member Development days to guarantee they are prepared to perform all the activities during their term of service and also provide members with the opportunity for professional and personal development. A typical Member Development day contains 6 hours of intensive training provided by outside professionals on one to three topics related to their term of service, a half hour of networking time, and an hour and a half of reflection activities. Training topics provided include: understanding/managing adolescent behavior; youth development; working with at-risk

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youth/cultural competence; service-learning; bullying prevention; volunteer management; Grant Writing; Disaster Preparedness Training; Volunteer Management; Publicity and Social Media; Disability Awareness and Inclusion; Service-Learning; Life after AmeriCorps, Understanding Working Styles, Effective Communication, and Being an Effective Youth Worker. All AmeriCorps members receive the Afterschool Basics Institute Certification: a training on evaluating and improving programs and curriculum impact using the 40 Developmental Assets and knowledge of youth social, behavioral, cognitive and emotional development stages. AmeriCorps staff also encourage members to attend the local State Commission-sponsored events and other trainings promoting student achievement offered by local training organizations such as ACROSS NH.

In an effort to enable the AmeriCorps members to have powerful and meaningful service experiences, members participate in Consultancy Groups and "Lunch and Learn" sessions throughout the service term. Consultancy Groups allow members to come together monthly with their peers in a process of collective inquiry to discuss issues and ask questions related to their service terms. "Lunch and Learn" sessions are held at each AmeriCorps training as an opportunity for members to share and reflect with their peers on something they have learned during their term of service.

These opportunities provide for a well-balanced year, making certain that all members are connected, satisfied, and moving toward accomplishing program and personal goals. The training timeline, in addition to annual site visits, quarterly member and supervisor conference calls, mid and end of term evaluations; and webinar-style desk "visits", provide program staff the opportunity to connect regularly with members and supervisors, ensuring that members and volunteers are adhering to the rules regarding prohibited activities.

All Education Award Only members receive the same AmeriCorps orientation training as stipended members at the beginning of their term with a comprehensive webinar designed to orient them to AmeriCorps, including prohibited activities, AmeriCorps and program history, member benefits, and reporting responsibilities. They receive training from their host sites to acquire skills in volunteer management, service-learning, and/or mentoring. Goodwill AmeriCorps programs ensure that member training needs are met by working with each member and site supervisor to complete a required Work Plan at the start of the term. This Work Plan evaluates the training needs of the member and sets out a plan for their term of service.

D. Member supervision

In order to ensure that members receive adequate support and guidance throughout their terms,

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each member has an assigned site supervisor. This designated supervisor attends a daylong supervisor training from Goodwill AmeriCorps program staff before the AmeriCorps member's term of service begins. Supervisor Training includes AmeriCorps prohibited activities, orienting your member to the local community, supporting the work of the AmeriCorps member, and AmeriCorps goals and reporting requirements. Site Supervisors are selected through a consultation process between AmeriCorps program staff and host site leadership. All Site Supervisors undergo a background check.

Goodwill AmeriCorps program staff have developed a comprehensive collection of monitoring tools and practices to ensure members and supervisors are properly trained, supported, and are working together towards program goals. Monitoring tools include: site visits from AmeriCorps program staff; quarterly reports; weekly timesheets; quarterly member and supervisor conference calls; mid and end of term evaluations; and webinar-style desk "visits".

Goodwill AmeriCorps program staff have developed a custom-designed member management system to assist in tracking and documentation. Functions include: the ability to submit forms online, submit/approve timesheets and in-kind donations with digital signatures, view and download policy manuals and forms, and auto-compilation of volunteer and client statistics. Members and supervisors can also view a member's "Individual Homepage", which allows supervisors and members to track hours listing hours completed to date, percentage of training and fundraising hours to date, and the average weekly hours to complete their term.

E. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

In addition to their daily work at the host site, all Goodwill AmeriCorps programs foster a sense of connection with the AmeriCorps identity through structured service, training, and leadership opportunities for members. These opportunities include: Orientation, Initial Training, September 11th, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, AmeriCorps Week, and Celebration of Service/Recognition. Frequent webinars, quarterly conference calls, host site exchanges, Consultancy Groups, "Lunch and Learn" sessions, and an AmeriCorps Google Group. This connection is further solidified by providing members with AmeriCorps gear, posting a Goodwill AmeriCorps sign at each site, orienting members to the history of National Service, and participating in National Service Days. AmeriCorps staff encourage stipended members to attend State Commission sponsored events and events that provide national service networking and reflection opportunities. All of these create connectivity with the AmeriCorps identity, and other national service participants, both in the local communities and statewide.

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Organizational Capability

A. Organizational Background and Staffing

Goodwill's over one hundred year history began in 1902 when Edgar Helms, a minister in impoverished South Boston, decided he wanted to help his parishioners by collecting donations from well to do neighborhoods and give them to the needy. His parishioners fought over the donated goods and the effort created hard feelings and demeaned his parishioners. So he again asked for donations but this time he taught his parishioners to repair the clothes, paid them for their work, and then gave them the opportunity to buy them with some of the money they had earned. This is the basis for Goodwill's ethic of "a hand up - not a hand out". The Granite State Education Corps strives to provide struggling students the "hand up" they need to succeed in school so they can live an independent life.

Goodwill Industries of Northern New England (Goodwill) has been operating AmeriCorps programs for ten years. Its six AmeriCorps staff collectively has 45 years of experience either serving as AmeriCorps members or staffing AmeriCorps programs. Goodwill AmeriCorps staff are leaders in the field, having served as peer mentors to National Direct and State Formula grantees, conference planners, and trainers. Goodwill staff provide significant assistance to fellow programs in the areas of budgeting, compliance, file maintenance, policies, performance measurement, and member management. The Granite State Education Corps is currently in its second year of operation and has a good track record of meeting its objectives and successfully recruiting and retaining its members. Additionally, Goodwill has significant experience operating federal grants. Goodwill's current portfolio of federal grants includes funding through the Departments of Labor and Justice, along with CNCS funding. This federal funding is approximately \$12 million dollars per year and Goodwill always has excellent audits and reviews by funders.

Goodwill AmeriCorps staff receives a multi-day intensive training from Check & Connect staff in the spring on best practices in implementing the Check & Connect model. Goodwill AmeriCorps staff are building relationships with Check & Connect staff and have reached out to other AmeriCorps programs that are utilizing the Check & Connect model.

B. Compliance and Accountability

Goodwill ensures compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations and the prohibited activities through a rigorous system designed to closely connect program staff with members and site staff. This system ensures significant support throughout the program year while also providing for frequent opportunities to monitor sites and members for compliance issues.

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This system includes requiring potential AmeriCorps host sites to attend a Site Supervisor Orientation and sign a Cooperative Agreement before they are approved to receive an AmeriCorps member. Both of these highlight AmeriCorps Rules, Regulations, and Prohibited Activities. The Cooperative Agreement also emphasizes that AmeriCorps members can and will be removed from a host site immediately if monitoring activities discover any type of non-compliance. Although the Site Supervisor Orientation and the Cooperative Agreement have a significant deterrent effect on non-compliant behavior they also allow for great communication and connections being made between Granite State staff and host site staff. This is critical to ensuring smooth program operation and the capability to provide immediate corrective action in cases where a member or host site is contemplating a course of action that might put them in non-compliance.

Next, this system requires both Site Supervisors and AmeriCorps members to submit to the required three-part background check. Any results returned on these checks requires a thorough investigation of the incident identified, and a determination of whether it is an offense that requires disqualification from service, a modification of the service activities and/or supervision, or if the offense is non-substantial and the individual should be allowed to serve.

The additional pieces of Goodwill's system to ensure compliance include: Members sign a Member Agreement stating the prohibited activities and the consequence of termination for breaking them; a member orientation on their first day of service; a multi-day training during their second week of service; weekly timesheets reviewed by Granite State staff; monthly progress reports submitted by the member and Site Supervisor and reviewed by Granite State staff; yearly site visits (with additional visits performed as necessary); and quarterly conference calls between Granite State staff, host sites and members. The Orientation, monthly Trainings and the Site Visits all include a refresher on AmeriCorps Prohibited Activities. The Orientation, Monthly Trainings, and the Site Visit all include opportunities where members and/or site supervisors can share concerns about non-compliant behavior or significant program issues in confidence without fear of retribution. Issues of organizational compliance are prevented by a culture of openness at Goodwill and a strong Corporate Compliance department. Additionally, Goodwill has annual audits of its federally funded programs.

C. Past Performance

Goodwill AmeriCorps has a history of meeting and exceeding performance targets in past National Direct and State Formula AmeriCorps grants. In ten years of operating multiple AmeriCorps programs per year, Goodwill AmeriCorps has met over 60 set performance measure targets and only

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missed four. Measured impacts on the community have included recruiting over 10,000 volunteers during the 2009-2010 program year, who contributed almost 100,000 hours of service. Goodwill's three AmeriCorps programs last year provided over 1400 students with at least 6 months of weekly assistance/support. Since the Granite State Education Corps has only one year of operation, there is only one year of performance listed here. During the Granite State Education Corps' first year, 700 students were enrolled in the program (ED1 goal of 650 met), 651 students completed a program operated by members or the volunteers they recruited (ED2 target of 600 met). The Granite State Education Corps had a target of 500 students having increased academic engagement (ED 27). Due to problems with the academic engagement measurement tools created by our previous Evaluation Consultants the Granite State Education Corps was not able to accurately measure how many students met ED 27. Therefore this performance measure has been marked as unmet. A Request for Proposal is being developed (fall 2013) to select a new Evaluation Consultant. With the use of the new Check & Connect program, data will be collected in a more accurate and proven method. NOTE: The Granite State Education Corps originally selected ED1, ED2, ED5, ED6, and ED7 but requested modification to ED1, ED2, and ED27 as these measures align better with the goals of the Granite State program. It appears that the amendment was made to the proper grant and grant year, yet e-grants did not reflect this change in the Annual Progress Report.

In the past three years of operation Goodwill AmeriCorps programs have had no compliance issues/areas of significant weakness or risk identified. As reviewed in Compliance and Accountability and Continuous Improvement sections Goodwill regularly evaluates/ improves systems.

Enrollment for the Granite State Education Corps during the 2012-2013 grant year was 102%. Retention is 92% as of 12/1/2013 (according to e-grants). To reduce this 8% loss of AmeriCorps members, Goodwill staff are implementing additional support systems, including the creation of Consultancy Groups. Consultancy Groups are small groups of members who meet throughout the term to offer each other advice and support and to collaborate and problem solve together. Additionally, the 2013-2014 Granite State Education Corps calendar has scheduled more frequent member development days to offer consistent contact. The vast majority of members who were exited early without an education award are Education Award Only members. To increase Education Award Only retention, AmeriCorps staff is focusing on site supervisor training and host site selection as well as extending additional invitations to trainings and other team building events.

Improvements to the on-boarding process have been made and now include more in-person interactions with staff and members. Additionally, measures have been added to increase member

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engagement (and ultimately member retention). Goodwill staff is always looking to implement new initiatives which will solidify the Corps of members while also strengthening impact in the community. Recent implementations include Consultancy Groups for peer networking and problem solving and Lunch and Learn Sessions for peer learning.

D. Continuous Improvement

Goodwill's AmeriCorps programs have multiple opportunities for feedback in order to ensure continuous improvement, including: monthly reports, mid and end term evaluations, evaluations by an external evaluator, program assessment and strategic planning from stakeholders within an Advisory Council, and an annual internal review of the program systems. All of these request honest feedback by non-Goodwill staff, where the results are used to make program improvements.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. Cost Effectiveness

As proposed, the Granite State Education Corps program will be extremely cost-effective. Since the Granite State Education Corps is targeting students and communities with the least financial resources, match dollars are much harder to come by. Yet even in these circumstances, the Granite State Education Corps is proposing to maintain its' per member cost of \$12,660/MSY. With more than forty years of collective experience operating AmeriCorps programs, the staff has developed time tested systems for operating extremely efficient programs. For example, Goodwill AmeriCorps staff created a custom web-based management system that greatly reduces the amount of staff time required to manage member timesheets, in-kind contributions, and member enrollment and exit paperwork. In addition, Goodwill programs are cost-effective through collaborations with colleagues in the other AmeriCorps programs that provide low-cost training and professional development.

The Granite State Education Corps has adopted the Check & Connect Model after closely reviewing the What Works Clearinghouse and other sources which improve educational outcomes. Only two types of models had strong evidence that they provide a significant improvement on students: 1) creating "academies" for struggling students and 2) mentoring programs. The mentoring models are much more cost effective and had an equally significant impact on student outcomes and equally strong evidence and research behind the models. Check & Connect was chosen as a model because it had been tested more broadly in rural and urban schools.

Check & Connect designates three implementation models, highlighting the utilization of AmeriCorps Members and community volunteer mentors as the most cost effective model. Check &

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Connect services utilizing full-time dedicated mentors are comparably very expensive. Dedicated AmeriCorps members will both be cost effective and focus on promoting sustainability of the program through incorporation of volunteer mentors, transitioning to a free or low-cost program model.

B. Budget Adequacy

The budget accurately identifies the expenses required to operate the Granite State Education Corps Program. Creation of the budget has been shaped by a decade of AmeriCorps program operations at Goodwill, and staff leadership with AmeriCorps program operation since 1994. This historical perspective, combined with a full service professional finance department, gives us confidence in building a realistic budget plan.

As stated above, Goodwill's many years of experience gives staff a keen understanding of what it takes to operate Granite State Education Corps effectively. Nonetheless, staff members have not taken the design of the Granite State Education Corps program lightly, and preparation of the program design involved many discussions among staff, leadership, and partners. These discussions led to the current proposed program design and budget. The staffing, training, monitoring, member support plans, and budget are thoroughly thought out, and based on prior years' experience to meet desired program outcomes, combined with the problems faced by residents of NH.

To date, all cash and in-kind resources needed to operate the program have been committed. This is in the form of conditional commitments from partners to provide a percentage of the cash and in-kind resources needed to operate the program once the final Grant Award has been made by CNCS. Goodwill has utilized this method for 10 years with continued success. Cash match of \$165,270 and in-kind match of \$186,480 has been committed by the following host sites, therefore no additional resource commitments are necessary: Boys & Girls Club of Manchester, Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua, Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley, Gilbert H. Hood Middle School/Derry Cooperative District, Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, Keene State College, SAU 29 Keene School District, Lin-Wood Public Schools, Monadnock Regional School District, McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Media Power Youth, Milton Elementary School/SAU 64, New England College, New Hampshire Technical Institute, Next Charter School, Nashua Police Athletic League, Pace Career Academy, New Heights, Rochester School District, Rochester Youth Safe Haven, Seymour Osman Community Center, Somersworth Youth Connection, ACCESS Winchester, and the YMCA of Manchester. These host site commitments exceed the necessary allotments to secure match, a practice used to ensure 100% enrollment within the program, therefore, this list of partners may change.

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Evaluation Summary or Plan

The Granite State Education Corps is closely modeled after the Great Strides Rural Education Corps, a tri-state Goodwill AmeriCorps program that aims to increase student engagement in rural areas. An evaluation report after year two of the Great Strides Rural Education Corps is attached for reference. A final evaluation will be conducted in year three which will reflect the impact evaluation model. The initial Granite State Education Corps Evaluation Plan follows:

I. Introduction

a. Program Background and Problem Definition

Granite State Education Corps' purpose is to help schools and nonprofits positively impact academic achievement and school completion for students with the highest risk factors. Members will do this, with support from Host Sites and Goodwill Program Staff, by developing systems and processes that will allow organizations to leverage community volunteers and increase their capacity to support students through targeted, data-driven interventions.

In the 2014-2015 school year, Granite State will adopt a new, comprehensive intervention model called Check & Connect, a research-based intervention for academically disengaged K-12 students. The core of Check & Connect is a trusting relationship between the student and a mentor. More details about Granite State Education Corps and the problem we are addressing in New Hampshire can be found in Sections 2. A and B of this proposal.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) (2011), an estimated 1.3 million American high school students drop out every year. As described in Sections 2 A and B of this proposal, the Granite State AmeriCorps program will address this problem in our own backyard, by working with NH schools and nonprofits who are serving these students with the greatest risk of never completing or succeeding in school.

We recognize it is critical to address not only high school students in immediate danger of leaving school, but possibly of greater importance, to begin to reverse the impacts already affecting students in lower grades. Research is discovering that dropouts arise from an accumulation of various risk factors throughout children's schooling that peak once in high school. It is increasingly evident that school dropout prevention must begin as early as possible. Some researchers have identified early predictors of dropout in children before they are enrolled in kindergarten (Hammond, Linton, Smink & Drew, 2007) (APA 2012). As children progress through the sixth and eighth grades, poor academic performance in math and English, low reading scores, absenteeism, and disengagement from school become very reliable predictors of whether they will later drop out of high school (Kennelly & Monrad,

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2007). There is no single prominent risk factor predicting dropout. Rather, there are numerous risk factors that in combination with each other raise the probability of youth leaving high school early (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002).

b. Overview of Prior Research

Check & Connect is designed as a comprehensive approach to student engagement at all grade levels, and is in fact the only program found by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) of the Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education to show positive effects on staying in school (WWC, 2006).

Through rigorous research conducted by the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI) and professionals in Minneapolis Public Schools, Check & Connect has been found to lead to increased credit accrual, persistence rates, graduation rates, and perceived parental participation in school; and reduced absences, tardiness, dropout rates, and behavior referrals for students with and without disabilities (Lehr et al., 2004; Sinclair et al., 1998; Sinclair et al., 2005). Additional research is described in great detail in Section 2B of this proposal.

II. Program Theory, Logic Model and Outcomes of Interest

Once trained, Mentors (either Members or community volunteers) will begin to build positive, trusting relationships with students, families, and schools. Using age-appropriate Monitoring Forms, and Student Engagement Instrument, Mentors will systematically monitor or "Check" alterable predictors of school success/completion (attendance, academic performance, and behavior). Using this data, Mentors will "Connect" students to individualized, timely, data-driven interventions. As an overarching intervention, Mentors regularly problem-solve with students (and as needed with parents, teachers, etc.) using a cognitive-behavioral model as outlined in the Check & Connect model.

The results of these activities, by Members and community volunteers, will be evident on three levels -- Short-Term, Medium-Term, and Long-Term. It is expected that in the first two years of implementation, we will see results in the first two levels, with indicators of change on the third level present.

Overarching results in these levels will include 1) Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and opinions specifically related to school, learning, the student themselves, and their future; 2) Changes in behavior or action resulting from the student's new knowledge, skill, attitude and opinion; and 3) Meaningful changes in condition or status in life. We have created lists of specific changes we predict

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in each of the above categories but don't have space to list them here.

III. Research Questions to be Addressed in the Study

Although the external evaluator will conduct the final Study Design, we have begun to outline the direction of our inquiry. At its core, our Study will explore the questions:

- Does Check & Connect, as implemented by Granite State Education Corps, positively impact indicators of student engagement?
- Does the intervention show potentially positive effects on long-term academic achievement for disengaged students?

IV. Study Components

Due to both the implementation of a new mentoring and intervention model (Check & Connect), and clarification of the Corporation for National and Community Service Evaluation regulations, AmeriCorps staff is in the process of distributing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an Impact Evaluation by an independent evaluator. This evaluation will analyze the impact of both the Granite State Education Corps and the Great Strides Rural Education Corps, which will both implement the Check & Connect mentoring model, but in different geographic regions and pockets of student need.

The evaluation model will include two areas of analysis: 1) Analysis of Predictors of School Completion; and 2) Change in Student Attitude.

1. The analysis of Predictors of School Completion will include a compilation and statistical analysis of attendance, academic performance, behavior referrals, and tardiness. This data will be pulled from student monitoring forms completed on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, depending on the student's grade level. The data will be compared to a similar at-risk population, either at another school that does not have the support of the AmeriCorps program and other similar mentoring supports, or by comparing student data prior to the AmeriCorps program being present.

2. Change in Student Attitude will be measured utilizing a Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) developed by Check & Connect. This survey will measure a student's attitude towards school and overall academic engagement. This survey may be given to smaller groups of students where greater depth of research is sought out.

AmeriCorps members will have the primary responsibility of collecting data through both the Check & Connect Monitoring Form and the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) Survey.

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Additional school records will be sought through Site Supervisors and partners. AmeriCorps program staff will provide oversight of the evaluation process in close conjunction with an independent evaluator. The first year of the grant will concentrate on data collection and testing tools used to gather evaluation data. The second year of the grant will focus on data gathering and initial compilation of data. The third year of the grant will include compilation of all data and an in depth comparison analysis to complete the impact assessment of the program. Final impact analysis will be completed by the independent evaluator.

V. Evaluator Qualifications

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for an evaluator will outline in detail the necessary qualifications for the evaluator. These will include experience in evaluation, including statistical analysis. The evaluator will have experience working with nonprofit programming and will be preferred to have experience in educational studies. The evaluator will provide examples of previous research studies that have been completed. The evaluator will also be independent of the program, without conflict of interest.

VI. Reporting Results, Timeline

Evaluation results will be utilized for program validation, continuous improvement, and program impact reporting. Evaluation planning will occur before and within the first few months of the new grant year. AmeriCorps staff will also be fully trained in the Check & Connect model, including research behind the model, in the spring of 2014. Training for members in program implementation and data collection will occur in the first few months of the grant. The first year of the program will be devoted to tool development and modification, data collection, and finalization of the evaluation plan. Year two will concentrate on data collection and initial analysis. Year three will focus on in-depth analysis and comparison with control group data. The final report will be compiled in year three.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

MEMORANDUM: Clarification Response

To: Gretchen Berger-Wabuti, Executive Director Volunteer NH!

CC: Pam Hall, Chair Volunteer NH!

From: Steve Niles, Granite State Education Corps

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Date: April, 9 2014

Subject: Clarification Response RE: Application # 14AC156198 --AmeriCorps State Competitive Grant FY 2014-15

Notes: GRANITE STATE EDUCATION CORPS (14AC156198) This application is under consideration for a grant in the amount of \$343,213.00, 27.11 MSY, Member Service Years (MSYs), 43 slots, and a cost per MSY of \$12,660.01.

Granite State Education Corps 14AC156198

Your application is under consideration for a grant in the amount of \$343,213.00, 27.11 MSY, Member Service Years (MSYs), 43 slots, and a cost per MSY of \$12,660.01.

a. Budget clarification items. Please make the following changes directly in the application budget in eGrants:

RESPONSE: All budget changes addressing the questions below have been made directly in the application budget in eGrants.

i. Section 1-A: Personnel --

a. Please provide a justification for each staff member supported by this grant: these positions were not described in the application narrative.

b. Personnel.

ii. Section 1-C: Staff Travel -- travel to sites:

a. Please provide more detail on the costs in this line item. The number of site visits, the average number of miles etc... Please separate the monitoring visits mileage from the training mileage.

iii. Section I C Member Travel-Please include the number of meetings included in the member travel reimbursement.

iv. Section 1-F: Contractual & Consultant Services: please move Host Site Supervisors to Section 1-A: Personnel Expenses.

v. Section I - G Staff training- Provide more detail on this expense and separate the consultant /trainer expense from the other associated expenses

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vi. Section I-G Member Training Section

a. On-going member training- Please provide more details such as --length of training/orientation, consultant/trainer fees and rates, and other associated expenses included in this line item.

b. Member Service Events- Please provide more details on the expenses include in this line item such as the number of events and Service Days. Food is only allowable with the dissemination of information/knowledge where length or timing necessitates the serving of food.

vii. I-I Other Program Operating Costs- Start of year training: Please provide more details such as --length of training/orientation, consultant/trainer fees and rates, and other associated expenses included in this line item.

a. Member Office Space-Please provide more details on this expense. Please breakout the office space from the other services provided by the sites.

viii. Section II-A: Member Living Allowances - please review and account for all members serving in a less than full time position. The current budget only accounts of 21 members (3 @ 675 hours; 3 at 450 hours; 15 at 300 hours all without allowance).

RESPONSE: Goodwill AmeriCorps staff has reviewed the numbers as requested. The number of members listed in all sections of the narrative match the numbers listed in the budget.

b. Please respond to the following items in the clarification summary field of the narrative:

1. Budget Clarification

a. The CCR Registration is scheduled to expire 11/19/2014. Please remember the registration must be current and active to receive an award form CNCS.

RESPONSE: Goodwill AmeriCorps is aware that the CCR Registration is scheduled to expire 11/19/2014 and will renew it when it is time to do so.

b. The applicant does not describe in the application narrative the roles of the 3 staff members supported in the budget.

RESPONSE:

Program Manager (45%): Oversees operation and performance of the Granite State Education Corps.

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Responsible for monthly budget management, site visits, site and member disciplinary actions, member file audit, partnership development with potential new sites, creation of data tracking systems, and performance measurement and evaluation. Reports to VolunteerNH and Senior Director of Workforce Solutions at Goodwill.

Program Representative (100%): Provides regular communication with sites and members, organizes member trainings, creates and manages member files, recruits members, collects performance measure tracking data. Reports to Granite State AmeriCorps Program Manager.

Senior Director of Workforce Solutions (5%): Provides monthly financial management oversight, vision and planning functions for Goodwill's AmeriCorps programs, and communication to Goodwill's Leadership and Board.

2. Programmatic clarification:

a. Please further clarify the roles for less than full time members. From what is presented in the application narrative it appears these education award only positions will be high-risk high school students. Will these students also be receiving mentoring services by the full time members? Please clarify.

RESPONSE:

Granite State Education Award Only members will serve students throughout New Hampshire at in-school, after-school, and out-of-school programs. In some instances, Education Award Only members will supplement the services of full-time stipended members. However, in many cases, the Education Award Only member will be placed in organizations or schools that do not have the capacity to host a full-time stipended member. The Education Award Only member will work with students (including high risk high school students) to raise the educational attainment and academic engagement of students through the implementation and expansion of mentoring programs, academic support and service learning. It is anticipated that the Education Award Only members will implement the Check & Connect Model and serve as mentors themselves or support a mentoring program for students by engaging community volunteers.

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Examples of possible Education Award Only placements include:

- * College students serving as mentors to struggling students in local schools
- * High school student serving in a leadership position within their community
- * Community volunteer supporting at-risk students through mentoring, service learning, enrichment, and academic support activities

A small percentage of Education Award Only positions will be instances where an at-risk high school student serves in a leadership role, completing hours of service through service learning projects, mentoring, and community outreach. In these instances, the Education Award Only member would not be receiving mentoring services from the Stipended AmeriCorps member who is providing services to the neediest students who are unable to commit to a 300+ hour term of service. Although these Education Award Only members are categorized as at-risk students because of their circumstances, they are higher performing students than the students being mentored by the stipended AmeriCorps members.

b. Grant Start Date and Member Enrollment Period: While we will prioritize early submitted start dates in award processing, the earliest possible start date we can consider is 06/01/2014. It is not permitted for an applicant to re-submit with an earlier start date than previously submitted. Please review your desired grant award start date and member enrollment period start date in the Applicant Info section of your application. Please make any corrections necessary. In the Clarification narrative field, please enter a statement confirming the desired grant award start and member enrollment period start.

RESPONSE: As stated in the original proposal, the grant award dates are 8/15/14 to 8/14/17. The enrollment period would begin on 8/15/14.

c. Performance Measures: Please make the following changes in the Performance Measures screens in eGrants:

a. Please revise performance measures by opting for either of these two options:

a. Create an aligned measure with ED2 & ED5 and another measure with ED2, ED4A and ED5 OR:

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b.Delete ED4A and leave the remaining PM with ED2 and ED5 (or delete ED2 and leave ED4A & ED5).

RESPONSE: The suggested change has been made in E-Grants. The Granite State Education Corps' mission is to increase the academic engagement of struggling students, from needy schools. Member activities (including utilizing the Check and Connect mentoring model) are research proven to increase Academic Engagement. If additional changes need to be made Goodwill AmeriCorps staff will do so.

e. Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification:

1.What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is your program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community?

RESPONSE: The Granite State Education Corps will not be reserving a percentage of slots for members with disabilities. As has been done in the past, Goodwill AmeriCorps staff will actively recruit within the disability community and promote positions in an inclusive framework.

2.In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies.) In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If you would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs your program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to your budget.

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RESPONSE: Goodwill AmeriCorps is not requesting additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

f. MSY with no program funds attached Clarification:

Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs. These additional no-cost MSYs are national service positions in which no grant funds will be awarded. In other words, grantees could receive additional AmeriCorps positions but no additional grant funds. Programs will be responsible for using their own or other resources to pay program costs, member support costs and other operating expenses. Keep in mind that full-time AmeriCorps program costs include expenditures for the AmeriCorps living allowance, health care and criminal history checks. Programs are not required to pay living allowances or cover health care for less-than-full-time members.

If you would like to request No-Cost MSYs, please edit your budget as appropriate (for example you may need to revise line items for member gear or criminal history checks). Please ensure your performance measures align with these additional MSYs. Lastly, you must include a response to each item below in the Clarification narrative field:

RESPONSE: Goodwill AmeriCorps is not requesting additional No-Cost MSYs.

- 1.The number and type of slots requested. If the addition of these supplemental slots to the current approved grant exceeds the original FY13 request, please provide your proposed use of these additional slots.
- 2.A description of resources that will be provided to adequately support the additional members and how they are sufficient to; support the member support costs, management, oversight, program operations, and the program activities.
- 3.Source(s) of non-CNCS funds. Provide a brief description of the amount, classification (cash or in-kind), source(s) (State/Local, Federal, Private) for all resources secured to manage, monitor, and support these additional members.
- 4.The organization's capability and capacity to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the additional members.

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g. Healthcare Clarification Items for all applicants:

1. Please provide the name of the health insurance provider you are proposing to use to insure your AmeriCorps members.

RESPONSE: Goodwill AmeriCorps is proposing to provide members with a maximum allotted reimbursement to cover insurance premiums through the Health Insurance Marketplace. For individuals who are unable to enroll in the Marketplace at the start of their term of service due to inability to meet qualifying life events or starting their term of service during open enrollment periods, Goodwill AmeriCorps will enroll members under Summit America, informing the individual that this plan does not meet federal insurance requirements and staff will work with them to enroll in the Health Insurance Marketplace at time of open enrollment.

2. How did you select the provider? (for example, direct marketing, through the Health Insurance Marketplace or other means)

RESPONSE: Goodwill AmeriCorps staff participated in numerous conversations with Summit America about current insurance coverage and the impact of the Health Care Law changes. In addition, extensive conversations and training has been provided by Consumers for Affordable Health Care in conjunction with the Maine Commission for Community Service to all Maine AmeriCorps staff to inform staff of options and implications regarding insuring members. Staff have had in depth discussions around internal policy needs, implications to recruitment, member training, and member oversight, and necessary tools and collaborations necessary to move to the Health Care Exchange option.

3. Does your proposed budget for member healthcare provide for Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) coverage, as defined by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), for your full-time members?

RESPONSE: Members who are able to successfully enroll in the Health Care Exchange will be provided Minimum Essential Coverage. Members who do not qualify to enroll in the Health Care Exchange due to not having a qualifying life event (moving, change in job, etc) and must enroll in Summit America to meet AmeriCorps requirements, will not meet Minimum Essential Coverage as

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defined by the Affordable Care Act. Members who have additional income and don't fall into a low cost bracket for the Health Care Exchange may not be able to be fully reimbursed for insurance costs. Goodwill AmeriCorps has proposed stating in policy that a maximum reimbursement will be made and members can purchase a plan fitting to their circumstances. This plan will be within the maximum allowable cost for most members, but will not be high enough for individuals with special circumstances (additional income).

4.If not, what adjustment to your budget is necessary in order for you to provide Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC)?

RESPONSE: Any necessary adjustment is dependent on the circumstances of individual members who are recruited for the program. Health Exchange costs increase significantly once an individual is outside of the income specifications to receive tax credits, cost sharing subsidies, and exemptions.

5.If you do not have enough information to answer question (4), please explain why not and/or what prevented you from being able to obtain the necessary information.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics