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Executive Summary

Across VT, the 26 VT Youth Development Corps AmeriCorps members will provide services to veteran/military families and implement initiatives to prevent childhood obesity. In the 1st year they will--connect military families to targeted services and community programs; foster skills, knowledge, and healthy habits about nutrition and physical activity in hundreds of youth; build organizational capacity to meet these needs; and leverage 500 volunteers to support veteran/military families, lead evidence-based nutrition and physical activity programs, tutor, mentor, provide community input, and leverage funds and in-kind resources. Our program addresses 2 CNCS focus areas: Veterans and Healthy Futures. The CNCS investment of \$325,000 will be matched with \$364,768, \$102,784 in public funding and \$261,984 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

EXTENT & SEVERITY OF NEED: The VT Youth Development Corps addresses 2 severe, statewide needs: expanding services to military families and reducing childhood obesity. **VETERAN/MILITARY FAMILIES (TIER 1):** Troop deployment and reintegration have serious impacts on military families statewide. In December 2009, the VT National Guard deployed 1500 troops-the largest since WWII. This directly affected 920 of the 2964 military children across VT (VT Nat'l Guard, 2010). Most of the deployed troops have returned and are reintegrating. Smaller deployments continue; in April 2014, VT Guard will send troops out of state for a 6-week intensive live-ammunition training to prepare for future deployments. VT has no military bases, thus magnifying the challenges for families. Civilian communities often do not understand the stresses of deployment and reintegration.

The 2010 Dept. of Defense "Report on the Impact of Deployment of Members of the Armed Forces on Their Dependent Children," suggests that children of deployed troops bear a heavy burden; more than half of the spouses of deployed troops reported increased fear, anxiety, and behavioral problems in their children. Often Guard families are unaware of supports and resources available to them (Nat'l Leadership Summit on Military Families, Booth et al, 2009).

Guard families also face unique challenges with reintegration, as deployed parents return. Living among civilians, these families lack the community structure of a base that provides a net of reintegration support and resources. When a parent deploys, family responsibilities shift and a "new normal" family structure develops; when the deployed parent returns, the new structure is disrupted, and both youth and adults can have trouble readjusting. Living away from the supports of a base creates a gap in care and hinders readjustment (Strengthening the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration

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Program, Jackson, 2009). The 2012 Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Report to Congress shows that rural National Guard families don't have ready access to the same support network as the active duty force. Staff working with VT Guard families confirm the findings above: youth feel stressed and isolated and families are unaware of services. VT communities lack traditional infrastructure to address the needs of military families, and with youth scattered across the state without peers in the same situation, feelings of isolation emerge. To help children of deployed/reintegrated troops cope, it is imperative that local programs reach out to these youth and ensure that they participate in activities, get support, and build leadership and civic engagement skills.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY: In VT more than 1 in 4 youth in grades 9-12 (25.8%) are overweight or obese (Center for Disease Control, Overweight & Obesity Study, 2012). The causes of obesity are complex and the consequences are serious for children's physical, social, and emotional health (Childhood Obesity, Mayo Clinic, 2012). The behavioral and social causes and consequences of childhood obesity in VT shapes the second focus of this application. VT's rural makeup (total pop. is 626,011; 75% of towns have under 3000 residents), the lack of public transportation, and shrinking town and school budgets mean that public recreation and sports programs are unavailable to many youth. When paring down budgets, sports and gym time are often first on the chopping block. The 2011 VT Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Youth Survey) shows that 62% don't attend daily PE classes; and 76% get less than the 1 hour of daily physical activity recommended by the US Dept. of Health & Human Services (2008). In our survey of AmeriCorps host sites (Site Survey), 94% said obesity is an issue affecting youth they serve. The VT childhood obesity rate increased 42% in 7 years (Rudd Center at Yale, 2010). Mayo Clinic research shows most childhood obesity results from eating too much and exercising too little, low-income children are at greater risk, and childhood obesity affects physical and mental wellbeing (diabetes, asthma, depression). Regular physical activity reduces obesity, depression, and anxiety, improves physical development, and seems to improve academic performance (Center for Disease Control, Adolescent & School Health, 2013), yet VT reports low levels of physical activity behaviors among high school students (Att'n'y General's VT Healthy Weight Initiative, 2010).

In our 2013 Site Survey, organizations hosting AmeriCorps members reported that poverty (80%) and lack of healthy food (67%) are significant community problems. All our sites serve low-income youth and at most sites 75-100% are impoverished. The Youth Survey shows that 75% of youth don't eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables (8% more than in 1999) and only 44% eat breakfast daily. One in 5 VT children experiences hunger or food hardship, and data for our primary target areas show eligibility for food stamps increasing (Hunger Free VT, hungerfreevt.org, 2013). The

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rate of free and reduced lunch in our primary target areas is at 24-74% (VT Agency of Ed, 2012). It is increasingly hard for poor families to get healthy food, and studies show that youth hunger increases health risks and decreases academic performance (Reading, Writing & Hungry, Murphy et al, 2008). "A hungry or poorly-nourished student cannot do his or her best work in school" (VT Agency of Human Services VT Well-being, 2006). Poverty can also have a paradoxical consequence of both hunger and obesity, and studies have shown a correlation between obesity and hunger in youth 12-19 years old (Relationship Between Hunger & Overweight or Obesity, Food Research & Action Center, 2013).

We selected the VT youth populations directly affected by these serious issues--limited resources for military families and the causes and consequences of obesity--for the following reasons. Military youth can face increased anxiety and fear during deployment and reintegration and are often disconnected from resources; they are an underserved population. Long-term health and psychological consequences of obesity present grave danger for VT youth; most youth served by us are rural and economically disadvantaged. By addressing these issues, we will increase services to military families, improve the lives of all youth, especially those who are or at risk of obesity, and result in healthier, more resilient communities.

AMERICORPS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS:

LOGIC MODEL: A completed Logic Model was sent to americorpsgrants@cnc.gov.

INTERVENTIONS ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS: Our AmeriCorps members are highly effective in solving identified community needs. Through our Theory of Change model, member-led initiatives enhance networks supporting veteran/military families and more families receive services through community organizations; member service engages youth in nutrition and physical activity programs and youth gain knowledge and skills and incorporate good habits into daily life, reducing obesity; and members recruit and manage volunteers and procure cash and in-kind resources (in compliance with all AmeriCorps regulations) to build program capacity. Our assumptions are that military families need and will use services; youth engaged in physical activity and nutrition education will make lasting lifestyle changes that reduce obesity; and organizations will benefit from capacity building. Our interventions, described in the Logic Model, connect military families to programs, develop healthy activities and gardening initiatives, and implement volunteer management strategies. These interventions result in resilient youth who are able to transition successfully into adulthood. We show impact through empirical data (sign-in sheets, activity reports, databases, surveys) and beneficiaries' stories. Our theory of change model moves communities toward real solutions.

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AMERICORPS EFFECTIVENESS: The 26 members serve at least 4000 individual youth annually through unique AmeriCorps activities. Resources are shrinking, and rural nonprofits are particularly hard hit. Our sites understand community needs, but they have neither the staff nor the resources to spearhead new programs that require singular focus, time, and expertise. AmeriCorps members support military youth and target obesity; they get focused training & support and implement strategies addressing these unmet needs. Sites report that members are highly effective and that these programs would not exist without AmeriCorps. The site supervisor at Operation: Military Kids (OMK) stated, "(T)he VYDC AmeriCorps members who have served with OMK, have designed and offered over 30 programs to children and youth from military families each year. . . . If our organization did not have VYDC AmeriCorps members, then we would not be able to offer such opportunities as our vacation camps, babysitter trainings, or our technology-based afterschool program. Without VYDC AmeriCorps members, we would reach significantly fewer children and youth from military families, and would be geographically limited in our programming."

TRAINING TOPICS & TIMELINE: Consultants, staff, sites, and members contribute to our comprehensive training plan. We ensure that members--are prepared and supported; aware of and adhere to rules and prohibited activities; and know that their service has a measurable, sustainable, and positive community impact. Members meet monthly for 2-day trainings (skill-building, professional development, and team meetings) where they discuss duties and prohibited activities and reflect on service. Members learn about community assessment, how to plan and implement evidence-based programs, measure change, procure resources, recruit and manage volunteers, and promote national service. We secure accessible, inexpensive facilities and experienced trainers (many teach at colleges) for reduced fees. Our staff promotes team-building and creates a culture of support.

Our 12-month plan starts in September: 1] 3-day Orientation: Rules & Restrictions; Activities & Outcomes; Ethic of Service; Engaging Military Families; Mandated Reporting; Let's Move & CANFIT (Eat Healthy; Get Active); Age-appropriate Activities; Community Assessment. Supervisors come 1 day to review & discuss member activities, program outcome, and adhering to rules. 2] Myers Briggs (work style); Reporting on Program Outcomes; Volunteer Management; Reintegration (military families). 3] Youth Development; Experiential Learning; Youth Counseling. 4] Grant Writing & Resource Development. 5] Conflict Resolution. 6] Rural Poverty; Inclusion Strategies. 7] Professional Networking; Community Gardens; Summer Slide. 8] Civic Reflection; Program Impact. 9] Leaving a Legacy & Promoting Sustainability. 10] Job Search Skills. 11] End-Of-Service. 12] Lifelong Civic Engagement. Sites provide other training. SerVermont provides relevant training for all members,

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including Red Cross' Disaster Management (staffing emergency shelters). Our plan prepares members for service, reinforces rule compliance, provides career development, supports disaster relief efforts, builds affinity with AmeriCorps, and encourages lifelong civic participation.

RULES & PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES: We ensure members and volunteers are aware of and adhere to all rules regarding prohibited activities. **MEMBERS:** Before they start, we send written information and discuss all requirements and rules. We train supervisors to monitor member activities. Members sign an Agreement that they understand and agree to adhere to all rules. At orientation, we cover the rules many times. We provide a written guide, monitor timesheets, check-in regularly, conduct site visits, and meet monthly to ensure that members are complying and adhering to rules.

VOLUNTEERS: We train members in managing volunteers, including how to ensure rule compliance. Members train and monitor about adhering to the rules. Supervisors monitor members' management of volunteers. Program staff ensure that members and volunteers adhere to rules via regular check-in, quarterly progress reports, and site visits. Through education, supportive monitoring, and regular oversight we ensure that members and volunteers understand and adhere to rules.

MEMBER SUPERVISION PLAN: Members receive hands on, quality supervision providing adequate support & guidance to maximize the impact of their service on themselves and their community. We train & support direct supervisors who provide 1-hour weekly, focused supervision and are available daily for additional support. They keep members focused on their unique AmeriCorps role, ensure rule compliance, review timesheets, and evaluate members. Sites select supervisors, often existing staff, and submit resumes and job descriptions for our approval; we conduct an in-depth supervisor orientation. Annually supervisors sign Site Agreements, outlining all rules and expectations. We use a comprehensive oversight process that includes ongoing technical assistance and regular communication cultivating a culture in which sites seek clarification before taking action. To foster support, we regularly communicate with sites and host 3 meetings a year to discuss issues and get feedback. Members discuss supervision at monthly meetings and they submit site evaluations twice a year. We conduct site monitoring and compliance visits, using a standard form; sites get feedback and a plan for addressing issues, if needed. These activities keep the members' service experience focused and ensure that our sites understand and comply with all rules.

Program staff provide continuous support to members and supervisors. In addition to the monthly training and meetings, staff review weekly timesheets, answer questions, provide guidance on how to implement and evaluate effective programs, visit sites, and review and give feedback on all assignments and reports.

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Members also receive peer support through monthly meetings, email, social media, and participating at each other's events. Members socialize outside of service and volunteer together at community events and initiatives such as tutoring, mentoring, and fundraising events. On-site supervision, program staff support, and peer encouragement result in members being adequately prepared for service.

AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: We believe in the power of national service and always promote AmeriCorps. We educate members & supervisors about the importance of recognizing AmeriCorps impacts; both sign agreements to promote AmeriCorps. We give members ample gear (each service day they proudly wear the logo & identify themselves as members in the community); AmeriCorps signs (for their sites); and electronic logos (to use on all documents & PR materials). Supervisors ensure that members wear the logo daily & put it on all documents. We help members develop an AmeriCorps introduction & give them materials to prepare them to speak in the community.

Organizational Capability

BACKGROUND & STAFFING: Our sponsor, the Washington County Youth Service Bureau (Bureau) has the experience, staffing, & management structure to plan and implement this program. The mission of the Bureau, a nonprofit founded in 1974, is to provide a wide range of programs that empower and enrich the lives of youth and families in Washington County, and provide leadership and support to youth programs across VT. The management structure starts with a community Board of Directors, which sets the budget, passes policy, and has ultimate responsibility. The Board oversees the Executive Director, who manages daily operations, supervises the Program Director, and trains members in youth development. Bureau staff help with recruitment, logistics, budget development, technical support, and financial reports. The 37 staff run programs and provide support to about 28,000 VT youth. Countywide programs include counseling, homeless & runaway services; teen centers, teen parent help; and after-jail support for ex-offenders (18-22). The Bureau runs 4 statewide programs: 2 national service programs (VISTA since 1999 and AmeriCorps State since 1997; the focus of each program has changed over time to meet community needs).

The national service staff is experienced and effective. The Director has 26 years of program management, 14 with national service; 3 others have each served 2 years as members. Five staff supporting AmeriCorps are from military families. Staff continuously seek out professional development; we carefully read all materials and attend CNCS training. We have helped new AmeriCorps programs create effective systems & processes, and CNCS asked us to help develop a national VISTA evaluation tool. In 2010, VYDC was named one of the 52 most innovative

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AmeriCorps programs. Our experience, success in exceeding performance measures, strong work ethic, and understanding of both community & member needs ensures that we run effective programs that meet community needs, provide members with a valuable service experience, benefit communities, and comply with all rules.

FEDERAL FUNDS: The Bureau has significant prior experience administering AmeriCorps grants & other federal funds. In its 39 years, the Bureau has successfully managed millions in private foundation, state, local, & federal funds. The Bureau consistently receives excellent marks on annual independent audits and meets or exceeds program outcomes. VYDC raises considerably more match than required (FY13: matched at 54.9% of the budget; FY12: matched at 58%; and FY11: matched at 72%); consistently receives excellent compliance reviews from SerVermont (state commission); and regularly exceeds all performance measures. The 30 member VISTA program raises cost-share for 20% of its members, always exceeds its performance milestones, and receives excellent CNCS compliance reviews (the last review cited 5 best practices). The Bureau is proud of its exemplary record managing all types of funds, including those from CNCS.

SUSTAINABILITY: We work with sites to build high-quality programming and responsible fiscal practices ensuring a positive impact sustainable after federal support. We have diversified funding sources, including increasing site contributions and seeking local, state, and private resources. Procuring private funds in rural VT can be difficult, yet we continue to be successful in securing more non-CNCS cash and in-kind support. In small towns, collaboration is essential to build community investment and provide program sustainability once federal money is gone. Most of our sites are nonprofits governed by community boards who actively build relationships with other community members, ensuring that youth needs are prioritized and addressed. Community organizations provide volunteers and program resources; youth and adults serve on advisory boards; businesses donate; and schools and towns provide space and funding.

Our sites rely on the members' efforts to forge relationships with local businesses to increase support, and members strategically build volunteer resources and foster meaningful opportunities for citizens to contribute. Members partner with local faith groups and community organizations, individuals, businesses, schools, town departments, libraries, service agencies, and others. Volunteers run programs, tutor and mentor youth, and cook nutritious meals. Members develop databases and management systems and train staff and volunteers how to use them. Community support is key to maintaining the positive impact initiated by members. With more non-federal cash to pay overhead, the in-kind support from businesses, and ongoing dedication of volunteers, sustainability is assured.

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We employ a complex strategy to maximize non-federal resources and move toward sustainability. Our sites pay 50% of member living allowance; 100% of FICA, workers' comp, health care, and travel. They supply significant in-kind match (supervision, space, equipment). We pursue varied strategies to increase and diversify funding, as do our sites. Below each category shows the efforts of both the Bureau and sites. We get funds from 20 towns in our county; 33% of sites get town funding. Schools provide financial and in-kind help to us and many sites. We get funding from 5 foundations; 73% of sites get foundation grants. We get state funding, as do 33% of sites. We get business and individual donations for programs and events, along with 87% of sites. Among our sites, 40% use a sliding fee scale. Most sites engage youth in fundraising events (bake sales, car washes). In FY11 our Executive Director initiated a collaboration with a VT Children & Family Council for Prevention Programs that resulted in more resources & members for 4 AmeriCorps programs. We continue developing innovative partnerships that maximize the impact of AmeriCorps without increasing Corporation funding. This multifaceted sustainability approach has been highly successful in decreasing reliance on federal resources and moving toward sustainable programming.

Our partner sites are nonprofits, schools, towns, and libraries. Together with our sites, we collaborate with individuals, town select boards, schools, diversion programs, VT Agency of Human Services (Employment and Training; Corrections; SerVermont), businesses, media, faith groups, youth agencies, and other national service programs. To gauge community needs, we survey youth and sites, and we use this information for planning interventions and outcomes. Sites implement programs locally, and partner involvement ensures that programs evolve to meet complex and interrelated community needs. We encourage and support our members in building strong relationships with community stakeholders and increasing volunteer capacity. All of these efforts move their sites toward sustaining the high-quality programs for the long-term.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART: The organizational chart was submitted to americorpsgrants@cns.gov

COMMITMENT LETTERS: Fifteen letters from significant community partners documenting support and AmeriCorps impact, as well as consequences of no AmeriCorps resources, were sent to americorpsgrants@cns.gov.

AMERICORPS RULES COMPLIANCE: We use a multi-faceted, ongoing strategy to monitor and ensure strict compliance with AmeriCorps rules, regulations, & prohibited activities in the program and as service sites. The experienced Director ensures all employees understand the rules and need for strict compliance. The Director participates in monthly program director meetings and carefully reads all correspondence from CNCS. If questions arise, we contact SerVermont or CNCS immediately. We

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participate in monitoring visits from SerVermont. We have a long history of compliance. SITES: When sites apply, we send written information and discuss all rules. The detailed application asks sites to discuss fiscal and supervision capacity and how the unique AmeriCorps role will expand capacity and meet community needs. Before placing members, we ensure that sites understand and agree to comply with all rules: supervisors sign a Site Agreement, listing all rules, and attend an orientation. Sites submit member forms to us; we ensure that files are complete and kept for the required time. To support compliance, all forms and processes are designed to help sites and members stay focused on rules and outcomes. We use a standard Member Position Description and Agreement, both signed by members prior to service. The Description sets forth activities and outcomes; the Agreement details all rules. Members submit detailed weekly timesheets that are reviewed by sites and us; if questions arise, we contact members and sites immediately. Sites file quarterly financial and program reports. No federal funds are spent without proper documentation. Annually, we host 3 supervisor meetings to discuss progress and compliance; monthly we meet with members to discuss progress and requirements. We are available for questions, and we cultivate a culture where sites and members ask for clarification prior to acting. We conduct site monitoring and compliance visits, using a standard process and form: we review site policies, observe member activities, discuss supervision, answer questions, and discuss compliance. If needed, sites receive written feedback with a plan for improvement. This thorough compliance and monitoring strategy allows us to work in partnership with our sites to ensure that all programmatic and fiscal rules are followed, restrictions are obeyed, targeted impact in communities is maximized, and our program continues to receive positive monitoring reviews from our funder.

PREVENT & DETECT COMPLIANCE ISSUES: To detect issues and prevent issues from arising, we employ the strategies discussed above. We spend time with members discussing prohibited activities; we want members to know the restrictions and understand why they exist. During recruitment, we send information about and discuss AmeriCorps rules with applicants. Sites receive training and a recruitment guide and discuss rules during interviews. As sites make selections, we conduct follow-up interviews and cover all rules. Before starting service, members sign each page of a Member Agreement, listing prohibited activities. At the orientation we cover rules and restrictions multiple times and give members a written guide. We monitor members' timesheets weekly, and contact them for clarification if needed. We check-in with members regularly, and meet with them monthly. We immediately forward updates from CNCS. Our policy of education, supportive monitoring, and regular oversight ensures that rules are understood and followed and compliance maintained.

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Frequent interaction allows us to ensure compliance with all rules. We take our fiduciary duty in managing a federally funded program very seriously, and there are no compliance issues.

ACCOUNTABILITY: If risk or noncompliance was identified, we would address it immediately to ensure accountability. We would stop the activity and contact SerVermont or CNCS for guidance. If the activity was deemed a compliance issue, we would immediately draft a compliance plan, get SerVermont or CNCS approval, implement the plan, and report on progress. The plan would include steps to ensure future compliance. If we determined that a member or site willfully disregarded rules, we would take swift action to remove the member for cause or terminate our relationship with the site. We believe in accountability, and this is verified through our excellent compliance reports.

PAST PERFORMANCE: PROGRAM TARGETS: We had formula funds for the past 3 years, although our performance measures and targets were similar in FY12 and FY13, they were very different in FY11. Each year we greatly exceeded our targets and effected positive change in communities. **FY13:** Military family members: 100 get information; 75 get services. Physical Activity: 200 youth; 75% increase knowledge/skills. Nutrition: 200 youth; 75% increase knowledge/skills. Volunteers: 170; 1700 hours. Capacity Building: \$10,000 cash; \$10,000 in-kind. **FY12:** Veterans: 75 youth; 75% increase knowledge; 75% more connected to community. Physical Activity: 250 youth; 75% increase knowledge/skills. Nutrition: 350 youth; 75% increase knowledge/skills. Volunteers: 150 recruited/managed; 1500 hours. Member Development: 14 members trained. **FY11:** Volunteers: 250; 1500 hours. Member Development: 15 trained; 50% gain skills; 85% continue in community service. Youth Civic Engagement: 50 discussions; 24 service activities; 70% gain knowledge/skills; 70% increase positive feeling about community.

PROGRAM SUCCESSES: In the past 3-years, VYDC members focused on their unique assignments, carefully tracked data, and provided real success in solving problems related to lack of services for military families and childhood obesity. We provided services to 624 military youth; 95% gaining knowledge/skills; 98% feeling supported by their community. We created 173 physical activity programs serving 1696 youth; 92% gaining knowledge/skills; 92% implementing positive behavior changes. We developed 179 nutrition programs serving 1138 youth; 96% gaining knowledge/skills; 96% implementing positive behavior changes. Members recruited/managed 1850 volunteers giving 12,847 hours to organizations (the equivalent of \$231,246). Members built capacity and made organizations more effective and efficient by procuring \$344,805 in cash and in-kind donations, forging 580 community partnerships, and creating 523 public relation documents. Sites report that members have improved efficiency and effectiveness and that more youth can be served. We have

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made real and substantial progress in providing opportunities for youth to be active and learn about nutrition and the data shows that youth are starting to make healthy changes in their lives. We have also made significant inroads in providing information to military families and connecting youth to community and military-focused programs. Our successes show strong momentum in effecting positive change, and continuing AmeriCorps services is critical to ensure that we make lasting, long-term improvements in communities by significantly reducing childhood obesity and increasing services to military families.

ENROLLMENT & RETENTION: In FY11 we enrolled at 107 % with 94% retention; in FY12 we enrolled at 113% with 94% retention ; in FY13 we enrolled at 105%, with 81% retention; as our program is small, one member leaving early has a significant impact on the retention rate. Last year, the members who left early all had unique issues. To reach 100% retention in the future, we will continue with our strong supports and systems--a thorough interview process, clear service descriptions, quality daily supervision, comprehensive professional development and training, and ongoing individual support. We are proud of our continued recruitment and retention successes, which indicate a high-quality program meeting the needs of members and addressing important community issues.

SOLICITING TIMELY & REGULAR FEEDBACK: We will solicit timely and regular feedback from internal and external stakeholders to inform continuous improvement efforts. We regularly assess all aspects of our program and have a robust internal evaluation plan: members complete an initial survey of strengths and needs, they give feedback and evaluate training monthly, and they complete self, site, and program evaluations semi-annually; sites evaluate members semi-annually and the program annually, and they give feedback at quarterly meetings. Sites evaluate VYDC annually. Beneficiaries give feedback through surveys and interviews. SerVermont conducts semi-annual monitoring visits. Members create opportunities for community members to give feedback and participate through community forums and meetings. We have worked with a local college in an external evaluation, with very favorable results; we plan to conduct another external evaluation.

DATA FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: We incorporate feedback into our program and adapt to meet the needs and make improvements, while ensuring compliance with AmeriCorps rules.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

MSY: We based our budget on a \$12,500 MSY, significantly less than the maximum amount of \$13,300. **COSTS & BENEFITS:** Our budget is reasonable, cost-effective, and in alignment with our program needs and outcomes; our MSY request is \$12,500, less than both the maximum and our

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FY14 MSY. CNCS and match funds will cover all aspects of our program. Unique and evidence-based member activities, designed to provide services to military families and to reduce obesity, require broad training and support to meet needs in targeted communities. Substantial match dollars ensure that we can deploy, train, and supervise the requisite number of members resulting in positive, long-lasting community impact. The budget covers living allowances greater than the minimum, FICA, health insurance, and workers' comp; it covers AmeriCorps gear, travel, supervision, and adequate space. It covers adequate staffing (2 FTEs) to ensure focus on outcomes, compliance, effective recruitment, and member support; it covers prorated staff salaries, fringe, travel, supplies, office use, and insurance. The budget supports comprehensive training led by experts, lets members hone skills for service and future employment, promotes regular reflection and networking, and builds esprit de corps. We secure low-cost, accessible space and reduced facilitator fees. Members learn resource development best practices to build site capacity and reduce reliance on federal dollars. Volunteer management lets members increase the reach of sites and builds community support. Members secure in-kind and cash resources essential to our success. They involve the community in our program by leveraging resources and ensuring the community understands and supports our goals. Sites' substantial in-kind resources, such as high-quality supervision, foster member satisfaction and retention, cultivate employment skills, and promote a life-long commitment to civic involvement. This budget provides the foundation for member and program success, and it is sufficient to support our program activities and desired outputs and outcomes.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES: Our program is a cost effective approach for addressing community needs. In rural communities, nonprofits are stretched and without AmeriCorps resources, our sites would not have programs targeting obesity or focusing on military youth; they simply do not have the resources. Sites lack the personnel, expertise, and resources necessary to run programs and recruit and manage enough volunteers for successful implementation. We provide mission-driven, trained members who focus primarily on the two issues. Members are cost-effective: dividing last year's allowance by the average number of hours served, the hourly amount is \$6.79. VT minimum wage is \$8.60, although the comparable wage for staff working with youth is \$12 an hour (the hourly wage does not include the value of training and support, which would cost sites thousands per member). Sites say that without AmeriCorps resources many programs would cease to exist. To strengthen programs & build community support, members recruit and manage community volunteers. Volunteers cannot dedicate themselves fulltime to programs as members can, and effective volunteer programs require management, which members provide. Members also leverage cash & in-kind

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resources and create systems making organizations more efficient and effective. In the past 3 years, the time of volunteers managed by AmeriCorps would have cost sites \$231,246 if the work was paid. Members procured \$344,805 in cash & in-kind donations; promoted programs; increased number of youth served; and developed databases and other systems, all requiring significant amounts of time and money. Trying to equal the achievements of AmeriCorps members, is not cost effective through any other means.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO OPERATE PROGRAM: We pursue multifaceted strategies to obtain diverse resources for program implementation. We get funds or in-kind from 20 towns in our county; 33% of sites get town funding. Schools provide financial or in-kind help to us and many sites. We get funding from foundations; 73% of sites get foundation grants. We get state funding, as do 33% of sites. We get business & individual donations for programs, so do 87% of sites. Among sites, 40% use a sliding fee scale. Most sites engage youth in fundraising events (bake sales, car washes); some sites get revenue from advertising, businesses (thrift store), or apartment complexes; a few sites get federal grants. These funds comprise the non-CNCS match (\$364,768). To adequately support our project, we anticipate match to be \$261,984 from private sources and \$102,784 from governmental sources, primarily state and local. To date, we have obtained non-Corporation resource commitments from sites to pay 50% of the living allowance; 100% of workers' comp, FICA, health insurance, and travel. Sites also contribute operational match of at least \$7000 per fulltime member; this represents supervision, space, equipment, phone, etc. The cash and in-kind contributions will meet the match of 53%, more than is required. We always exceeded match requirements and expect that to continue. We continue developing innovative partnerships that maximize the impact of AmeriCorps without increasing Corporation funding. **BUDGET ADEQUACY:** Please see Budget Narrative.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

In the past 3 years, we conducted comprehensive internal process evaluations that included quantitative and qualitative data from beneficiaries, members, sites, & staff (reports were sent to americorpsgrants@cns.gov). Results show that beneficiaries increased knowledge & skills and made healthy behavior changes; members were very satisfied with their service experience; and sites became more effective and efficient in addressing compelling community problems. In the 2nd year of the proposed grant, we plan to work with the University of VT to conduct an external evaluation on our theory of change. **THEORY OF CHANGE: VETERAN/MILITARY FAMILIES:** 1] We create summer and vacation camps and other programs for military youth. Studies show engaging military youth in targeted programs leads to these **OUTCOMES:** increase communication skills and

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understanding of military culture, increase ability to express feelings about deployment & reintegration, and increase in confidence and resiliency. 2] We inform and help military families connect to existing community services, especially programs promoting healthy futures for youth. VT's unique military structure (high per capita participation in National Guard; no bases; Guard troops spread across a rural state without direct access to military or veteran services) results in youth feeling isolated and families without needed supports to navigate the issues arising from deployment & reintegration; OUTCOMES include more families learning about and using services, increase in community connection and support, and increase in ability to cope with deployment & reintegration. HEALTHY FUTURES: 1] We develop age-appropriate sports & recreation programs for low-income youth; studies show youth participating in programs (60 minutes, 3 days a week) produce these OUTCOMES: enhance skills, seek out activity, teach others, and decrease health risks of obesity. 2] We develop nutrition programs, including community gardens, and feed low-income youth healthy meals; studies show that youth engaging in community-based nutrition programs produce these OUTCOMES: increase knowledge, increase healthy food choice, and decrease risk of obesity. EVALUATION DESIGN: QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY: 300 beneficiaries complete surveys and interviews (designed by evaluation experts) that measure changes in skills & knowledge and behavior. We gather quantitative data (beneficiary # demographics; program types, #, duration, & dosage; AmeriCorps # & role; volunteer # & role). We gather qualitative data observations and participant stories. 26 members complete surveys (service experience, training, impact); 15 sites complete surveys (member contribution, impact on effectiveness and efficiency). All data is analyzed vis-à-vis the beneficiary outcomes stated above; member satisfaction and development outcomes; and community impact (site efficiency and effectiveness, increase in # beneficiaries, impact on behavior and health). USE OF DATA: We use interim results to tweak programs and show impact; we use final results to show impact. BUDGET: \$3,000 over 3 years.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

NA

Continuation Changes

] CCR-The CCR registration is scheduled to expire 07/09/14. Please remember the registration must

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be current and active to receive an award from CNCS.

As is our practice, the Executive Director will ensure that the CCR is renewed before the 9 July 2014 expiration of the current CCR.

2] Changes to the budget

a] Please remove the reference to VISTA in the Personnel line item descriptions.

Done in Budget Narrative

b] Section E. - Supplies-Member Uniforms-Please add with AmeriCorps logo to the line item description and include the gear items included.

Done in Budget Narrative

c] In-Kind Operational Match-Please breakout the items listed here in separate lines and add additional details and calculations to justify the costs included.

Done in Budget Narrative and Budget.

d] Section III Administrative Costs-

i. The 1% set aside for the Vermont Commission needs to be included on a separate line item.

Please revise.

Done in Budget Narrative and Budget.

ii. Please provide a copy of the approved Federal Indirect Cost Rate Agreement. (Send to Grants Officer -- Confirm here.)

Sent to State Commission (SerVermont) at request of CNCS Program Officer.

3] The applicant indicates that members secure in-kind and cash resources. Please describe member fundraising activities and verify that member activities are not supporting or generating the grantee match.

Members' activities do not support or generate grantee match. Members' efforts to procure in-kind and cash donations are not reflected in financial reports and are not counted as match. The efforts are reported in the progress report under capacity building. Members do not exceed the 10% cap on fundraising, and members do not work on federal grants.

Narratives

4] Performance Measure Clarification--use eGrant performance measure screens:

(Because of the character count in the performance measure screens, not all information would fit. It is included here so that the Program Officer can get a better understanding of the activities of the AmeerCorps members)

a] Please revise the applicant Intervention 1. Activity: Operation Military Kids- Free vacation and summer camps for military youth. The duration is 12 months which appears to be incorrect for a summer program.

Added this information--

There are camps 5 weeks and two weekends out of the year, including the following: 4 week-long day camps (1 in February, 1 in April, and 2 in the summer); 1 week-long overnight camp (summer); and 2 2-day overnight leadership camps (1 in January; 1 in July).

The following information was not included because of space limitations:

During the time leading up to the camps, there is a significant amount of planning: members research and write curricula; oversee logistics (find space for activities and overnight accommodations, plan for meals, acquire supplies, ensure that there is liability insurance); recruit and train volunteers; develop and implement public relations campaigns to publicize the events (social media, inform partners, use other networks); create and oversee the registration process; coordinate the implementation of the camps; publicize the camps; create an evaluation process; follow-up with families as necessary, thank volunteers and partners, and create a legacy manual detailing each step of the process.

The 4 vacation and summer day camps and the one summer overnight camp focus on science technology, nutrition, physical education, civic engagement, and arts activities. The camp in April also celebrates the Month of the Military Child.

Speak Out for military kids is a group of teens from military families and civilian families that come together to build understanding about the life of youth in military families. There are two 2-day overnight leadership camps each year, one in January and one in July.

b] Please remove OUTCM5676: it is not an outcome.

Narratives

Removed

d] H5: OUTCM5668: Youth who participate in physical activity programs will increase their knowledge and skills. Please explain what particular knowledge and skills will be increased.

THERE IS NO ROOM TO ADD ANY MORE INFORMATION TO THIS OUTCOME. Here is the additional information requested regarding what particular knowledge and skills will be increased related to physical activity programs:

Youth, including those from low-income families, military families, or who are New Americans, gain skills and knowledge about low-cost sports and recreational activities, including the following:

How to swim

How to rock climb

How to defend yourself (martial arts)

Where to hike and what to bring with you to be safe

How to be safe skateboarding

How do relieve stress and exercise through yoga

Low-cost ways to make hulu hoops and how to use it for exercising

How to cross-country and down-hill ski

How to snowshoe

How to play team sports such as broom ball, basketball, soccer

How to use low-cost recreation for fitness--frisbee, capture the flag, various running games

How to use wii-fit or dance programs

How to incorporate Get Fit, Be Strong fitness challenge into daily life

How to canoe

How to track wildlife

e] H6: OUTCM5670: Youth who participate in nutrition programs will increase their knowledge and skills. Please explain what particular knowledge and skills will be increased.

THERE IS NO ROOM TO ADD ANY MORE INFORMATION TO THIS OUTCOME. Here is the additional information requested regarding what particular knowledge and skills will be increased related to nutrition programs:

Youth gain some or all of the following knowledge and skills:

Narratives

How to prepare a garden

How to make and use compost

How to plant, grow, tend, and harvest vegetables

How to create low-cost, nutritious meals using local ingredients

How to make probiotic foods and the benefits of them

How to use kitchen tools and equipment

What foods are part of healthy diet, including how to read a food label

How to glean

5] 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?

While none of our positions are specifically designated for members with disabilities, our philosophy and practice is to use an equal opportunity approach. This year, we have a member in a motorized wheelchair serving for a second term, and several members with hidden disabilities. Last year we had a member who was blind.

We are very proactive in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are aware of and know how to apply for positions. We work with the Vermont Center for Independent Living, to make sure our materials are accessible, to reach out to individuals who have disabilities, and to help prospective members through the process.

We do not wish to increase our MSY amount at this time.

6] No-Cost MSYs

We do not wish to increase our MSY amount at this time.

7] Health Care Survey

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

Most likely we will continue with insurance through the Corps Network (Willis). It is our understanding that there will be either a compliant option or an option with a waiver. Our state,

Narratives

Vermont, has expanded Medicaid coverage, and many members choose to get health care through Vermont Health Connect, with most qualifying for Medicaid.

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

We have a past history of working with this provider, and the members have been happy with the coverage. (We are still waiting for word on what the exact premium would be.) We will also provide information about the option through Vermont Health Connect.

c] 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?

I believe the amount that we budgeted is NOT enough for compliant coverage. My understanding is that compliant coverage through the Corps Network would increase around \$55 per month, per member over what we have budgeted.

We do have some budgeted as CNCS share, and the rest as match from our sites (sites pay all or some of the health insurance, if members choose the AmeriCorps option). We based the numbers on how many folks enrolled in past few years. Most of our members are under 26 years, and of those many have been covered by their parents' insurance. As insurance plans and rates are changing, we do not know if this will still be the case in the future.

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

This would depend on how many members chose the insurance. If we base it on the past two years, we would anticipate needing an extra \$1,000 to \$3,000 if health care costs rise as we anticipate, especially if members cannot qualify for Medicaid.

e] 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.

Not applicable.

Grant Characteristics