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Executive Summary

Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps will have 227 AmeriCorps members who will provide expanded learning activities including focused academic assistance, mentoring, and service learning projects in 70 school buildings and 16 satellite sites. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing the academic engagement for 8,280 students. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 6,000 volunteers who will engage in service-learning projects, focused academic assistance, mentoring, and National Service Day events.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$1,463,450 will be matched with \$1,836,021 - \$1,472,000 in public funding and \$364,021 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED - Thumb through any copy of "Country Home" or "Country Living" and you will find a handsome assortment of rustic getaways. From lavish cattle ranches to genteel lakeside cabins, the photos present a dreamlike image of life in rural America. Look beyond those pages, however, and you'll see a very different reality for the struggling rural residents of Western Pennsylvania. Decades of persistent poverty have given birth to population trapped in a cycle of generational poverty. Students of this cycle face academic, social and emotional barriers that hamper their hopes and dwarf their dreams.

Sadly, their struggle is often overlooked. While Pennsylvania is home to the sixth largest rural population in the nation these students constitute only 20% of the state's total student population, making rural students largely invisible in a culture increasingly driven by statistics and bottom lines. In addition, while a 2009 study conducted by the Center for Rural PA found that 91% of rural superintendents cited academic support programs as an essential element of meeting student needs in their districts, only 18% of all eligible students received academic support.

The Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program exists to stand in this gap -- empowering and strengthening students -- and people of all ages, to enhance the quality of their lives through learning and service. Since 1998, Keystone SMILES has served as the only AmeriCorps provider in the nearly 9,000 square miles which comprise its rural service region. Over that period, Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps has provided 86,422 children and youth with the expanded learning activities they needed to succeed despite the poverty surrounding them. For Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps, these children, their schools, and their communities matter. They are our neighbors, our sons and daughters, our family, and the challenge they face becomes clear when judged by the statistics.

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The median family income in Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps' rural home county of Clarion, PA falls nearly \$10,000 short of the national average, and per capita earnings are \$6,274 below the national level (US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2011). At 9.4%, the average unemployment rate in all 12 counties served by the program surpasses both state and national averages by nearly 2% (PA - 7.4%, USA - 7.5%; USDA, ERS, Nov 2012). Nearly one in four children (23%) residing in these counties lives below the poverty level. (USDA, ERS, 2010) An additional 31% live in families classified as "working poor," a group that includes children in homes whose total household income is below 200% of the poverty level (Kids Count Data, 2009-2011). Together, these statistics represent an astonishing 54% of children served by Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps -- the only AmeriCorps program in the northwest quadrant of Pennsylvania. These counties include Allegheny, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, and Venango. Collectively, they represent nearly one quarter of the state's area.

Not surprisingly, this persistent poverty impacts student performance. In report cards issued annually, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) assesses each district's performance. In 2004, all 24 districts served by Keystone SMILES failed to meet PDE targets in one or more areas related to student performance. In 2012, only 41% of our districts fell short of AYP targets. In one district alone, a superintendent noted a 46% increase in student performance on Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessments (PSSAs). "This amazing increase in student achievement was largely the result of intervention from AmeriCorps members," testified the administrator. AmeriCorps allows us to leverage our resources to provide the much needed small group and one-on-one assistance students need," noted a superintendent, while another indicated "AmeriCorps enables the District to provide our struggling students with targeted assistance to improve their achievement."

Despite this firsthand knowledge of their students' struggle, rural educators are often unable to effectively address students' needs due to a lack of resources. The school districts served by Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps reported spending an average \$9,982 per student during the 2011-2012 school year. The statewide district average in the same year was \$14,535 per student (openpagov.org, 2009-2010). In a classroom of 20 students, this represents a gap of more than \$91,000.00.

In addition to resource challenges, the culture of poverty students live in creates additional barriers. Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., is an American educator and author best known for her book, "A Framework for Understanding Poverty," and her work on the culture of poverty and its impact on education. Payne's work is based on the premise that people in poverty face challenges, from both obvious and hidden sources, that are virtually unknown to most people (including educators) who do not have

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first-hand experience with living in poverty. "The role of the educator is not to save the student, but rather to offer a support system, role models, and opportunities to learn, which will increase the likelihood of the student's success."

AmeriCorps members will aid in breaking the cycle of generational poverty in rural NW PA by providing expanded learning activities to 24,840 of the region's neediest students over the next three years. These learning opportunities would not exist outside Corporation for National and Community Service funding. Through AmeriCorps, the program has begun to foster hope for the future in this isolated and impoverished area by improving the academic engagement of students. However, many more children must be reached, or the dreamlike image of "Country Living" will remain just that - a dream.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

THEORY OF CHANGE / LOGIC MODEL - To address the academic and social needs of struggling rural learners, Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps has created, implemented, and maintained a National Service network of partners and programs that provide expanded learning opportunities for students. As school districts and community agencies, those institutions that stand most ready to directly impact student's learning, face diminishing budgets and increasing performance targets, expanded learning opportunities become the most effective way to provide much needed interventions.

Expanded learning opportunities include before, during, and after school programs and summer learning initiatives that broaden learning for youngsters. Expanded-learning systems help students be more connected to school, build self-confidence, and connect with caring adults, so every student can thrive. Students not only learn how to do better in school, they find new ways to ignite their passions - and to engage in learning and life. Keystone SMILES seeks to provide 3 types of expanded learning activities - focused academic assistance, mentoring, and service learning projects - to 24,840 (8,280/year) rural children and youth. Not every student served will participate in each intervention type; instead, members, utilizing the expertise of school leaders, will mold services to meet student needs.

In the first type of expanded learning activity provided, focused academic assistance, 227 members will employ one-on-one and small group instruction, the Response to Intervention Model, Credit Recovery, Title I remediation and support, Standardized Test preparation, and progress monitoring to accelerate acquisition of knowledge and skills for 4,000 students at 70 school buildings. The scope of

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member service categorized as "focused academic assistance" is intentionally wide, allowing school leaders to identify and address local needs through their expertise and engage members to supplement and complement, not replace, existing programming.

One-on-one and small group instruction, as well as the Response to Intervention Model (RTI), are methods of academic intervention designed to provide early, systematic assistance to children who are having difficulty learning. One-on-one or small group instruction give students individualized attention focused on improving academic deficiencies in specific skills, concepts or subject areas. RTI seeks to prevent academic failure through early intervention, frequent progress measurement, and increasingly intensive research-based instructional interventions for children who continue to have difficulty.

Likewise, Title 1 remediation is provided in schools that have identified 35 percent of students as being disadvantaged or at-risk. Schools must supply those students with additional opportunities designed to help them meet academic requirements. As another expanded learning strategy, credit recovery programs aim to help schools graduate more students by giving students who have fallen behind the chance to "recover" credits. Finally, progress monitoring is a scientifically-based practice used to assess students' academic performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

The target population for academic assistance will be at-risk students, in grades K-12, who have been identified as economically disadvantaged, having special and/or exceptional needs, and/or who have not met proficiency benchmarks on curriculum based assessments and/or PSSA or Keystone Exams. The duration and dosage of before, during, and after school programs will be 3-5 times per week for 30-90 minutes a session, for 46 weeks. The dosage and duration of summer programs will be 3-5 days per week for 3-8 hours per day, for 1-8 weeks at 70 school buildings and 16 satellite sites.

In addition to academic assistance, members will provide, as a core activity, one-on-one, group, team and peer mentoring; and social and emotional skills development, such as dropout prevention, goal setting, conflict resolution, stress, and/or anger management to 2,000 students at 70 school buildings and 16 satellite sites.

Mentoring helps provide students a support system and role models. Social and emotional skills development teaches students how to interact with their peers, cope with and manage their emotions, and develop and achieve personal goals. These activities increase the academic engagement of students and decrease the likelihood students will leave school.

The target population for mentoring activities will be at risk students, in grades PK-12, who have been identified as economically disadvantaged, having special or exceptional needs, or who have

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recurrent disciplinary referrals, high absenteeism, and/or social/emotional health deficits. The dosage and duration of before, during and after school services will be 3-5 times per week for 30-90 minutes a session, for 46 weeks. The dosage and duration of summer programs will be 3-5 days per week for 3-8 hours per day, for 1-8 weeks.

As the final core activity of the Program Model, members will engage 3,500 students in service-learning projects focused on engaging and serving, rural communities, persons with disabilities, Opportunity Youth, and/or veterans and military families. Like mentoring and academic assistance, service-learning improves academic engagement. By engaging in service that teaches real-life skills, students discover a meaning and context to their studies that is unattainable through traditional textbooks. This realization motivates struggling learners and teaches the value of academic pursuits.

The duration and dosage of AmeriCorps members' projects will be conducted during a concentrated block of time over several weeks or months for a total of no less than 30 hours. The target population will be students, in grades PK-12, receiving focused academic assistance or mentoring.

As a result of focused academic assistance, mentoring and service learning projects delivered by AmeriCorps members, 19,872 of the 24,840 students (80%) served over the course of the three year cycle will demonstrate an increase in academic engagement by two levels in at least one of the following six areas: Organization (Completion of Assignments (ED 27)), Motivation (Interest in School (ED 27)), Attitude (Perspective on School Climate (ED 27)), Academic Performance (one year's progress in one year's time), Group/Classroom Behavior (Decreased Disciplinary Referrals (ED 27)), and or Leadership and Self-Confidence. Members will conduct pre and post surveys, twice a year, measuring change in student engagement.

These increases will improve graduation rates in rural school districts. Once graduated, students will gain greater access to post-secondary opportunities, resulting in improved life-time earning potential. Over time, these changes will empower students and their families to escape the cycle of poverty in rural western Pennsylvania. As rural citizens escape the poverty cycle, rural communities can reclaim resources to revitalize industry and stimulate economic growth.

EVIDENCE BASE - Expanded learning also leads to measurable results. Citing a decade of research and evaluation studies, as well as large-scale, rigorously conducted meta analyses, Every Hour Counts (formerly CBASS), found quantifiable gains in graduation rates, academic performance, positive behaviors, work habits, and persistence. The evidence cited speaks clearly to the benefit of expanded learning programs:

*Graduation Rates Improve: In Chicago, students who participated in After School Matters were

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nearly two and a half times more likely to graduate than their peers who did not participate (George, R., et al. (2007).

*Grades and Test Score Increase: The American Journal of Community Psychology reported that students who participated in after-school programs for skill-building showed a nine-percentile increase in grades and an eight-percentile increase in test scores. (Durlak, J. A., et al (2010).

*Social and Emotional Learning Skills Improve: Low-income elementary and middle school students in cities and rural areas who regularly attended quality expanded learning programs demonstrated significant gains in work habits, task persistence, and positive social behaviors. (Vandell, D. L. et al.(2007).

Sites hosting AmeriCorps members also testify to effectiveness of these efforts in enhancing academic engagement: "As a district, we experienced a 17% growth in grades 7, 8, and 11 on the mathematics (2012) PSSA achievement test. This growth is directly related to the AmeriCorps volunteers assisting with the implementation of our mathematics remediation programs in our Jr/Sr High School," wrote one school district administrator. Another said "84% of students tutored (by AmeriCorps members) in math last year brought their (2012) PSSA scores up to proficient targets. Results for students who received tutoring in reading were also very good."

A recent independent evaluation of the program found further statistical evidence concerning the impact of AmeriCorps involvement versus impact absent of such involvement:

* One high school reported an average of 10% increase in content areas: Physical Science 84% with AmeriCorps/ 66% without; 8th grade Science 77% with AmeriCorps/67% without; Government (grades 10-11) 84% with AmeriCorps support/75% without.

* Resulting from the service of an AmeriCorps member in one elementary, school students needing interventions decreased by an average of 11.5%; while students demonstrating skills at or above benchmarks increased from 62% to 85%.

In terms of research regarding mentoring outcomes, (David Dubois et al, 2011) in a systematic assessment, examined 73 independent evaluations of mentoring programs directed toward children and adolescents published over the past decade. In study after study, youth mentoring is associated with positive outcomes in social and emotional development, behavioral/risk-related behavior and academic performance (Dubois, D.L, et al. (2011). Other evidence, compiled by Every Hour Counts, found that students who participated in expanded learning programs increased their positive social behaviors by 11% (Durlak et al., 2010).

At a local level, host sites have reported preliminary evidence regarding the efficacy of mentoring

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service provided by members: "According to surveys given to our parents in 2010, 97% of our students showed improved self-confidence, 85% had improved their grades, 93% refrained from participating in any delinquent act, and 95% avoided drugs, alcohol, and tobacco," reported one site. Another site reported a 50% decrease in bullying behavior after AmeriCorps members coordinated with local agencies to provide anti-bullying programs as a component of mentoring initiatives.

In regard to the efficacy of service learning, Peter Scales and colleagues studied the effects of taking part in service-learning on the academic assets of a large national sample of sixth- through twelfth-grade students. They found low socio-economic status students who participated in service scored higher in achievement, motivation, grades, bonding to school, and attendance than similar students who did not participate in service. A 2007 study by Davila and Mora analyzed data from the National Education Longitudinal Study and found students who participated in service-learning performed better in reading, math, history, and science than those who did not, and were more apt to complete high school. Several quasi-experimental studies of service learning report increased motivation toward school and more positive attitudes toward learning (Hecht 2002; Brown, Kim, and Pinhas 2005).

Closer to home, Shelley Billig, of RMC Research Corporation analyzed the results of a four-year grant in a Philadelphia school in 2008. Analysis of achievement and behavioral data showed that, on average, students participating in service-learning activities had higher scores on state tests and exhibited more positive academic behaviors. Over the course of the year, students who engaged in service-learning activities for more than 30 hours had higher reading, science and writing scores, as well as significantly fewer tardies and greater average daily attendance than students from matched comparison classrooms.

Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps has significant experience in the area of expanded learning activities as a means of increasing academic engagement. The program was born out of a need for improved academic engagement for rural students and in 18 years has produced measurable annual outcomes in academic engagement for 86,422 rural students. In 2012-13 alone, 6,460 students demonstrated an increase in academic engagement as a result of expanded learning activities provided by AmeriCorps members.

c. MEMBER TRAINING - The Keystone SMILES member training program strives to develop its members through three tracks designed to meet the needs of members and their service area.

All members are required to attend a pre-service orientation. This three-day training focuses on AmeriCorps rules and regulations, prohibited activities, service descriptions, and placement site expectations. During their orientation, members are also trained on topics including history of

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National Service, challenges in rural education, leadership, conflict resolution, communication, inclusion, diversity, and generational poverty as defined in Ruby Payne's book titled, "Understanding a Framework of Poverty." In addition to the pre-service training, members are provided with on-going training either face-to-face or via a monthly webinar.

During their term, members participate in a 16-hour Community Emergency Response Team training (CERT), meeting Pennsylvania's and the Corporation's expectation for disaster preparedness training. CERT training educates members about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills. The training concludes with a Disaster Simulation.

All members receive training in service learning. Depending on their term type, members either participate in an online or on-site service-learning training. After training, members are required to plan, implement, and report on one project focused on serving and engaging rural communities, persons with disabilities, Opportunity Youth, and/or veteran and military families in volunteerism.

In addition to the CERT and service learning, members participate in one of three tracks based on their service focus.

Track One is for those members serving in Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps' expanding learning programs that focus on mentoring and service learning projects. Track One uses the IEP (Individual Education Program) education model. Member development for this track is based on individual learner needs and/or career goals. For example, members wishing to pursue careers in technical or construction trades receive job skills training and support are guided through their individual member development plan.

Track Two is for those members with a non-education degree who are serving in a Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps' expanding learning program dedicated to focused academic assistance. Members in this track receive additional preparation during pre-service and in-service training consistent with the academic assistance activities the member will perform.

Track Three, is for individuals with a bachelor's degree in education, serving in expanded learning programs dedicated to focused academic assistance. To maintain a permanent teaching certificate in Pennsylvania, all certified educators must complete 180 hours of professional development recognized by the PA Department of Education every five years. This mandate is referred to as the Act 48 requirement. The Keystone SMILES member development plan has been approved through the Venango College of Clarion University and the PA Department of Education, to provide members in Track Three with a unique benefit of earning a minimum of 95 of their required 180 Act 48 hours. This PDE endorsement underscores the quality of training provided by Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps.

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Throughout their term, members from all three tracks come together monthly for in-service trainings, which are provided either in-person or through webinars. Webinars are used to train members spread across a wide geographic area in a way that is cost effective and time efficient. Monthly trainings are designed to provide on-going training, reinforce prohibited activities, and keep members informed on service days and national service updates.

In order to ensure members and volunteers are aware and comply with regulations regarding prohibited activities, Keystone SMILES employs a well-established system. Potential members are made aware of all eligibility and compliance issues throughout the recruitment process. Members selected to serve agree to adhere to AmeriCorps guidelines by signing a member agreement and service description prior to pre-service orientation. At pre-service orientation, members are provided a detailed training on AmeriCorps regulations which includes prohibited activities. In addition, host sites verify their compliance with prohibited service activities through the Host Site Application and Agreement they complete each year. Host Site supervisors oversee volunteers recruited and managed by members. Through their supervision, Host Sites ensure volunteers are made aware of and comply with the rules regarding prohibited activities. Finally, throughout their term of service, several impromptu site visits by Regional Program Coordinators are made to verify the members and volunteers are not participating in any prohibited activities.

All AmeriCorps members participate in an annual end of service training that includes information on career exploration, education award, exiting paperwork, and resources to engage in civic activities beyond their AmeriCorps term. At this event, Keystone SMILES recognizes the achievements of its members with awards for special projects and outstanding service records.

d. MEMBER SUPERVISION - AmeriCorps member supervision is coordinated at the AmeriCorps hub in Knox, PA with the Program Director, Assistant Director and the two Program Coordinators, with over 51 years of experience coordinating an AmeriCorps program. These staff members provide overall program coordination which includes; attending all required Corporation and PennSERVE training, member recruitment, placement and enrollments, communicating with members and host sites, creation of time tracking and data collection tools, member evaluations, approval and coordination of National Service days and service learning projects, as well as designing and implementing training for regional coordinators, member's on-site supervisors, and members.

In addition to AmeriCorps Program Coordinators, Regional Coordinators are Keystone SMILES staff members designated by the Director to supervise members in specific counties where AmeriCorps Host Sites are located. Regional Coordinators have the responsibility of tracking member's progress

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towards term completion, conducting scheduled and impromptu site visits, collecting and analyzing member service data and acting as a liaison between Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps and the Host Site.

In addition to Regional Coordinators, AmeriCorps members have both a Lead and a Direct Supervisor at their Host Site. The Lead Supervisor is the site's administrator who applies to host AmeriCorps members at their site. The responsibilities of the Lead Supervisor are to ensure all State and Federal regulations are adhered to and to oversee the member's Direct Supervisor. Typically there is one lead supervisor per host site, although sites may designate an alternate contact. Keystone SMILES requires the Lead Supervisor to attend a quarterly training designed to keep them up to date on upcoming application requirements, AmeriCorps rules and regulations, Keystone SMILES policies, AmeriCorps prohibited activities, and current member issues.

The Lead Supervisor of the Host Site will designate their staff member(s) to be the Direct Supervisor(s) based on the expertise needed as it relates to a member's service description. At least one Direct Supervisor per school or building is designated to provide daily supervision of AmeriCorps member(s) at their site. Direct supervisors must attend an annual training, which includes and reinforces the AmeriCorps grant approved performance objectives, program design, service history, supervisor responsibilities, prohibited activities, and commitment to AmeriCorps program identification. In addition to daily supervision, the Direct Supervisors' responsibilities include: communication with Regional Coordinators, approval of time sheets and data reporting, and completion of member evaluations. Direct Supervisors collaborate with Regional Coordinators and the site's Lead Supervisor(s) to ensure members receive the daily support needed for a successful term of service. On-going support and guidance is provided by the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps Program through host site training, site visits, monthly training, surveys, emails and phone calls.

e. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION - Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program can be identified in each of the host sites it serves by large posters and smaller decals, required to be posted in a prominent place in order to identify them as an AmeriCorps site. AmeriCorps banners and posters are also present at all service projects and recruitment fairs. In addition, one will witness the AmeriCorps logo on vehicles, brochures, and recruitment and orientation materials. AmeriCorps members and staff can be identified daily by their name tag, messenger bag, and/or service gear.

AmeriCorps is not only featured as a part of our website; Keystone SMILES has dedicated a separate website and Facebook page to its program. These pages are utilized for National Service education, resources for applicants, current AmeriCorps members, partners and alumni.

Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps members are prepared to speak about their AmeriCorps experience.

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Members are trained on the importance of telling their service story and are required to reflect on their service by providing a Great Story three to four times during their term.

In addition, all members participate in AmeriCorps Awareness Week activities aimed at educating students, school and/or agencies, and communities about AmeriCorps and the service they provide the community. Keystone SMILES celebrates AmeriCorps Awareness week by inviting all members, supervisors, and special guests to an AmeriCorps showcase event. At this event all sites are asked to create a story board of service at their site. These story boards depicting member's services are displayed and members are recognized with certificates for their service.

Organizational Capability

a. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING - Keystone SMILES, (Service Making an Impact through Learning Experiences with Students), has been successful for more than 18 years in securing resources to help close the gaps in education for its own and neighboring rural communities.

The agency has significant experience in managing Federal, State, and private grants and managing grants from CNCS which include AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and Learn and Serve . State and local grant funding from PA Safe Kids, the Heinz Foundation, Rosie O'Donnell Charities, Bridge Builders' Community Foundation, PA Child and Adult Lunch Program, PA Pre-K Counts, Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS, State Farm Progressive Agriculture Foundation, City of Oil City, Justus Foundations, and the PA Department of Education have also been managed effectively. The agency has maintained an unblemished audit status in addition to a review from the CNCS Office of Inspector General- Audit and Fraud Departments in 2010 with no findings.

In addition to grant management expertise, service is no stranger to the seasoned staff, Board of Directors, and administrators of the Keystone SMILES agency. Members of the Board and advisors are active in their state and local communities. The success of our organizational structure is directly related to the longevity and dedication of this foundational group of staff over the last 18 years.

Director, Joyce A. Fosdick, former educator of Keystone School District, has 24 years of experience operating CNCS programs and has earned a Grants Management Certificate through Management Concepts. Program staff members have a combined 139 years in National Service as providers and supervisors. Keystone SMILES Board President, W. Barnett Knorr, served as board member for Pennsylvania's State Commission for 12 years and held the positions of co-chair and chair during his tenure. The fiscal department consists of a grants manager, an accountant, and a fiscal officer with combined 34 years of experience who have attended all fiscal trainings provided by CNCS technical assistance providers. A total of 80% of staff are alumni of CNCS programs. The integrity and

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longevity of the organization earned the program recognition as "1 of the 51 Most Innovative AmeriCorps programs in the United States" by Innovations in Civic Responsibilities Northwest.

b. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY - Keystone SMILES has worked diligently to design and implement assessment tools for monitoring host sites which includes: at least three scheduled or impromptu visits, four annual Lead Supervisors' trainings, webinars, online ticket system, email and phone calls. Direct Supervisors must also attend annual training before a member can be placed at their site. AmeriCorps staff use a monitoring tool to document site visits and detect non-compliance issues such as unapproved service activities, AmeriCorps branding, and adherence to policies and procedures.

Partners are provided an expectation outline at the initial program year training, during the application process, and again at the beginning of each program year before recruitment begins. The expectation outline includes compliance in regards to members and volunteers including expected outputs and outcomes, regulations, displacement, member development, and the actions to be taken if a policy is not followed. A report card is distributed bi-annually to communicate host site's progress and compliance status. Fiscal, program, and compliance regulations are outlined in Host Site agreements which are reviewed and signed by each host site annually. Sites agree, in writing, to meet all compliance regulations including "prohibited activities".

Host Sites must submit an application each program year, including Host Site's needs, demographics, recruitment and retention rates, service descriptions, past performance, and agreement of compliance. A review of the host site applications is conducted to determine if any risk factors exist. Partners who are deemed "high risk" are immediately dropped as a site. Moderate risk sites are flagged and a meeting will take place with both the Lead and Direct Supervisors. When a compliance regulation not adhered to by the Host Site, the site receives a monitoring plan to be implemented for a period of two years. Sites on probation with no compliance issues will be taken off probation.

Keystone SMILES is monitored by PennSERVE, the Governor's Office of Citizen Service, who requires compliance and fiscal oversight as a priority of their grantees. Keystone SMILES has a record for meeting state and national reviews in the areas of compliance and fiscal responsibilities.

c. PAST PERFORMANCE -- Keystone SMILES has consistently met or exceeded all Performance Measures for all years of operation. 19,942 students were provided academic tutoring support by AmeriCorps members in the last three years, exceeding the student output target by 5,942 students. 88% of those students served and evaluated, gained a grade level in their target subject area, surpassing the Intermediate Outcome target of 80%. A total of 98% were promoted to the next grade

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or graduated, 13% more than the End Outcome target of 85%. 4,995 students received social/behavioral support from members, exceeding the target by 2,595 students. 81% gained the target level of skills, 11% more than the Intermediate Outcome target. Members recruited and engaged 22,649 volunteers who contributed 105,450 hours to AmeriCorps projects and programs, exceeding the original Output target of 15,000 volunteers contributing 75,000 hours.

Since Keystone SMILES Community Learning Center has been a grantee, regular monitoring from PennSERVE and several visits from the Inspector General's Office have resulted in no compliance issues. Keystone SMILES takes great pride in a strong and consistent record for member enrollment and retention. A conscientious effort by the AmeriCorps staff ensures a 100% enrollment rate yearly. For 2012-2013, the program's retention rate was 90.3%. Members who did not complete their terms left to pursue professional opportunities, for financial hardships, or for other personal challenges not covered under the definition of compelling personal circumstances.

To build on our successes in the area of retention, Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps' begins with careful recruitment of members who have the appropriate combination of motivation and skills to meet program needs. The program strives to fuel this motivation through ongoing support activities such as: clear expectations and service descriptions, consistent communication and supervision, member evaluations and feedback, benchmark and progress reports that promote a sense of accomplishment, immediate attention to questions and concerns, esprit de corps activities, and member recognition. The level of this support and each member's ongoing satisfaction with his/her term is assessed through site visits, member surveys for all program events and trainings, and an end of term evaluation. As a result of these retention and support strategies, members are significantly more likely to successfully complete their terms of service.

d. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT - Continuous improvement is an on-going priority for Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps. Data collection, program and training evaluations, an annual outside evaluation and end of year surveys completed by members and Host Sites provide information to inform and improve program services. Additionally, Keystone SMILES utilizes information from their partners, PennSERVE, and CNCS trainings to ensure quality programs for members and Host Sites as illustrated in the evaluation submitted with this application.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

a. COST EFFECTIVENESS - Keystone SMILES continues to be aggressive in striving to overcome rural barriers with limited cash resources while maintaining an adequate, cost-effective budget. Our communities do not have the luxury of resources being dedicated by large corporations or foundations

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because of their rural isolation. The program works very hard to promote National Service by spreading the wealth of the AmeriCorps resources throughout congressional regions within our service region as a strategy for widening the base to generate the sorely needed resources to stay competitive for AmeriCorps funding. Historically, Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps has incrementally reduced the cost per MSY each subsequent year. This application's MSY will be \$9,851, \$3,449 below the MSY maximum set by the Corporation.

The program budget continues to demonstrate our efforts to keep overhead and administrative costs low by using only 3% of the total AmeriCorps budget of \$3,299,471 towards administrative costs including in-kind support.

With documented support and matching dollars committed from 39 Host Sites, a case can be made concerning the significant and essential roles SMILES AmeriCorps members have in Western Pennsylvania communities. Match dollars and in-kind support have been pledged by 2 universities, 21 school districts and 18 non-profit organizations across 12 counties. The diversity of the agency's funding continues to grow with in-kind and other contributions from AmeriCorps service sites, small businesses, local grants, federal dollars, individual donations, veteran's organizations, and other miscellaneous and program income. Ongoing efforts to diversify funding for sustainability are foremost in the minds of the AmeriCorps staff, Board of Directors, partners, and friends.

b. BUDGET ADEQUACY - The majority of the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps budget is dedicated to direct costs for the support and development of 227 members providing services in resource poor, rural communities. With the constant reminders of the financial burdens upsetting the economy of rural communities, the budget is methodically designed to meet federal expectations while maximizing member living allowances and keeping local cash match increases to 2% or lower.

The budget is designed to meet the expenses necessary to recruit, train, supervise, and support members. At \$3,299,471 (which includes in-kind match of \$81,625 and cash match of \$1,754,396 as explained in detail in source of funds section of the budget narrative), the budget reflects a prudent, adequate, and reasonable accounting necessary to meet all aspects of CNCS AmeriCorps program design as depicted in the narrative. 68% of the budget includes direct costs for member living allowances, increased healthcare, benefits, taxes, and clearances, in alignment with program narrative. 23% of the budget is dedicated to member preparation, training, mentoring, and supervision. 6% is allocated for service projects benefiting veterans, children, youth and operation expenses. Only 3% of the budget is utilized for administrative expenses. These funds will support implementation of sorely needed support services in education for 8,280 students.

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Evaluation Summary or Plan

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY MEMBERS

Keystone SMILES, (Service Making an Impact with Learning Experiences with Students), AmeriCorps members serve in host sites providing academic engagement and service-learning programs in schools throughout rural communities in 12 counties. To address the academic and social needs of struggling rural learners, members will provide expanded learning opportunities to at-risk students, in grades K-12, who have been identified as economically disadvantaged, having special and/or exceptional needs, and/or who have not met proficiency benchmarks on curriculum based assessments and/or PSSA or Keystone Exams. Academic assistance will take place in before, during, and after school programs and summer learning initiatives that broaden learning for youngsters. Keystone SMILES seeks to provide 3 types of expanded learning activities - focused academic assistance, mentoring, and service learning projects - to 24,840 (8,280/year) rural children and youth.

EVALUATION CLASSIFICATION:

An independent evaluation will take place, using an external evaluator.

PROGRAM EVALUATION DESIGN DESCRIPTION: Our evaluation approach will employ a variety of research designs, including exploratory, descriptive, and quasi-experimental designs. Based on these designs, appropriate data collection methods and instruments will be used to gather information for evaluating the attainment of the program objectives. These designs were identified in consultation with our external evaluator, board, and Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps staff.

Exploratory design -- The evaluator will conduct a review with the host sites to verify the need for academic improvement services in the school district, which students need this service, and if students needing help are participating in the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program. A review of program designs and results of similar scientifically-based tutoring programs will be conducted and compared with the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps design. This review will inform us of the most effective program designs and performance measures to consider.

Descriptive design - The evaluation methods relating to the descriptive design will include service utilization studies, opinion polls, client satisfaction surveys, outcome surveys and best practice surveys. The descriptive design, along with information from the exploratory study, will respond to the process, intermediate outcome, and end outcome related questions.

Quasi-experimental design - The evaluator will select a number of students meeting specified criteria for evaluation. The established criteria will include, but will not be limited to, active participation in

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the program, ability to establish a stable baseline and to stay with the program, available school data, and willingness to be studied. Academic skills of the selected students will be measured at baseline (pre-tutoring phase), and after the tutoring starts, over several assessment points to monitor the changes. The quasi-experimental design will include case studies of the students to provide true examples of the immeasurable human interest impact which are quantifiable but can be life changing in the educational experience of a student.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION:

- To provide substantial data confirming whether program targets are realistic
- To assess program output and program outcomes
- To develop reports to funders on the effectiveness of the program design
- Used as a sustainability and decision making tool
- Validate the importance and impact of the services Keystone SMILES provides through the AmeriCorps program.

DESCRIPTION OF DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

We will collect two kinds of data. For the process assessment portion of our evaluation, we will collect data on the integrity of implementing our program model. This data will include the number of hours of academic tutoring provided per student, the number of tutoring sessions per week over what period of time, the tutoring methods used, etc. For the outcome assessment portion, we will utilize the data we currently collect for our annual performance measures, i.e. student outcomes including academic engagement and overall grade level growth, promotions, and graduation.

DATA SOURCES:

- Data will be collected from Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps members and their supervising teachers utilizing the program rubrics and state testing results.
- Data on student outcomes in the academic program group will be collected from school district staff and teachers.
- Data on the comparison group students/classes will also be collected from school district staff and teachers.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY THIS EVALUATION:

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PROCESS EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

- Is our tutoring model being implemented with integrity by both AmeriCorps members and community volunteers? If not, why not?
- Do the sites' institutional infrastructure support the services provided by the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program design? If yes, please explain. If not, please explain what needs to be changed.
- Are there any modifications that we need to make in our service delivery based on our outcome findings?

OUTCOME EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

- Have students in the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps Program improved in the student's ability to gain academic skills as anticipated, after receiving services from the program?
- If students improved in their academic standings to meet Pennsylvania standards, how much change occurred, in which areas?
- What Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps tutoring methods caused academic growth in students?
- How will the outcomes of students' participating in the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps academic programs compare with similar students not served by any tutoring program?
- What other indirect factors have an impact (positive or negative) on the desired program outcomes?

INSTRUMENTS TO BE USED:

- Instruments to collect process/implementation data about our program model will be developed by the independent evaluator in conjunction with program staff after we receive funding for the next three year grant cycle.
- Secondary data summary tools will also be developed by our independent evaluator.
- We will use our existing performance measurement data collection tools, a research-based rubric, to collect student outcome data.

DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE

Student outcome data will be collected at the beginning of the school year, mid-term, and end of the school year beginning year two. Data will be collected quarterly.

REPORTING: The external evaluator will compile a final report outlining all our process and outcome findings and the resulting recommendations for improvement. The complete report will be

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made available to our state commission / CNCS as part of our next grant application. We will compile a one page fact sheet highlighting the results of our evaluation to share with other stakeholders (community partners, members, current and prospective funders, etc.) as well as participating teachers, school administrators and district staff. Dissemination of the evaluation results will be made available to stakeholders through printed materials.

PROJECTED USE OF FINDINGS: The evaluation findings will allow our agency to move toward continued improvement of the AmeriCorps program located in depressed rural communities. The evaluation findings will enable the program to decide whether increased academic skills of students are in fact, the result of our program services. Outcomes will be reported to the CNCS, PennSERVE, The Governor's Office of Citizen Service, host site partners, and other stakeholders, including funders and community partners. Evaluation data will be used to improve the impact of the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program while also attempting to attract new resources, engaging more individuals into service, and engage more non-profit and business partners.

USE OF EVALUATION RESULTS: Keystone SMILES wants to demonstrate to our state commission the importance of supporting rural programs and the impact being made by our members in these communities. To meet sustainability expectations, we are seeking the support of our state commission as we continue to reach out to the community to obtain matching funds. Lastly, to satisfy our education partners is critical to our ability to provide services in the rural areas with limited resources.

EVALUATION TIMELINE: 2014-2015 will be Year One of the grant which will be dedicated to further planning and taking the general evaluation approach outlined in this plan, identifying focus groups, coordinating evaluations, as well as finalizing the data collection tools and systems. The data collection portion of the evaluation will begin in the first quarter of Year Two and continue through one full program year. The first quarter of Year Three, 2016-2017 will be focused on data analysis and the preparation of the findings and recommendations for the final report. The report will be completed by the independent evaluator by January 15, 2017. In February 2017 at the winter school district host site training, this evaluation will be debriefed by the evaluator and stakeholder representatives. This post-evaluation action plan will be implemented in fall of 2017-2018 program year.

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THREE YEAR EVALUATION PLAN BUDGET: Evaluator's fee is base at a daily per diem of \$625 for 110 days to be used throughout the three year evaluation period. Daily rate will include travel, communication, printing, supplies, and indirect cost for the implementation and completion of the evaluation period.

Amendment Justification

NA

Clarification Summary

a. Budget

1. Please explain how each of the staff members listed in the budget fits into the broader organizational chart for Keystone SMILES and is consistent with the staffing structure for the AmeriCorps program proposed in the application narrative.

Keystone SMILES Community Learning Center provides support services to families, schools, and nonprofits. The AmeriCorps program is one of the larger programs the agency implements. The agency is responsible for the follow programs: a Pennsylvania Department Education Alternative Education Program, Pre-K Counts, DPW, Adult Child Food Program, School Lunch program, YouthBuild USA, and Safe Kids Clarion Venango . The agency is governed by a Board of Directors with an Executive Director and human resource department. The AmeriCorps staff has its own director and staff members to implement, coordinate and supervise the members, host sites, and service programs.

2. Please explain why Member Tracking staff position appears twice in the budget.

This responsibility is shared by two staff members due to the size of the program and to provide a check and balance system for internal monitoring. Both of these staff members also have other AmeriCorps program responsibilities.

3. Please also explain why the CERT Training Coordinator is present in the budget at 100% usage even though the application narrative describes the CERT training as a 16-hour commitment.

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The narrative of this position should read 70% AmeriCorps Hub Coordinator/30% CERT Training Coordinator equaling 100% of AmeriCorps time. The narrative describes the CERT Training Module time requirement not how many classes must be implemented to train 227 members. CPR classes must not exceed 15 people per class. Please also explain why, in addition to this full-time staff member, additional daily rate CERT trainer costs are included in the budget. We have a team of CERT trainers who assist with the trainings. These trainers are outside of the agency and come in to provide the required trainings with our CERT Trainer Coordinator. These trainers are needed for 4 half day specialized modules within the CERT curriculum throughout the start of new AmeriCorps classes and the Disaster Simulation activity.

4. Please describe the scope of responsibilities for the Winds of Trade staff member and At-Risk Youth Programs Coordinator explain why these roles are budgeted at 100% usage.

These 100% AmeriCorps service programs never existed before the AmeriCorps resources. They provide academic engagement services as an alternative education opportunity for students and persons with disabilities in Clarion and Venango counties. They work with the AmeriCorps members on a daily basis at two different location sites. The At Risk Youth Coordinator has been in our AmeriCorps budget since the start of the AmeriCorps program. The Winds of Trade Staff is a new collaboration for next year and this position is solely an in-kind match for the new initiative. Also explain why, in addition to these two full-time staff roles, additional daily-rate trainer costs for At-Risk Youth and Persons with Disabilities are included in the budget. The trainers are outside professionals in the field who provide professional development during orientations.

5. Please justify the need for two Service-Learning staff members at 100% and 75% usage as well as separate web-based and on-site Service Learning training.

Services projects are ongoing in more than one county or community at a time; therefore, we need these staff positions to work with more than one group of members in these projects on any given day. The part time position is used for larger signature projects within the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program. The web based training is taught by professional service-learning educators through Clarion University.

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6. Please explain why both mileage and fuel are budgeted for transportation for staff and members, since the mileage rate is inclusive of fuel costs. Please also explain why the budget for member travel includes vehicle maintenance/insurance for existing minibuses and vans and also includes van rentals.

Keystone SMILES has 9 second hand vehicles which are utilized to transport staff and AmeriCorps members to trainings, site visits, and service projects. PA laws dictates that automobile owners purchase and maintain auto insurance for all of their vehicles or face suspension of vehicle registration, driver's license and/or fines. Furthermore, like our personal vehicles these 9 second hand vehicles require routine maintenance and repairs to provide safe transportation for our staff and members such as oil changes, brakes repair and replacements, tires, inspections and other general maintenance. When these vehicles are used the gas is then allocated based on the mileage log of each vehicle. This gas usage is claimed under the fuel line item. However, our members span 12 counties in Western Pennsylvania and it is not cost effective or efficient to pick up and transport all of our members and staff to all trainings, site visits, and service projects. Therefore, in addition to these vehicles there are times when members and staff are asked to used their personal vehicles to attend trainings, site visits and service projects. When this is the case, mileage may be claimed by the member or staff person, which goes under the mileage line item of the budget. Finally, the van rentals are for 15-passenger vans which are larger than the kind we own. These larger rental vans allow us to transport more members and staff to the regional launch.

b. Programmatic

1. Please describe how the proposed tutoring curriculum and the proposed pre-service and in-service tutor training is research-based and consistent with the instructional content of the local education agency and with State academic content standards, as required by 45 CFR 2522.940. Please also describe how members that engage in tutoring will meet minimum qualification requirements to serve as tutors and will be supervised by individuals with expertise in tutoring, as required by 45 CFR 2522.910 - .940.

Only members in Tracks Two and Three provide focused academic Assistance programs. Members in Track Three are those who hold a bachelor's degree in education and thereby, meet the minimum

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qualifications to serve tutors.

Members in Track Two who provide focused academic assistance programs will receive tutoring training through Venango College of Clarion University Continuing Education program and will be required to pass a proficiency test that meets NCLB and PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education) requirements. After successful completion of the training sessions and skills test, members receive a Paraprofessional Certificate.

All members providing focused academic assistance programs will be supervised with individuals who have expertise and experience in tutoring.

2. Based on a review of the cost effectiveness section in your application your program did not make a compelling case for the requested cost per member service year (MSY). Please consider decreasing your cost per MSY by revising your CNCS share of the program budget or explain why your program is cost effective in terms other than what exists in the application.

At \$3,299,471, the Program's budget is designed to provide sorely needed support services in education for 8,280 students. Per student, this is an overall investment of \$398. Comparable services provided by Sylvan Learning Center, in Erie, PA cost \$47.99 per hour, per student. This cost excludes the \$199 evaluation fee required to have a student evaluated for participation in Sylvan's services. Similarly, an informal review of classified ads posted through Craigslist and offering tutoring services in Western PA reveal an average hourly rate ranging from \$20 to 40. Based on these figures, a student could receive from 4-20 hours of support services for \$398. Through the same investment in Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps, students receive an average of 137 hours of support services, based on an aggregate of dosage and duration figures for the proposed expanded learning programs. At nearly 7 times the return on investment, Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps provides a cost effective program model for rural, Western PA.

d. Strategic Engagement

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? Although we do not have a specific number of slots allocated for recruitment of persons with disabilities, one of our goals is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities as members of our

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program during the recruitment process. The Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps program works with community agencies to engage persons with disabilities in service programs and AmeriCorps opportunities during the recruitment process. Additionally, our recruitment materials include pictures of people with disabilities performing service activities and we also include a non-discrimination statement on all applications and recruitment materials.

f. Healthcare

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

ASRM. LLC
505 South Lenola Rd, Suite 231
Moorestown, NJ 08057

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

We researched what other programs are using.

(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?

No.

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

ASRM does not offer insurance that meets the ACA minimum coverage. Quotes from a local insurance agency indicated the premium would increase \$75/month, times 11 months, times 70 members, would be \$57,750 additional funds needed in the budget.

Continuation Changes

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NA

Grant Characteristics