

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

As part of the "Youth & Veterans for Colorado" program, the Colorado Youth Corps Association will engage 346 AmeriCorps members at six CYCA-accredited youth corps. All six of these youth corps are among the first in the nation to be recognized as 21st Century Conservation Service Corps by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. The members will improve Colorado's recreation infrastructure, protect wildlife habitat, conduct fire mitigation and burned area rehab, prevent erosion and flooding as a result of wildfires, and install energy efficiency measures in the homes of low-income residents. These service activities will occur in 46 Colorado counties - in both urban and rural areas. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving 1,000 acres of public lands, improving/creating 140 miles of trails and waterways, and conducting energy efficiency retrofits in the homes of 1,500 low-income residents.

This program will address the CNCS focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Environmental Stewardship. The program will engage economically disadvantaged and unemployed youth and young adults, military veterans and children of active military members in conservation service projects.

The Colorado Youth Corps Association will have 346 members who will improve Colorado's recreation infrastructure, protect wildlife habitat. conduct fire mitigation and burned area rehab, prevent erosion and flooding as a result of wildfires and install energy efficiency measures in homes of low income residents. These activities will occur in 46 Colorado counties- in both urban and rural areas. At the end of the 1st program year the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving/creating 140 miles of trails and waterways, and conducting energy efficiency retrofits in the homes of 1,500 low-income residents.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of [Focus Area(s)]. The CNCS investment of \$1,394,489 will be matched with \$683,054, \$601,022 in public funding and \$82,032 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

### a. PROBLEM/NEED

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NEED #1 -- JOB-READINESS AND EDUCATION -- Young adults are unemployed at twice the rate of adults. Colorado's unemployment rate for this age group in 2012 was 16.7% - and ethnic minority youth have an even higher unemployment rate at 20.5% (Bureau of Labor Statistics). The demand for youth corps positions in Colorado verifies the reality of these statistics. Youth corps receive nine applications for every one available position.

While the economic picture in Colorado is beginning to show signs of improvement, recovery is projected to be a lengthy process. Though the unemployment rate for adults has declined steadily in Colorado (Oct 2013 adult unemployment was 6.8% compared to 7.3% for the nation), youth and young adult unemployment has been stubbornly stagnant. Unskilled and undereducated youth are generally among the last to be hired and, more often than not, are hired for low-paying and/or part-time jobs. According to a study of youth unemployment, young people "experiencing unemployment at an early age have years of lower earnings and an increased likelihood of unemployment ahead of them....leading to decreased wages, increased chances of unemployment and longer future unemployment spells for the most vulnerable." (Employment Policies Institute, 2001).

In addition to having the same issues as other teens and young adults as described above, the children of military families can suffer stress related to deployment of a parent, frequent family relocation, and re-integration of a parent who returns from deployment (National Child Traumatic Stress Network).

In 2007, several Colorado youth corps identified the value of the youth corps model for a different population -- recently returned Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Though veteran unemployment overall in 2012 was only 7%, post-9/11 veterans between the ages of 20-24 suffer extremely high unemployment at 22.5% (September 2013). In fact, the unemployment rate for this category of veterans is increasing rather than decreasing (Syracuse University, Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Sept 2013).

Youth corps will engage young people ages 17-25 (including children of military families) and military veterans (up to age 35) in this program.

NEED #2 -- CONSERVING COLORADO'S LAND, ENERGY, AND WATER RESOURCES - PUBLIC

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### LANDS IMPROVEMENT --

Colorado's public lands are of critical importance to the state. Outdoor recreation in the state generates an impressive \$13.2 billion annually in economic activity, supporting workers in small rural towns and in cities. Additionally, most of the state's residents live adjacent to forested areas (Colorado's Front Range) or in the mountains. A full 25% of Coloradans (1.3 million) live directly in the fire-prone wildland urban interface (State of Colorado). Additionally, the state estimates that 40% of new residential development is at risk of wildfire.

Even before the unprecedented wildfires in 2012 and 2013 and devastating floods in 2013, Colorado's public land managers were struggling with a beetle epidemic, insufficient funds to manage high volume recreation use, increasing fire fuels build-up in the wildland-urban interface, and degrading wildlife habitat. All of these issues, and more, underscore the need for AmeriCorps members to dedicate their time, talent, and energy to improving our public lands.

The September 2013, Colorado flooding killed 9 people, destroyed 200 miles of roads, damaged or destroyed more than 2,000 homes, and wiped out 50 bridges. The US Forest Service has identified 380 miles of roads, 230 miles of trails and 20 facilities including campgrounds, picnic areas and boating access areas that were damaged by the floods totaling \$17 million in needed repairs (US Forest Service). In Boulder County alone, 117 miles of hiking trails were damaged (Boulder County Parks & Open Space). In all, 18 Colorado counties (28% of Colorado's counties) were designated for assistance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and 27,000 residents had applied for FEMA assistance as of late-November 2013 (Denver Post, Nov 2013).

Worse still, the flooding came on the heels of two devastating wildfires seasons in 2012 and 2013, the Black Forest Fire (most destructive in Colorado history), High Park Fire, and Waldo Canyon Fire (Denver Post, June 2012, July 2012, June 2013). These fires, collectively, killed five people, destroyed 1,095 homes, burned 119,000 acres and caused \$85 million in damage. Some of the neighborhoods that burned are, by all accounts, suburban neighborhoods, not densely forested enclaves as one might imagine, making the fire threat all the more frightening.

Fires not only cause immediate damage, the flooding that results will be a huge problem for years to come. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Locations downhill and

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downstream from burned areas are very susceptible to flash flooding and debris flows, especially near steep terrain. Rainfall that would normally be absorbed will run off extremely quickly after a wildfire, as burned soil can be as water repellent as pavement. As a result much less rainfall is required to produce a flash flood."

TRAILS & WATERWAY IMPROVEMENTS -- Colorado's land managers struggle to meet the demands of outdoor recreation users -- residents and visitors -- while still protecting the natural resource and wildlife. Outdoor recreation and the state's trails system are critical economic drivers and integral to the active and healthy lifestyle of Colorado residents. Outdoor recreation is the second largest industry in the state and generates \$13.2 billion in consumer spending, \$994 million in tax revenue, 125,000 direct jobs, and \$4.2 billion in wages and salaries -- in both urban and rural areas (The Outdoor Recreation Economy, Outdoor Industry Association, 2012). More than 75% of Coloradans participate in outdoor recreation activities each week and an additional 28 million people visit Colorado annually, many of whom participate in outdoor recreation. Most of these residents' and visitors' outdoor activity is related to trail use (2008 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Colorado State Parks). In a January 2014 study, 87.5% of federal land managers and 60% of state lands managers indicated that their staffing and funding have not kept pace with the urgent needs on the land in their care (Caring for Colorado Public Lands, OMNI Institute).

In addition to the demands of recreation users, fire damage, and flood threat, land managers are struggling to mitigate a pine beetle epidemic which exacerbates the threat of forest fires and results in thousands of acres of standing dead trees primed to burn or fall on people and infrastructure. According to the 2012 Colorado Forest Health Report, 575,000 acres are affected by beetles. Recreation areas that are not maintained or improved could suffer from a drop in visitation or could be closed altogether because of safety issues, negatively impacting local economies that depend on visitors.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY - AmeriCorps members can help solve other kinds of conservation issues beyond those on public lands. According to the Energy Information Administration, residential buildings consume 21% of the total energy in the United States. Because homes, collectively, make up the greatest energy use, investing in home energy savings is the top priority for energy efficiency organizations in Colorado, including the Colorado Energy Office. Additionally, when low-income

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individuals use more energy than they need because their homes are inefficient, taxpayers often pay these unnecessary bills. Energy Outreach Colorado, the leading provider of home energy assistance to low-income residents in Colorado, provides \$373 in utility assistance on average per household annually to low-income Colorado families, including seniors and individuals with special health needs. As of November 2013, Energy Outreach Colorado paid utility bills for 18,000 low-income residents. These residents are often faced with the choice of with either paying a utility bill or buying food or medicine. By installing energy-saving measures in these homes, youth corps not only save energy, but bring energy costs within reach for low-income families. Energy retrofits involve a large up-front investment which is too costly for low-income families, but yields savings over time that benefits families and taxpayers, alike.

b. AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS - PROGRAM DESIGN -- Academic research, cost effectiveness data, return on investment data, and sponsor satisfaction data demonstrate that the youth corps model works for land conservation and energy efficiency projects. AmeriCorps members -- both young people and veterans -- have the energy, enthusiasm, and drive to make change in their communities while they chart positive and productive futures.

### PROGRAM MODEL & ACTIVITIES

Youth, young adults, veterans, and children of military families will serve on staff-supervised crews and engage in critical conservation service projects from 36 - 38 hours each week that directly benefit Coloradans. For the remaining 2-4 hours each week, members will engage in job-training, education, leadership development, and other career preparation activities. Land conservation crews are made up of 8-10 members and energy crews are made up of 2-3 members. Mile High Youth Corps -- Colorado Springs, which is located near a number of military facilities, will enroll children of military families (approx. 25 annually). Two youth corps, Western Colorado CC and Rocky Mountain YC, operate veterans crews. These corps, together, engage about 30 veterans annually.

All members will serve as part of six CYCA-accredited youth conservation corps throughout the state. Participating youth corps include Larimer CC, Mile High YC, Mile High YC -- Colorado Springs, Rocky Mountain YC, Weld County YCC, and Western Colorado CC. Each of the participating youth corps recruit their members directly through local and national methods. Once recruited, the

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members will join the youth corps or veteran crew for a pre-determined term of service. CYCA is requesting member slots in the following increments: 73 300-hour slots, 196 450-hour slots, 45 675-hour slots, 15 900-hour slots, and 17 1700-hour slots for a total of 346 members/108.94 MSYs. All members will serve in a full-time capacity. Youth corps match candidates with the appropriate term of service depending on their age, desired commitment, life stage, and area of interest. Youth corps seasons and terms of service are determined based on project partner request, project schedule, weather, fund availability, member feedback, and many other factors.

For land conservation projects, members are assigned to crews that are deployed to projects in the geographic region that the corps serves. Crews can be residential (camping) crews, meaning they travel together and camp near their projects throughout the term of their service, or non-residential (day) crews, meaning they return home each evening. For each project (typically 1 -- 8 weeks in length), crews are hosted by a public land management agency such as the United States Forest Service, Colorado State Parks and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, the Tamarisk Coalition, Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, the National Park Service, or a city or county government

Land conservation projects include: flood mitigation; trail maintenance and construction; fence construction; eradicating invasive species; eliminating hazard trees killed by bark beetles; and fire mitigation in the wildland-urban interface. The veterans crews are focused on fire management projects which provide participants with highly targeted job training and the technical skills necessary to launch a fire management career. This model has proven successful in helping veterans gain jobs and helps them acclimate to civilian life, bond with fellow veterans, and take advantage of the therapeutic value of nature, while simultaneously allowing them to continue to serve with their fellow soldiers and chart a new career path. The fire mitigation and management field capitalizes on characteristics of many veterans -- high levels of trust, advanced technical training, physical fitness, high levels of resiliency, advanced team-building skills, strong organizational commitment, extraordinary leadership abilities, and a strong desire to serve and protect (Syracuse University, Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Sept 2013).

Collectively, youth and veteran members will improve 1,000 acres of public lands annually (EN4), and improve/construct 140 miles of trails and waterways in parks and open spaces (EN5).

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For energy efficiency projects, crews visit homes that are pre-qualified for retrofits by youth corps' energy partners and funders. Members will conduct home energy audits, provide energy efficiency education to residents, and install energy efficiency measures including compact fluorescent light bulbs, faucet aerators, and high efficiency showerheads for 1,500 low-income residents (EN1). Some units may even receive new refrigerators.

This program will help young people and military veterans, especially those considered to be "disadvantaged individuals", overcome their education and employment barriers by offering opportunities to earn living allowances; acquire marketable job skills and work experience; become more mature and responsible through positive mentorship and leadership development; receive encouragement and assistance with college exploration, admissions and financial aid applications; experience civic engagement; and earn AmeriCorps Education Awards. In all, 104 members will officially fall into the CNCS category of "disadvantaged individuals" (O12). Though not all members will meet CNCS' specific definition of "disadvantaged individuals", we anticipate that nearly 100% of members will have some manner of life barrier - low-income, unemployed, disconnected from school, or be in need of career development support. The goal for all members is to be economically self-sufficient and achieve higher levels of education as a result of their corps experience.

Members will participate in career training, life-skills training, and a host of other educational activities for at least 2-4 hours each week to better prepare them for educational and career success. Youth corps take a two-pronged approach to education and training -- a combination of participating in standardized curricula matched with customized sessions to meet each member's needs. First, all members participate in several universal education curricula: 1) Service Learning Curriculum; 2) Career and College Readiness Training; and 3) Colorado Outdoor Leadership Guide (for members assigned to land conservation projects). These curricula are designed to be easily implemented by crewleaders and contain easy-to-facilitate readings, activities, and discussion topics in a variety of focus areas, including environmental education, civic engagement, independent living skills, career development, healthy lifestyles, and leadership.

Next, youth corps take a personalized and customized approach to education for each member. Staff help members create short and long-term plans related to their professional and personal goals. These

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plans dictate the custom education or training each member receives. If a member dropped out of high school, she takes GED prep or HS completion classes while in the corps. If a member is ready for college, corps staff help him research and visit schools. If a member is homeless, staff help him find housing assistance and a free bus pass. If a member is a college graduate and interested in securing a post-corps job, staff help her create a resume and practice interviewing.

EVIDENCE BASED -- COST EFFECTIVENESS -- Youth corps have four measures of cost-effectiveness for this proposal.

#1 -- Administrative efficiency - This proposal streamlines three existing and one anticipated AmeriCorps proposals into one request (see detail in Organizational Capability section, below).

#2 -- Land Conservation Efficiency - A 2012 Booz-Allen study commissioned by the National Park Service found that youth conservation corps are, on average, 65% less expensive than accomplishing the same projects by other means.

#3 -- Energy Savings Return on Investment - The energy efficiency retrofits that youth corps conduct result in approximately \$363 in savings per home and installation costs are recouped within 1.2 years for multi-family units. Energy savings are calculated based on Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency formulas as well as industry-recognized assumptions about the number of retrofits installed in a typical residence and daily average use of the installed measures.

#4 -- Youth Development Results - When young people stay in high school, secure a GED or diploma even if they originally dropped out, and go on to post-secondary education, society as a whole, and the young people, all benefit. According to the Center for Labor Market Studies (Northeastern University, 2009), high school dropouts cost society \$292,000 each, earn \$10,000 less per year than high school graduates, and are incarcerated at 63 times the rate of college graduates.

It is clear that education is an indicator of economic success. To that end, more than 20 years of research shows that youth corps help young people gain the education, job-training, and leadership skills they need to advance their education and secure employment. These studies include: Texas A & M University (2011 and 2012) and OMNI Institute (2006, 2009 -- 2012). Additionally, recent post-corps placement data underscores the effectiveness of youth corps. For example, more than 80% of

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the graduates of Mile High Youth Corps and Mile High Youth Corps -- Colorado Springs in the past three years have gone on to postsecondary education or jobs. For veteran crew graduates in Colorado, 85% go on to jobs or higher education within three months of leaving the corps. See the Evaluation section for more detail on youth corps research.

Based on the cost to society of people whose educations stagnate and the positive results that youth corps achieve, a \$12,800 cost per MSY is a great value to society -- not to mention the benefits of the members' land conservation and energy accomplishments.

2. c. Member Training - Once enrolled in a youth corps, members receive a thorough orientation to the program as well as to AmeriCorps (2-5 days in length). In the AmeriCorps orientation, they learn about the history and scope of national service, receive AmeriCorps orientation materials and identity items, and learn about prohibited activities, how to use their education award, and about the grievance procedure. Members are then assigned to a crew and a crewleader. The crew is trained in tool safety, personal protective equipment and other risk-management topics. Skill training related to each project is provided at the beginning of each project. Typical training includes CPR and First Aid, compact fluorescent bulb disposal, aerator and showerhead install, energy audit techniques, trail construction and maintenance, weed identification, native plant identification, flood mitigation, and fence installation, all depending on the project at hand. Members participating in fire fuel projects can earn USFS/BLM recognized S-212/S-190 chainsaw certifications and members participating in invasive species projects can earn herbicide applicators certificates. Throughout their terms, members engage in education and training activities 2-4 hours each week, either by dedicating 30-60 minutes daily, or taking a half day each Friday for these activities.

Beyond the "hard skills" training that members receive, what stays with them well after their term of service is less quantifiable and doesn't come with a certificate. Youth corps alums typically cite their corps experience as life-changing and pivotal. They succeed in ways never thought possible -- challenging their minds, bodies, and spirits. After weeks of long days, inclement weather, physical challenges, camp chores, education sessions, and crew conflicts, a youth corps member thinks, "If I can do this, I can do anything!" They challenge themselves, with the help of caring and committed staff, to achieve higher levels of education, leadership, and personal goals. These improvements in character and self-esteem, coupled with job training, leadership experience, and technical abilities

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make youth corps alums attractive candidates for future employers.

2. d. Member Supervision - Because they serve in crews, members are directly supervised by staff crewleaders that manage their day-to-day service on project sites. Crewleaders travel and share meals with their crews and have daily crew debrief sessions. Crewleaders also work with members to set personal goals and monitor their progress toward achieving those goals. All crewleaders complete, at a minimum, a week-long training and orientation in addition to technical and risk management training. Crewleaders at each location report to a program manager and/or project coordinator who is responsible for overall program management and member development. Because members do not serve independently, they have little opportunity to engage in prohibited activities. However, all staff are trained in AmeriCorps prohibited activities, monitor for violations regularly, and are trained to report possible violations.

2. e. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification - During orientation, members are introduced to national service history and how their service connects to the larger movement. This is reinforced through supplemental trainings to include topics on civic engagement, leadership, and lifelong service. Additionally, the AmeriCorps logo is prominently displayed at each corps headquarters, on each corps' website, print materials, event displays, vehicles, and if allowable, signage at project sites. Members display the AmeriCorps logo on their uniforms at all times. Members will also participate in national days of service such as Make a Difference Day, 9/11 National Day of Service & Remembrance, and MLK Day of Service. Not only do these national service days engage the broader community in service, they help to bolster the AmeriCorps brand.

### Organizational Capability

3. a. Organizational Background and Staffing - CYCA is an independent 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization governed by an 18-member board of directors. The Colorado Youth Corps Association has been in existence for 15 years, growing and supporting Colorado's network of 10 accredited youth conservation corps. Each of the youth corps participating in this program have 10-20 year histories serving their communities.

CYCA has managed a variety of CNCS grants for the past 15 years. CYCA currently manages a multi-site AmeriCorps Education Award program and a multi-site VISTA program. CYCA also manages approximately \$1.6 million in State of Colorado, Great Outdoors Colorado (lottery trust fund), and

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federal project-based funds annually which are passed through to youth corps. Appropriate fiscal controls and checks and balances, approved by an auditor, are in place. CYCA received an unqualified financial audit and A-133 audit in 2012 (and every year since its first audit in 2002).

All six of the participating youth corps are accredited by CYCA and have also been designated as 21st Century Conservation Service Corps by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture. Collectively, these youth corps serve 46 Colorado counties (72% of Colorado counties). All told, there are 10 CYCA-accredited youth corps in the state. Two of these youth corps engage 14-16 year olds making them ineligible for AmeriCorps, and the two other youth corps participate in AmeriCorps programs through national direct grants. This proposal unifies all other Colorado youth corps under one proposal.

CYCA is uniquely positioned to streamline administrative functions, capitalize on economies of scale and centralize compliance and oversight for this program. Two of the six participating youth corps, Mile High YC and Weld County YCC, currently operate cost reimbursement AmeriCorps programs. Additionally, CYCA currently operates an Education Award Only program and Larimer County CC had seriously considered submitting a stand-alone cost reimbursement proposal in response to this NOFO. If this fixed award proposal is funded, Mile High YC, Weld County YCC and CYCA will not seek continuation of their programs and Larimer County CC will not apply directly for a grant in future years, saving CNCS \$1.067 million, 112.71 MSYs, and 323 slots which are now "bundled" into this request for \$1.394 million in funds to support 108.94 MSYs and 346 members.

Scott Segerstrom, CYCA's Associate Director, has managed CYCA's AmeriCorps Education Award program and a 21-member VISTA program for the past 2 ½ years. He is well versed in program management and compliance. Jennifer Freeman, CYCA's Executive Director, provides oversight for the AmeriCorps program. Ms. Freeman has been involved in AmeriCorps and national service since 1993. Additionally, each youth corps identifies an AmeriCorps site administrator to oversee AmeriCorps-specific program activities and compliance in partnership with corps management staff and crewleaders. See attached organizational charts for the full scope of staff support to this program.

3. b. Compliance and Accountability - The Colorado Youth Corps Association maintains multiple layers of technical assistance and oversight to ensure that AmeriCorps operations are effective,

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efficient, compliant, and transformative. Each year CYCA convenes key staff from every AmeriCorps service sites for a mandatory in-person training dedicated to effective program management, compliance review and update, technical assistance, and best practices. CYCA also holds mandatory quarterly conference calls with service sites and conducts audits of AmeriCorps member files several times each year. CYCA recently earned the lowest risk assessment rating of all Colorado state commission-funded programs (a score of 29 out of a possible 95) in a Serve Colorado review. This rating underscores the amount of time and attention that CYCA staff have dedicated to compliance systems and training.

3. c. Past Performance - PERFORMANCE MEASURES -- CYCA has always met or exceeded the identified performance measures. For CYCA's most recently concluded program year, members improved 281 acres of park land (EN4 Goal: 150 acres) and improved or created 141 miles of trails/waterways (EN5 Goal: 50 miles). In all, 85% of the projects were conducted with a high degree of satisfaction on the part of project partners (94% satisfied or highly satisfied. Goal: 85%). Performance measure O12 is new for CYCA and youth corps, therefore we do not have results related to this measure. However, historical enrollment data shows that a majority of members would qualify under the CNCS definition of "disadvantaged individuals".

ENROLLMENT & RETENTION -- The average enrollment rate for the Mile High YC, Weld County YCC, and CYCA programs in 2012 was 94% and the average retention rate for these three programs was 87%. Given that youth corps engage a high percentage of low-income young people with significant barriers to education and employment, we are pleased with these rates, but are always working to improve them by analyzing program design, setting clear expectations with incoming members, and providing ongoing coaching of participants to foster their success. By way of example, we have learned to better match incoming members with a term of service. For a young person with multiple life barriers and no experience in a structured program, an initial 300-hour term, rather than a 450-hour term, makes most sense. If a 300-hour member leaves after serving 400 hours, she will successfully earn an award. If a 450-hour member leaves after serving only 400-hours, she would "exit without an award".

3. d. Continuous Improvement - CYCA and youth corps are committed to continuous improvement and are guided by current strategic plans or business plans. Youth corps also regularly seek feedback

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from members and project partners in order to make informed decisions about program delivery with the goal of providing the best possible member service experience, education opportunities, and project quality. Youth corps regularly conduct surveys of their outgoing members and project partners. This data is then analyzed and utilized to improve programs on a regular basis. For example, veterans conservation corps crews originally only served for 300-hour seasons. However, we heard from federal hiring managers that these members would be more competitive for fire-related jobs if they had between 12 weeks and 6-months of experience operating a chainsaw rather than just eight weeks. Therefore, all veterans crews now have longer seasons.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

4. a. Cost Effectiveness - The CNCS cost per MSY for this program is \$12,800. The total cost per MSY for the program is \$19,070. CYCA and participating youth corps will provide the balance of the program support which is \$6,270 per MSY (approx. 33% match), making the program extremely cost effective.

The CNCS share of the cost (\$12,800) will be dedicated to all or a portion of activities and expenses such as; member living allowances; criminal history checks; health care for 1,700-hour members, uniforms bearing AmeriCorps identification; personal protective equipment; supervision; staff and member training; crew transportation; and compliance training and program management/oversight by CYCA.

The match portion of the cost (\$6,270) will be dedicated to activities and expenses such as; tools, gear and equipment; staff and member training; crew transportation; and compliance and program management by youth corps. All program costs were determined based on actual average costs across programs for the participating youth corps.

Youth corps, with CYCA's assistance, have a long history of raising funds to support their programs. The total partner support is \$6,270 per MSY. Long-time youth corps supporters have contributed the following each year for the past three years: 1) Great Outdoors Colorado (Colorado's lottery trust fund) - \$1,254; 2) Colorado Parks & Wildlife - \$1,254; 3) federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, US Forest Service, etc.) - \$2,696; 4) Local cities and towns throughout the state - \$313; 5) energy efficiency partners (Xcel Energy, Energy Outreach Colorado, Ft. Collins Utilities, etc.) - \$627; and 6) private individuals, foundations and corporations - \$126.

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4. b. Budget Adequacy - Based on knowledge gleaned from 20 years of youth corps operations, and seven years of operating veterans crews, the total cost per MSY of \$19,070 is adequate to operate a successful program of this size. Economies of scale, especially related to program management, monitoring, and compliance, offer efficiencies not achievable with smaller programs. Non-CNCS funding and resources are budgeted at \$6,270 per MSY (approx. 33% match). The funding sources are detailed above. These fund sources and funding levels were determined based on historical data regarding support for youth corps.

Because this program would not take effect until January 2015 (youth corps operate on a calendar year and so their FY 2014 program would operate from Jan 2015 -- December 2015), no fund sources have been secured, to date. However, the identified funding partners have supported youth corps at the levels listed above (and higher, in some cases), for the past 15-20 years.

Two of the six participating youth corps, Mile High YC and Weld County YCC, currently operate cost reimbursement AmeriCorps programs. Additionally, CYCA currently operates an Education Award Only program and Larimer County CC seriously considered submitting a stand-alone cost reimbursement proposal in response to this NOFO. If this "Youth & Veterans for Colorado" fixed award proposal is funded, Mile High YC, Weld County YCC and CYCA will not seek continuation of their programs and Larimer County CC will not apply directly for a grant in future years, saving CNCS \$1.067 million, 112.71 MSYs, and 323 slots which are now "bundled" into this request for \$1.394 million in funds to support 108.94 MSYs and 346 members. This bundled approach serves to streamline administrative functions, capitalize on economies of scale and centralizes program compliance and oversight.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

More than 20 years of research underscores the efficacy of the youth corps model for positively affecting people's lives. Recent national and Colorado-only research is detailed below.

Texas A & M University, 2012: Colorado youth corps participated in a national evaluation conducted by Mat Duerden (Texas A & M University). This evaluation utilized a comparison group as part of the research methodology. The 2012 study had a sample size of 1,093 corpsmembers and a comparison sample of 633. Colorado corpsmembers were 38% of the sample. Texas A & M also produced a

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Colorado-only report, results of which were nearly identical to the national-level data.

This study revealed that participating in a youth corps produced a variety of benefits from increases in targeted outcomes (e.g., leadership, self-responsibility, etc.) to intentions to pursue education and career paths related to natural resource management and other outdoor recreation industries. Participants also reported high levels of satisfaction with interpersonal aspects of the experience (e.g., crew dynamics). Specifically, results indicated that participants had statistically significant increases across all measures in contrast to comparison group members who experienced no significant changes across a similar period of time. Interpersonal aspects measured in the study that showed statistically significant increases include: community engagement (747% higher than comparison group), positive attitudes toward public lands (1126% higher), environmental activism (755% higher), teamwork (636%), leadership skills (644%), self-responsibility (333%), grit (923%), critical thinking (400%) and communication skills (405%). The results indicate that corps participation was associated with significant positive change in participants across all measured outcomes.

OMNI Institute, 2012, Mile High Youth Corps: For Mile High Youth Corps members, OMNI Institute showed a statistically significant increase in job-related skills; 95.4% of members felt that the service they performed was helpful to the community; Mile High YC had a positive impact on the attitude of members toward environmentalism; statistically significant increases were observed for environmental self-efficacy and perceived likelihood of engaging in pro-environmental behaviors; 92.7% of members were satisfied with the program; and 97.2% would recommend the program to friends.

OMNI Institute, 2012, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps: For Rocky Mountain Youth Corps members, the OMNI Institute study revealed statistically significant improvements for job skills, leadership skills, self-esteem, and stress; a statistically significant increase was observed in civic engagement; members showed statistically significant decreases in their use of alcohol and marijuana; and members reported their experience in the youth corps to be meaningful, challenging, and satisfying, thereby providing valuable career preparation.

All six corps included in this proposal will be required to participate in either a subsequent OMNI Institute or Brigham Young University study (Mat Duerden, formerly of Texas A & M is now at

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Brigham Young University). These studies are conducted by reputable researchers and utilize accepted research methodologies.

Recent post-corps placement rates for education and jobs also underscore the efficacy of the youth corps and veteran conservation corps models. Mile High Youth Corps and Mile High Youth Corps-Colorado Springs had an 80% placement rate, 3-months post-corps, for their members. Similarly, Veterans Conservation Corps alums have an 85% job and education placement rate 3-months post-corps.

### Amendment Justification

n/a

### Clarification Summary

--Please edit your Executive Summary to fit the standard language and information requested in the NOFO. Information beginning with „Two of the six participating youth corps,...“ should be moved to Cost Effectiveness section of the application.

This change was made in the document.

--The application has no information on how volunteers will be utilized and trained. Please confirm community volunteer generation is not a part of the program design.

While volunteer generation is not a core component of the Youth & Veterans for Colorado program, we recognize the value of collective impact and raising awareness of AmeriCorps through volunteer events in communities across Colorado. Our members will participate in national days of service such as Make a Difference Day and MLK Day of Service. Over the course of each program year, Members will engage 250 community volunteers for a total of 1,000 hours. All volunteer orientation sessions will provide comprehensive training on required skills, risk management, and prohibited activities.

--Grant Start Date and Member Enrollment Period: Please review your desired grant award start date and member enrollment period start date in the Applicant Info section of your application. In the Clarification narrative field, please enter a statement confirming the desired grant award start and member enrollment period start. It is not permitted for an applicant to re-submit with an earlier start

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date than previously submitted.

We confirm a start date and enrollment date of 1/1/2015.

Strategic Engagement slots Clarification:

--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?

Five percent of slots will be targeted to recruit members with disabilities. Currently service locations connect with local workforce centers, Workforce Investment Act case managers, Department of Human Services, and non-profit partners to create pathways to service. Service locations will build upon these existing partnerships and develop new collaborations with local stakeholders serving the disabled community to ensure they are notified of opportunities to serve with the local corps. Colorado Youth Corps Association staff will continue to attend Serve Colorado's annual ADA training to ensure we embrace best practices in engaging this community

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

The Youth & Veterans for Colorado program will not be requesting any additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

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--MSY with no program funds attached Clarification:

The Youth & Veterans for Colorado program will not be requesting any additional No-Cost MSYs.

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

Colorado Youth Corps Association will use Summit America Insurance through The Corps Network in cooperation with Serve Colorado to ensure our members.

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

We selected our provider through technical assistance provided by The Corps Network and Serve Colorado.

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

While Summit America's coverage does not currently provide for MEC. Summit America has related that MEC will be provided as of September 1, 2014. We are confident that Summit America will provide MEC by the start of our program (1/01/15), thus no budget alteration are required.

--The Colorado Youth Corps Association listed itself as a 21CSC program; one or more member organizations participating in this project are 21CSC member organizations. For those programs that are approved as 21CSC programs, please respond to the following in the clarification narrative:

As part of the Task Force for Expanding National Service, CNCS and USDA are currently exploring

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the possibility of supporting additional projects for 21st Century Conservation Service Corps(21CSC). The goal is to generate additional service opportunities on USDA National Forests and Grasslands for youth and/or veterans within AmeriCorps by pairing natural resource management needs with 21CSC opportunities. Would your program be able and interested in adding additional slots if selected to be a part of this expanded effort? If so, please provide an estimate of the number of additional slots that you have the capacity to support. This request is solely to get an estimated interest/capacity for growth if the partnership goes forward. There is no commitment at this time to offer the slots nor to use them if they become available.

Yes, Colorado Youth Corps Association would be interested in adding additional slots if selected to be a part of the partnership between the Corporation for National and Community Service and the United States Department of Agriculture. We would have the capacity to support up to 60 additional 300-hr slots (12.699 MSY). Our exact request would be dependent on the size and scope of the additional opportunities provided to our AmeriCorps members.

### **Continuation Changes**

n/a

### **Grant Characteristics**