

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps program will have 30 AmeriCorps members, 30% of whom will be non-degreed, who will implement capacity-building service projects in multiple nonprofit organizations throughout the State of Iowa. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing the efficiency, effectiveness or scale of the programs they have served with. For those Members that were non-degreed they will pursue and complete a college level course within one year of completing their term of service. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 1,150 volunteers that will be engaged in providing direct services at the nonprofits our members are serving with.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Capacity Building and Economic Opportunity. In addition to CNCS's investment of \$390,000, Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps will leverage \$425,000 in private support.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED. While the country slowly emerges from the Great Recession of 2008, many Iowans still struggle. Iowa's nonprofit sector, made up of over 27,000 charitable organizations, is being called upon in unprecedented ways to address the state's most critical needs and improve its citizens' quality of life ("The Role of Charitable Nonprofit Organizations in Iowa: Report of the Governor's Task Force", The University of Iowa, 2005). Further exasperating Iowa's economic recovery and the strain on nonprofits for service are the state's number of "opportunity youth," young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are disconnected from the societal institutions that can help them successfully transition into adulthood, particularly education and employment. In 2011, one out of every ten young Iowans between the age of 18 and 24 was not attending school or working, and did not have a degree beyond high school -- 33,000 young people in total (Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>). If left unchecked, the number of opportunity youth will undermine Iowa's ability to make a strong economic recovery. "Disconnected youth are more likely than other youth to engage in criminal activities, become incarcerated, and rely on public systems of support," and the disengagement of these young adults has real financial consequences (Government Accountability Office, "Disconnected Youth: Federal action could address some of the challenges faced by local programs that reconnect youth to education and employment", February 2008). Further, the lost earnings, lower economic growth, lower tax revenues, and higher government spending on social programming related to Iowa's 33,000 opportunity youth will have an estimated fiscal cost of at least

Narratives

\$7,114,140,000 and a social cost of at least \$19,689,120,000 (Belfield, Leven & Rosen, "The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth", January 2012).

With stagnating poverty levels and more young people than ever out of work and unemployed, the demand for nonprofit support is on a long-term upward trend as Iowans struggle to regain their economic footing. According to a survey of over 500 nonprofit organizations located across the 99 Iowa counties, demand for services continued to increase in 2010 and 2011 despite a slightly improved economy. In 2010, 56% of respondents to the Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center's (INRC) survey indicated a moderate or significant increase in demand for services between 2008 and 2010. In a follow-up survey in 2011, 50% of the same respondents indicated they continued to see increases in demand between 2010 and 2011. Simultaneously, 42% of 2010 respondents and 43% of 2011 indicated their funding decreased, resulting in 74% of 2010 and 79% of 2011 respondents downsizing their staff or operations (Schartz, Smith, & Klein, "Meeting the Technical Assistance and Training Needs of Iowa Nonprofits: An evaluation report for the Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center", December 2011). The continuing cycle of downsizing to meet constrained budgets threatens the Iowa nonprofit sector's ability to meet the increased demand for services.

In times such as these, organizations must deliver more effective solutions with greater efficiency that can be replicated across the state to have the greatest impact possible on improving the economic conditions of Iowa's most impoverished families. As stated by Kristi Knous, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, "Our nonprofit community is navigating through the economic challenges put in front of them ... Working more efficiently and effectively is the theme for success moving forward--with sustainable operations and the benefit of an understanding and supportive community." ("Survey of Nonprofits and the Economy: Key findings," Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, Winter 2012) Based on the Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center's evaluation of nonprofit technical assistance and training needs, nonprofits have moderate to great need for support in recruiting or keeping volunteers, training volunteers, delivering quality programs or services, assessing community needs, outreach to new members or clients, and evaluating program outcomes or impact. (Schartz, Smith, & Klein, p. 81-90) These needs related to volunteer management, client engagement, community assessment, and program development are the type of short-term, high impact projects that full-time AmeriCorps members of varying educational backgrounds can address through the delivery of year-long service projects designed to enhance an organization's ability to deliver impactful programs and services.

National service efforts that help build the capacity of Iowa nonprofits can help address the need for

Narratives

organizations to work more efficiently and effectively. Public Allies proposes to address capacity needs by leveraging the untapped human resources found in the state's Opportunity Youth. In doing so, we will not only increase the poverty reducing services being provided in Iowa communities, we will multiply the support for Iowa's economic recovery by putting those in danger of an economically unstable future on a pathway to sustainable education and career.

B. MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS, EVIDENCE-BASED/EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACT. Public Allies has designed its capacity building service delivery program using research-based best practices and evidence informed by years of our internal performance data. As a result of the service projects delivered by our Members, Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps will increase in ordered, incremental ways, the capacity of Iowa nonprofits. Our model of capacity building begins by developing partnerships with a wide array of community and faith-based organizations that would not otherwise have the ability to manage an AmeriCorps program. During the partnership development phase, Public Allies guides each partner through a capacity self-assessment, based upon the McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid developed in 2001 by Venture Philanthropy Partners and now widely recognized as an industry best practice. The capacity assessment focuses on measuring capacity need in several areas where members could provide supportive service--program development, delivery and evaluation; community engagement and interface; and organizational infrastructure and resources. Members will serve approximately 35 hours per week delivering a project designed to address the identified need, such as developing a volunteer recruitment and management plan, improving language access materials so organizations can conduct outreach to new client non-English speaking clients, or developing collaborations to enhance the service delivery offerings of a program. When effectively delivered by the Member, these projects will result in the increased efficiency, effectiveness, or scale of the targeted program, as captured in a post-service capacity self-assessment.

Both our participatory organizational assessments and our project-based technical assistance are best practices noted for improving the capacity of organizations ("Promising Practices for Improving the Capacity of Faith- and Community-Based Organizations", Fink & Branch for the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). Research also indicates that when applied intentionally and correctly, capacity-building efforts work. In a study on the impact of its Organizational Effectiveness grant program, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation surveyed 169 grantees that finished projects between 2007 and 2009. The findings of their study verify that the investment in an organization's capacity has significant measurable impact on programs and services:

Narratives

program quality and reach improve, organizations become more strategic with programs, and visibility and community support for their programs are increased. (TCC Group, "The David and Lucile Packard Foundation OE Goldmine Research Project Final Report", October 2011) Our own program results bear this out. Of the organizations hosting Public Allies AmeriCorps Members in 2012, 90% indicated their capacity grew as a result of the Member's efforts; 63.7% increased number of people served at their organization; 72.6% improved their level and/or quality of services; and 54.8% were able to start a new project or program.

While simultaneously addressing the ability of nonprofits to deliver vital programs and services, Public Allies also meets the need to place opportunity youth on a pathway to economic self-sufficiency. Of the 30 full-time Members Public Allies is requesting, at least 9 will be Opportunity Youth that have not attained a degree beyond high school. We know, based upon the findings of the report "Opportunity Road: The promise and Challenge of America's Forgotten Youth," that although disengaged, opportunity youth are confident about achieving their goals, want a good career, and want to pursue an education beyond high school. What they lack is the access to jobs or the skills or education to pursue the types of positions that interest them. They also face economic and experiential barriers to go on to school. (Bridgeland, Milano; "Opportunity Road: The promise and challenge of America's forgotten youth"; January 2012) The interventions of Public Allies' Member development program include a number of the noted best practices for working with opportunity youth. The research conducted by Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement and documented in "Civic Pathways Out of Poverty and Into Opportunity" demonstrates that program designs such as Public Allies', which combine service, training, coaching, and experiential learning, have the components to help young adults develop the skills and relationships that can eliminate the barriers that keep them out of school and unemployed.

Community service and civic engagement are a best practice for increasing the odds that young adults will form the connections to role models and social networks. The relationships built during the process of serving help young adults develop a support network (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement, "Civic Pathways out of Poverty and Into Opportunity," November 2010). Through Public Allies, young adults will develop relationships with leaders, co-workers and volunteers at their host sites, and noted Iowan leaders who volunteer their time to train our Members. Service is also an effective way for youth to build the "hard" and "soft" skills required to succeed in higher education, the workforce, and in their personal lives (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement). Trainings such as asset-based community development, volunteer management, effective meeting facilitation, and

Narratives

developing collaborations are designed to give our Members the skills required to successfully carry out their service projects, while trainings such as time management, public speaking, managing up, giving and receiving feedback, and resume writing help our Members address the psycho-social issues that can serve as barriers in moving their careers forward.

The skills our Members develop during the program prepare them to successfully move into sustainable jobs or degree programs. Upon graduating from Public Allies, 57% of the Members from the class of 2012 without degrees went on to take jobs with their host sites, another nonprofit or enroll in a second term of service. Eighty-six percent (86%) were headed back to school, including some who had secured jobs.

C. MEMBER TRAINING. Orientation. Public Allies' Member orientation begins prior to enrollment when applicants are oriented to the minimum requirements for participation in AmeriCorps, service requirements, and the rigorous expectations for participation in Public Allies. Once enrolled, an intensive, multi-day team-building retreat followed by core training orients Members to Public Allies and to the communities they will serve. Core training topics include: the history of National Service and Public Allies; orientation to our Member contracts, policies, performance measures, and standards for excellence; as well as targeted skill-building workshops that prepare Members to excel in their service with our Partner Organizations, the host organizations for which they will deliver their 10-month service projects. Partner Organization supervisors also attend an orientation to review goals and expectations for the program year. This is all prior to the orientation that each Member will receive from their individual service site.

Acknowledgement of prohibited activities is central to the orientation process. Each Member is given a thorough orientation to prohibited activities during initial Member intake processes and during the formal orientation when the Member contract is reviewed. To further underscore the importance of abiding by AmeriCorps regulations, staff emphasizes the types of situations that should be avoided and when Members should consult with their Public Allies Program Manager in the instance the activities they are to engage in appear questionable--this includes making Members aware of our policy regarding indirect prohibited activities, and that volunteers they engage also cannot engage in the same prohibited activities as Members. However, our success in avoiding prohibited activities requires that our Partner Organizations are as well-versed in prohibited activities as our Members. Partner Organizations are presented the prohibited activities in the Public Allies policies and procedures manual, which is thoroughly reviewed during the required Partner Organization orientation. A review of Member position descriptions prior to service ensures in advance that Member

Narratives

service objectives do not include prohibited activities, and regular review of member service activities by Public Allies Program Managers ensures compliance with the regulations during the term.

Training. Members will be brought together weekly as a cohort throughout the term for their Member development activities. Our training program is designed to develop both the leadership capacity of our Members and the skills required to successfully move onto pathway towards a career or post-secondary education following an AmeriCorps term of service.

Our leadership training incorporates our core values: diversity/inclusion, focus on assets, collaboration, integrity, and continuous learning. Training focuses on evolving the Members practice of these values such that they can be effective community builders, with the ability to help elicit solutions from whatever position they find themselves in. As stated by Public Allies CEO, Paul Schmitz, in his book, "Everyone Leads," our leadership training program focuses on cultivating a leadership style grounded in three key beliefs: "Leadership is an action that many can take, not a position that only a few can hold. Leadership is about taking personal and social responsibility to work with others for common goals. Leadership is about the practice of values that engage diverse community members and groups working together effectively." This notion of a new definition of the quality of leadership is gaining momentum as even universities and colleges refine their academic leadership programs to focus on a definition of leadership that is "less a matter of position and income and more one of action and public purpose. It emphasizes collaboration and horizontal arrangements in which everyone is a leader, rather than part of a hierarchy. It is also more bottom-up than top-down, and it is inclusive in welcoming diversity in all its facets." (From Command to Community: a new approach to leadership education in colleges and universities, Nicholas Longo and Cynthia Gibson, 2011)

To help them achieve the objectives of their service projects, Members learn community outreach skills, collaboration, volunteer engagement, community asset mapping and management. To enhance civic participation participate in dialogues and critical reflections to connect their service to larger social issues. To enhance the self-esteem and self-efficacy of the Members that will allow them to pursue educational and career goals, Members will also receive critical self-awareness training such as conflict resolution, time management, networking, and giving and receiving feedback. Public Allies Iowa will be supported by a national training and learning structure facilitated by the Public Allies national office and comprised of the training and learning staff from across the country, benefiting from new ideas and innovative practices.

Since Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps will be a state-wide model, weekly training will take place via

Narratives

conference call/webinar. In addition, the entire cohort will come together, face-to-face, every six weeks for cohort training to help ensure the Member experience is rounded out by the mutual support offered by peers. Nationally, our program has consistently and substantially impacted our Members. Members report that after their service experience they are more values driven and results oriented, clearer on their long-term career goals, inspired/compelled to be more engaged in the community, reflective and aware of their leadership styles, and informed and experienced to have a greater community impact. Nationally, Public Allies has seen that investing in our member experience yields higher returns such as increased organizational impact and retention.

D. MEMBER SUPERVISION. Each Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Member is assigned to carry out their capacity-building work at individual Partner Organizations. We select our Partner Organizations through a competitive process in which they are vetted by Public Allies AmeriCorps staff to determine if the organization is eligible to host an AmeriCorps Member and has the demonstrated need to build organizational capacity. In order to host our Members, Partner Organizations must identify an experienced direct supervisor who can commit to 1) providing daily supervision and support to the Member, ensuring that the Member has the proper resources available to him/her and is on target to achieve service goals, and 2) maintain a close partnership with a Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Program Manager to ensure the Member's experience is relevant and meaningful. Expectations of our Partner Organizations are clearly defined in the host agency contract and policies and procedures manual which each organization agrees to uphold.

A Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Program Manager regularly coordinates with the host site supervisor to troubleshoot the partnership, reflect on the partnership's success, and when necessary, create plans to ensure Members can successfully complete their term. Program Managers ensure Members receive coaching on personal and career goals. Supervision of the Member is a collaboration between the Partner Organization and Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps, and this is reflected in the mid-term and end-of-term evaluations, which take into consideration the feedback of both the Partner Organization supervisor and the Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Program Manager to ensure that the evaluation reflects the Member's performance at the host site, at trainings and in the implementation of Team Service Projects. In the instance that a Member must begin service prior to the findings of their statewide or FBI criminal history checks being returned, the Member will be physically accompanied at both the Partner Organization and Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps by someone approved to have access to vulnerable populations.

E. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION. As a national organization that

Narratives

leverages national service as a solution, Public Allies is deeply committed to ensuring that all AmeriCorps activity is branded appropriately and effectively. We see ourselves as partners in raising the visibility of AmeriCorps and the impact of national service on communities. As such, our commitment to effective co-branding is codified in our national branding guidelines and is enforced through a Memorandum of Understanding between Public Allies National Office and Iowa Community Action Agency, the organization that operates our Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps program. Our websites, Member recruitment portals, and printed materials all prominently display the AmeriCorps logo, and our Members, after being thoroughly oriented to their roles as AmeriCorps Members, are issued AmeriCorps co-branded gear. Within each contract executed with our Partner Organizations, our Members are identified as a resource provided as a result of an AmeriCorps grant and we encourage all service sites to proudly display the AmeriCorps logo. Each Member takes the AmeriCorps oath to "Get things done" and sees themselves not only as Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members but also as part of the greater national service movement. The Member's identification with the national service movement is enhanced through the Member's participation in national days of service such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of service and AmeriCorps awareness-building events during AmeriCorps Week.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND AND STAFFING. Public Allies was founded in 1992 to serve as a pipeline for a new generation of diverse young leaders to begin careers working for community and social change. Since, Public Allies has come to be regarded as a comprehensive program model that blends community service, nonprofit capacity building, civic engagement and leadership development with best practice evaluation processes. Public Allies now exists in 23 communities across the United States with over 5,000 AmeriCorps members having served to date.

As the grantee, Public Allies National Office supports the design, delivery and monitoring of our AmeriCorps program. The National Office currently manages multiple AmeriCorps competitive and formula grants with multiple state commissions and has managed a growing national direct grant since 1993. The lead staff administering the grant, the Director of AmeriCorps Grants and the Director of Finance and Administration, collectively have over twelve years of experience managing AmeriCorps grants. Internal operations are managed by Cris Ros-Dukler, Chief Operating Officer, who oversees the management of a national Program Team that works collaboratively to provide support to local sites. The Program Team provides AmeriCorps grant management and regulatory implementation, monitoring site compliance and quality, technical assistance in program delivery,

Narratives

staff learning interventions, a central program guidance repository, and a web-based Member management system, all of which is available to Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps to tap into for support. Public Allies will contract with the Iowa Community Action Association (ICAA) to serve as the Operating Partner that operates Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps. ICAA is a state-wide network of 18 local Community Actions Agencies that serve all 99 counties in Iowa and exists to address the needs of low-income and disadvantaged citizens, provide services that enhance the capacity of the community action network, and encourage the professional development of its members. As the Subgrantee, ICAA is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the grant. Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps successfully launched in September 2013 under the auspices of ICAA. On the ground, Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is led by a full-time site director, Laura Aldrich, who manages the program's day-to-day operations including managing the other Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps staff, building the relevant external relationships required to support the program, and overseeing program compliance. The program also has two Program Managers that together are responsible for Member coaching, training, recruitment, and host site partnership management. Additional training support is provided by a training manager.

B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY. Nationally, Public Allies has a unified vision, mission, and program standards that all sites must follow. We ensure program excellence through our site Scorecard, a rigorous annual assessment that measures site health in three areas: compliance, quality, and impact. These elements allow us to work with sites to ensure that all aspects of site health are leveraged for maximum impact. Our national program team annually reviews the compliance standards, which cover all AmeriCorps regulations and Public Allies program requirements while leaving room for sites to respond to different local needs and issues. As the implementing agency, ICAA signs an agreement with Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps to comply with the minimum standards, avoid prohibited activities, and participate in all of our evaluation activities, which are monitored by the National Program Team.

In addition to monitoring program outcomes, Public Allies also monitors closely the service of our Members. The staff of Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps will work with our Partner Organizations to establish clear position descriptions for each Member with service objectives free of prohibited activities and by providing comprehensive orientations to both Members and Partners Organizations. Our internet-based evaluation tool enables staff to continuously monitor the service activities of our members individually. A national staff person will make at least one official site visit each year, during which time file reviews, interviews with Members and Partner Organization supervisors,

Narratives

attendance at trainings and team service project meetings and other monitoring activities take place. The National Office will support Public Allies Iowa in submitting all required reports to the state commission. Our high-tech and direct monitoring activities enable us to support the continuous learning and improvement of our programs.

Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps Members and their host sites will be actively monitored by program staff to ensure the Members' service is carried out in a manner compliant with AmeriCorps regulations. Delivered with an emphasis on prevention, we begin by orienting host sites to AmeriCorps regulations, particularly prohibited activities during pre-service orientation, and monitor for prohibited activities in a thorough review of position descriptions prior to the service year's start. During the service term, Public Allies staff regularly review Member service activity logs (filed online monthly) for prohibited activities, monitor Member stipend payments, and meet with Members and host site supervisors three times per year to ensure compliant service activities are being delivered. Our compliance management systems are designed to root out the causes of systemic issues. In the instance when systemic compliance concerns are found, the problem is approached through a requirement for education and widely applied corrective actions. Both sites and Partner Organizations demonstrating an inability to comply can be subject to actions up-to and including increased monitoring, placing the partnership on probation, or terminating the relationship.

C. PAST PERFORMANCE. Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is currently in its first year of operation as a state formula grantee and has not yet operated a full funding cycle.

D. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. Continuous improvement is one of the core values of Public Allies and the organization lives that out by annually soliciting feedback and satisfaction data from both the Members and their host sites. That data is used to help inform the program's quality indicators on the national Scorecard. Public Allies national office regularly reviews this data and will provide it to the Iowa AmeriCorps program to use in planning its own evolving program development. Occasionally, particular trends or key points of data are given a deeper level of analysis to help inform shifts in performance measure and program design. During the Fall and Winter of 2013, the national office is conducting a review of Opportunity Youth retention data, to identify best practices that can be adopted into the model to ensure successful delivery of our outcomes for this population.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS. Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps' requested cost per Member Service Year is \$13,000. Public Allies seeks the maximum AmeriCorps grant per MSY for three reasons. First, our program model is rigorous. The extensive leadership development and nonprofit capacity-building

Narratives

activities we undertake, especially with smaller community organizations, make our program model more distinctive than others. The average budgeted cost for training in a Public Allies program is \$13,877. We generate savings by engaging community leaders as volunteers. Second, we serve a very diverse corps of young people with about half college graduates and half with a high school diploma or GED and provide more extensive support to our members as a result. Coaching is a best practice when working with this population. To meet this need, we employ a maximum of a 15:1 Member to Program Manager ratio. This ensures that each of our Members receives the direct attention and support required to get the most of the program and successfully complete. Third, we pay a higher stipend than most programs with an average about \$14,000 for 1,700 hours. Research indicates that 28% of opportunity youth are parents or have familial obligations that can make a full time service commitment challenging. In order to attract and retain a diverse corps that includes opportunity youth, we must offer a stipend that will allow the Member to minimally sustain themselves and their dependents. Such a stipend makes our program available to a more diverse population and rewards the individual placement work they are doing at organizations. It should be noted that our average net cost per participant (total cost per member minus stipends and benefits) is \$13,929. This is comparably lower than what many organizations would typically pay either entry level workers or consultants to take on the activities our Members are performing. To reduce the costs associated with offering a higher stipend and to ensure full commitment to the success of our Members, Public Allies requires our Partner Organizations to pay \$14,000 as a cost share for the Member's service.

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY. The total cost for the Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps program is conservatively estimated at \$775,000, of which 50% comes from CNCS. Another 42% of the program's costs are covered by the cost share arrangement between Public Allies and our Member host sites. The remaining costs are covered by in-kind and private donations leveraged by our Operating Partner, the Iowa Community Action Association. This cost-share model allows Public Allies to concentrate our AmeriCorps grant funds to cover non-living allowance Member expenses such as 3 program staff, Member health care, criminal history checks, training costs, space rental, office supplies, and technology costs associated with training a cohort spread throughout the state.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Narratives

Clarification Summary

2013-14 CLARIFICATION RESPONSES

PROGRAMMATIC CLARIFICATIONS

1. Please further describe the role of the Iowa Community Action Association and its staff in managing this grant, vs. the roles of Public Allies Iowa staff.

1. Public Allies National Office contracts with the Iowa Community Action Association (ICAA) to operate the Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps program. As such, ICAA is the employer of the Public Allies Iowa staff, and the Public Allies Iowa Site Director reports directly to the Executive Director of ICAA. Public Allies' COO manages the relationship with the ICAA Executive Director to ensure fidelity to the grant.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATIONS

1. The minimum hours an individual must perform in order to be counted as a recruited volunteer is 0.25 hours. Public Allies Members record within PISD, our service documentation and timekeeping system, the number of un-duplicated volunteers they have recruited over a month, the number of hours served by each of those volunteers, and the activities performed by those volunteers. The system records the service hours performed by volunteers in quarter-hour increments.

2. As in the question related to performance measure G3-3.1, the minimum hours an individual must perform in order to be counted as a managed volunteer is 0.25 hours. Public Allies Members record in PISD the number of un-duplicated volunteers they have managed over a month, the number of hours served by each of those volunteers, and the activities performed by those volunteers. The system records the service hours performed by volunteers in quarter-hour increments. Managed volunteers are recorded separately from recruited volunteers within the PISD.

3. This is a discrepancy in the description of the output. There are 30 Members that will provide capacity building services for 22 or more nonprofit organizations. This adjustment in language has been made in the performance measure.

4. The basis for determining the targets for performance measures G3-3.9 and G3-3.10 begins with determining the number of host sites that will still be hosting AmeriCorps Members at the end of the term. Our estimated retention rate is 85%. Given this, we assume that 18 of the 22 agencies that

Narratives

begin the program will still be hosting Members at the close of the term, and thus experience a full delivery of capacity building services. Of the 18 organizations for which projects have been completed, we estimate that 85% of these organizations (15) will indicate their capacity has been enhanced as a result of service. Those 15 organizations are broken down between the 6 estimated to experience an increase in capacity, the 5 expected to implement effective volunteer management practices, and the 4 expected to experience and increase in efficiency.

We believe the estimates presented for our capacity building outcomes represent significant and sound stretch goals for impacting the capacity of our partnering organizations. For 2012-13, 92% of our National Direct partners that sought an increase their effectiveness indicated they experienced such a growth at the end of the term, and 92% of partners looking to increase their efficiency indicated their efficiency did indeed grow. Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is just in its first year of operation. Increasing the capacity of 15 out of 22 participating organizations represents rigorous but realistic targets for a new site. We have yet to see the program's inaugural performance towards these goals. Following two full years operation, we will review the targets and adjust them as necessary.

5. An annual alumni survey was launched in 2013 for graduates of Public Allies class of 2012-13. The survey is being updated to ensure that it includes questions that identify our opportunity youth graduates, and questions to gather information about college course initiation and completion. The survey will be completed and sent out to graduates of the 2013-14 class in the summer of 2014.

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT SLOTS

1. Our goal is to have 10% of our 2014-15 Members representative of the disability community. Over the course of our first year of operation we've learned that at least 12 Members (48%) of our current class have mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities. However, only 1 Member (4% of the class) officially disclosed the disability on Member enrollment forms. This experience tells us that we can successfully engage Members with disabilities, but that reporting this can be difficult due to Member decisions regarding self-reporting of that information. A goal of 10% reflects what we feel is an achievable stretch goal.

Our plan for recruitment of persons with disabilities is to continue developing the connections we made this year with organizations that advocate for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, such

Narratives

as Goodwill, Easter Seals, Vocational Rehab, and Veterans Affairs. As a program, we have cultivated a relationship with Michael Gamel-McCormick, Disability Policy Advisor to Senator Harkin. He has been a valuable connection in identifying gatekeepers and stakeholders in the community.

Additionally, we have already promoted our positions for next year at the Goodwill career fair and will make other efforts to recruit at similar venues.

2. Request for additional MSYs

As a new program, Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps is interested in focusing on ensuring that it soundly implements the program and can fulfill the commitment to enroll and retain the 30 Members requested. However, the site is committed to enrolling a class that is fully representative of all of Iowa's residents, including those with disabilities.

NO COST MSY'S

1. Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps declines the opportunity to request additional slots at this time.

HEALTHCARE

1. Public Allies Iowa AmeriCorps will offer The Corps Network Healthcare Insurance Plan (TCN) to Members while simultaneously educating Members about other options they may be eligible for through the Health Insurance Marketplace and their state Medicaid.

2. The Corps Network Plan was one of two known plans specific to the AmeriCorps program when SRC Aetna (our former provider) announced they were exiting entirely from the AmeriCorps market by December 31, 2013. While vetting both TCN and the alternative, BCS Inc., we found that TCN's broker, Chris Rooney at Willis of Seattle was much more engaged and provided better communication with its clients and CNCS in establishing an ACA compliant plan. More specifically, TCN sought out MEC designation through the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) which would have allowed the plan to remain ACA compliant, meet AmeriCorps healthcare standards, and be cost-effective which would also satisfy the Individual Mandate. BCS Inc. had no intentions of applying for MEC designation.

In December, we learned that CMS dismissed TCN's application for MEC designation. Based upon CNCS' published ACA guidance to AmeriCorps Members and the emergent need for continuity of

Narratives

health coverage after the December 31, 2013 cutoff, we felt confident moving forward with TCN as our primary health plan. In addition to offering the TCN plan, we also plan to educate our members about the "Individual Mandate" and the ACA compliant plans that they may be eligible for through the Health Insurance Marketplace and the state's Medicaid program.

3. Our proposed budget is based on the individual cost of a plan through TCN which does not fully provide for MEC coverage. However, our full-time members are thoroughly educated about their options for securing health coverage beyond the Public Allies offered plan. If they choose, they may apply for a fully ACA compliant plan in the Marketplace or their State Medicaid program. Members that decide to forgo coverage through TCN will be eligible to submit their monthly premium cost (for an individual) to Public Allies for reimbursement, up to the same rate as TCN's plan which currently is \$160.43.

4. We are offering Members reimbursement for their individual MEC plans up to the same rate as the TCN plan. Our program's budget assumes covering costs up to \$160.43 per month per member, and thus there are no budget adjustments necessary to provide the MEC coverage reimbursement to Members.

5. Our decision to proceed in this manner was informed by information we received from TCN and recently emerging information from CNCS.

ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATION RESPONSE

For Performance Measures G3-3.1 and G3-3.2, describe how the program determined that .25 hours is a reasonable minimum for the amount of time to be counted as a volunteer. Describe how the types of activities performed in this time frame would be beneficial to meet the needs of the nonprofit organizations and the communities served. Please consider increasing the minimum amount of time an individual must perform in order to be counted as either a recruited or managed volunteer, or justify how .25 hours is appropriate.

Each Public Allies partner organization determines for themselves, based upon their needs, what a reasonable amount of time is for a volunteer's service to make an impact. We operate under the assumption that the organizations defining the volunteer service projects are in the best position to

Narratives

determine the amount of time required for the project to be completed or for an impact to be made. We set 0.25 hours as a minimum, to allow for variances in our partner organization needs. We don't wish to set a higher benchmark that may deter our Members from accounting for the contributions of all volunteers they may work with.

The 0.25 hour benchmark is a minimum requirement for the time to be captured in our system. In actuality, the average amount of time served per volunteer recruited or managed by all Public Allies sites over the past two years is 7.8 hours. Thus far, volunteers recruited or managed by Public Allies Iowa Members in 2013-14 have served 3.4 hours each. So while the minimum threshold is 0.25, we fully expect that the volunteers will serve far more than the minimum.

FINAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE CLARIFICATION RESPONSE

The applicant must increase the minimum amount of time required in order to be counted as a recruited and/or managed volunteer for the Capacity Building performance measures. Alternatively, the program could provide evidence substantiating that the proposed time of 15 minutes, in conjunction with the proposed volunteer activities, is an effective program design.

We have made the change to a one hour minimum and updated the performance measures in eGrants.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics