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Executive Summary

EarthCorps will have 30 AmeriCorps members who will deliver watershed restoration services including invasive plant removal, native planting, slope stabilization/erosion control and trailwork at project sites in parks and natural areas primarily in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties, in Washington State. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for documented ecological improvements to 100 acres of land. The AmeriCorps members will recruit and manage an additional 10,000 community volunteers who will contribute 32,000 hours of restoration activities. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of environmental stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$360,000 will leverage \$240,000 of non-federal public sources and private sources.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Problem/Need

According to the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP), a state agency charged with leading the recovery of one of the largest natural resources and economic drivers in Washington State, Puget Sound is an ecosystem at-risk. "Swimming beaches and shellfish beds are closed because of contamination. Dead zones are appearing in South Sound and Hood Canal where the lack of oxygen is killing fish and marine life. Populations of salmon once numbered in the millions are now threatened with extinction. The iconic species of Puget Sound, the southern resident killer whale carries some of the world's highest levels of chemicals in their bodies. Tribal nations that depend on Puget Sound resources to sustain their culture, traditions and ways of life find these uses, many of which are guaranteed by treaties, increasingly imperiled." (PSP 2012-13 Action Agenda) The Assessment of Selected Toxic Chemicals in the Puget Sound Basin: 2007-2011 by PSP and the Washington Department of Ecology found that over 9,000 metric tons of toxic chemicals enter Puget Sound each year. The most common chemical pollution pathway is "stormwater run-off" - a mix of dirt, oil, pet waste and debris that washes off of roads, roofs and lawns during storms, into creeks, rivers and bays. Large quantities of stormwater dump into Puget Sound in the highly urbanized metropolitan area bounded by the cities of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett. Each city sits at the mouth of a vast river system that drains into Puget Sound. The Duwamish, Puyallup and Snohomish are three of the 19 major rivers in Puget Sound. Their watersheds are located in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties.

Cleaning up the poisoned water of Puget Sound is imperative for the state economy and public health: the annual Puget Sound shellfish harvest is valued at \$86 million and the annual fish harvest at \$61 million. China's December 3, 2013 ban on tainted geoduck clams from Puget Sound is a painful

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example of the high cost polluted waters can have on the local economy and dozens of shellfish harvesting jobs. Using the Sound for swimming, recreation and food is widespread among the region's 4.3 million residents. Pollution affects people of all income levels, but it can be especially detrimental to low-income residents and people whose culture makes them dependent on fishing in polluted waters for food. A 2013 health impact assessment by the University of Washington School of Public Health noted that in Seattle, members of Asian, Oceanic, and African immigrant communities, tribes and Alaskan natives regularly eat fish and shellfish harvested from sites along Seattle's waterfront, the Port of Seattle, and the Duwamish River. Also, 40% of 199 local foodbank users surveyed in the study consume seafood from these sites, near the Duwamish Superfund site. Water sampling at these sites during the 2005 fishing season showed levels of highly toxic chemicals known as Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) that were up to 48 times higher than the water quality standard set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Under Superfund, the EPA, Port and industrial polluters are cleaning up pollution that has already reached the water. Meanwhile, it is vital to implement additional ways to stem the tons of pollution that continue to enter Puget Sound each year.

AmeriCorps members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems

Evidence-Based and Measurable Community Impact

AmeriCorps members are well-suited to help meet the community need to stop Puget Sound pollution by engaging in watershed restoration. Multiple studies have found that watersheds with more forest cover have lower levels of stormwater runoff than areas dominated by urban and agricultural uses. For example, Brett, M.T. et al. showed that nutrient loading in streams was significantly lower in forested areas than in heavily developed areas in their 2005 article "Non-Point-Source Impacts on Stream Nutrient Concentrations Along a Forest to Urban Gradient" in *Environmental Management*, 35(3), 330-342. Matteo, M., et al., indicated that restoring forests along streams in already-developed watersheds can positively impact water quality and runoff in their 2006 article "Watershed-scale impacts of forest buffers on water quality and runoff in urbanizing environment" in the *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, 132(3), 144-152. A 2011 report by the EPA Office of Research and Development compared various water quality interventions across eight river systems in the Chesapeake Bay and confirmed that a buffer of forests along streams reduces chemicals and runoff in waterways. The mechanism for doing so is called "stormwater retention" - the ability of healthy soils and plants to absorb toxic water rather than allowing it to run off into streams or bodies of water like Puget Sound. Some plants can even convert toxic chemicals into less toxic forms.

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AmeriCorps members can be trained relatively quickly to implement on-the-ground activities such as installing saplings and native plants and removing invasive weeds, that help to restore the forests, wetlands, and marshes to retain and filter water as it moves through the watershed. They can also lead community volunteers in this work, teaching them about the behavior changes they can make to reduce their stormwater footprint - such as using native plants in their yards rather than maintaining lawns with chemical fertilizers that can wash off into storm drains. AmeriCorps members can make a substantial contribution toward meeting the community need for watershed restoration within the 10.5 month timeframe; they are highly motivated to serve their communities and can bring fresh energy each year to a long-term initiative. Their work at each project site will be guided by a science framework including vegetation management plans and a well-defined scope of work. The impact of their service will be measured through daily work logs, surveys of land managers, and ecological monitoring.

Theory of Change and Logic Model / Evidence-Base

Our theory of change envisions AmeriCorps members implementing watershed restoration activities and engaging volunteers in order to meet the urgent community need to stop toxic pollution from entering Puget Sound, an at-risk ecosystem. This approach is "community-based environmental restoration," defined by Ecological Restoration International as "a bottom-up approach involving both professionals and volunteers, which fosters environmental stewardship and enhances community sustainability with the aim of restoring vital ecosystem components (i.e. goods and services) and increasing broader-scale functionality and health." This theory of change is modeled on the successes of the watershed restoration initiative underway in the Chesapeake Bay. We propose to leverage AmeriCorps members to implement watershed restoration activities that improve forest health, which will increase stormwater retention.

Strong evidence supporting the hypothesis that AmeriCorps members can effectively lead community volunteers in achieving measurable improvements to public lands is provided by on-going studies of Seattle's forested parks initiated by Seattle Urban Nature (SUN). SUN's Comprehensive Habitat Assessment study started in 2005 with 16 permanent monitoring plots in representative sites across forests on public lands in Seattle. It has grown to encompass 202 plots in 59 Seattle parks and an additional 18 plots in nearby cities. The experimental design follows accepted ecological science methodology: prior to restoration activities occurring in Seattle parks, a permanent plot is established and baseline data is gathered. Plots are re-monitored annually. The results show that compared to

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control sites with no intervention, sites with targeted interventions by AmeriCorps members, contractors, and other volunteers show a measurable decrease in invasive plant species, increase in native plant cover, and increase in regenerating conifer trees. These parameters are key indicators of forest health. This can be input into a standard calculation of stormwater retention value. An independent analysis of the data on 65 sites was presented by Restoration Analytics Design to Seattle stakeholders in September 2013 and confirmed these findings: native plant cover increased on average by nearly 20 percentage points; mean invasive plant cover decreased from 43% to 24%; and evidence of regenerating trees increased from 1.3% to 1.4% of the total vegetation cover. These studies show positive findings for the intended outcomes for forest health. These studies strongly suggest a causal link between member and volunteer restoration activities and improvement in forest characteristics that correlate with increased stormwater retention value over time. With a high level of confidence, we expect that the watershed restoration activities proposed in this program design will lead to similar improvements to stormwater retention value for the targeted sites.

The proposed program design is shown in the attached Logic Model and outlined below. The primary beneficiaries are the watershed restoration sites that are the recipients of members' service activities. Community volunteers recruited and managed by members are secondary beneficiaries. Tertiary beneficiaries of the program are the members themselves, whose knowledge, behaviors and lives are changed by the experience.

PRIMARY BENEFICIARY (first row of Logic Model) -- watershed restoration sites

INPUTS: 30 AmeriCorps members will work in teams of six

ACTIVITIES: Members implement on-the-ground activities such as removing invasive weeds, planting native plants, trees and especially conifers (which absorb water year-round, unlike deciduous trees). They will stabilize slopes and maintain or build trails, to improve public safety, access and minimize erosion. Work takes place on public lands such as city and county parks and natural areas in Puget Sound watersheds, primarily in the high population centers of King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. Some work takes place in wilderness areas in the upper watersheds. Duration and dosage of the intervention varies according to the specific site's need, and is governed by the site's vegetation management plan. This typically ranges from five to 50 crew days (6 members for 9 hours) per site per program year.

OUTPUTS: 100 acres of public lands will be improved in terms of ecosystem health by removing threats (e.g. invasive species or erosion), or increasing biodiversity. Five miles of trail will be constructed, maintained, or improved. This small mileage reflects the difficulty of building trail and/or

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completing significant repairs such as installing crib walls on heavily used trails. These outputs are measured in daily worklogs completed by the crews and entered into EarthCorps' field database.

Measurements are verified by the responsible land management agency.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOME: The sites where members complete restoration projects will meet a target in the site's vegetation management plan, such as increasing the number of conifers in a site. This outcome is measured through worklogs and verified by the land management agency.

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOME: After three years, the sites are expected to show an increase in biodiversity, an indicator of resiliency in a recovering ecosystem. This outcome will be measured through robust ecological monitoring on a representative sample of one-fourth of the improved lands (25 acres).

LONG-TERM OUTCOME: After five or more years, the sites will show evidence of native plant regeneration, an indicator of sustainability, as well as an increase in mature tree biomass, which maps to an increase in stormwater retention value. This outcome will be measured through robust ecological monitoring, as above. As indicated in the evaluation plan, EarthCorps ecologists, external contractors, and trained citizen scientists perform annual ecological monitoring at dozens of restoration sites using standardized protocols.

The proposed program design galvanizes community volunteers to help meet the community need to restore watersheds, and it also benefits the volunteers. The rationale for targeting K-12 youth for 50% of the volunteers is a 2007 study of urban natural resource professionals by EarthCorps and University of Washington researchers. Professionals traced career choice to participation as youth in a lifecycle progression of quality nature programs, highlighting the importance of starting early to effect long-term behavior change.

SECONDARY BENEFICIARY (second row of Logic Model) -- community volunteers

INPUTS: 30 AmeriCorps members

ACTIVITIES: Of the 30 members, six will focus especially on recruiting community volunteers, targeting youth, college students, employees of local businesses and community groups, and Baby Boomers. They will make special efforts to engage cultural and immigrant groups, low-income residents, and others who use degraded waters as a food source, so that the people most impacted by pollution can be empowered to participate in improving their natural resource. All 30 members will learn to train and lead volunteers in activities including invasive plant removal and native planting.

OUTPUTS: 10,000 volunteers will complete more than 32,000 hours of service. These conservative estimates are based on past experience: in 2012, EarthCorps engaged 12,844 volunteers; by early

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November 2013, EarthCorps engaged 11,241 volunteers. The members will lead up to 200 "volunteer events." A typical event is four hours, with shorter duration for school-based events to fit the constraints of the school day. The hours of service estimate is based on past average service hours.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES: Volunteers will gain four pieces of foundational knowledge including the 1) ability to identify native and invasive plants; 2) what ecosystem services are -- including stormwater retention and water filtration; 3) how healthy forests contribute to ecosystem services; and 4) how to counteract common threats to forest health. This outcome will be measured through a post survey at the conclusion of each volunteer event, asking questions such as "Can you name one native plant?" "How can healthy forests prevent stormwater run-off?" "What is one thing you can do to stop stormwater run-off?" This allows volunteers to reflect on their service, confirm new knowledge gained, and provide feedback about the event.

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES: Based on past experience, about half of episodic volunteers will commit to make a behavior change such as cleaning storm drains, removing invasive plants, or volunteering again. Thanks to Salesforce, a customer relationship management database used for registering volunteers for events, it is possible to track "repeat" volunteers who come to more than one event. Based on experience and a new effort to incentivize repeat volunteering, the expectation is that one-fifth of volunteers will repeat. About 100 volunteers will step up to an increased level of engagement and leadership, by enrolling in a formal steward program.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES: Formal Stewards increase the capacity for watershed restoration and sustain volunteerism by recruiting additional volunteers and managing their own "volunteer events." With support from EarthCorps staff, they are respected as leaders and connected to a community of their peers, through networking events and educational workshops and trainings. This outcome can be measured through interviews with the stewards. Like the volunteers who move beyond episodic engagement to the level of formal Steward, AmeriCorps members develop skills, knowledge and leadership that can transform their careers and multiply their long-term impact.

TERTIARY BENEFICIARY (third row of Logic Model) -- AmeriCorps members

INPUTS: 30 AmeriCorps members

ACTIVITIES: Members spend 80% of time in the field, and 20% in education

OUTPUTS: 30 graduates of the program; 30 education workshops

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES: Members gain concrete knowledge about watershed restoration; professional work skills such as time management and delegation; and an awareness of their personal leadership style and practices. This outcome is measured in verbal and written post-program

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evaluation. To assess leadership development, program staff will use the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) tool developed by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, on the basis of their evidence-based studies to approach leadership as a "measurable, learnable, and teachable set of behaviors."

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES: 90% of members will obtain employment within a year of graduation from the program. This outcome will be measured through the institution of a new, annual survey instrument for program graduates. In addition to requests for updated contact information and current employment, the survey will include LPI questions to assess on-going leadership growth.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES: Based on past experience, at least 50% of alumni will obtain employment in a relevant environmental or community service field within five years of graduation. 10% will take on formal leadership roles. The annual alumni survey will be used to measure this outcome.

Member Training

The two-week member orientation includes meeting staff, reviewing AmeriCorps' prohibited activities, setting expectations, and attending an off-site teambuilding retreat. AmeriCorps language and prohibited activities are included in member position descriptions and discussed in the interview process. 20% of the program is dedicated to education and training. On average, members have two education days per month, in the classroom or on field trips that illuminate the topic. The curriculum is based on EarthCorps' three pillars of habitat, community and leadership. Topics include: habitat restoration theory, best management practices in restoration, and natural history of the Pacific Northwest; national service education; leadership development; volunteer management skills such as public speaking, volunteer safety; cultural competency, communication, team dynamics, conflict management and civic responsibility. Members are trained to educate, lead and communicate effectively with volunteers, for example in workshops on "Engaging Diverse Populations," "Multicultural Outdoor Environmental Leadership," and "Engaging Youth." Several experts in environmental restoration fields volunteer their time to provide educational training such as salmon life cycle, Puget Sound restoration history, and how to plan projects with community stakeholders. EarthCorps maintains a large in-house lending library and computers with Internet access for members to use to further research.

Member Supervision

A crew leader accompanies each team of members and provides the perspective of someone with a

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year or more of experience in environmental service and leadership. Crew leaders are recruited from EarthCorps, other AmeriCorps programs, conservation corps programs, and land management agencies. They participate in an intensive two-week training prior to the members' arrival, and receive training throughout the program year. Crew leaders meet weekly with the program manager and the operations manager to discuss leadership topics and receive support. Once a month, they receive in-depth technical or soft skill training.

Members meet at EarthCorps every day at 7:30 am for morning announcements and warm up exercises. Work teams meet with an EarthCorps staff member to get an overview of the service project they will be working on for the day or multiple days. The crew travels to their worksite to complete the service tasks. The Crew leader oversees the implementation of activities at the site and coordinates the day. Using a service learning approach to reflect collectively on their service, crews meet every other week to discuss how members are doing, lessons learned, and any other issues. Each AmeriCorps member meets once per week for 30 minutes with a staff member to check in and reflect on the week's experiences. Every other week, all members and EarthCorps staff hold an "AllCorps" meeting to present their recent experiences, address issues and ideas, discuss upcoming events or projects, and to give appreciations. Thanks to this investment, members leave the program with an understanding of how effective teamwork can allow them to accomplish goals. In the 2012 alumni survey, more than 90 respondents submitted comments such as: "EarthCorps gave me the confidence and community of support to feel confident in going forward as a leader for environmental justice and sustainability."

Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

EarthCorps makes its affiliation known by placing the AmeriCorps logo on the website, marketing materials, and volunteer event signage. Members must wear a uniform with AmeriCorps logos on the shirt and rain gear/jackets. During member orientation and weekly member meetings, members discuss AmeriCorps and the history of national service in order to instill pride and allegiance with AmeriCorps. As part of volunteer management training, they learn messaging and protocols for discussing their AmeriCorps experience with community volunteers during events. Members are encouraged to become active alumni by participating in events led by the EarthCorps Alumni Committee and AmeriCorps alumni events.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Background and Staffing

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Founded in 1993, EarthCorps has enjoyed a high level of support and direct involvement from businesses, community organizations, and local, state and national elected officials because of our commitment to developing capable youth leaders to meet community needs. EarthCorps became an AmeriCorps affiliate in 2000, offering AmeriCorps members an intensive experience in environmental service and leadership. EarthCorps' Program Director with 20 years of experience in corps programming, oversees four corps program staff, and manages HR. The Corps Operations Manager supervises the program staff to develop annual program goals and outcomes, and implements evaluation and reporting for continuous improvement. The Corps Program Manager oversees the AmeriCorps members' day-to-day operations, education and training, and ensures adherence to AmeriCorps guidelines. The Recruiter drives member recruitment and provides personnel and benefits support. The Logistics Coordinator issues uniforms and safety and communications equipment, gives administrative and personnel support, and tracks attendance and worklogs. Other EarthCorps Field and Science staff provide guidance on environmental service and ecological science projects, and community outreach, as needed. Other administrative staff assist program staff with program budgeting, payroll, facilities and fleet management as needed.

EarthCorps has experience managing AmeriCorps grants in the education-award only program, as well as Washington State formula and competitive grants. EarthCorps has managed government grants and contracts with King County, multiple municipalities, and federal funding allocated via the state Recreation and Conservation Office. EarthCorps collaborated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Community-Based Habitat Restoration Partnership (NOAA-CRP) to run a regional Request for Proposals (RFP) process. EarthCorps staff conducted outreach to community groups, provided project development guidance, organized site visits, assisted in project selection, provided technical expertise, project management and work crews, and facilitated narrative and financial reporting on project outcomes. Similarly, in conjunction with Seattle Public Utilities, EarthCorps ran a local RFP process for Climate Action Grants to community groups to improve habitat adjacent to urban streams in the utility's management area. EarthCorps provided advice on the RFP and reporting process, community outreach, guidance, technical expertise, project management and work crews for the projects.

Cost-effective management at EarthCorps includes leveraging volunteers to perform appropriate work, and is an important factor in keeping EarthCorps' programs running on time, on budget, and delivering high quality results. Fiscal oversight is provided monthly by a standing Finance Committee of the Board of Directors. Accounting systems follow the GAAP and support cost allocation.

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EarthCorps has an Accounting Practices Manual that details procedures for internal controls and has consistently achieved a clean financial audit. The organization has never received enough federal funds to trigger an A-133 audit. EarthCorps is an accredited member of Earth Share of Washington, an active member of The Corps Network and has participated in the Excellence in Corps Operations assessment, and has provisional accreditation with the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps. In 2014, we plan to participate in the permanent accreditation process, which will include a thorough peer review and evaluation.

Compliance and Accountability

EarthCorps has an excellent record of compliance with AmeriCorps. Compliance is part of EarthCorps' risk management approach, which focuses on getting members invested into understanding and committing to policy adherence, in order to minimize infractions. During member orientation, members and staff review AmeriCorps policies and procedures as stated in the EarthCorps Policy Handbook. Crew Leaders hold safety/compliance meetings daily at each service site to highlight potential issues. They are responsible for oversight on the service project sites, and report any compliance issues by phone to the Corps Program Manager immediately. Weekly debriefs allow the program staff to detect any emerging issues or trends and provide support around issue management. We have standard forms to report discipline, safety, or compliance issues. These are tracked and managed by the Corps Operations Manager in a database for on-going assessment. Our MOUs with project partners explicitly state AmeriCorps policies. If partner compliance issues arise, they are addressed by the Program Director and Field Director with the partner. EarthCorps and the WCNCs have a strong relationship characterized by responsiveness, transparency, and due diligence. We invite our state program officer to work alongside our members. We submit all monthly and annual reports to our program officer in a timely manner, attend all trainings, and respond to site and audit monitoring questions and findings quickly.

Past Performance

In the past three program years, EarthCorps met or exceeded all performance measure targets. In 2013 EarthCorps met or exceeded all performance measures, including: 1) A target of 100 acres of at risk ecosystems was exceeded (actual: 142 acres) and in 2012 and 2011, the target of 80 acres of at risk ecosystems was exceeded (2012 actual: 120 acres; 2011 actual: 286 acres). The unusually large number of acres in 2011 reflects a focus on urgently-needed large-scale herbicide application work.

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The proposed watershed restoration intervention requires intensive engagement on targeted sites, so we estimate that the overall acreage will be 100 acres, even with an increase in the number of members.

In all three years, both outcomes were met of 85% of project sponsors reporting an improvement in public land due to member's activities, and 85% of volunteers indicated increased awareness about Puget Sound environmental issues and committed to volunteering again.

In 2012-2013, member enrollment was 100% and retention was 95%. (One member was dismissed one month before the end of his term due to repeated tardiness.) In 2011-2012, member enrollment was 100% and retention was 87% (three members were dismissed early due to family relocation, pre-existing physical injury, and lack of commitment. In 2010-2011 member enrollment and retention were at 100%.

EarthCorps works hard to run programs with 100% retention. From the very first interviews the recruiter screens for commitment to serve, responsibility to meet community need, accountability to peers, and ownership of meeting performance targets. We have comprehensive policies and protocols, and take the time to communicate clearly our expectations. We provide performance feedback three times throughout the service year, within 60 days in to service, a mid-term evaluation, and a final review at the end of service.

Continuous Improvement

Timely and regular feedback from members is solicited at weekly meetings and check-ins, quarterly retreats and the final evaluation. This feedback is integrated into annual planning meetings of the program staff in order to inform continuous program improvement. Program staff hold weekly meetings to share ideas and issues, as well as an annual planning retreat to address emergent feedback. We assess member leadership growth three times per service year using the Kouzes & Posner Leadership Personal Inventory tool, which provides data for program improvement as well as tracking member development. As external stakeholders, volunteers receive an email survey following each event, asking what went well and what could be improved. Project managers keep in close touch with agency partners and ask them to complete an anonymous annual survey (90% response rate in 2013). Each staff team integrates direct feedback and industry trends into work plans during their weekly team meetings and annual team retreats.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

Cost Effectiveness

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EarthCorps will leverage the \$360,000 investment from CNCS with 32,000 community volunteer hours and \$240,000 in non-federal and private funding. Spread over 100 acres, the \$3,600 per acre of CNCS funding is a modest investment for public lands improvement in urban areas, with ancillary benefits of community engagement and member development. Streamlined systems, robust partnerships, and in-kind donations of project materials and supplies from local businesses and organizations allow us to keep program costs low while maintaining high quality member experiences and project results.

Budget Adequacy

The total program budget is \$600,000. The \$360,000 requested is sufficient to cover each member's stipend, and at \$12,000 per MSY, this is a lower cost than in previously funded Competitive applications, which have been at \$13,000 per MSY. Additional program costs include: benefits for 30 members including insurance, gear, bus pass, salaries and benefits for 3.5 FTE staff, background checks, member recruitment, training and education, retreats and team-building, evaluation, building and office equipment, tools and vans, travel, volunteer recruitment and management, planning and materials. We will cover these costs through non-federal fee-for-service funding from partners such as the cities of Seattle, Kirkland, Redmond, Tacoma, Federal Way, and corporate, foundation, and individual contributions from Boeing, REI, Google, Microsoft, Seattle Parks Foundation, Bullitt Foundation and others.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

As shown in the Logic Model, members will implement restoration activities to meet targets on 100 acres of public lands. The evaluation methodology is ecological monitoring on a representative sample of 25 acres. Data collection occurs pre- and post-intervention at monitoring plots by EarthCorps ecologists, corps members, trained citizen scientists and external consultants. Data collection parameters include invasive plant cover in the plot; native plant cover; diversity of native plants; and density of regenerating conifers. Depending on jurisdiction of the project sites, the monitoring data will be analyzed by EarthCorps or the land manager. Interim evaluation results are used to steer adaptive management decisions and priorities for the project sites: such as where and how to deploy member crews in the subsequent year. The final evaluation results for the 2015-2017 program years will determine whether, where and how to deploy AmeriCorps members to meet the community need for watershed restoration activities.

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Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Budget Clarification:

1) See Matching Funds in the Budget Section.

Programmatic Clarification:

1) Background Check Certification

EarthCorps certifies that all covered individuals receive required criminal history checks on or before the first day of enrollment. EarthCorps ensures full compliance with background checks in accordance with AmeriCorps policies.

2) Volunteer Focused Corpsmembers

The six AmeriCorps members focused on volunteer recruitment will work out of EarthCorps' office in Seattle. We will call them ECV for EarthCorps Volunteer. They will have a dedicated office space, and each member will be provided adequate office equipment including desk telephone, computer, internet and printer/photocopier access, desk, and cell phone. This equipment will allow them to effectively communicate with partner agencies and volunteers. They will be led by a senior member who has previous training in volunteer recruitment and management, either through EarthCorps or another reputable training program. This lead member reports to the Corps Program Manager. Members of this team receive a tailored orientation and training with the crew leaders of EarthCorps' restoration crews, which is delivered by the Corps Program Manager and the Operations Manager during the two weeks prior to the start-date of the other AmeriCorps crew members. During the program year, they participate in many relevant training sessions with the other members, and often are called on to help facilitate these sessions. They also have specialized training sessions that are relevant to volunteer recruitment, volunteer management and education, tracking and recognizing volunteer impact, networking and working with agency partners.

Selection of the five or more agency partners will be made by EarthCorps' Field Director and Program Director, through a process of recruiting and interviewing prospective agencies and selecting those most likely to benefit from the service of an ECV member. Parameters include: does the agency have sufficient need and projects for volunteers? Does the agency have dedicated resources or personnel for

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volunteer management? Is the agency contact willing to work with an AmeriCorps member to establish effective volunteer management practices? Each member will be assigned to one agency partner serving a distinct geographic area, such as a particular city or watershed. This system allows each member to "dive deep" into the local community and form a productive working relationship with their agency contact and key volunteers in the neighborhood, as well as to learn the physical and cultural geography of that area. As needed, they can call on the other ECV members for assistance and a professional EarthCorps project manager for expertise in that particular community. Staff project managers are also assigned to specific partner agencies and geographies. Together, the project manager, ECV member and agency contact will determine what needs the agency has and work to provide the necessary practices, such as a written volunteer generation plan; establishing formal volunteer partnerships; providing volunteer registration, insurance, and tracking systems; creating volunteer job descriptions and recruitment materials; documenting and communicating volunteer impact; training/professional development for volunteers and agency contacts; or organizing award/recognition ceremonies for volunteers.

Like the other member crews, ECV members meet as a group every other week to discuss how members are doing, lessons learned, and any other issues. Each ECV member meets once per week for 30 minutes with a staff member to check in and reflect on the week's experiences. Every other week, the ECV members participate in EarthCorps' bi-monthly community meeting meeting to present their recent experiences, address issues and ideas, discuss upcoming events or projects, and to celebrate accomplishments.

3) 21st CSC Additional Slots

EarthCorps is able and interested in adding additional slots if selected to be a part of the expanded 21CSC effort. EarthCorps' program has the capacity to support up to 10 additional slots.

Performance Measure Clarification:

- 1) G3.3 is clarified in the Performance Measure section.
- 2) EN4's unit of measure was changed to acres Performance Measure section.
- 3) EN5's unit of measure was changed to miles in the Performance Measure section.

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Strategic Engagement Slots

1) At this time EarthCorps does not request additional strategic engagement slots. EarthCorps does include recruiting from diverse communities as a priority in our recruitment strategy, by reaching out strategically to all communities represented throughout King County. Our annual goals of recruiting a diverse AmeriCorps applicant pool include categories such as: gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, creed, physical abilities, etc. EarthCorps has minimum qualifications for the AmeriCorps position and makes accommodations as needed. EarthCorps is an equal opportunity employer and abides by all non-discrimination policies and laws.

No-Cost MSY

1) At this time we do not have the capacity for any additional no-cost MSYs.

Healthcare Clarification:

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

Summit America

2) How did you select the provider?

Summit America was recommended by The Corps Network and then reviewed against potential alternatives for quality and cost.

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)?

A 50% increase to AmeriCorps health care costs (as estimated by Summit America). This would total a \$25,200.00 increase in our budget.

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

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Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics