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Executive Summary

The Choice Program at UMBC will have 8 AmeriCorps members (6 disconnected youth slots and 2 supporting members) who will provide direct leadership, training, and coaching to less experienced court-involved or disadvantaged youth to develop their workforce capacity in Choice's expansion of the Flying Fruit Fantasy social franchise in Baltimore, Maryland. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for providing job training and employment skill development to an additional 40 economically disadvantaged youth in the Choice Jobs Program. The AmeriCorps members will not leverage any additional volunteers above the volunteers leveraged from existing EAP programming.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Economic Opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$106,400 will be matched with \$34,299 in non-governmental funds. The additional funding will be comprised of revenue from the existing social enterprise, Flying Fruit Fantasy, operated by The Choice Program.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Rationale and Approach

Capacity: The Choice Program at UMBC, using service-learning as its core vehicle, has engaged Disconnected Youth for 25 years through a strong partnership with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). From its inception, The Choice Program has focused on preventing recidivism by providing a community-based alternative to incarceration. The Choice Program provides youth with support and resources to help increase success and reduce recidivism. Choice's AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows, a vital component of the Choice Program, provide direct service through four program areas offered by Choice. The Intensive Advocacy (IA) program provides youth with a direct line of service, case management, mentoring, and family support. Members work closely with Case Management Specialists at the Department of Juvenile Services, to ensure that the youth they serve successfully complete their obligations to probation, are linked to supports and services, as well as, maintaining a path to avoid recidivism. In addition to the IA model, The Choice Program also supports employment development and placement through The Choice Jobs program. The Choice Jobs program works with disconnected youth to provide vital job training and job development skills, through a variety of direct service activities. The program currently operates 3 sites (of 7 total sites) that are housed in Maryland DJS buildings and works with over 450 probation

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and reentry aftercare youth annually. Over 70% of Choice AmeriCorps members serve as role models and advocates for adjudicated youth on a daily basis. Choice's existing partnership with the Department of Juvenile Services and other community agencies serving adjudicated youth will aid in the identification, recruitment, and screening of youth as AmeriCorps members.

The Choice Program engages adjudicated youth in four key ways. First, by developing high expectations; members model positive behavior and hold youth accountable to the terms of their probation as well as their personal goals. Second, fostering caring adult relationships; members use consistent daily contact, informal counseling, advocacy, and crisis intervention to develop significant and meaningful relationships with the youth that they serve. Third, linkage to community resources; members identify a youth and family's needs then connect them to resources in their community. Finally, meaningful participation; members engage youth in structured activities that can range from arts programming or a physical activity, to service learning and employability programming. Choice places a special emphasis on employment readiness including job skills development, employment search assistance, and on-the-job training to engage youth in their first employment experience and to build job skills, as well as self-esteem. Disconnected Opportunity Youth AmeriCorps Members would be engaged using these same principles in a model that balances both personal support through mentoring and service learning experience.

The Program Administrator for The Choice Program at UMBC is Mrs. Julie Brooks, Assistant Director of The Choice Jobs Program and the Grants Administrator is Mrs. Rae Gallagher, Deputy Director of The Choice Program at UMBC. The New AmeriCorps Fellows will be directly supervised by a new Service Coordinator. The new Fellows, in turn, would be directly responsible for mentoring the youth AmeriCorps members and cultivating their leadership skills.

Project Budget: The Choice Program at UMBC's budget request for this initiative includes:

- * 2 Community Service Learning Fellow AmeriCorps Members with living allowances at \$13,300/member/year (\$26,600 total) to support, mentor, case manage, and effectively engage Disconnected Opportunity Youth

- * 6 Disconnected Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps Member stipends at \$13,300/member/year (\$79,800 total)

- * Total funds requested from CNCS are \$106,400

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* Total program costs are estimated to be \$140,699 which includes a CNCS share of \$106,400, and a Grantee share of \$41,231 which meets the minimum 24% matching requirement.

Grantee Share - \$41,231 or 28% of Total Program Costs - In order to meet the minimum 24% matching requirement, the Choice Program at UMBC will provide:

* \$8,900 in additional funding for each of the two Community Service Learning Fellow Americorps Member for a total of \$17,800. The new member's living stipends will then be on par with the current Fellows already enrolled at \$22,200/member/year.

* Support for fringe benefits for Member salaries, including social security, and unemployment insurance totaling \$9,501

* Health insurance coverage options for all 8 members at \$1,710 each for a total of \$13,680.

The Choice Program at UMBC will also support this initiative by providing an additional Service Coordinator/Business Specialist to oversee and manage the project. The Service Coordinator's time and effort on this project is not considered a part of the Grantee cost share commitment and will not be tracked or reported upon.

Health Care is offered to all Members at a cost \$1710/year. However, history has shown that not all Members opt to enroll in the Health Care Program. In the event that we are unable to meet the total of \$13,680 as stated in our Cost Share portion of the budget, due to less than 8 Members opting to enroll in Health Care, the program will cover other additional operating expenses to assure we meet our 24% required match.

Costs associated with local travel for the 2 Fellows to support, case manage, and engage the Disconnected Opportunity Youth will also be reimbursed by the Choice Program at the rate of \$0.56/miles. However, these costs are not fixed, will vary, and are not considered a part of the Grantee cost share commitment and will not be reported upon.

Summary of Member Activities: A recent study by CLASP sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation showed that young men of color have far worse health outcomes than their white peers. They are also more likely to experience chronic exposure to trauma, which affects adolescent development, and can lead to behavior problems and poor academic performance. They are less likely

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to graduate from high school and pursue postsecondary education opportunities or to be employed as youth, and they are more likely to face risks that jeopardize their health and success. The study found that some of the most significant risk factors for boys and young men of color are that: 1. High school-aged males of color have limited exposure to career opportunities through work experiences, internships, apprenticeships, and other work-oriented activities. 2. Males of color who are not in school have limited access to mentors, advocates, or counselors to help them get back on track with their education and/or employment training. 3. Males of color who are not connected to school lack sufficient options for re-engagement in education programs. 4. Males of color often encounter teachers who lack the cultural competency to work effectively with them. This program intervention seeks to impact and address each of these critical issue areas.

All youth involved in the Jobs Program receive education, training and development using the Choice Jobs curriculum. The Jobs curriculum teaches youth several important jobs-related focus areas. The Jobs curriculum taught in a module format gives youth the direct involvement and educational enrichment in job training and skills development. Weekly "Jobs Clubs" facilitated by AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows allow the youth to work directly with the Fellow on a variety of job development skills. Choice Jobs also owns and operates two Flying Fruit Fantasy (FFF) Fruitshake, smoothie, frozen yogurt locations. The FFF locations are job training centers where youth are involved in direct job training, while operating two high volume food service operations. While at the FFF work sites, youth receive direct job training skills, including but not limited to: food preparation, customer service, food safety, sanitation and cleanliness techniques, workplace expectations, leadership and team building. Through the Jobs Program, The Choice Program provides job training, life skills, and educational development opportunities that focus on males of color, the largest demographic population served by the program in the City of Baltimore.

In addition to the two current locations, The Choice Program at UMBC is currently in the implementation stage of expanding the job training social entrepreneurial enterprise to a third location at the new University of Baltimore School of Law building. Youth AmeriCorps members will receive direct leadership development experience at this new location while training and supporting less experienced court involved youth with the goal of expanding their workforce experience and capacity. The addition of the youth AmeriCorps members will not displace any existing positions within the Choice Jobs program. Other locations utilize college interns to provide supervision of youth during the summer break. The University of Baltimore location will operate year-round, and requires a new youth employment and service model specific to this location. In addition to the job training

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opportunity at the FFF locations, the Youth AmeriCorps member will also receive mentoring, life skills, case management, structured engagement and coaching provided by an AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellow on a daily basis. This structured engagement includes, but is not limited to, Reflections, Peace Circles, and other cultural enrichment events. Reflections and Peace Circles are additional services not currently in place at the other FFF locations. The mentoring practices will focus on leadership, job skill development and how to effectively offer peer-to-peer support. AmeriCorps Youth Members will also receive 12 hours of drug prevention and awareness training facilitated by a community partner. In addition, Youth AmeriCorps members will receive support, guidance, direction, coaching and mentoring to assist in obtaining a GED. Choice and community partners will provide the Youth AmeriCorps member with 5-8 hours per week of GED preparation, training and education. The Opportunity Youth AmeriCorps Members will in turn provide peer-to-peer mentoring, coaching and leadership to court involved and other disconnected youth through service and job training at our Flying Fruit Fantasy Cafe (University of Baltimore) job training social enterprise. Additionally, the Youth AmeriCorps Member will participate in service learning projects supporting The Choice Program at UMBC's other community initiatives. The Youth AmeriCorps Member will also take an active role in organizing community service opportunities for Choice Program youth.

Measurement of Outcomes: All efforts are reported daily by AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows into the Social Solutions Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) software. This includes attendance for all classes/shifts, individual vocational counseling, life skill building and scheduled on-the-job training. In addition to the use of reporting software, Choice Jobs uses a testing assessment given to the youth at the start and commencement of the Jobs Program. The test measures proficiency in 6 areas: Career Awareness, Job Search Skills, Applications, Interviewing, Key Work Soft skills and Vital Documents. The test measures both knowledge and skill acquisition critical to success in the job market. All efforts are recorded in the Efforts to Outcomes database so that individual and program progress can be evaluated.

Performance Measures

Performance Measures: The addition of the 8 requested member slots would build The Choice Program's organizational capacity in the CNCS focus area of "Economic Opportunity," increasing the number of youth reached in the program's job training and skills development initiative. Specifically, increasing the target output, number of economically disadvantaged individuals receiving job training

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or other skill development services from 100 participants to 140 participants (CNCS 2014 Performance measure O2). The performance measure outcome (the number of youth demonstrating increased vocational knowledge upon program completion) would also increase from 90 youth to 125 youth. The other previously approved AmeriCorps performance measures as stipulated in The Choice Program's 2014 grant application would be unchanged.

The performance measures for Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps Members and the anticipated targets are listed below (Based on 6 awarded youth opportunity slots):

• OUTPUT: Number of economically disadvantaged National Service participants who have not obtained their high school diploma or equivalent prior to the start of their service term.

-Target: 6 participants

o OUTCOME: Unduplicated count of Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps Members that attain their GED/diploma while serving in CNCS- supported programs or within 30 days after finishing the program

-Target: 4 participants (66%)

o OUTCOME: Unduplicated count of Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps Members that avoid court or criminal involvement

-Target 4 participants (66%)

• OUTPUT: The number of (Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps) Members that successfully complete the program.

--Target 4 members (66%)

o OUTCOME: Unduplicated count the Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps Members that have demonstrated resiliency, attitude and or skills-beliefs changes.

-Target 5 members (83%)

Organizational Capability

N/A

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

N/A

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

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Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Clarification Summary

Youth Opportunity Augmentation

1. Describe the specific criteria by which disconnected youth AmeriCorps members will be selected to participate in the program:

Disconnected youth AmeriCorps members will be selected to participate in the program based on age, education level, and previous delinquent involvement. Youth AmeriCorps members will be between the ages of 17-25 and have been adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, convicted in the criminal justice system, or identified as at risk of incarceration by the Department of Juvenile Services. The Choice Program has been operating in Baltimore City for over 25 years and will utilize existing partnerships with community agencies and referring agencies such as the Department of Juvenile Services to identify youth. One critical community partner will be the Ingoma Foundation, who has been selected in partnership with the Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health/Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence as part of a collective initiative seeking to connect out-of-school and out-of-work youth back into post-secondary, credentialing, or entrepreneurship opportunities. Disconnected youth AmeriCorps members will commit to enrolling in the 12-month experience, attending GED training, as well as job and leadership development training.

2. Describe how AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows will be trained to provide mentoring, life skills, case management, structured engagement, and coaching to disconnected youth AmeriCorps members:

AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows will receive a similar but modified training to the existing Choice Fellow curriculum. The current Fellow training curriculum includes Service 101 (Family-Centered services, intro to informal counseling, strengths-based services, intro to adolescent development, navigating Juvenile Services, Social Services, and Education systems), Service Plus (Case Management roles and interventions, time and stress management, court and legal advocacy), Documentation procedures, Intake and Service Planning, Non-violent Physical Crisis Intervention,

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and Cycle of Change and Motivational Interviewing techniques. All AmeriCorps Fellows serving with the Choice Jobs program also receive Job Development training and certification through VCU and are trained in ServeSafe (food safety practices). The Choice Program has also recently invested in re-introducing resiliency training with a one-day in-person training supplemented by materials in "Reaching Teens: Strength-Based Communication Strategies to Build Resilience and Support Health Adolescent Development" book and online resources. Choice's management team has also recently invested in "Coaching for Commitment" training that will be adapted for the expansion of the Jobs programming. Finally, the Jobs program has created a comprehensive training curriculum on employment and life skills that acts as a guide for the AmeriCorps Fellows to lead with youth. Fellows become acclimated to the curriculum through shadowing current members and reviewing the curriculum with supervisors. Choice's management team includes 2 Service Coordinators trained in Peace Circle facilitation techniques and plans to expand the training to Fellow members in the next year.

3. Describe how disconnected youth AmeriCorps members will be trained for their direct service activities (supporting less experienced court-involved youth in expanding their workforce experience and capacity). Will this training differ from the direct service training provided to AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows serving in the Jobs Program? If so, how?

Disconnected youth AmeriCorps members will participate in select trainings that incoming Fellows receive, such as Service 101, ServeSafe, Cycle of Change and motivational interviewing, and Non-Violent Physical Crisis Intervention. All disconnected youth members will also complete the Job Program life skills and employment training as participants prior to becoming co-leads on the trainings. Each disconnected youth member will be paired with an AmeriCorps Fellow for individual coaching, goal-setting, case management, and feedback. Ideally, disconnected youth members will also be trained in Peace Circles.

3. Explain in greater detail how the responsibilities of the disconnected youth members at the FFF Café will differ from those of the AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows. What type(s) of support will each category of AmeriCorps member provide to the youth working at the Café? For example, who will be responsible for direct supervision of the youth and for implementing the Jobs curriculum?

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The FFF Café will follow a model similar to an "Assistant Manager" and "Shift Leader" dynamic. The Service Coordinator is the Manager of the site. The AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows will act as the Assistant Manager on duty at the FFF Café and will assume primary responsibility for the direct supervision of youth and for implementing the Jobs life skills and employment curriculum. Each AmeriCorps Fellow will also assume direct responsibility for the coaching and development of 3 disconnected youth members to include bi-weekly check-in meetings to include goal-setting and feedback, monitoring of progress with GED, and engagement with drug treatment or substance abuse education. The disconnected youth members at the FFF Café will assume "Shift Leader" type responsibilities, taking direction from the AmeriCorps Community Service Learning Fellows, but also taking leadership and giving direction to the youth during their shifts. The disconnected youth members will be given opportunities to take responsibility for ensuring smooth operation of the FFF Café for short periods of time, including oversight of the food preparation, cash register, and youth employees. Upon completion of the Jobs curriculum training, the disconnected youth members will co-lead and co-facilitate Jobs curriculum sessions, again following the lead of the AmeriCorps Fellows but not being solely responsible for all of the content.

4. Specify the anticipated timeframe for filling the 8 requested slots:

Recruiting efforts will begin immediately following award of funding at the end of September for the AmeriCorps Community Service Fellows. Based on current programming, this typically takes 4-8 weeks. The Fellows will then undergo a 2-week training period to include formalized classroom training and shadowing of current AmeriCorps members. Recruitment for youth members will occur simultaneously, with the goal of training to occur simultaneously as well.

5. Please describe how the program will be able to provide the following information in progress reports: Number of AmeriCorps members that maintained a drug free status or engaged in drug treatment and/or substance abuse education and if positive participated in the community supervision sanctions or diversions:

All of the disconnected youth members will be expected to complete drug/substance abuse education as a part of program requirements. This education will come in the form of training led by AmeriCorps Fellows during life skills modules (including "Drug Free Workplace") and in partnership

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with existing substance abuse treatment agencies in Baltimore.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics