

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) offers this proposal as the lead applicant of the North Central Region, a consortium of members of State Service Commissions to facilitate the planning, implementation, and financial oversight of the 2014-15 North Central National Service Convention (NCNSC). MCSC, in collaboration with America Service Commissions (ASC), proposes a multi-day regional conference for AmeriCorps State/National, Senior Corps, and commission program staff and leadership.

The NCNSC's structure will include tracks specific to these stakeholders, collaborative sessions to facilitate cross-stream training and dialogue, and a virtual component to accommodate participants unable to travel. Trainings will focus on the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) competencies in performance measures/evaluation, compliance for grants administration, program/financial management, and other topics vital to effective program impact.

The amount of funding requested is \$50,000

Program Design

LEAD APPLICANT: Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC)

Consortium members of the North Central Region include the State Service Commissions--hereafter referred to as "commissions"--of Illinois (IL), Indiana (IN), Iowa (IA), Michigan (MI), Minnesota (MN), Nebraska (NB), North Dakota (ND), Ohio (OH), South Dakota (SD), and Wisconsin (WI).

The consortium also includes ASC and is further comprised of stakeholders representing AmeriCorps State/National and Senior Corps programs.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES: The Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) offers this proposal as the lead applicant of the North Central Region to facilitate the planning, implementation, and financial oversight of the 2014 North Central National Service Convention (NCNSC). MCSC, in collaboration with ASC, proposes a multi-day regional conference for AmeriCorps State/National, Senior Corps, and commission program staff.

The NCNSC's structure will include tracks specific to stakeholders, collaborative sessions to facilitate cross-stream training and dialogue, and a virtual component to accommodate participants unable to travel. Trainings will focus on the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) competencies in performance measures/evaluation, compliance for grants administration, program/financial management, and other topics vital to effective program impact. This proposal is supported by the RSVP National Association, the National Service Inclusion Project, and several

Narratives

national training and technical assistance providers. The amount of funding requested is \$50,000.

APPLICANT INFORMATION: The MCSC has been in operation since 1991. MCSC and the consortium commissions provide routine training, technical assistance, and monitoring for national service programs. Each entity has a breadth of knowledge and experience regarding learning intervention strategies required for high-impact national service programs.

REGION PROPOSED: The proposed service region aligns with CNCS' recommendation for the North Central region listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. These 10 states include IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, ND, NE, OH, SD, and WI. Executive leaders from the consortium met prior to the development of this proposal to indicate their support of MCSC to serve as the lead applicant for this opportunity, and agreed to encourage their programs to attend the NCNSC.

APPLICANT EXPERIENCE:

MCSC is the ideal recipient and steward of these funds. The MCSC has actively participated on the planning committee for both the 2012 and 2013 NCNSC. The 2012 NCNSC was hosted in Dubuque, IA from August 6-8, 2012. The conference brought together 160 national service stakeholders representing 16 states. The 2013 NCNSC was hosted in St. Charles, IL from August 20-22. The conference brought together 239 national service stakeholders representing 14 states. The 2013 conference agenda is attached as a supplementary document. A planning committee representing eight states in and around the North Central region determined the focus of the learning opportunities and trainings. Four concurrent workshop tracks were offered, including AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Volunteer Engagement, and Commissions. Each of these tracks were tailored to the most critical needs of participants and designed to explore the most innovative practices in national service. Where possible, commission staff with subject matter expertise served as trainers, including staff from ASC, IA, IL, IN, MI, MO, NE, and WI. Highly regarded national service subject matter experts were also contracted to disseminate their expertise including Amy Salinas: Independent Consultant and co-founder of On3Learn (member development and management), Bonnie Janicki: Senior Grants officer for Grant Operations at CNCS (financial/grants management), Kinza Ghaznavi: Grants Management Specialist at CNCS (criminal history checks), AnnMaura Connolly: Chief Strategy Officer and Executive Vice President of City Year (building and leveraging local champions), Joseph H. Evans, PhD: Psychology Department at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (disability/inclusion), Ruth Reko, PhD: Independent Consultant (working with volunteers 55+), and Tom Okarma: Founder of Vantage Point (strategic alignment, managing organizational change, board development). The conference also included a variety of dynamic keynote speakers, including

Narratives

Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth, Bill Basl (Director of AmeriCorps at the CNCS), and Jeff Snell (Special Advisor to the President at Marquette University). Large group plenaries also included information on engaging veterans and how to utilize and connect with the North Central AmeriCorps NCCC campus.

Evaluations indicated that 92% of respondent's expectations were met or exceeded, 84% described the convention as a valuable investment of their time, and 83% felt the convention was a valuable investment of their funds. More than 95% of respondents agreed that their learning experience was supported by the trainers and conference staff with useful training materials and adequate opportunities for discussion. Anecdotal feedback in response to the statement "For me, the most valuable piece of the North Central National Service Convention was..."

- "As a new staff member, gaining knowledge related to the foundation of managing an AmeriCorps program (finances, theory of change, managing sites, etc). It was also helpful to be provided opportunities to network with other program directors and share ideas."

- "Networking with other programs and having the opportunity to meet with my state commission staff."

- Speakers on innovative topics. Learning from veterans, fiscal policies, and inclusive practices.

The NCNSC is a replicable training model for other regions to apply and adapt in continued partnership with ASC. The common leadership of ASC allows for consistency of conference development, alignment of curricula, and continuous improvement among all regional conferences-- allowing for an excellent conference experience for participants nationwide. Each conference will be similar in structure and content to allow for prospective attendees to select their preferred date, location, and total cost.

SELECTION OF HOST CITY AND FACILITY:

Based on survey responses and proposed cost effectiveness, the MCSC/ASC proposes hosting the conference at a location in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The location is close to the region's geographic center, and provides access to direct ground transportation and a hub of affordable airfare.

MCSC/ASC staff will research the facilities recommended by the MCSC, and contact local Convention & Visitors Bureaus to review other options. Facilities will be assessed on their capacity to host a multi-day conference for a minimum of 200 persons disbursed among four-six breakout sessions at any given time, as well as their capacity to be fully accessible for persons with disabilities. Facilities must be capable of providing lodging and meals at the federal government per diem rate.

OUTREACH, MARKETING, AND ENGAGEMENT:

Narratives

ASC will promote the 2014 NCNSC to CNCS area managers, state officers, Senior Corps Associations, and commissions. MCSC/ASC will create and publish a proposed agenda, trainer credentials, and registration information by January 2014 (or within three months of the training event date).

Marketing materials will be posted on ASC and MCSC websites, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and e-news subscriptions. MCSC will request NCNSC information be posted on CNCS website. Materials will contain a statement that alternative formats are available upon request, and requests will be honored promptly. Regional branding will be created for use on conference materials in addition to CNCS branding required by the cooperative agreement. Each commission in the consortium will be responsible for forwarding marketing materials to their key stakeholders.

The minimum target enrollment for the NCNSC is 200 participants: 80 AmeriCorps State and National program staff; 80 RSVP, Foster Grandparent, and Senior Companion program staff; 20 commission staff; and 20 other invited service stakeholders.

CONFERENCE DESIGN METHODOLOGY:

MCSC/ASC will co-facilitate an inclusive planning process to advise the development of the conference. A committee will be formed that represents the 10 states in the region and includes delegates from AmeriCorps State/National, Senior Corps, CNCS State Offices, commissions, and ASC staff. The committee will meet regularly upon CNCS' notice of intent to award a cooperative agreement to MCSC. The committee will determine the theme, agenda design, and learning modules of the 2014 NCNSC.

The NCNSC will be two-three days in length, with the potential for half days of conference content on either end to allow for travel flexibility. Each day will begin with a plenary session, followed by a series of tailored breakout sessions, and conclude with a large group reflection, networking activity, or service project. Opportunities for specific stakeholder groups to host independent meetings, orientations, and trainings may be offered pre or post conference upon request.

The NCNSC, along with four other lead commission applicants, will use technology to allow virtual participation at a reduced rate. Select workshops will be internet-streamed through a vendor like Livestream, Adobe Connect, or GoTo Training. Each conference will offer different tracks of workshops online, to allow participants to receive all the available content that would be offered at a single conference, but in manageable increments for effective e-learning.

The following tracks of learning will be offered at the conference: AmeriCorps State and National, Senior Corps, commissions, and volunteer engagement. Required trainings for CNCS competencies regarding performance measure data collection, applying evidence-based theories of change, program

Narratives

evaluation, and grants/financial management will be offered and featured prominently on the agenda.

Including topics listed above, MCSC/ASC will serve the most common and critical needs of national service programs in the region. Needs will be identified through analysis of commissions' and CNCS State Offices' needs assessments, summaries of recent trainings, and/or feedback. Analysis of information will ensure that learning priorities are aligned throughout the region, and allow for appropriate design of the agenda's structure, emphasis, and flow to attain maximum educational impact.

The commissions of MI and IA designed a national service program staff core competency tool (submitted as a supplementary document) that assesses program risk, intensity of monitoring required, and learning need. The tool describes the professional competencies (site management, community engagement, member human resources) national service program staff must possess in order to be successful. The tool itemizes a continuum of performance indicators for staff who are struggling, emerging, strong, or exemplary. Although the tool is utilized more often for AmeriCorps staff, most elements are applicable competencies for Senior Corps staff. MCSC will use this tool to supplement and corroborate the needs analysis process, identify opportunities for learning interventions, and inform the training design.

Initial ideas for plenary session topics include: AmeriCorps NCCC's regional activities, United Way Worldwide affiliates and volunteer centers, and/or innovative practices in cross-stream collaboration. Potential breakout sessions include member recruitment/engagement/retention strategies, disability inclusion, veterans/military families, service as a strategy to support disconnected youth, disaster services and response, and focus area-specific topics (education, health, environment).

MCSC/ASC will utilize peer trainers in order to tap into the subject matter expertise available in the field. Peer trainers may be identified by the committee, CNCS State Office staff, and programs.

National training and TA providers will be sought for expertise and facilitation, particularly for the required CNCS topics of performance measures and grant/financial compliance. MCSC/ASC will ensure that preferred national trainers receive a notice of the opportunity. CNCS senior leadership will also be invited and requested as potential keynote presenters.

Post conference, learning materials and curricula (slides, handouts, recordings, etc.) will be delivered to the National Service Knowledge Network for online cataloging and ongoing reference.

OUTPUTS, EVALUATION, AND KNOWLEDGE GAINS:

The MCSC/ASC will work with CNCS to adopt the required assessments of gains in competency for

Narratives

performance measures and compliance. The assessment will be administered pre and post-workshops as instructed by CNCS. Additionally, it is standard practice for MCSC to conduct an on-line post-conference evaluation (via Survey Monkey) that measures participant satisfaction, knowledge gains, and ability to apply new learning. Assessment data, including participant profiles and conference outputs, will be delivered to CNCS within 30 days of the conclusion of the conference. Evaluation results will be shared in a systematic way among awarded commission lead applicants to provide recommendations for continuous improvement. The MCSC/ASC also proposes piloting a mid-year evaluation that captures how participants have applied knowledge gains from the conference over time and to what effect. Cases of particular success would be identified and analyzed in order to improve future trainings.

TIMELINE:

Based on the results of an initial survey sent in June 2014, the consortium identified the best months to convene as March or April. CNCS will announce the competition results in September 2014. The benchmarks for this time are itemized as follows: September 2014:

Announcement/negotiation/approval of cooperative agreement; October 2014: Regional planning committee meets regularly, facility contract executed, trainers secured, and marketing materials developed; January 2014: Registration system opens and logistics coordination continues; Three weeks prior to event: Registration deadline; Dates TBD: NCNSC presented; Two weeks after event: Learning materials submitted; 30 days after: Outputs and evaluation data returned (if aligned with CNCS requirements); 90 days after: Financials reconciled/reported to CNCS; Six months after: Mid-year evaluation sent, collected, and analyzed.

HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY AND ROLES:

MCSC will serve as the point of contact with CNCS and submit all required materials. MCSC will manage budget and allowable costs, secure conference facility, and print materials. MCSC will co-facilitate the planning committee with ASC. The planning committee will advise conference development, secure trainers, and assist with promotion. MCSC will respond to all requests for reasonable accommodations and ensure accessibility.

ASC will manage the conference registration system, which will contain prominent messaging for persons with disabilities to request reasonable accommodations. ASC will market the conference to their network and provide continuous support to the lead duties of the MCSC. ASC will communicate successes and cautions of other awarded commission lead applicant's conferences to those that have yet to convene. Executive Directors of ASC and the MCSC will attempt to secure cash and/or in-kind

Narratives

sponsorships to increase revenue.

RATIONALE FOR APPROACH:

The MCSC/ASC's rationale for this approach is based on experience. The intent is to replicate the most successful elements of the 2012 and 2013 NCNSC and enhance the conference by adding attendance via technology, reduced registration fees, workshops related to new CNCS priorities, and increasing overall capacity.

Organizational Capability

DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS AND EXPERIENCE:

ASC, in partnership with the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, initiated, developed, and implemented the conference model which inspired the regional training Notice of Funding Opportunity. The MCSC, in partnership with ASC, is eager to improve upon the model in the coming months with the support of CNCS. The MCSC has been a leader in the national service program development and training field for many years. The MCSC has proactively sought to address the needs of AmeriCorps State/National and Senior Corps in all of its training and educational opportunities. The MCSC has a history of initiating training and conference partnerships. Some examples in past years include: Team Up Michigan (a cross-stream conference for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps program staff) and the Tri-State AmeriCorps Program Director meeting in 2006, which engaged more than 100 AmeriCorps program, fiscal, and grants staff from Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

These examples demonstrate that the MCSC and ASC are accustomed to routinely presenting education opportunities with large audiences, multiple tracks of learning, and often multiple days in length. Further, the MCSC has a wealth of experience in the design and facilitation of personalized and targeted learning interventions for smaller cohorts of AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other service programs. The topics of these trainings have included financial management, grant compliance, performance measurement, theory of change, and methods of data collection that empirically demonstrate impact.

The MCSC maintains three AmeriCorps program officers who provide routine technical assistance regarding the selection, systems development, and reporting of CNCS performance measures. The MCSC staff have received training from leading experts in CNCS performance measures including Sue Hyatt/Core Thought and JBS International. Performance measures improvement and evaluation are regular agenda items at MCSC program director orientations, trainings, and conferences. More than 20 national service programs representing all focus areas have received performance measure training and technical assistance from MCSC staff in recent years.

Narratives

EXPERTISE OF KEY STAFF:

The MCSC intends to contract with ASC to maximize the capacity to design and achieve an excellent conference. Qualifications of the key staff from ASC and the MCSC assigned to the NCNSC are as follows: Rachel Manuel Bruns is the deputy director of programming and operations for ASC. She is a shared staff member between ASC and the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (technical assistance provider to volunteer centers). Other leadership roles have included the director of Volunteer Wisconsin and Iowa Campus Compact. She also played a lead role in the coordination of the 2012 and 2013 NCNSC.

MCSC program officer, Megan Sargent Foresman, has been with the Commission since 2004. Prior to becoming a program officer in 2012, she was the training and inclusion coordinator. She has extensive experience in event coordination, as well as training design and facilitation. Megan has participated on the planning committee and led workshops for both the 2012 and 2013 NCNSC. She is also the subject matter expert among the MCSC staff for disability/inclusion. MCSC Senior Program Officer, Jeanine Yard has been with the Commission since 2001. Yard has more than 35 years of experience working with nonprofit management, national service, and youth development programs. This team will lead the regional planning committee, create media and marketing, coordinate the local conference logistics including facility/meals/lodging, communicate and contract with selected trainers, coordinate virtual participation, and evaluate knowledge gains.

SYSTEMS, STRUCTURE, AND STAFFING:

All core staff is experienced in the grant requirements and developmental needs of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, and many are subject matter experts (i.e. disaster services, youth mentoring, disability inclusion, etc.) with the ability to train at NCNSC. MCSC staff regularly collaborate with national service program managers and the CNCS office in MI.

Rachel, Megan, and Jeanine have worked together on the 2012 and 2013 NCNSC, as well as other national service related events and will maintain regular contact throughout the planning process for the 2014 -2015 NCNSC.

FISCAL OVERSIGHT: The MCSC is an agency within the MI Department of Human Services (DHS). The MCSC has managed multiple federal grants since 1993, including AmeriCorps, Admin/Program Development and Training (PDAT)/Disability, Learn and Serve, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and the Volunteer Generation Fund. The MI DHS adheres to the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, undergoes regular financial reviews, and is audited annually by the Auditor of State. As a state agency, DHS has sound fiscal, program, and personnel policies that are

Narratives

reviewed and updated on a regular basis. DHS will ensure fiscal oversight and compliance with federal requirements. DHS will review and approve the cooperative agreement with CNCS and the subsequent contracts with ASC, facility, and trainers. The MCSC will also supervise the execution of each contract's scope of work and financial reconciliation.

PROJECT MANAGERS:

The project management duties of conference coordination and training design will be designated among the core team that includes Rachel Manuel Bruns (ASC), Megan Foresman (MCSC), and Jeanine Yard (MCSC).

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

The registration fee proposed is up to \$150 for persons residing within 100 miles of the conference location, and up to \$75 for persons residing beyond 100 miles. The rationale for the reduced rate is to offer a built in "scholarship" to offset travel costs and hotel rooms. Registration for virtual conference attendees is not expected to exceed more than \$35/person. Reasonable expenses factored into the fee include meeting room rental, five meals, lodging, live-streaming technology, trainers' fees and travel, and MCSC/ASC conference personnel travel.

Any revenue beyond local registration fees will be acquired through sponsorships yet to be determined. The Executive Directors of the MCSC, ASC, and the conference host state will be tasked with the acquisition of cash or in-kind sponsorships.

The budget proposed is sufficient to provide the participants with an excellent conference and effective learning experience. The current budget of the MCSC is \$11,957,800 and the cooperative agreement would represent <1% of the total budget. The \$50,000 requested will allow for enhancements to the 2014 - 2015 NCNSC including live-streamed workshops, more participants at a lower registration cost, and increased capacity of the project management team. These enhanced outputs are expected to increase the overall learning outcomes for participants. Expenditures and revenues are tracked and allocated appropriately in the state's financial management system.

Clarification Summary

N/A

Required Documents

<u>Document Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
Program Director Core Competencies	Sent
Convention Agenda	Sent
Session Descriptions	Sent