

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

### Executive Summary

This Choctaw AmeriCorps application is authorized by the Tribal Chief. Further, a Tribal Council governing resolution is currently in process, and will be available for submission to the Corporation prior to the grant award, if the project is funded.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI; the Tribe), Federally-recognized since 1945, proposes to create a 36-month Choctaw AmeriCorps Program that will operate on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in the Tribe's Department of Early Childhood Education, focusing on Choctaw language instruction for more than 165 preschoolers aged four- and 5-years-old. In preparation for the 2014-2015 School Year, the Tribe will recruit thirteen (13) Choctaw AmeriCorps members, aged 55+, who will mentor the preschoolers and encourage daily use of the Tribe's native Choctaw language, which is eroding with each passing generation. Choctaw AmeriCorps will have two (2) AmeriCorps Members in each of six Choctaw communities in rural east central Mississippi. A thirteenth Member is also requested due to large student/teacher ratios in some classrooms. Thirteen AmeriCorps Members will each provide eight (8) hours per week of regularly-scheduled hands-on Choctaw cultural literacy activities and Choctaw language preservation activities in small-group mentoring sessions within the seven community-based Tribal Early Childhood Education centers. At the end of the 1st program year, the Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be responsible for having mentored more than 165 Choctaw 4- and 5-year-old preschoolers, strengthening their educational skills in Choctaw language speaking and listening comprehension. Choctaw AmeriCorps will address two AmeriCorps priorities, which are economic opportunities for Encore-age, 55+, Tribal members and education, particularly for young students. Choctaw AmeriCorps will operate throughout the calendar year, as the Early Childhood Education centers remain operational year-round. All seven of the Tribe's community-based Early Education Centers are fully licensed and certified by the Office of Head Start, the Administration for Children and Families, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Centers are also licensed by the MS State Department of Health.

Choctaw AmeriCorps will provide \$8.00 per hour stipends for 13 Tribal Elders aged 55+. MSY (Member Service Years) are based upon ¼ time calculations for the 13 AmeriCorps Members, which equals 3.25 MSY annually. Service hours available equal 1,700 per MSY. This totals 7,225 total

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service hours annually. Each AmeriCorps Member will provide service for approximately 8 hours weekly throughout the year. Grantor-allowed AmeriCorps cost is \$13,300 per MSY, which totals \$43,225 annually. A Tribal match of 31% annually will total \$18,997 each year. The Tribe will also purchase 13 shirts bearing the AmeriCorps logo for AmeriCorps Members to wear while on duty; these shirts will cost approximately \$540.00. The Total Cost of the Choctaw AmeriCorps Program will be \$62,762 each year, including the shirts. Program expenses include AmeriCorps Member stipends and FICA. FICA is calculated at 7.65%, for a total cost of \$4,422 annually. The applicant attests that Tribal financial capacity is available to support all the requirements of an AmeriCorps grant under 45 CFR.

The Member Enrollment Period for this program will commence on August 1, 2014. The proposed Grant Award Start Date is October 1, 2014. The one-year grant project will end on September 30, 2015.

### Rationale and Approach/Program Design

#### Narrative Rationale and Approach/Program Design

One hundred percent (100%) of the student population of the Choctaw Department of Early Childhood Education is Native American; the students are Choctaw Indians who reside on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in rural east central Mississippi. Choctaws have low incomes, struggle with poverty, and are losing their native Choctaw language, which is giving way to increasing use of English, especially among younger Tribal members. The following is a review of 2010 poverty rates as indicated in the 2010 US Census, and 2010 median household income and per capita income levels:

Choctaw Indian Reservation: Poverty Rate.....29.9%

Indian Country: Poverty Rate.....29.5%

Mississippi: Poverty Rate...21.6%

U.S.: Poverty Rate...14.3%

Choctaw Reservation: Median Household Income...\$32,604

Mississippi: Median Household Income...\$36,851

U.S.: Median Household Income...\$50,046

Choctaw Reservation: Per Capita Income...\$11,303

Indian Country: Per Capita Income...\$16,180

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Mississippi: Per Capita Income: \$19,096

U.S.: Per Capita Income: \$26,059

Educational attainment levels on the Choctaw Indian Reservation roughly parallel state and national averages, as indicated below, with data obtained from the 2010 US Census and the 2011 American Community Survey. However, the Choctaw rate of graduation in a normal, 4-year high school classroom setting is a very low 51%, with 38.3% completing their GED or a special education certificate.

Choctaw: High School graduate: 89.3% (includes both GED and diploma recipients)

Indian Country: High School graduate: 78.9%

Mississippi: High School graduate: 80.3%

U.S.: High School graduate: 85.9%

In 2010, only 7% of Choctaws over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree versus 13.3% for Native Americans in the U.S. over age 25 with bachelor's degrees, and 28.5% for the overall U.S. having bachelor's degrees.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is a self-governing tribe of 10,500 enrolled members, with 8,559 living on or near the 33,864-acre Choctaw Indian Reservation in rural, east central Mississippi. Fifty percent of Choctaws are below age 25. MBCI's largest, most populous community, Pearl River (population 3,424), is located on the west side of Neshoba County, MS, where poverty rates are higher than the rest of the county. Poverty rates among families on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in Mississippi, range from 28% to 51% (US Census 2010). The unemployment rate is very high at 35%.

### B. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members as Highly Effective Means to Solve Community Problems Evidence Base and Measurable Community Impact

The 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members who will be selected for this program will all be aged 55+, enrolled members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, permanent residents of the Federally-recognized Choctaw communities, and will all be bilingual in Choctaw and English, and will be fluent

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Choctaw language speakers. Interaction between these Tribal elders and the Choctaw 4- and 5-year-old preschoolers will help to foster Choctaw language development and cognitive skills among the students; and it will build a communication bridge between the elders and young Tribal members in a small-group, learning center-based setting.

### 2. Narrative Related to Evidence Basis

The Tribe has invested in research-based native Choctaw language assessment for the past twenty years to establish periodic baselines and longitudinal analyses of the language's current status and usage in Choctaw homes, classrooms, and communities. The results of the longitudinal studies have been the alarming realization that the Tribe's native language is in fact eroding quickly, as the use of English on the Choctaw Indian Reservation, even in most homes and at community functions, rises to displace the use of Choctaw language.

The Tribe is the recipient of a grant from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) that it has successfully used, in combination with Tribal revenue, to establish the Choctaw Tribal Language Preservation Program, operating in the Choctaw Tribal School System. This grant, combined with Tribal fund expenditures, has enabled further research by university-trained linguists, native Choctaw speakers, and community-based surveys to measure and document language erosion, especially among young Choctaw children. Funds have also been used to participate in Northwest Indian Language Institute Language Curriculum Development Training at the University of Oregon, among other important language preservation training. Curriculum development, teaching methodologies, hands-on instructional activities, Strategies for Teaching Conversational Dialogues, and many other training topics are being studied by Program personnel. Choctaw Language Classes are now being taught in the Choctaw Tribal School System, but more time and effort is needed, especially among young Choctaw preschoolers, and this will be a major goal of Choctaw AmeriCorps, working with 165+ four- and 5-year-old students enrolled in Early Childhood Education classes, such as Head Start, on the Reservation, in numerous Choctaw communities.

A Choctaw Language Assessment initiative is currently in progress throughout the Choctaw Indian Reservation in its Tribal educational system. Research consultants from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, among others, have been brought in to assist with the study. Work is progressing on a

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Choctaw translation of the Kindergarten through first grade Pre-LAS (Language Assessment Survey) and the Oral Choctaw Language test for second graders. A written comparison is also being produced of the Choctaw and English Pre-LAS that is administered in the Tribal Schools.

Language Assessment reports reflect an alarming state of loss of the Choctaw language among the K-1st grade level students as evidenced by the None-Choctaw-Speaking Level of the Pre-LAS results. The report recommends that aggressive action must be taken immediately to reverse this trend. Even though the Choctaw language may be spoken in the home, and children hear the language, they are not active in responding back in the Choctaw language. Tribal speakers can be lulled into thinking that their children can speak the language when they are able to retrieve something or carry out an assigned task in the Choctaw language. The report continues, "If intense revitalization efforts are not realized now, in 50 to 60 years the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians will be in the same situation as the Oklahoma Choctaw are today. Loss of the native Choctaw language will continue in the wake of increasing English-speaking prominence.

### 1. How the intervention is designed to address the problem

Research-based intervention methods will include the following: a) creation of language nests in Choctaw Early Childhood Education classrooms, in which only Choctaw is spoken; b) creating Choctaw language flash cards with vocabulary words and placing them prominently throughout the classrooms to identify objects and places and build vocabulary in Choctaw; and c) speaking and communicating more frequently and regularly using Choctaw language with the preschoolers to increase their listening comprehension and verbal performance skills. The goal of Choctaw AmeriCorps is to create a meaningful and long-lasting opportunity to get more native Choctaw-speaking Tribal members inside the Early Education classrooms for meaningful interaction between the Tribal elders aged 55+ and the Choctaw preschoolers. Young preschoolers are at an ideal age for language development, and increasing their daily interaction with native Choctaw speakers is an important solution that has great potential for success. The design is based on the premise that having a real and meaningful need to acquire a language facilitates the learning process. Actual need to speak and understand a language in order to communicate often results in greater development and use of that language, as the total immersion technique well demonstrates.

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### 2. Number of locations in which Members are providing services

The 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will provide direct and interactive language-building services to young Choctaw preschool students within the Choctaw communities; Early Childhood Education Learning Centers. Choctaw communities in rural, east central Mississippi include Bogue Chitto, Conehatta, Pearl River (2 Centers), Red Water, Standing Pine, and Tucker, for a total of 7 Early Learning Centers where AmeriCorps Members will serve. Public transportation for Members will be provided by Choctaw Transit, which already has well-established daily bus routes in Tribal communities. Minimal ridership fees may be subsidized by the Tribe.

### 3. Number of Members who will be delivering the intervention or program model

Thirteen (13) enrolled Tribal members aged 55+ of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians who are fluent speakers of the native Choctaw language will provide public services.

### 4. Core activities that define the program that Members will deliver

Small-group, classroom-based learning sessions that last for 45 minutes each will be provided on a weekly basis and more often if time allows. Choctaw Language Preservation Program curriculum materials will be provided and used during the learning sessions. The focus will be on Choctaw vocabulary building, speaking proficiency, listening comprehension, and basic conversation. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will receive training on the use of the instructional materials from staff members at the Language Preservation Program prior to engaging in the small-group learning sessions in the Early Education Learning Centers.

### 5. Duration of the Choctaw AmeriCorps Program

The program will commence on August 1, 2014, and operate through July 31, 2015, for Year One, with two additional proposed subsequent program years, totaling a 36-month project.

### 6. Target population for the Choctaw AmeriCorps Program

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More than 165 Choctaw Indian preschool students aged four- and five-years-old and who are enrolled in the Tribe's Department of Early Childhood Education located in rural east central Mississippi, on the Choctaw Indian Reservation will receive AmeriCorps services.

### 7. Indicators and data collection tools used to measure program outcomes

Results of the Pre-LAS Choctaw Language Assessment tests will be administered at the beginning of the project, at the mid-point, and at the conclusion of the project. Choctaw language proficiency will be measured and reported for all 165+ preschoolers participating in the project. In addition, AmeriCorps attendance rosters will be maintained; training records completed and maintained regularly; hourly completion rates logged; minutes of AmeriCorps meetings taken; minutes of community meetings and orientations taken; public transportation records kept; background investigations records maintained; and healthcare coverage and Tribal drug and alcohol policy compliance records generated and maintained.

### D. Choctaw AmeriCorps Member Training

#### 1. Anticipated Member training topics

Anticipated Choctaw AmeriCorps Member training topics will include the following: a) new Tribal employee orientation provided by the MBCI Office of Human Resources Job Placement Coordinator; b) CPR & First Aid training that will be provided by the MBCI Fire Department; c) various team building sessions such as leadership, conflict management, and effective communication provided by the MBCI Choctaw Health Center's Behavioral Health staff; d) AmeriCorps specific training including member rights and responsibilities, standards of conduct, prohibited activities, grievance procedures, and suspension/termination of employment will be provided by the Tribal Policy Development Officer, who is a former AmeriCorps Member with valuable knowledge and experience. Choctaw Language Curriculum and instructional training will be provided by the Director and associated leadership from the Tribe's Choctaw Language Preservation Office that is engaged within the Choctaw Tribal School System.

#### 2. Timeline for Choctaw AmeriCorps Member training

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The majority of the training will occur within the first month to six weeks of employment to orient the new Members to Tribal and AmeriCorps employment. There will be various training sessions that will continue throughout the year to reinforce the AmeriCorps message of public service. These trainings will include, but will not be limited to, code of conduct, prohibited activities, etc., as outlined above. Ongoing training will begin as monthly reminders and move to quarterly sessions as the message is reiterated and retained by all AmeriCorps Members.

### 3. Making Members aware of AmeriCorps rules and prohibited activities

The Tribe will make Choctaw AmeriCorps Members aware of AmeriCorps rules and prohibited activities through the following opportunities: Training the Program Coordinator and Members via in-person training sessions, providing reading material or websites to visit, as well as regular follow-up meetings to check in with the Program Coordinator and all Members.

### E. Choctaw AmeriCorps Member Supervision to ensure support and guidance

This Choctaw AmeriCorps Project is placed organizationally within the Tribe's Department of Early Childhood Education. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be supervised daily at their respective, assigned service sites, the Choctaw Early Childhood Education Centers, by the respective Center Directors. Overall supervision will be provided by the Director, Department of Early Childhood Education. The Department Director will conduct regularly-scheduled meetings with all Choctaw AmeriCorps members at their respective service site locations, as well as monthly large-group meetings with all Members to address issues of concern as they arise (more often, as necessary). Additionally, the Department Director will perform unannounced service-site visits to ensure that Members and their service sites are compliant with AmeriCorps standard regulations. The Department Director will be required to provide documentation on all meetings and spot checks completed. If the Tribe is awarded this grant, the Choctaw Department of Early Childhood Education leadership and instructional staff will be notified during their periodic training sessions concerning AmeriCorps basics and what AmeriCorps Members are expected to accomplish in the classroom to ensure consistency, as well as daily support and guidance towards increasing Choctaw language usage on a daily basis.

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## F. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

### 1. Identifying participants as AmeriCorps Members

Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be required to wear AmeriCorps-approved and Tribally-issued uniforms or clothing bearing the AmeriCorps logo, such as a standardized shirt, jacket, or sweater. Members will wear this clothing at all times while on duty and performing grant-related activities. This standardized clothing will be purchased by the Tribe using Tribal funds and will be issued to all 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members upon their enrollment in the project. Members's service activities will include, but not be limited to, working in the Choctaw Early Childhood Education Learning Centers's classrooms, attending required AmeriCorps training sessions, and promoting the AmeriCorps program at public, community events, such as local Choctaw Development Club meetings that are held monthly throughout the Choctaw communities.

### 2. Informing the community about AmeriCorps Members and Service

If the Tribe receives the grant award, then the Tribe will write and publish news articles in the Tribal periodical newspaper Choctaw Community News, as well as in local area weekly newspapers such as the Newton County Appeal, The Carthaginian, and The Neshoba Democrat. The Tribe will promote the concept of AmeriCorps public service and announce the program and its related training and employment opportunity potential for senior Choctaw Tribal members aged 55+. Information will be posted at all Choctaw Facility Buildings (community centers) and sent to all local community development clubs regarding the grant funding, as well as program requirements. Choctaw AmeriCorps information will be posted on the Tribe's website, [www.choctaw.org](http://www.choctaw.org); and through Tribal e-mail regarding the AmeriCorps grant award and program requirements. Once the 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members are hired, they will begin to inform local Tribal development clubs about the importance of the AmeriCorps Program and their Choctaw-language-teaching activities within the Tribe's Early Childhood Education learning centers throughout the Reservation.

### 3. Members wearing AmeriCorps logo daily

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As all 13 of the Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be required to wear approved attire during program activities, the AmeriCorps logo will be prominently identifiable daily on the clothing. Members will be informed of this requirement upon being hired, and the Program Coordinator will be responsible in the event of non-compliance. Tribal funds will be used to purchase standardized shirts, sweaters, or jackets bearing the AmeriCorps logo, and the clothing will be presented to each Choctaw AmeriCorps Member.

#### 4. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members speaking to community about AmeriCorps Service

Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be trained to a sufficient extent that if they are asked about the AmeriCorps program, they will be able to provide basic information regarding the program and will be able to refer interested individuals to the AmeriCorps website or to the Tribal website, where they can find additional, detailed information about AmeriCorps and its focus on nationwide community service.

### Organizational Capability

#### A. Organizational Background and Staffing

The applicant confirms its ability to raise additional resources as needed to support costs associated with the proposed AmeriCorps program through its annual (each November) Choctaw Community Fund drive. Donors (Tribal employees and Tribal members) have the option to make financial contributions annually to both the Tribal Elders and Tribal Youth. Participation in the fund is excellent. The 2014 pledge total is \$54,341.00.

The Tribe's capabilities and professional competencies are broad-based, well established, durable and well documented. The Tribe contracts with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to operate its eight (8) Choctaw Tribal Schools, grades pre-K-12, on the Choctaw Indian Reservation, providing instructional services to 2,221 students in academic programs fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and by the Mississippi State Department of Education. All education employees are Tribal employees. Departments and Programs are well established and professionally staffed within the Tribal government's Division of Education and Division of Tribal Member Services. Among many others, these offices include the Department of Early Childhood Education and the Choctaw Language Preservation Program. The Choctaw AmeriCorps Project will operate under the

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supervision and auspices of the Tribal Division of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education.

The Tribe contracted many years ago with the Indian Health Service to operate the Choctaw Health Center and 3 satellite healthcare clinics on the Choctaw Indian Reservation in rural, east central Mississippi. Almost all medical professionals in the Choctaw Service Unit are Tribal employees. The Tribe has contracted with DHHS since the late 1960s to operate a Head Start program on the Reservation. The Tribe contracts with the BIA to operate all Tribal Government services except Reservation Roads, which remain with the BIA. The Tribe's contracted work includes Choctaw Social Services, Tribal Law Enforcement, Choctaw pre-K-12 Education, Tribal Employment and Training, Tribal Real Estate, Forestry, and Ag Extension, and Choctaw Adult Education. The Tribe contracts with the U.S. Department of Labor to operate the Tribal Workforce Development Training programs on the Reservation.

### B. Compliance and Financial Accountability

The Tribe maintains its Finance and Accounting Office that has 63 employees, including 5 certified public accountants, 9 accountants and 3 accounting technicians. The Tribe's Finance and Accounting Office managed programs and projects with a total budget of over \$300 million during FY 2013. General-purpose financial statements of the Tribal government are prepared by the Finance and Accounting Office and are audited by independent auditors, the accounting firm Breazeale, Saunders and O'Neil, Ltd., of Jackson, Mississippi, in accordance with OMB Circular A-128 and A-133 of the Single Audit Act. All funds are managed by the Tribal government through a centralized system for management of human resources, property and procurement, and financial accounting. The Government Services Division of the Tribe operates in accordance with financial, procurement and administrative personnel policies formally adopted by resolutions of the governing Tribal Council. Tribal procurement policies provide guidelines for the property management and procurement for Tribal programs and operations in accordance with OMB Circular A-103 and/or other appropriate Federal regulations. The accounts of the Government Services Division are organized on the basis of funds or account groups, each of which is considered a separate accounting entity. These statements present a combined overview of aggregated data for each fund type of the Tribal Government Services Division. Financial reports are prepared by the Finance and Accounting Office within the Department

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of Administration, and are submitted in accordance with the requirements of the respective funding sources. Expenditure reports are printed monthly for each contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or program, and copies are made available to the appropriate administrators, department directors and the Tribal Financial Controller. The Tribe has consistently received unqualified audit opinions on Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians audits with no material findings.

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

#### IV. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

##### A. Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy

##### 1. Cost Per MSY in relation to program design

The Tribe's proposed Cost Per MSY of \$12,564.00 is very reasonable considering the fact that the Tribal government will be contributing a 31% Tribal actual match, which is more than the minimum required. The Tribe's willingness and interest in producing a 31% non-Federal match for the Choctaw AmeriCorps Project is a clear demonstration of the Tribe's understanding of the value of this project with a goal of long-term Choctaw language preservation. The allowable AmeriCorps cost is only \$43,225.00 for this project per year, which will operate year-round for each of three years of proposed Choctaw AmeriCorps operations. The budget has been minimally planned to cover AmeriCorps Members' service stipends and their FICA only, with the Tribal match covering other expenses of program operation, along with valuable services being made available to support AmeriCorps by other existing Tribal departments, such as Planning, Finance and Accounting, Public Transit, and the Choctaw Health Center, in addition to the Choctaw Language Preservation Program, the Department of Early Childhood Education, Division of Education, MBCI Human Resources Office, and the Tribe's Background Investigations and Adjudication Office, which operates in full compliance with all applicable Federal rules and regulations promulgated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior. Supportive Tribal resources will be made readily available to ensure overall success of this important initiative in a long-term, cost effective manner.

##### 2. Cost effective for addressing Choctaw, MS, community needs

The Total AmeriCorps Member service costs for Year One operations equal \$62,222. This figure

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demonstrates a highly cost-effective means of addressing the Choctaw language loss prevention in the Tribe's Early Childhood Education population of preschoolers at a time when such language intervention can be the most productive and of the greatest long-term benefit. The Tribal members who will be enrolled as AmeriCorps Members will be the best qualified and most valuable assets to the program since they are all bilingual in Choctaw and English languages, and are fluent in the native Choctaw language. There is no other source of Choctaw language speakers other than enrolled Tribal members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

### B. Budget Adequacy

#### 1. Sources & Amounts of non-CNCS resource commitments (in-kind and cash)

MBCI Tribal match of 31% equals \$18,997 for Year One operations. This match is using Tribal revenue, which is non-Federal money. Similar Tribal, non-Federal match amounts are assured for Years Two and Three, if the Tribe continues to receive AmeriCorps awards.

#### 2. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members' Living Allowance

The Tribe understands that a living allowance is not a wage, and programs may not pay living allowances on an hourly basis. This program, if funded, will distribute the living allowance at regular intervals and in regular increments. Funds will be distributed to all AmeriCorps Members regularly every 2 weeks.

Thirteen (13) Choctaw AmeriCorps Members' Living Allowance of \$8.00 per hour equals \$57,800 for Year One operations' Living Allowance. The 17-member Choctaw Tribal Council (Legislative arm of Tribal government) has formally adopted a Tribal policy of providing a minimum of \$8.00 per hour to entry-level, minimally qualified Tribal member employees in all Tribal government departments and programs, including Choctaw AmeriCorps. The concept is to provide at least a living-wage minimum that will help prove to be a positive incentive for employees to stay the course once employed and gain additional on-the-job training, valuable skills, knowledge, and work experience as they prepare for various career opportunities on the Choctaw Indian Reservation and beyond.

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Given the fact that the 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will all be aged 55+, which is in keeping not only with local community-identified needs in this particular project, but also in keeping with AmeriCorps's attention to the Encore concept of providing economic opportunities to senior citizens in their home communities, the Members's earned Education Allowances will be permitted to transfer directly to the Members's immediate family members, if desired. For example, a Choctaw AmeriCorps Member aged 55+ who is not personally interested in continuing into further higher education may choose to transfer his or her Education Allowance earned at the end of one year's service to a child or grandchild who wants to attend college or a university to pursue higher education. The permission to transfer such valuable educational assets to Members's children and grandchildren will be a very attractive characteristic of this community service project, and one that will hold great value and meaning not only for the Members, but especially for their younger family members who will benefit by greater educational opportunities in an economically distressed environment at Choctaw, MS.

### 3. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members's Healthcare provided

All 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be enrolled members of the Federally-recognized Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. As Tribal members, they will all be 100% eligible to receive comprehensive healthcare services at the local Choctaw Health Center through the auspices of the Indian Health Service (IHS). Those requiring more advanced healthcare will be 100% eligible to receive referrals paid for by IHS, insurance providers, Medicare, etc., to Anderson's Regional Medical Center in nearby Meridian, Mississippi.

### 4. Choctaw AmeriCorps Members's Criminal History Checks

The applicant confirms that both staff and members will perform the required criminal history checks per 45 CFR subsection 2540.201. The costs of Criminal History Checks will not be expensed to the AmeriCorps budget.

The MBCI Tribal Government's Human Resources Office operates the Background Investigations and Adjudications Office (BIAO), which functions in full compliance with all governing Bureau of Indian Affairs and U.S. Department of Interior Federal rules and regulations. The Tribe's BIAO is centrally located, and is staffed and equipped to manage all BIAO functions that are required for

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employees in various Tribal departments, such as the Division of Education, Department of Public Safety, Police Department, Adult Detention, Juvenile Detention, and others. All Choctaw AmeriCorps recruits will receive complete criminal history checks through the Tribe's standardized background investigations processes prior to their acceptance as AmeriCorps Members. Every stage of the investigation and adjudication process is thoroughly documented, and written records are securely maintained within the central BIAO for inspection, as required, by Tribal authorities and grantor agencies.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

Not Applicable

### **Clarification Summary**

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The Member Enrollment Period for this program will commence on August 1, 2014. The proposed Grant Award Start Date is October 1, 2014. The one-year grant project will end on September 30, 2015.

This Choctaw AmeriCorps Project is placed organizationally within the Tribe's Department of Early Childhood Education under the Department Director's supervision. All 13 Choctaw AmeriCorps Members will be supervised daily at their respective, assigned service sites, the Choctaw Early

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Childhood Education Centers, by the respective Center Directors. AmeriCorps Members will have no supervisory duties. Overall supervision of Members will be provided by the Director, Department of Early Childhood Education. The Department Director will conduct regularly-scheduled meetings with all Choctaw AmeriCorps members at their respective service site locations, as well as monthly large-group meetings with all Members to address issues of concern as they arise (more often, as necessary).

Additionally, the Department Director will perform unannounced service-site visits to ensure that Members and their service sites are compliant with AmeriCorps standard regulations. The Department Director will be required to provide documentation on all meetings and spot checks completed. If the Tribe is awarded this grant, the Choctaw Department of Early Childhood Education leadership and instructional staff will be notified during their periodic training sessions concerning AmeriCorps basics and what AmeriCorps Members are expected to accomplish in the classroom to ensure consistency, as well as daily support and guidance towards increasing Choctaw language usage on a daily basis.

The Tribe understands that a living allowance is not a wage, and programs may not pay living allowances on an hourly basis. This program, if funded, will distribute the living allowance at regular intervals and in regular increments. Funds will be distributed to all AmeriCorps Members regularly every 2 weeks.

The applicant confirms that both staff and members will perform the required criminal history checks per 45 CFR subsection 2540.201. The costs of Criminal History Checks will not be expensed to the AmeriCorps budget. The Tribal government has the capacity to provide all necessary background checks on AmeriCorps Members.

The MBCI Tribal Government's Human Resources Office operates the Background Investigations and Adjudications Office (BIAO), which functions in full compliance with all governing Bureau of Indian Affairs and U.S. Department of Interior Federal rules and regulations. The Tribe's BIAO is centrally located, and is staffed and equipped to manage all BIAO functions that are required for employees in various Tribal departments, such as the Division of Education, Department of Public Safety, Police Department, Adult Detention, Juvenile Detention, and others. All Choctaw AmeriCorps recruits will receive complete criminal history checks through the Tribe's standardized background investigations processes prior to their acceptance as AmeriCorps Members. Every stage of the

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investigation and adjudication process is thoroughly documented, and written records are securely maintained within the central BIAO for inspection, as required, by Tribal authorities and grantor agencies.

This Choctaw AmeriCorps application is already authorized by the Tribal Chief. Further, a formal Tribal Council resolution is currently in process; it is on the scheduled agenda for the July regular Tribal Council meeting, and will be available for submission to the Corporation prior to the grant award, if the project is funded.

The applicant attests that Tribal financial capacity is available to support all the requirements of an AmeriCorps grant under 45 CFR.

The applicant confirms its ability to raise additional resources as needed to support costs associated with the proposed AmeriCorps program through its annual (each November) Choctaw Community Fund drive. Donors (Tribal employees and Tribal members) have the option to make financial contributions annually to both the Tribal Elders and Tribal Youth. Participation in the fund is excellent. The 2014 pledge total is \$54,341.00.

A copy of the Pre and Post standardized test for Choctaw language proficiency is available, and is being e-mailed to Mr. Gunter in the clarification process.

### **Continuation Changes**

Not Applicable

### **Grant Characteristics**