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Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Through the VGF and community support, the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) has built and strengthened the infrastructures of six Volunteer Centers (VCs) for the purpose of increasing the number of people who volunteer in meaningful roles in Mississippi (MS). Using a successful model, VCs have continued to grow and channel an ever-increasing number of volunteers (from 1,500 - before VGF - to nearly 60,000 by the end of year three) to serve in meaningful roles that impact local community needs. The six VCs comprise a basic, statewide network that shares knowledge and resources through face-to-face meetings and other communications. MCVS is requesting funding to strengthen the state's ability to engage more citizens in meaningful volunteer service and build capacity in more nonprofit organizations through the expansion the volunteer center network. With funding from VGF, in the next three years, we will continue strengthening current infrastructures and initiate at least three new VC's that will expand outreach to unserved, highly populated areas that also have a large concentration of nonprofit organizations. Through the expanded volunteer center network, we will significantly increase the number of meaningful volunteer engagements to at least 80,000 (up from 60,000 at the end of year three), and increase the number of nonprofit organizations who benefit from capacity-building services to at least 900 (up from 740 at the end of year three) in the first year. Efforts will include a significant increase in the number of skill-based volunteers, as well as progressive increase in volunteer retention rates and nonprofits implementing effective management practices as a result of capacity-building services. MCVS will also report comprehensive data on CNCS-specific volunteer demographics and CNCS & MS focus area impact activity.

Program Design

PROGRAM DESIGN - The state of Mississippi (MS) has serious social and economic problems. According to a 2012 US Census Bureau report by the US Department of Commerce, 22.3% of MS's population is living below the poverty level compared to the national average of 14.9%, with 5.1% fewer high school graduates (US Dept of Ed reported a 75% graduation rate in 2011) and 8.5% fewer college graduates in its adult population. The May 2014 Unemployment Rates for States from the Bureau of Labor Statistics ranks MS as 48 out of 51 states, having one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation at 7.7%; and, according the US Department of Commerce report (cited above), those that are employed earn \$7,381 less annually than the national average. In addition to the educational and financial challenges to the people of MS, the state's Health Ranking for Obesity,

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Smoking, and Diabetes is one of the least healthiest in the nation, ranking 50 out of 51, according to the 2013 Annual Report on America's Health Rankings from the United Health Foundation. To make matters worse, there are fewer nonprofit organizations, with fewer funding options, available in MS to help alleviate these serious social problems. According to the October 2012 report on The Number of Registered Nonprofit Organizations by State from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, MS has 5.6% fewer nonprofit/charitable organizations (per/10,000 persons) than the rest of the nation, and a 31.3% reduction in the number of "Private Grant-Making Foundations" over the past 10 years. In summary, MS is experiencing a higher degree of serious social and economic problems with fewer resources to help solve them.

Despite overwhelming challenges and a lack of financial resources, the people of MS consistently exhibit a willingness to give of themselves and help a neighbor in need. In the report, Data on Individual Giving by State, 2011 from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, Mississippian's gave \$1,059 more of their hard-earned paychecks to charitable causes than the average American. Although only 26% of its citizenry is reported to volunteer, 32.5% of individuals in MS's most populated urban areas volunteer, beating the national average of 23.5% in comparable areas (Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2012 from CNCS and the National Conference on Citizenship). This kind of selflessness, when harnessed and focused on a specific need, is a valuable resource in the uphill climb to solving Mississippi's problems.

The VC Network in MS is steadily harnessing that valuable resource by mobilizing a willing citizenry to volunteer and connecting them with meaningful, focused opportunities that address serious problems. It is simultaneously bolstering the efforts of MS's overwhelmed nonprofit organizations by recruiting a volunteer workforce and providing the tools to effectively utilize their talents.

Through the VGF and community support MCVS has built and strengthened the infrastructures of six VCs for the purpose of increasing the number of people who volunteer in meaningful roles and building capacity in the nonprofit organizations that need assistance. VCs have connected or engaged nearly 60,000 volunteers (end of Year Three funding), and will surpass that number by the end of the current funding cycle (1st quarter results of current funding cycle - 20,485 volunteers). Volunteer Centers have also partnered with and built capacity in more than 700 nonprofit organizations. VCs have connected volunteers to meaningful opportunities that help alleviate hunger and homelessness; promote literacy and health awareness; help victims of disaster; and preserve wildlife and the environment. As a result, volunteers have had the opportunity to learn new skills, make more social connections, expand their educational and professional networks and ultimate employability, and

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experience physical and mental health benefits.

VGF funding will allow MCVS to expand VC services to significantly more citizens and nonprofit organizations that, together, will more effectively solve serious, community-based problems. For the next three years, MCVS requests VGF funding to increase the state's volunteer infrastructure by sub-granting funds to increase the services of the six existing VCs and initiate at least three new VC's that will expand outreach to unserved, highly populated areas that also have a large concentration of nonprofit organizations. As a result, the VC Network will significantly increase the number of volunteer engagements, including the number of skill-based volunteers, as well as progressively increase volunteer retention rates and nonprofits implementing effective management practices as a result of capacity-building services. MCVS will also report comprehensive data on CNCS-specific volunteer demographics and CNCS & MS focus area impact activity.

More specifically, the VC Network will 1) increase the number and hours served by both new and retained volunteers that are recruited and/or managed by a VC to 80,000 volunteers serving 400,000 hours in the 1st year, with an increase to 105,000 volunteers serving 525,000 hours in the second year, and 130,000 volunteers serving 650,000 hours in the third year; 2) increase volunteer retention rates from 65% (52,000 volunteers retained) in the first year to 73% (94,900 volunteers retained) by the end of the third year; 3) increase the number of skill-based volunteers from 25% (20,000) the first year to 35% (45,500) by the end of the third year; and, 4) Increase the number of nonprofits reporting or demonstrating the use of new volunteer management techniques from 45% (225 of 500 training participants) the first year to 65% (455 of 700 training participants) by the end of the third year. VC's will also continue improving measurement and tracking of the following volunteer demographics: new volunteers, skill-based volunteers, disadvantaged children and youth volunteers, volunteers enrolled in a degree-seeking program, and volunteers born between 1946 and 1964. In addition, VC's will continue measuring the types and amounts of volunteer activities in the following 12 areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, Veterans & Military Families, Arts/Culture & History, Animal/Wildlife Care & Advocacy, Disabilities, Hunger & Homelessness, Health-Related Services/Education/Research & Advocacy, and Children/Family Services & Advocacy.

MCVS will accomplish these goals by providing statewide volunteer recognition & promotion of the VC Network and shared volunteer recruitment and matching portals; and providing financial, technical and training support to ensure the expansion efforts of the existing six VCs; and initiate at least three new VCs using this successful model containing the following five basic services: 1- Act as a

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Community Hub where all concerned citizens can go to become informed and connected to meaningful volunteer work that contributes to the solutions of serious community problems. 2 -- To connect and mobilize citizens through an ongoing menu of volunteer opportunities either managed internally or offered by a broad diversity of nonprofit organizations. 3- Act as an "awareness builder" that promotes volunteering by marketing VC and nonprofit volunteer opportunities, recognizes volunteers for outstanding service, and markets and participates in National Days of Service and local volunteer events. 4- Is a capacity builder that provides nonprofit partners with an online tool to recruit and manage volunteers and provides volunteer capacity building training to ensure effective volunteering. And 5 - Act as the community's gauge for volunteer activity by knowing where volunteers are needed, who and how many are volunteering, what they are doing, and how much time they are devoting to service.

More specifically, the VC Network will provide on-going guidance by MCVS staff (the Volunteer Network Officer (VNO) & other staff as appropriate), with an emphasis on targeted marketing of skill-based volunteers and ensuring VC capacity to offer workshops and one-on-one consultations to nonprofit partners focused on managing and retaining skill-based (and other) volunteers. VC staff will receive consultation, training, and networking opportunities at a two-day Fall Retreat, a mini (four-hour) retreat during the National Conference on Volunteering & Service, and additional network meetings hosted by the VCs. Individual consultation is provided by the VNO during site visits (at least two 4-6 hour visits per center annually), and daily & weekly contact through phone and e-mail. Consultations include: VC operations, financial management, grant management & reporting, community support for fundraising & in-kind resource building, marketing & volunteer recognition, and online volunteer matching systems. In addition to MCVS support, the VC Network has formed an informal association that has formalized and further strengthened the VC infrastructure in the state. The network shares documents through an online Dropbox account, and continuously shares knowledge by phone, email, and in-person meetings. The three new VCs will receive intensified technical assistance & training from MCVS, but will also have the advantage of tapping into the wealth of resources offered by an established support network.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: The mission of the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service (MCVS) is to engage and support Mississippians of all ages and backgrounds in service to their communities. As the state's office of volunteerism, MCVS invests in Mississippi communities by building public/private coalitions; linking communities, organizations, and individuals to local and

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national resources and technical assistance providers; coordinating state resources for volunteers; initiating volunteer programs to address unmet needs; administering State Service Plan Goals and training among the Mississippi Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service (MCNCS), the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), and MCVS; and promoting and recruiting citizen participation for volunteer service initiatives such as Make A Difference Day, 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance, and MLK Day of Service. MCVS continues to work hard to create a seamless service delivery system. The leadership of our governor, appointed commissioners, and staff has created a base of support to achieve concrete results. Our philosophy of collaboration has served our state well; all of our broad initiatives include support from public, private, business, and faith sector partners.

MCVS has successfully administered CNCS-funded programs since 1994. MCVS is currently in its fourth year of administering the VGF program to increase volunteerism. In the 2013-2014 program year, MCVS is managing 11 AmeriCorps programs supporting 386 member slots. With a proven track record of operational, programmatic, and fiscal responsibility and nine professional staff, MCVS is well-prepared to manage the proposed activities, serving as the grantee and fiscal agent for this project. Key staff members who will administer the proposed project are as follows:

PROGRAM & FISCAL OVERSIGHT - Volunteer Network Officer (VNO), Krista Estes (four year employee), has successfully directed the efforts of the VGF program since its inception in 2010, and will continue in this same role. Her responsibilities will include grant writing, developing and issuing RFP's for sub granting, determining grant awards, monitoring quarterly grant objectives, reviewing and approving monthly reimbursement requests, providing VC staff with individual and group training and consulting services in grant-related financial, organizational & nonprofit management, and reporting to CNCS. Ms. Estes has a BS degree in Psychology & 30 yrs experience in nonprofit & volunteer leadership, with more than 15 years experience as Chief Operations Officer with one of the nation's largest VCs. In this role, she provided operational leadership for a \$1M annual budget and oversaw services and programs impacting a large metropolitan area. Professional proficiencies: budgeting, staff & volunteer direction, HR management, grant writing, accountability and oversight, fundraising, board leadership, training/workshop facilitation, event management, and strategic planning. **Danny Blue, Deputy Director of Finance & Administration,** (eight year employee), BA in Accounting, will manage the financial oversight and share programmatic oversight with the VNO. Specifically, Mr. Blue will be responsible for the overall fiscal compliance. He has more than 10 years experience with CNCS-funded programs, and 16 years of experience working with federal programs

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such as USDA School Lunch Programs, Carl Perkins Vocational Education Programs and Special Education Preschool, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Programs. His duties include federal and state compliance and reporting, budget planning and analysis, cash management, as well as other duties. Adrian Austin, Fiscal Officer, (two year employee) has a BA in Business Management & 16 years experience in accounting and finance. Mr. Austin will process approved VGF reimbursement requests, perform monthly budget monitoring, produce Federal Financial Reports, quarterly Cash Transaction Detail, the annual state agency financial report, and year-end financial statements. General community relations and promotional services will be contracted to the Fahrenheit Creative Group, LLC. MCVS has contracted with this firm for the past two years with successful results, and will engage them to promote the VC Network program through website development, social media, and graphic design services.

The current infrastructure for financial and programmatic oversight of the VGF funded program will be kept in place and consists of the VNO and Fiscal Officer reviewing and approving monthly reimbursements and conducting quarterly reviews of all programmatic progress. In addition, the VNO will field questions on a daily and weekly basis and make site visits to VC sites at least twice a year, and as needed. Notes will be kept on all consultations, site visits, and training sessions, with improvements and adjustments being made on a continuous basis for both VC staff and the VNO. MCVS' current organizational budget is \$7,497,786. This request of \$435,000 will represent (less than) 6% of the total.

To ensure compliance with federal requirements, MCVS will employ the same level of review as with other CNCS grants. MCVS will adhere to written grant policies and procedures already in place for the current VGF program. MCVS will review internal controls and segregation of duties of its sub grantees. An examination of sub grantee's fiscal systems will be performed to determine its ability to separate program costs. Initial fiscal training will be provided to sub grantees to inform them of federal requirements. MCVS will review fiscal activity monthly and provide feedback to sub grantees and program staff on the progress toward project goals. Fiscal support documentation will be reviewed regularly to identify any questioned or unallowable costs.

The infrastructure developed for fiscal oversight includes a monthly review of program costs to identify any questionable or unallowable costs. Programmatic and Fiscal staff meet at least monthly to discuss sub grantee progress toward meeting project goals. Actual costs versus budget comparison and match percentage is analyzed monthly. Written feedback and follow up is provided to sub grantees each month. Monitoring visits are performed periodically to provide technical assistance to

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sub grantees. Primary and secondary reviews of costs are performed to ensure the accuracy of reimbursements issued.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

BUDGET/COST EFFECTIVENESS - The proposed budget specifically outlines how funds will be used to achieve the goals of the proposal. The majority of funds (more than 80%) will be directly sub granted to VCs for increased capacity to engage more volunteers. 20% of funds will be spent for direct support of VC activity through salary, fringe, and related expenses for MCVS staff to provide personalized financial and programmatic monitoring, training and consulting, and for the promotion of statewide volunteer recruitment and recognition efforts. The budget reflects criminal background check expenses for one MCVS staff, and indication that sub grantees will be required to add this expense in their operating budgets for FY2014 funding. The budget reflects MCVS's Predetermined Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate of 42.7% - documentation is on file with CNCS and available upon request. The budget reflects a 50.8% match from the following non-grant funded resources: \$320,770 from sub grantees; \$44,457 state appropriation; and \$30,596 local support and \$52,509 federally approved indirect cost.

AMOUNT OF UNEXPENDED AND UNDRAWN FUNDS ON OPEN, CURRENT VGF GRANTS - As of June 30, 2014, MCVS closed out MCVS anticipates there will be no unexpended funds from our current (13VGH) VGF grant. Of the estimated \$228,961 undrawn funds (as of June 30, 2014), Volunteer MS has approximately \$96,637 in other VGF program outstanding obligations and \$132,324 in outstanding sub award obligations. We will be requesting a no-cost extension for our current sub awards whose budget period is beyond Volunteer MS' current VGF grant funding period of 9-30-14.

Continuation Narrative Updates

Clarification Responses

Grant Characteristics