

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board AmeriCorps (VHCB AmeriCorps) proposes to have 36 AmeriCorps members (30.01 MSY) who will deliver affordable housing and environmental stewardship/education services through 30 nonprofits across the state. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing and enhancing affordable housing services, stabilizing at-risk ecosystems, and cultivating environmentally sustainable practices. AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 1,200 volunteers that will be engaged in activities that support the affordable housing and environmental goals of the State, VHCB, and the community organizations that sponsor members, such as preparing meals for shelters and extracting invasive plants. This Multi-Focus Intermediary program will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$368,669 will be matched with \$573,885, comprised of \$250,167 VHCB cash, \$200,676 sponsor cash, and \$123,042 local in-kind.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) is a quasi-governmental funder with the dual goals of creating affordable housing while preserving natural and agricultural lands. Working with state, local, and regional partners, VHCB meets housing needs of Vermont's most vulnerable citizens, while stimulating investment in downtowns and village centers. Through transitional and permanent housing that serve as a platform for service delivery, VHCB projects provide low income (L.I.) residents with a stable living environment in which they can begin to address other basic needs. VHCB's conservation and working landscape initiatives add immeasurably to the quality of life in Vermont's communities. These programs contribute to economic vibrancy, promote smart growth, and provide recreational opportunities that enhance the health and well-being of Vermonters. As a rural state, Vermont's affordable housing and land conservation nonprofits are tasked with addressing multiple needs within geographically dispersed and under-resourced communities. These organizations lack the capacity to house an entire AmeriCorps program yet could greatly benefit from AmeriCorps members' energy and skills. Therefore, VHCB proposes to serve as a multi-focus intermediary AmeriCorps program that will enhance the capacity of nonprofits and their respective networks to create more affordable housing opportunities for Vermonters and protect our most precious natural assets. Interventions proposed in this application have been informed by the latest scientifically moderate-to-strong evidence and State Action Plans. The proposed member positions

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placed at host organizations (referred to as 'Sponsors') have been designed to make the biggest impact by delivering these interventions.

**PROBLEM #1: INSUFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING SERVICES** - Stable family and community life is integrally connected to and dependent upon safe, affordable, and permanent housing. Housing provides an anchor for employment, education, civic relationships, and provides a sense of place. For years, Vermont has faced numerous challenges in providing sufficient housing, including inadequate supply, high housing costs, disproportionately low wages, loss/reduction of jobs, damaged household credit, and inadequate services. Although Vermont's 2014 poverty and unemployment rates (12.3% and 4.4% respectively) are slightly below the national average of 14.5% and 5.8%, the cost of living is 118% of the national average and 11th highest in the nation (U.S. Census). One in 7 children and 1 in 10 elders live in poverty in Vermont (2014 VT Housing Needs Assessment). The Needs Assessment found 69.9% of Vermont renters are categorized as either cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened, paying 30% or more of income on rent. Similarly, 44.9% of homeowners are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened. As such, households pay disproportionately high ratios of their income towards housing costs, ranking Vermont as the 17th highest in the nation (Nat'l Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)).

In recent years, Vermont experienced cutbacks to human services, homeless assistance grants, and an 11% reduction of Section 8 rental assistance, which otherwise could have provided housing to 774 households. This, combined with high utility costs and an aging housing stock, has created a precarious housing environment for L.I. Vermonters, forcing many into homelessness. Vermont has the highest rate of homelessness in New England and 13th highest nationally (The State of Homelessness in America 2014). Between 2012-13, the number of people who experienced homelessness in Vermont increased by 25% while the national average decreased by 3.7%; its homeless veteran population increased by 17%. Moreover, the average length of shelter stay has increased from 13 days in 2000 to 36 days in 2014 (2014 Annual Statewide Count of Homelessness). Because people are staying in shelters longer, there is insufficient space and fewer persons served. While the State and housing nonprofits are working hard to address the insufficient housing supply, they lack the capacity to deliver ample, high-quality direct services for those with greatest need. Services such as housing placement, case management, shelter assistance, financial literacy, and homeownership counseling are critical to L.I. Vermonters' ability to obtain and sustain housing. Sponsors surveyed in VHCB AmeriCorps' (VHCB AC) 2013 External Evaluation reported that demand for their organizations' programs are expected to increase over the next 5 years. Specifically, 73% of

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Sponsors reported the anticipated number of individuals needing services will increase; 45% stated the geographic region they serve will need to be extended; and 41% reported the scope of their mission will have to expand in order to cover inter-agency service gaps. These growing needs are in tension with decreasing resources. Of Sponsors surveyed, 60% expected to see their organizations' funding either decrease or remain the same. These projections are bearing out among strapped homeless providers. Unsurprisingly, among the top 3 most commonly cited impediments to developing homeless housing is lack of services (2014 VT Housing Needs Assessment). The VT Agency of Human Services has identified top priorities as: 1) reduction in incidence/duration of homelessness and 2) strengthening of services that alleviate and prevent homelessness, and 3) more support for affordable first-time homebuyer programs and increased public education efforts.

EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS LACK OF HOUSING SERVICES - VHCB proposes to expand the capacity of local, affordable housing nonprofits to better serve populations of greatest need by placing AmeriCorps members whose direct service activities will enhance the quality and extend the reach of current services provided by these organizations. VHCB AC's Theory of Change has been designed to most effectively attenuate the barriers that lead to homelessness while promoting skills and opportunities to establish pathways out of homelessness. Members' core housing activities will increase and enhance services, leading to increased organizational capacity and more individuals transitioning into affordable housing. In turn, there will be reduced risk and duration of homelessness and, ultimately, reduced incidence of homelessness, and improved economic security and quality of life. 18 MSYs placed in Emergency Shelters, Housing Resource Centers, Transitional Housing Providers, and Community Land/Housing Trusts will deliver homelessness and homeownership services (described below), contributing to the Economic Opportunity and Capacity Building focus areas and PMs O5, O11, G3.4, and G3.10.

According to the State of Vermont 2012 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice: 1) 1 out of every 7 Vermonters are living with a disability and are twice as likely to live in poverty as those without a disability; 2) female-headed households with children accounted for more than half of all families living in poverty; 3) refugee populations face additional challenges in acquiring/maintaining suitable housing; and 4) minority households are less likely to be homeowners and more likely to experience housing problems. In conjunction with these findings, housing services will target: economically disadvantaged individuals/families; elders; veterans; minorities; persons with disabilities; female heads-of-households; immigrants; victims of domestic violence; adults with substance abuse, mental illness; and ex-offenders. Target areas are in 11 of the state's 14 counties,

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where there is the greatest proportion of poverty and homelessness and homeownership rates are lowest. The majority of target areas are rural counties with Beale Codes of 5 or greater; two are within the Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zone, and another two have the state's highest number of cost-burdened households.

HOMELESSNESS SERVICES: VHCB AC's member activities will support the major goals of VT's Plan to End Homelessness: preventing/reducing the duration of homelessness; reducing service gaps; increasing available affordable housing units; and increasing the economic security of very L.I. households.

Among the most effective strategies to reduce homelessness is rapid-rehousing, which connects individuals with immediate access to stable housing. Many Sponsors use the rapid-rehousing Housing First philosophy, which embraces the notion that vulnerable clients are more easily engaged in robust clinical services and experience greater success once the chaos of living on the streets has been eliminated from their lives. The first step is to provide housing, followed by supportive treatment services in the areas of mental/physical health, substance abuse, education, and employment.

Housing First is a newer approach that shows strong promise, according to studies that compare this model to other treatments. The randomly controlled trial 'Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals With Dual Diagnosis' by Tsemberis et al (2004) provides strong evidence to this end. In this study, 225 homeless participants diagnosed with severe mental illness and substance abuse disorders were randomized into 2 groups; 126 were assigned to a control group that received treatment as usual and 99 were assigned to a Housing First program. Using ANOVA variance analysis, researchers found that over a 24-month period, participants in the Housing First group had significantly faster decreases in homeless status ( $P < .001$ ) and increases in stably-housed status relative to participants in the control groups ( $P < .001$ ). As compared to the control group, tenants of Housing First experienced significantly higher levels of perceived control and autonomy of the program, perhaps contributing to their success in maintaining housing and to the choice of participating in supportive treatments after being housed. Results from the 2014 publication 'Pathways Vermont's Rural Demonstration of Housing First', a strong SAMHSA-funded, 5-year study of AC Sponsor, Pathway's Vermont, found that the program housed 250 people, 160 whom were chronically homeless. After 6 months in the study, these individuals reported a 24% increase in improved health status; 24% decrease in severe depression; and 17% decrease in stress caused by mental health symptoms. A sub-group of participants showed a trend of reduced reliance on ER services. Housing First has an 85% retention rate, meaning 85% of people housed do not go back to

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homelessness.

A crucial practice in rapid-rehousing is case management, especially for those with complex needs. One method, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), is an approach used by Sponsors that emphasizes assertive outreach, engagement strategies, and an increased emphasis on clients' resource/housing needs. A systematic review in the *Journal of Public Health*, 'Effectiveness of Case Management for Homeless Persons' (de Vet et al 2013) looked at 33 studies, all of which found ACT superior to other models of case management. The study found statistically significant positive effects between ACT and fewer shelter days, housing stability, and cost-effectiveness as compared to other homeless treatment approaches. ACT participants had more contacts with service agencies. Notably, ACT programs were not more expensive than usual services yet achieved better results.

Both Housing First and ACT are endorsed by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Members placed at emergency shelters will provide core services to support rapid transition into stable housing, including: Housing Identification/Placement; General Shelter Assistance (shelter intakes, orientations, donations procurement, transportation, meal prep, child care coordination); and Case Management (job readiness assistance, job/housing applications assistance, substance abuse referrals, post-placement follow-up). Members placed in housing resource centers will provide preemptive services designed to avert homelessness, including Rent Subsidies. Members will also provide Financial Literacy (household budgeting, credit repair counseling, rental readiness). Refer to the Housing Logic Model for activities' dosage and data collection methods.

VHCB members are especially well-suited to deliver these services because of Sponsors' solid delivery systems, ability to train members quickly, and experienced supervisors who work with VHCB AC to design strategic positions in which members can hit the ground running to make the greatest impact. Historically, member efforts have allowed these organizations to pilot novel initiatives such as Ready Set Rent, Keys to Rental Readiness, and Homeless Peer Mentoring that have empowered participants to pay off debts, save money, and qualify for special housing opportunities.

**HOMEOWNERSHIP SERVICES:** For L.I. individuals ready to advance to homeownership, the shared equity model provided through Community Land Trusts (CLTs) offers affordability that would otherwise not be available in the conventional market. Through a CLT, homeowners purchase only the structural improvements of a home, while paying a modest monthly fee to lease the underlying land. At time of purchase, owners agree to resale restrictions, which limit the future resale price and secure perpetual affordability. Consequently, homeowners take on a smaller mortgage than if bought on the open market. The CLT acts as the long-term steward of the property and the homeowners by

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providing pre/post-purchase counseling, sound maintenance, and foreclosure prevention. Findings from multiple impact studies examining CLTs across the nation have demonstrated impressive outcomes. A 2011 independent study by the National Community Land Trust Network reports the foreclosure rate of CLT homes was 10 times lower in 2009 than that of conventional market homes. For Champlain Housing Trust, a VHCB Sponsor, 91.8% of their homebuyers remained homeowners 5 years after purchase, much higher than the national rate for conventional first-time homebuyers. Successful stewardship of shared equity homes takes various efforts yet many CLTs lack sufficient staffing. VHCB AC members will provide needed support for homeownership services, including: Home Buyer Education/Outreach, Pre/Post Purchase Counseling, and support for Loan Foreclosure Counseling.

**PROBLEM #2: THREATS TO OPEN SPACES AND HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS-** Vermont forests provide an array of benefits such as clean water, fertile soils, and a vibrant recreation industry that improve the state's culture and economy. As population grows and development spreads, fragmentation of local ecosystems threaten diverse wildlife habitat. Invasive species, which reduce biodiversity, alter ecosystem functions, and have considerable economic impacts, have contributed to the decline of 49% of all imperiled species on earth and are the second largest threat to biodiversity. Invasive plants rapidly displace vegetation and create monocultures in formerly healthy ecosystems. The entire food chain in these microsystems can become so disrupted by infestations that they cease to function. Moreover, alien plants can significantly alter the state's aquatic environs, such as lakes and rivers, compromising the abundance and diversity of native species. The VT Invasive Exotic Plant Committee reports infestations of alien plants in Vermont can interfere with navigation, recreation, power generation, water supply, agricultural lands, and create public health and safety hazards. With 74% of its lands forested, and possessing 5,000 miles of rivers and 800 lakes/ponds, Vermont is particularly vulnerable to the threats of invasives. In their 2008 Report on Invasive Species, the VT Agency of Natural Resources (VT ANR) proclaimed that non-native species have created significant damage and, without effective control and management, will continue to pose threats in the future. Although state entities are collaborating to mitigate the effects of invasives, Vermont cannot yet implement a comprehensive state-wide effort because of a lack of human resources to extract the invaders. Based on Natural Resources Conservation Service figures, it costs about \$500/acre to get control of invasives. This practice requires long-term monitoring and control, including surveying and plant identification to develop plans. While VT ANR does not have clear estimates of the total costs to implement this practice, they report "it is substantial". For example, during the years 2005-07,

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Vermont spent \$178,000 to manage Japanese barberry. Since 1982, the total cost of water chestnut management in Lake Champlain has exceeded \$8.3M. VT ANR recommends that in addition to invasives extraction, public outreach/education is imperative.

In addition to the spread of noxious invasives, Vermont continues to mitigate the environmental impacts of devastating floods. In 2011, Tropical Storm Irene and other flood events pummeled its slopes and valleys. As a result, major floodwaters and debris poured through rivers and communities, affecting 225 municipalities. Irene's devastation sent the state into disaster mode and, to date, the storm's effects are still being realized. High flows and saturated ground conditions undermined tree roots while floating debris injured tree stems. Large amounts of accumulated sediment and debris in streamside forests may inhibit tree growth over time. Aerial surveys found 9,213 acres with trees exhibiting flood damage. Scores of trails and recreational sites around the state were closed and some are still undergoing remediation. As severe flooding events become more common, Vermont's rebuilding efforts are focused on resiliency while protecting the natural environment. VHCB AC's conservation Sponsors play a key role in this endeavor and will require bolstered resources to implement sustainable solutions.

Lastly, outdoor recreation is an important part of the lifestyle and economy in Vermont, generating \$2.5B a year in retail sales, \$180M in state taxes, and supporting 35,000 jobs (Champlain Business Journal April 2012). Vermont has 850,000 acres of public lands open to recreation and thousands of miles of trails. Given 33% of all habitat loss is owed to outdoor recreation, the protection and preservation of trails, lakes, and forests upon which Vermont's livelihood depends is imperative. To this end, citizens must become responsible stewards of the land. To become a good steward, people must be put in touch with nature. However, people today, and especially children, have become increasingly disconnected from the land. The '2012 Exploration of Children's Experience of the Outdoors and Nature with Associated Risks and Benefits' by The Children & Nature Network reported youth participation in outdoor recreation declined since 2006. A 2011 nationwide poll commissioned by The Nature Conservancy found that while 88% of youth reported using a computer every day, only 11% reported accessing a natural area every day. This disengagement from the natural world may be contributing to our planet's destruction (Note: While VT data on children/nature and habitat loss is unavailable, national data is generalizable). Studies show that spending more time in nature promotes not only people's health and quality of life but can incite changes in environmentally-conscious behaviors. 66% of children in The Nature Conservancy poll reported having had at least one meaningful experience in nature and were more likely to express concern about environmental issues.

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Environmental programs that promote ecologically informed citizenry through hands-on education and direct stewardship are needed in order to preserve the vitality of Vermont's bioregion.

### EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THREATS TO OPEN SPACES AND ECOSYSTEMS-

According to The Nature Conservancy, the best response to invasive control is to coordinate, strengthen, and broaden support for existing approaches, including: preventing the invasion of more invasive species; replacing culverts; controlling soil erosion; maintaining vegetation zones; and educating the public on environmentally-sustainable practices. VHCB's Theory of Change has been designed to support these strategies in conjunction with the State's major plans to address the threats to and long-term viability of its ecosystems. The 2010 VT Forest Resources Plan, 2010 Report on Invasive Species, and 2011 VT Ecosystem Restoration Plan have established several Future Desired Conditions, including: Biological Diversity; Forest Health and Productivity; and Land Ethic. To attain these conditions, they have prioritized invasive species control and stewardship of forest habitats. As such, VHCB AC proposes to deploy 13 MSYs that will contribute to the Environmental Stewardship focus area and PMs EN 4, EN 4.1, EN 5, and EN 5.1 that will include: 1) treatments to stabilize/protect forests and bodies of water and 2) environmental education. See Environment Logic Model for dosage and data collection methods. Critical to the success of restoration strategies is expertise of VHCB AC's Sponsors, including The Nature Conservancy of VT, Green Mountain Club, Franklin Watershed Committee, trail associations, nature centers, and local park districts. These organizations work with USDA and municipal agencies to develop targeted conservation management plans with the greatest impact on the most vulnerable areas.

**INVASIVE SPECIES AND FOREST HABITAT MANAGEMENT:** A moderately strong 2009 controlled trial 'Invasive Plant Removal Method Determines Native Plant Community Responses' by Flory et al in the Journal of Applied Ecology evaluated responses of native plant communities to 3 common invasive removal treatments at 8 reference plots. Using ANOVA fixed effects analysis, hand weeding and post-emergent herbicide yielded 24% and 21% (respectively) greater native plant biomass, species richness, and tree regeneration compared to reference plots after 2 years of treatment, each with significance at  $P < .05$  or smaller. These results suggest that when invaded habitats are treated with hand-weeding or post-emergent herbicide, native plant community biomass and diversity can be at least partially restored. 'Lessons Learned From Invasive Plant Control Experiments' by Kettenring et al (2011), a systematic review and meta-analysis of 355 papers of mostly controlled trials, concluded: there are currently no effective short-term solutions to invasives; long-term efforts are needed to control invasive plants; and hand pulling and herbicide treatments are

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determined to be the most effective means to eradicate and control invaded areas. Therefore, VHCB AC will provide much-needed invasive management services: Control/Management Planning; Volunteer Pull Days Coordination; Invasives Extraction; and Herbicide Application. Members selected for these positions will bring an environmental science background and physical endurance, making them particularly well-suited for the task.

As a compliment to invasives removal, members will provide forest and water habitat management. VHCB AC will align its member activities with the priorities of the Vermont portion of the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative and Vermont's 2013-17 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan that both seek to conserve and restore our greatest environmental assets. Member efforts will focus on the most invasive-prone and storm-affected areas within Central Vermont, Northeast Kingdom, Southern Lake Champlain Valley, and Upper Valley. Other target areas include the Long Trail, Catamount Trail, Cross VT Trail, Winooski River Region, preserves, and state and city parks.

Members will implement stewardship activities including: Trail Maintenance; Culvert Repair; Boundary Marking; Easement Monitoring; and Tree Planting/Maintenance. As stated in the Theory of Change, areas receiving increased restoration will regenerate and conserve healthy, productive, sustainable ecosystems that will benefit regional landscapes, communities, and economy.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:** Environmental education (EE) is a key component of the conservation tool box to increase knowledge, improve attitudes, and change behaviors. Empirical research has demonstrated that knowledge of and experiences in nature have a positive influence on children and environmentally-related behaviors. Based on strong evidence that children influence the attitudes of their parents, who consequently change household behavior, member programming will target youth as agents of change. A strong 2013 controlled study, 'Child-Oriented Environmental Education Influences Adult Knowledge and Household Behavior' by Damerell et al, assessed the effectiveness of EE in influencing both the behaviors of children and their parents and related household behaviors. It found the most significant variable affecting household water usage was whether the focal child had received wetland education. Higher knowledge scores were found for students who had received the education ( $P < .001$ ) and the children who carried out wetland work had even higher scores than the children who did not perform the work ( $P = .0049$ ). Moreover, households of these children showed more conservative water use, suggesting that education targeted to children can translate into positive household behavior. Results from 'Connection to Nature: Children's Affective Attitude Toward Nature' (Chen 2012) found children's previous experience in nature ( $P < .01$ )

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and knowledge about the environment ( $P < .01$ ) positively influenced their interest in performing environmentally-friendly behaviors.

VHCB members will provide place-based education to get children outdoors and into their community and natural environment. With a focus on cultivating Awareness, Sensitivity, Positive Attitudes, Skills, and Participation, youth will gain hands-on field experiences through service learning. They will have opportunities to apply their knowledge of natural history and local conservation issues to solving real world problems and will learn to integrate ecologically sustainable practices into their daily lives, such as energy efficiency and composting. Increased understanding will foster enhanced appreciation for the natural environment thereby increasing the sense of responsibility, empowerment, and self-efficacy needed to share conservation strategies with others, leading to increased and sustained community participation in environmentally-sensitive practices. Members will provide hands-on EE for youth via: School Programs; Public Programs; Day Camps; and Service Learning Projects, such as trail maintenance and invasives removal. Refer to the logic model for dosage and data collection specifics.

**VOLUNTEER MOBILIZATION:** VHCB AC multiplies its direct efforts by mobilizing community volunteers of all ages/abilities and fostering an ethic of civic responsibility. Most Sponsors have a great need for volunteers but insufficient time or staff to mobilize them. VHCB AC will build on its strong track record of volunteer generation to strengthen Sponsor capacity. As part of their core service activities, members will recruit, train, supervise, and coordinate volunteers. Members will also enhance Sponsors' volunteer systems by maintaining and creating new databases and fortifying volunteer relationships. Volunteers will exponentially increase the positive impact members have and contribute to the sustainability of their efforts. Volunteers will provide assistance such as child care, event planning, managing food shelves, and environmental stewardship.

**5. MEMBER TRAINING-** Tomorrow's leaders need to be equipped for tomorrow's challenges. VHCB AmeriCorps strives to prepare members as positive catalysts in a global community, armed with the knowledge and skills to solve seemingly intractable problems. VHCB AC is committed to delivering a robust training curriculum that will create these leaders, enabling future meaningful employment and a more engaged citizenry.

The year will begin in September with a 3-day Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) designed to ensure successful service terms. Each member will be given a handbook; learn AC rules, data tracking, and progress reporting; participate in regional and service-specific breakout sessions; explore the AC Pledge; and enjoy team-building activities, including a service project. Subsequent trainings will

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include: Financial Literacy Peer Advisor Certificate (November); CPR/1st Aid (December); Volunteer Management (January); Cultural Competency (March); Understanding Poverty (April); Leveraging Community Resources (May); and Life After AmeriCorps (July). Members will have the opportunity to attend special events to support their service, such as the VT Statewide Housing Conference, NeighborWorks Training Institute, and Northeast Weed Committee Annual Meeting. Position-specific trainings, such as loan management, co-occurring disorders, GPS mapping, outdoor stewardship safety, or herbicide application, will be provided by Sponsors.

Throughout the year, VHCB will stress compliance to rules, responsibilities, and conduct. Member handbooks will be replete with forms, progress reporting tools, policies, and prohibited activities to guide members through a rewarding term. A significant portion of the PSO is dedicated to ensuring members understand the CNCS rules, member agreement, and position description. An energizing "quiz show" will reinforce the material. Adherence to the rules is continuously monitored through daily on-site supervision, timesheets, monitoring visits, formal evaluations, and informal check-ins; members will also have open-door access and guidance from Program staff.

6.MEMBER SUPERVISION- Supervisors are employees of the sponsoring organization and designated based on ability to support the member position. All supervisors will attend a Supervisor Orientation to review CNCS rules and Program expectations. The VHCB staff will correspond and meet regularly with supervisors, including at regional meetings and site visits where compliance is monitored. In addition to daily supervision, members and supervisors will be required to conduct weekly check-in meetings to ensure the member is supported and on task. In addition to technical support, VHCB staff and Sponsors provide steady moral support, recognition, and feedback. Member satisfaction and performance will be assessed and responded to on a timely, on-going basis. Together, supervisors and members will complete a Member Performance Review twice per service term. In turn, members will complete a Review of Supervisor and VHCB will perform a Sponsor Evaluation. When conflicts arise or if a member is faltering, VHCB staff will follow the Grievance Procedure, whereby the VHCB AC Director will be available to provide conflict resolution or other assistance.

7.MEMBER EXPERIENCE- In addition to thoughtfully crafted positions, meaningful service activities, and quality trainings, VHCB AC will offer a suite of enrichment initiatives to enhance knowledge, community engagement, and leadership skills. The Independent Service Project (ISP) encourages members to spearhead a project of their interest in the local community. After its first pilot year, several ISPs resulted in 62 lbs of vegetables grown and donated to a local food bank; dozens of students saving energy; and 24 tax returns processed for L.I. residents. The Book Club lets members

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read and review approved books to obtain a greater understanding of their service experience. Peer Site Visits allow members to learn best practices from peers doing similar service and exchange peer support. Members will also be encouraged to optimize the unique, interdisciplinary VHCB AC consortium to collaborate on inter-site service projects.

Interspersed between trainings will be events that promote a service ethic, esprit-de-corps, networking, and celebration, such as a Ropes Course (October); Statewide Launch (October), VT National Service Conference (November); winter retreat (February), MLK Day project (January); service days (on-going); and closing ceremony (August). The AmeriCorps Leader will be integral in promoting service reflection and goal setting, coordinating service projects, connecting members with additional trainings/resources, fostering regional networks with members from all VT AmeriCorps programs, providing peer support, and incubating group service efforts. Lastly, VHCB will keep members connected to AmeriCorps beyond their term through the AC Alumni networks.

The 2014 End of Term Member Survey found that 100% of members who participated fully in the training curriculum thought the Program provided trainings that were useful to their personal and professional development; 100% felt more effective in addressing issues facing their community; and 90% felt better equipped to secure employment. Furthermore, 97% believed they improved in at least 5 of 7 specific life skills. Among them, 100% improved in problem solving and ability to create successful strategies in the face of change or adversity; 97% improved in interpersonal communication; and 93% enhanced their sense of civic engagement and knowing how to make a difference in the community. This suggests members are receiving superior training and guidance, leading to powerful service experiences and lifelong civic engagement. Indeed, results from the Survey validate this point: In PY13, 20% of VHCB's members were hired by their Sponsor; 40% secured employment elsewhere; 14% were enrolled in graduate school; and 31% re-enrolled with VHCB AC. With such outcomes, VHCB AC is valued as an incubator for high-caliber future workers in a rural state struggling to keep its younger workforce.

To ensure effective and innovative member positions, the Program will require annual re-application for Sponsorship. Applications will request evidence-based support from Sponsors to guarantee effectiveness of the tasks described in the position descriptions. To avoid stagnation, the Program will enact a policy that a slot will not be awarded to a particular organization using the same position description for 3 years or more. This will ensure sites are putting careful thought into position development, implementing innovative strategies, and promoting growth in their organization. To enhance local recruitment, the Program is currently piloting an initiative to help spread the word

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about AmeriCorps, recruit new applicants, and arouse interest in service in future generations. Known as "R.A.R.E. (Regional AmeriCorps Recruitment Envoy) Opportunity", it will give members a platform to tell their story and describe AmeriCorps opportunities. Members become part of the R.A.R.E Opportunity by speaking to school and community groups and tabling at job fairs. In addition, VHCB AC recruits in the communities it serves through advertisements in local publications, outreach at career fairs and public events, and broadcasting of videos profiling members' service. VHCB AC's website and Facebook page are additional platforms that recruit, connect, share stories, and promote service experiences.

8.COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS I.D- VHCB takes pride in being part of the AmeriCorps family. Prior to enrollment, applicants are made aware they are committing to a year of national service, not a traditional job. During the highly-spirited PSO, members will become conversant in AC lingo, become acclimated to its culture, and hone an "elevator speech". The Life After AmeriCorps training will assist members with articulating their AC experience to the community and job prospects. VHCB requires members to wear I.D. at all times while representing AmeriCorps. Members will be given ample gear with the VHCB AC logo. All sponsoring sites must publicly display an AC placard and include the logo on public communications. Member name tags, voicemail recordings, and email signatures will also identify them as AmeriCorps.

### Organizational Capability

1.ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING- VHCB has extensive experience using state and federal funds to meet local needs. Since 1987, VHCB and its partners have administered more than \$300M in state funds to create and conserve more than 11,300 units of affordable housing, 640 farms, and 410,000 acres of land while leveraging \$1B from federal programs and foundations. It administers funding from property transfer tax revenues and a dozen different federal funding sources. VHCB's annual audit includes the A-133 of our federal grants. VHCB is periodically monitored by its funders, with exemplary results. VHCB's impeccably clean audit history, along with a dedication to maintaining proper internal control structures and regulatory compliance, make it a low-risk auditee. Its knowledgeable staff, solid track record, and effective systems enable it to successfully respond to new funding opportunities. In 2009, VHCB was awarded a CNCS ARRA grant, expanding VHCB AC by 30% which served homeless service providers and homeownership centers. VHCB has stewarded \$5.9M in CNCS funding the past 17 years. VHCB's total FY15 budget is \$25M with an operating budget of \$3.4M.

For 26 years, VHCB has partnered with and helped establish housing/conservation nonprofits

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throughout the state. This established delivery system is well positioned to maximize the benefits of the proposed project. Results prove that a delivery network tailored to the realities of delivering services in smaller towns and cities- scaled appropriately- are essential to success. Effective systems for tracking, fiscal accountability, and other essential elements of program administration are already in place. VHCB AC staff collaborate with the financial, housing, and conservation staff to ensure financial integrity and maximized deployment of member positions. Renewed funding of VHCB AC would fit within the existing administrative structure and not require the establishment of new major systems or controls.

Four highly experienced staff members will oversee the proposed program: Program Director Francis Sharpstene has 7 years' experience working with VHCB AC. Previously, he was Program Assistant and completed 2 years in AmeriCorps NCCC. He will be responsible for: implementing/developing program policies; planning/facilitating trainings and events; monitoring and ensuring compliance with state and federal requirements; supervising staff; member recruitment; and attending National Service meetings. Program Administrator Joan Marie Misek has 14 years of experience working with VHCB AC, initially as Program Assistant, then Program Director, and is also an AmeriCorps alumna. She will be responsible for: grant management; data collection/reporting, in-kind tracking; administration; and general member/sponsor support. They will report to Polly Nichol, Housing Programs Director, who has administered VHCB's housing programs for 26 years. Responsibility for financial aspects will reside with VHCB's CFO, who has 12 years experience managing finances for VHCB AC. She is responsible for tracking project funds and financial reporting. She will oversee staff who will complete financial reports and member payroll.

To ensure community participation, VHCB senior staff meet individually with the leadership of the housing organizations once a year for monitoring and to discuss needs/priorities. Gatherings for all housing and conservation executive directors are held regularly. VHCB requires grantee organizations to disclose TA needs, challenges/obstacles, annual goals, etc. Community members participate on the boards of the housing organizations- most of them are structured to have 1/3 residents or L.I. representation, 1/3 community representation, and 1/3 other such as government or business. VHCB also participates in the VT Council on the Homeless to serve as an opportunity to talk about what VHCB can do. This past year VHCB co-sponsored a statewide meeting of homeless service providers at which they talked about challenges and best practices.

2. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY- VHCB AC has a strong record of compliance and will continue to provide multi-tiered quality-control measures to prevent and detect noncompliance. All

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Sponsors will be required to attend programmatic and financial training, including a review of CNCS rules and best practices. There will be at least one annual Sponsor meeting to review compliance as well as conference calls to precede important processes, such as member recruitment. Program compliance will be monitored by the Director on a continual basis via monitoring visits, sponsor evaluation, sponsor annual report, regional supervisor meetings, and periodic communications via email and phone. Monitoring criteria will include match provision, compliance, on-site supervision/training, meeting attendance, and member selection/retention. Most of the sponsors are also monitored by other VHCB departments for compliance on other grants. To promote accountability, sites must re-apply annually for sponsorship through a competitive process that evaluates ability to meet compliance and performance expectations. Any noncompliance will be addressed immediately and will be accompanied by technical support from the Program to resolve problems and prevent future risk. Sponsors that fail to improve upon noncompliance will not be re-awarded a position. The long-tenured VHCB staff is well-versed in existing CNCS regulations and readily adopts new rules through vigilance with SerVermont communications, and CNCS email updates/webinars. Staff frequently consults with SerVermont for clarity on potential non-compliance issues.

3. PAST PERFORMANCE- VHCB AC has a consistently strong performance record. During its last competitive grant, VHCB mobilized an average of 1,854 volunteers annually (232% of goal), logging an average 10,457 hours (174% of goal), which is analogous to 6.2 additional MSYs/year. Members have provided housing placement services for an average of 1,572 economically disadvantaged individuals (52%) including an average of 78 veterans/year (89% of those served were homeless or near-homeless). An average 526 transitioned into affordable housing (191%). VHCB members have contact with the majority of homeless individuals in the state and impacts of their efforts can be seen in the improved rate of chronic homelessness, which was 3.68% less than in 2012 (State of Homelessness 2014). Over the last 3 years, an average 1002 individuals received financial literacy (334%); 79% of these individuals demonstrated improved financial knowledge.

An annual average of 340 low-income housing units were repaired (227%); an average 184 low-income units experienced an energy audit (736%); and an average 306 housing units received weatherization or energy efficient retrofits (204%). As a result, hundreds of very L.I. residents had warmer, safer, more accessible, and more affordable homes.

Averages of 24,583 acres were stewarded (307%); 151 miles of trails and rivers were maintained (189%); and 20,621 trees were planted/maintained. Additionally, an average of 6,846 students

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received environmental education (274%). We leveraged an annual average of \$7,584 community in-kind donations to support member projects. Additionally, an average of 525 students per year participated in service learning activities. Actual performance over the last 3 years exceeded goals for many measures; therefore, these goals have been adjusted to achieve more ambitious outcomes.

The testimony of one Sponsor, Green Mountain College, illustrates how effective members have been at helping communities manage unwieldy invasive populations: "VHCB AmeriCorps members have filled big gaps in land stewardship and education on campus. Their work brings big improvements to natural areas and helps integrate this work with other campus sustainability programs. These members are entering new territory for the college, in new positions for which no faculty or staff position existed."

Concluding remarks taken from the 2013 External Evaluation that surveyed Sponsors synthesizes VHCB AmeriCorps' success in providing high-quality, cost effective performance: "Most Sponsors described VHCB AC as indispensable to achieving their organization's mission." And, "100% of sponsors reported their return on investment of the Program to be either 'excellent' or 'worthwhile', citing 'leveraging community involvement'; 'contributing to organization sustainability'; and 'playing a major role in enhancing capacity and extending direct services' as among the most valuable contributions of VHCB members." Sponsors also commented that the unique housing-conservation member collaborations benefited their organizations and "welcomed more efforts to promote collaboration". VHCB AC's steadfast ability to support local organizations was perhaps best acknowledged by one of its Sponsors who, as part of their 30th Anniversary, awarded VHCB AC their esteemed "Decades Award". As stated in the press release, "HomeShare Vermont would not be where it is today if not for the amazing VHCB AmeriCorps members assisting with outcomes, working with clients, developing trainings, and much more."

The PY13 enrollment rate was 100%. Retention was 89%, with a 92% average retention over the last grant cycle. To meet 100% retention, improvements will be made to the member selection process by integrating interview questions that focus on the applicant's desire to serve, ability to survive on the living allowance, and level of commitment for the full term. To deter members from leaving to accept employment elsewhere, the Program has increased the living allowance and will offer money management training. Last year, the Program initiated a state-wide Member Discount Program similar to a student discount.

The Program has never encountered compliance issues. Nevertheless, on-going mechanisms will be implemented to assess evolving needs of members and Sponsors. This will include: surveys, external

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evaluation, progress reports, monitoring visits, and focus groups to elicit successes, challenges, and feedback. For Program improvements, regular assessments and modifications will be performed on current protocols, and best practices will be exchanged with other programs. If funded, one area for improvement will be to build a more robust alumni network.

### Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

The cost/MSY for this proposal is \$12,257, a \$43/MSY decrease from the current level and \$1,473/MSY below the maximum. Reductions were made despite constraints such as a 31.4% increase in member health insurance costs, 3% cost-of-living increase; and scaling a PT staff position up to FT.

Since 2008, many Sponsors' revenue sources and staffing have contracted, making the value of member services proportionally greater. Results from the 2013 External Evaluation illustrate this point: when asked what their organization would do if they lost the AmeriCorps position, 2 of 3 responded the most likely outcome would be the irretrievable loss of the level of enhanced service delivery supported by the member; 75% said hiring to fill this gap would not be possible. In the context of delivering cost-efficient housing services, families turned away from shelters due to overflow are sent to motels, which cost the state \$3.9M in FY13. Through members' rapid re-housing activities, fewer people stay in motels, psychiatric institutions, and prisons, saving millions in tax payer dollars. For example, in the 6 months after a cohort of 129 people enrolled with Pathways Vermont, the amount of money spent on those people dropped by over \$1 million from what was spent 6 months before they were housed (Report on Cost Effectiveness of Pathways VT's Housing First Program, 2014). VHCB members mitigate the cost to control invasives, as well. VTANR reports it costs upwards of \$500/acre to extract invasives. In PY13, 7 VHCB members (5.26 MSYs) stewarded over 10,000 acres, with at least half the acreage receiving invasives treatment. Based on \$12,300/MSY, members theoretically saved the state and nonprofits ~\$2.4M. This does not take into account the 1,800 volunteers mobilized annually by members, whose 11,670 hours were valued at \$252,655 (independentsector.org).

The total cost of this proposal is \$997,582. VHCB requests \$392,352 from CNCS and will provide \$605,230 in non-federal funds (61% overall match). VHCB will provide \$261,817 cash match and sponsors will contribute \$214,041 cash match and \$129,372 in-kind.

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

VHCB AmeriCorps provides housing and environmental services by placing members in a network of

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non-profits throughout Vermont. Members provide financial literacy, homelessness and housing placement services, as well as providing environmental stewardship and education. In addition, members recruit and manage community volunteers to compound the effect of members' service. Member services will lead to an enhanced ability to maintain safe, affordable, permanent housing; increased community awareness and engagement in affordable housing solutions; stabilized, thriving ecosystems; and increased community participation in environmentally sensitive practices.

To ensure the effectiveness of the VHCB AC approach and continued improvement, the Program will implement an extensive evaluation during the second year of the grant. VHCB has a paid internship program and will allow the VHCB AmeriCorps Program to use one intern to conduct a full program evaluation. The evaluator will work with the AmeriCorps program on a part-time basis for a 3 month period. VHCB will provide the intern with access to the necessary means to complete the evaluation including supervision, office space, and past evaluation methods and tools. The intern will have relevant training and experience on evaluating and will be recruited from a local college's Business or Public Administration degree program.

The evaluation will assess member and sponsor satisfaction, value of member placements, the program's areas of strength and weakness, and most importantly, the overall effectiveness of the program at addressing community needs as set forth in the Program's logic model. The evaluator will also help the Program to investigate the changing needs of Vermont relative to the work of the program by looking at the most recent studies regarding housing and environmental conservation in Vermont and receiving updates on our sponsoring organizations' strategic plans. Additional objectives include assessing sponsor interest in future participation and the impact the Program may have on alumni career paths.

The evaluation will address the following key questions: Does the program have an enduring impact on the core problems confronting Vermont and the nation? Is the program delivering solutions through member service? Does the program have an innovative approach to delivering services to sponsoring organizations and target communities? Is the program creating the capacity needed for impact and success? What is the perception of members regarding training and support they received? Are members satisfied with their AmeriCorps experience?

The evaluation will combine online surveys with discussion groups which will include sponsoring organizations, current members, alumni, and community partners. Previously collected data will be used in conjunction with surveys and discussion groups to answer the key questions. Data used will include results from: pre-service member goals survey; member performance reviews and

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evaluations; and member activity reports. Official reports from community partners and research institutions will be used to assess local and statewide changes that have occurred during the service year such as the rate of homelessness and foreclosure, eviction rates, public and recreational lands accessibility, health of ecosystems, and participation in environmentally-conscious activities. Reports from sponsoring organizations will be used to determine the extent to which VHCB AC Member activities affected these changes.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

#### A. Programmatic Clarification Items

1. You mention the Vermont Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The member roles as described may not be unique and may actually duplicate the work of existing staff. Please verify that this isn't the case or remove treating at risk ecosystems as a performance objective.

The Vermont Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Plan provides an assessment of the supply, demand, quality, priorities, and issues surrounding outdoor recreation in the state and sets forth an action plan and set of recommendations for achieving a desired vision for outdoor recreation. It serves as a guide to state, regional, municipal, and nonprofit entities working in the area of land management, environmental education, recreation, planning, among other domains (the Plan itself does not employ any staff).

Although the health and accessibility of our natural lands is of high priority to the public, resources to support them are inadequate. These entities all share a similar barrier to achieving their shared vision of managing our lands: a shortage of people to perform the stewardship that has been determined necessary. In general, the current staff of these entities is primarily dedicated to on-going monitoring of targeted environmental conditions. VHCB AmeriCorps members would not be duplicating their efforts. Rather, they would be providing the unique and invaluable on-the-ground stewardship that is currently lacking. Additionally, members would be mobilizing hundreds of volunteers who would log thousands of hours removing invasive plants, maintaining trails, creating signage, and repairing culverts. VHCB has conducted surveys of said entities to assess how best to maximize AmeriCorps member activities for the benefit of the state. Our results clearly show that stewardship and volunteer

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management are among the top needs.

Our proposed sponsoring nonprofits (see list below\*) are considered by the state as integral partners in developing, coordinating, and actualizing a statewide effort to support the Plan. Together with these sites, we designed members' service activities to reflect what is needed most as well as the services that current staff among these entities are not able to deliver themselves. It should be noted that many of the proposed Sponsors are small organizations comprised of five or fewer employees yet are charged with large jurisdictions. They are well-informed of CNCS' non-duplication policy. Furthermore, we consulted with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources throughout development of our proposal to ensure member activities would be filling the most immediate needs and that there are no other resources available that would duplicate their efforts.

All VHCB AmeriCorps sponsoring sites are trained on non-duplication. This is monitored throughout the year via the Application for Sponsorship, member time sheets, progress reports, and site visits.

\*List of proposed sponsoring nonprofits: The Nature Conservancy, Green Mountain Club, Franklin Watershed, Cross Vermont Trails, Catamount Trail Association, Green Mountain College, and Lamoille County Conservation District.

2. Also the number of MSY dedicated to treating at risk ecosystems seems negligible given the size and scope of the problem as described. Please explain why the limited MSY dedicated to treating at risk ecosystems is being divided into separate categories instead of being focused on a single outcome.

While the six proposed MSYs are not sufficient to fully address the significant environmental stewardship needs of the state, their positions have been designed to leverage hundreds of volunteers that will greatly magnify their impact. Each year, our members' service has made triumphant gains that could otherwise not have happened. To illustrate, in the last year and a half, one half time position with the help of student volunteers at Green Mountain College has resulted in a near eradication of Glossy Buckthorn in that area. The supervisor of this position reported, "This is a highly invasive species that we now think we can manage because of our AmeriCorps member. In the process, many students learned the ecological background of species introductions and management

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methods."

While invasive species management persists as a pressing problem that AmeriCorps members are well-suited to address, there are a variety of other stewardship treatments needed to support the health of our at-risk ecosystems, such as building riparian buffers, puncheons, and culverts; growing, planting, and maintaining trees; removing debris; trail maintenance; create and repairing signage; and monitoring for easement compliance. It should be noted that some of these activities are season-dependent and can only be performed during certain months of the year (e.g. invasive management, building riparian buffers) while others can be completed in off-seasons or year-round (e.g. signage, growing trees, trail maintenance). By performing a range of activities, the potential of the member positions are maximized and more dynamic.

3. Please further explain how as an intermediary you will monitor and maintain accountability in your network of organizations.

Together with VHCB financial staff and senior management, VHCB AmeriCorps proposes to continue conducting a thorough, two-tiered approach to ensuring compliance and accountability among our Sponsoring Organizations:

Tier One:

1. Application for Sponsorship- Elicits information on how the organization will grow or benefit from a member placement; the unique contribution the member would make; what data collection tools will be utilized; ability and capacity to effectively recruit, supervise, and support a member; and description of how safety of staff is ensured (includes a copy of written policies/procedures).

2. Sponsor Risk Assessment- Part of the sponsor selection process. It assesses the following: ability to provide cash and in-kind match; potential employee displacement or duplication; potential CNCS prohibited activities; quality and impact of member activities; health and safety of service environment; qualification and availability of supervisor; ability of supervisor to attend AmeriCorps trainings/events, communicate issues of import in a timely and appropriate manner; agreement to adhere to Mandated Reporting requirements; and agrees to undergo National Service Criminal History Check.

The Fiscal Health portion includes a general assessment of current fiscal status and identifies any issues of cash flow problems, lines of credit status, and projected revenues compared to projected expenditures.

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3. Sponsor Orientation, Trainings, Regional Meetings and/or Conference Calls - All sponsors and supervisors will attend an orientation that will cover CNCS rules and regulations as well as VHCB expectations and guidance. Regional meetings and/or conference calls will occur throughout the year to review program updates, existing rules, disseminate new rules, and review certain processes such as recruitment.

4. Supervisor Timesheets- Submitted via OnCorps every two weeks with a description of supervision hours. VHCB AmeriCorps staff review and approve/reject supervisor hours on a timely basis and monitor the timeliness of supervision of member timesheet approval.

5. Site Visits and Check-Ins- VHCB AmeriCorps staff will conduct at least two site visits and check-ins with each supervisor-member dyad to review how program expectations are being met. If warranted, additional site visits and check-ins will be conducted.

Tier Two:

1. Most of VHCB AmeriCorps' proposed sponsors are recipients of other VHCB grants or are part of its network. Other VHCB staff, including the CFO, Executive Director, and Directors of the Housing and Conservation departments, conducts their own compliance monitoring.

VHCB embraces a culture of collaboration and compassion. When sites are faltering, VHCB works together with them to eliminate risks and correct problems. In the past, however, when the risks seem intractable or the site is unable to minimize them, VHCB AmeriCorps has chosen to terminate the partnership.

### B. Budget Clarification

The Executive Summary, Budget Narrative, and Performance measures have been updated to reflect 30.01 MSY, 36 members and to respond to budget clarifications.

### C. Performance Measure Clarification

1. Please remove the capacity building performance measure.

The capacity building performance measure (and its related parts: G3-3.7, G3-3.2, G3-3.1, G3-3.8, G3-3.4, G3-3.3, G3-3.10) have been deleted.

2. Please explain how you will ensure that each beneficiary is counted only once in O5 and O11.

Together with Sponsors, VHCB AmeriCorps will establish user-friendly data collection tools to best

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capture member activities. Members and supervisors will be given printed materials and trained on definitions of terms (e.g. 'economically disadvantaged'), outputs, outcomes, data storage/retention, and on the importance of avoiding duplication of individuals served (this applies across all performance measures and volunteer counts). The electronic reporting system that members use to submit their quarterly activity reports is designed to capture and cue members to conduct two separate counts, delineating 'individuals who have received housing services' from 'individuals who have transitioned into housing'. VHCB Staff are also especially sensitive to this when reviewing and processing the reports and follow-up with any suspect numbers.

3. Outcome O11 must be measured by an inspection report and certificate of occupancy, proof of residence, or other verification as described in the performance measure instructions. Please revise the instrument and instrument description to meet this requirement.

The performance measure has been revised to include the required documentation.

### D. Strategic Engagement Slots

1. What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is your program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community?

All VHCB AmeriCorps Member slots will have recruitment efforts targeting persons with disabilities, with a goal of recruiting 3 MSY or 10% of VHCB AmeriCorps members with disclosed disabilities. To achieve this goal, VHCB AmeriCorps will include people with disabilities in its diversity recruitment planning, create and maintain partnerships with disability-related advocacy organizations, and post position descriptions in disability-related publications, web sites and inclusive advertising venues. As an example, VHCB AmeriCorps will advertise open positions with the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR). As a statewide agency working to assist Vermonters who face barriers to employment in finding gainful employment, VABIR is Vermont's liaison between employment and skilled workers with disabilities and other life barriers.

2. In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities.

VHCB AmeriCorps is not requesting additional positions to be filled by AmeriCorps members with

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disabilities.

E. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification:

VHCB AmeriCorps is not requesting additional MSYs with no program funds attached.

### Continuation Changes

N/A

### Grant Characteristics