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Executive Summary

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps will have 136 AmeriCorps members (43.85 MSY) who are designated as Opportunity Youth, engaging in environmental stewardship (as 21st CSC) across the state of New Mexico. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for 80 acres of public land improvements and 90 miles of trail construction and/or maintenance, while simultaneously improving their long term economic opportunities. Historically, within in one year of service, 70% of Corpsmembers have earned college credit, and 20% of Corpsmembers have secured employment. In addition, AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 120 episodic volunteers that will address identified community needs including trail repair and public land clean up.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Environmental Stewardship and Economic Opportunity. The CNCS investment of \$522,750 will be matched with \$1,024,469. This match is made up of \$929,000 in public funding and \$103,760 in private funds, both cash and in kind.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. Need

Each year, New Mexico ranks in the lowest quadrant of child well-being (AECF Kids Count, 2014). Since 2005 our state's youth have seen a steady decline in economic well-being. In 2014, New Mexico was ranked 49th of 50 states in all categories including economic well-being. The state earned the title of "Worst State to be a Kid" (Report: New Mexico 50th in nation to be a kid [2014, January 21]), with 29 % of children and youth living in poverty, only 74% of youth graduating on time, and 18.9 % of youth ages 16 to 24 neither in school nor employed.

Known as "Opportunity Youth", New Mexico youth, ages 16 to 25 years old, are disconnected from social support services, high caliber educational systems, and labor strong markets. Ongoing research further points out that a disproportionate number of "Opportunity Youth" are in low income and minority populations (Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth, Corcoran et al., 2012). Isolated and living below the poverty level, unemployed and under-educated youth in New Mexico's communities present numerous costs to the taxpayer, as they have lower lifetime earnings and are more likely to need government assistance. The average "Opportunity Youth" costs the taxpayer \$13,900 per year (Belfield, Levin, and Rosen, 2012).

At the same time, in a state with 68% public lands, New Mexico's land managing agencies struggle to build and maintain safe, sustainable recreational sites. Many of the public properties were built 30-50 years ago and have reached the end of their useful life without significant maintenance (National

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Parks Conservation Association, Oct 2012). Adding to the challenges, there is limited land management staff to address the hundreds of miles of trail, fencing and campgrounds on public lands. Furthermore, catastrophic wildfires are looming natural disasters without significant fuels reduction efforts. New Mexico State Forestry has identified 20 wildland-urban interface zones at risk of catastrophic forest fires in the state. Catastrophic wildfire destroys not only personal property, but diminishes recreational opportunities for hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts. New Mexico depends heavily on outdoor recreation and tourism to support the economy. With travel and tourism contributing \$7.8 billion dollars to New Mexico's economy, these community assets need protection (The Economic Impact of Tourism in NM, Tourism Economic, 2011).

Recruiting from across New Mexico communities, RMYC's AmeriCorps program will mobilize local unemployed and disconnected youth (primarily Hispanic and Native American) to build and restore trails and public lands. These AmeriCorps service experiences provide job training, stackable work place credentials, post secondary education prep, and soft skills training which are critical first steps to long-term economic well-being for 16-25 year old "Opportunity Youth".

2. Theory of Change

RMYC's National Performance measures are Opportunity Youth and Environmental Stewardship (21st CSC): O12/15, O14/17, EN 4 and EN5. Rocky Mountain Youth Corps' AmeriCorps program will engage 136 Opportunity Youth into varying service terms for a total of 43.85 MSY. Our theory of change maintains that Opportunity Youth who are given educational supports (academic assistance, stackable workplace credentials, college credit, and assistance in transition to post-secondary schools), fundamental skill building opportunities (resume writing, career exploration, job search and interviewing), and technical skill development (forest management, forest restoration and sustainable trail building) improve their self-sufficiency. Skills learned through on the job service and supportive training and assistance will allow AmeriCorps members to reach improved academic performance, find lasting employment and gain long term economic success. Environmental Stewardship projects become the means by which youth build work experience, earn stackable credentials and engage in personal development trainings. At the same time, these environmental conservation projects will promote healthy, productive, and sustainable ecosystems as well create safe, scenic, accessible trails which reduce the impact of natural disasters and human impact on our public lands.

In the RMYC AmeriCorps Program, RMYC will utilize (32) 900- hour, (32) 675-hour, (8)450-hour, and (64) 300- hour Education Award Only terms of service to complete environmental stewardship projects. These AmeriCorps crews will be recruited from pools of northern and central

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New Mexico unemployed youth, as well as nationally on the AmeriCorps website. These environmental stewardship projects are especially beneficial to Native American youth, as this opportunity provides a unique experience for tribal youth to immerse themselves in projects that tie to their historic and cultural backgrounds. In September 2015, four 8 member crews with 675 hour service terms will begin. Their service will run September to December 2015. These crews will reduce the risk of wildfire, build trails and improve public lands infrastructure. Their term of service completes in December in order to complete projects before winter. This end date also aligns with transitions to second semester post-secondary schools, and the start of new employment opportunities.

RMYC's next AmeriCorps Conservation crews are recruited to begin in March 2016. These AmeriCorps participants are divided into four crews of eight Members serving 900 hours. The 900 hour crews span six months, from March to August 2016. The 900 hour service term schedule provides Members a significant duration within the contract period, and aligns with a transition into higher education for the fall semester. Once again, these crews focus on a variety of public land and historic restoration activities through which they gain hands-on work experience. These Conservation crews will also complete watershed restoration and wildfire prevention, creating a more natural forest regime to prevent catastrophic wildfire. In addition, crews will improve and enhance public land infrastructure and recreational opportunities including maintenance and construction of trails. Their trail work will include a number of partners including the National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks, local tribes as well as local government.

The final AmeriCorps crews enrolled in the Conservation Program are the (64) 300-hour Education Award Only terms, and the Bandelier Conservation Crew of eight 450-hour members. From June through August 2016, 64 youth from across northern and central New Mexico (including Albuquerque) will build new trails and trail extensions, install recreational equipment such as playgrounds, and restore historic facilities during RMYC's summer Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program.

Eight crews of eight youth ages 16 to 25 years old, under the direction of an experienced Crew Supervisor, will be formed. These RMYC AmeriCorps Summer YCC Crews provide meaningful service experiences for youth who might otherwise have no summer options. RMYC AmeriCorps Summer YCC Members are high school and college age youth who are given the opportunity to experience community service and to earn an Education Award before returning to a high school or college. The AmeriCorps Education Awards are vital to youth living in areas where poverty exceeds national levels

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and economic opportunity is limited. The AmeriCorps award is provided without an AmeriCorps stipend as wages are provided by a New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps grant.

Also during the summer of 2016, one crew of (8) 450-hour members will work on land restoration projects found within the area of Bandelier National Monument. Tribal youth from around the area will be recruited to join this crew, allowing for an immersion experience in the culture and history of Bandelier.

3. Evidence Based

The youth corps program model is a proven intervention for Opportunity Youth based on historical/pre-preliminary evidence as well as two quasi-experimental studies. RMYC has two decades of program outcomes, as well as moderate evidence from the national study with Abt and Associates, June 2011, and a regional evaluation by the Public Land Service Corps, 2013.

Historically, crew-based service like RMYC's AmeriCorps program has successfully addressed community needs. The Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's organized unemployed young men into crews which improved millions of acres of federal land. When the job market picked up, businessmen indicated a preference for hiring a man who had been in the CCC and the reason was simple: employers believed that anyone who had been in the CCC would know what a full day's work meant, and how to carry out instructions in a disciplined way. In 2014, U.S. Secretary of the Department to the Interior, Sally Jewell, declared that she wanted to put kids to work in youth corps because the experience develops lifelong environmental stewardship (National Geographic, Nov 2014). As a part of this initiative, she has pledged to provide 100,000 work opportunities through public-private partnerships.

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps has been implementing the youth corps model since 1995. During this period, RMYC has found that 70% of participants are enrolled in post-secondary schooling after their service year and approximately 20% find long term employment. This evidence is based on a non-experimental survey of members at exit from National Service.

From 2006 through 2009, RMYC members who participated in youth corps programming were part of the National Evaluation of Youth Corps funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service and conducted by Abt Associates, Inc. This well designed and thoughtfully implemented quasi-experimental study compared outcomes between the group receiving youth corps intervention and a matched comparison group. RMYC's customized report indicated that at 18 and 30 months after service, RMYC participants earned a wage of \$11.13 per hour, while control members earned less at \$9.60 per hour. In addition, 90.5% of RMYC respondents worked in a regular job post-

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graduation compared to the national members' respondent pool, at 78.1%.

The 2013 Public Land Service Corps Evaluation Report was developed collaboratively by leaders at Corps organizations and researchers at Brigham Young and North Carolina State Universities. The purpose was to assess the impact of Corps experience on participants in terms of targeted outcomes: their intentions to pursue future education and confidence in obtaining employment. Statistically significant increases were observed across all outcome measures, in contrast to the general population. The greatest growth occurred on the teamwork, community engagement, leadership and environmental engagement measures. PLSC participants' interest in obtaining additional education increased 12.7%, and confidence in their own ability to get a job increased 18.3%. Both the Abt and PLSC studies have been forwarded to CNCS.

4. Notice Priority

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps meets two of the 2015 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined in the NOFA. Our organization is designated as a re-competing proposal, as RMYC is finishing the third year of a grant award. As in previous proposals, our organization's mission is to engage 16-25 year old economically disadvantaged youth through AmeriCorps programming. In addition, the work experiences we offer to AmeriCorps members are centered around environmental conservation projects in at-risk environments across New Mexico. Through our program, AmeriCorps members develop resources and skills which lead to improved well-being, employment and financial security. Therefore, the organization meets CNCS priorities: Economic Opportunity and Environmental Stewardship. Furthermore, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps is one of five New Mexico programs recognized as a 21st CSC program and the only 21st CSC program offering crews statewide.

5. Member Training

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps AmeriCorps members are the primary beneficiaries of programming. To implement the strategies necessary to impact the lives of Opportunity Youth enrolled in RMYC AmeriCorps program, RMYC maintains a strong Training Department staffed with two graduate and post-graduate level professionals with a variety of training certifications, from Emotional Intelligence to Mental Health First Aid, Restorative Justice and CPR/First Aid. Our Corpsmember Development Program is based on the National Youth Employment Coalition Workbook on Effective Practices, as well as three national programs: Jobs for Graduates, YouthBuild, and Job Corps.

Due to staggered enrollment, timelines are based on crew hiring in September, March, and June. Nonetheless, all Members receive Orientation, weekly training, Individual Development Plans, and individual counseling and transition assistance. Program staff uses a variety of experiential teaching

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methods, from seminar style discussions to student skits and guest lecturers.

Interventions targeted to employment success illustrate the theory of change concept that Opportunity Youth who serve at RMYC will improve their employment preparation, expand career choices and many will find employment or return to a structured educational environment. RMYC's Corpsmember Development Program offers AmeriCorps members career exploration opportunities and stackable work skills credentials. As the season progresses, Members complete job search components such as resume writing, interviewing practice and public speaking activities. These trainings assist Members as they navigate the job environment and develop transition plans.

The second element in the theory of change suggests that educational exploration, GED attainment, concurrent/dual credit and post-secondary support lead to improved educational outcomes for Opportunity Youth. All National Service participants who lack a high school diploma receive GED support through our community's adult basic education program. Opportunity Youth often lack a culture of education and have little knowledge of post-secondary preparation activities; many might be the first in their family to attend college. The Training Department staff provides assistance in school and financial aid applications, and through RMYC's co-enrollment program with the University of New Mexico-Taos (UNM-Taos) members earn college credit towards an Associate's Degree. These credits are available in Life Skills & Team Service (A&S 198) and Introduction to Land Management (Bio 225). Research shows that "dual enrollment programs significantly increase the likelihood of attaining any college degree" (An, B.P., 2012, The Impact of Dual Enrollment on College Degree Attainment). Finally, for those entering post-secondary options, one of two RMYC's Training Coordinators provides on-going support activities which often include mentoring and academic guidance to encourage the Alum's persistence toward college graduation, even when faced with new challenges.

Orientations occur throughout the program year and are tailored to each crew and program. The first week of Orientation emphasizes a teambuilding within and across all crews, regardless of their project assignments. Topics include History of National Service, AmeriCorps regulations and performance measures, prohibited activities discussions, organizational introduction, review of the Corpsmember Handbook, conflict resolution, understanding diversity, First Aid/CPR and additional teambuilding experiences on RMYC's Challenge Course, a high elements ropes course. The second week of Orientation includes partner and project specific trainings, such as chainsaw use and safety (S-212 and Forest Worker Safety certifications), emergency response protocols (Wilderness and Remote First Aid certification), prescribed burn training (S130/S190 certifications), wilderness

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orienteering, forest ecology, and forest monitoring techniques.

The cornerstone of our Corpsmember Development Program is the Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is a written rubric for establishing and measuring progress in a Member's professional and personal goals. Four competency areas: skill development, healthy lifestyles, teamwork and civic engagement/service are emphasized through the IDP. The IDP provides a structure to chart and monitor progress toward goals. IDP's are initiated during Member Orientation and are facilitated by each Member's Crew Supervisor. The IDP is re-visited throughout the service term by the Member and Crew Supervisor to monitor progress and is aligned closely with the Member Performance Evaluations.

The Corpsmember Development curriculum, provided weekly, is designed to meet specific objectives of RMYC programming and emphasize critical reflection on individual and group dynamics. Curriculum units are connected to overall learning goals in IDP competency areas, and create a unique and personalized learning environment for the crews. Trainings focus on creating cohesive crews through team development. All trainings have an underpinning of workforce skill development and successful transition to further education or employment. These weekly trainings provide the opportunity to recheck Members' understanding of prohibited activities. Conservation crews engage in ongoing trainings around topics such as: fire ecology, Leave No Trace, leadership development, successful transitions, expedition behavior, flora/fauna identification, outdoor survival, and effective communication. Additional trainings also address new tools or equipment, depending upon projects.

An additional component of RMYC's member Development Program is Education Blocks. This week long "Ed Block" consist of concentrated instructional periods including workshops that teach Members how to write or improve their resumes and cover letters and allows for an opportunity to engage in mock interviews. During Ed Blocks, Members also practice public speaking skills and discuss professional goals with community members. Members have a chance to receive a Mental Health First Aid USA certification during Ed Block, a nationally recognized, evidence-based curriculum that aims to teach the skills needed to respond to mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

As Members move into their last months of service, the Training Department implements a transition strategies program (Life After AmeriCorps) which assists Members to transition successfully to full time employment, college/vocational programs or a combination of both. Resume writing, professional dress, reference development, FAFSA support, and other topics are discussed weekly during transition trainings. Members are enrolled in NM Department of Workforce Solution's 'Work

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Keys" program to support this transition. Members are supported as they develop their portfolio of job skills and related certifications.

6. Member Supervision

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps has developed a tiered system of support and supervision for Members. Members' immediate supervisor is the Crew Supervisor, who is supported by a Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator reports to and is mentored by the Conservation Program Manager.

Crew Supervisors are hired in the same process as all staff and Members: review of job description, formal application, background check and panel interview. Crew Supervisors receive a two week Orientation which reviews not only AmeriCorps and organizational regulations, but also teaches additional skills in counseling, positive youth development and conflict resolution. Due to the primitive locations of many of our crews, these Crew Supervisors also are certified as a Wilderness First Responder. Other Crew Supervisor trainings includes Felling Boss (risk management of new sawyers), "train-the-trainer" technical trail workshops, and GIS workshop training. As part of Staff Development, the Training Department administers a variety of training for all staff. For example all field based and office based staff receive both 1st Aid / CPR and Mental Health 1st Aid. The Training Department also provides Professional Personality Profile for all Crew Supervisors, Coordinators and Managers, eliciting self awareness and information for their own professional progress. Crew Supervisors also receive all of the same certifications as their Members, such as S-212, Forest Workers Safety Certification, and S-130/190.

Crew Supervisors function as on-the-job trainers, managing all aspects of a crew's daily assignments. Tools, member time sheets, project plans, transportation, and job skills are taught and reinforced by the Crew Supervisor. RMYC crews have eight Members; this ratio allows for individualized support and guidance from their Crew Supervisor and aligns with service project capacity.

The Crew Supervisor is supported by the Program Coordinators and Manager. The Program Coordinators review Project Impact Forms submitted by Crew Supervisors, make project site visits and assist in material and partner site logistics. The final tier is the Program Manager. The Program Manager is responsible for both AmeriCorps Members and projects. The Manager must manage stipend hours, training hours, and the AmeriCorps experience. Formal meetings between Crew Supervisors, Coordinators, and Program Manager allows for trouble-shooting project issues, reviewing member needs, and monitoring supervision of members. These meetings occur on a regular basis and

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provide the opportunity for time to be dedicated to these topics. Furthermore, the Manager participates in a weekly Management Team meeting where issues from the field can be discussed with the leadership of RMYC.

7. Member Experience

AmeriCorps members gain three levels of skills found to be the foundation of long term employment: basic skills, thinking skills and personal qualities (Best Practices of Youth Employment, 2010). Basic skill attainment, including GED if necessary, and dual credit and workplace credentials are fundamental programmatic pieces at Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. Thinking skills are stressed through leadership roles on crews and earning stackable credentials. The crew model reinforces and develops personal qualities such as self-esteem, responsibility, self-management, and teamwork. The crew is given projects which require them to work together, identify obstacles to success and utilize creative problem solving to reach the project's environmental goal. AmeriCorps members experience is reflected upon during project checks out at the end of each week. This reflection allows members to analyze their skills, communication and project outcomes with both their crew supervisor and Conservation Program Coordinator.

Community Meetings are an important component of RMYC's "esprit de corps". Community Meetings occur monthly, and provide an opportunity for crews to interact and learn from each other. Oftentimes crews become focused on their assigned projects and do not work the same schedule as other crews. Community Meetings provide the venue for cross-pollination of ideas and recognition of the larger "youth strength" in the community. A different crew hosts the meetings each month. Beginning with an icebreaker to encourage meeting new people, the crew provides a brief Crew Report to update the larger Corps community about the projects they are working on. The crew report provides an opportunity for AmeriCorps Members to practice their public speaking skills and fosters healthy competition and pride. The hosting crew then opens the floor to any announcements, acknowledgements and celebrations. Each month an outstanding crewmember from each crew is awarded the status of Crewmember of the Month and publicly acknowledged at Community Meeting.

Furthermore, connection to the overall AmeriCorps experience is fostered through attendance of the AmeriCorps members at the New Mexico AmeriCorps Statewide Launch. At the launch, Members have the opportunity to recite the AmeriCorps pledge as a statewide group. This pledge serves as a powerful reminder of their commitment to service. Members practice public speaking and group presentations of learning and skill development focuses on participant's ability to speak about their

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AmeriCorps experience at community service events, as well as during informal discussion.

AmeriCorps Community Service days reinforce an ethic of civic engagement. Each year, RMYC host 3-4 community service events in which members and volunteers work along each other.

Approximately 120 to 150 community volunteers are recruited each year. These episodic community volunteers demonstrate the power of public service over a life span and remind AmeriCorps Members that volunteerism should continue after their term of service.

Community input is an organizational value. In both large and small communities where RMYC has a project presence, we establish advisory boards made up of local community and tribal leaders, government representatives and project partners. These individuals guide our programming and assist in recruitment. All crews are enrolled with sensitivity to the local community's cultural and ethnic diversity. RMYC's Training Department is tasked with recruiting applicants into RMYC programs. Successful strategies have included word of mouth, flyers, community meeting announcements, school fairs and events, newspaper advertisements, and social media outlets. Historically, RMYC has had three times the number of applicants as positions available.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

At RMYC, uniforms play an importance role in establishing an AmeriCorps identity. All RMYC Staff and Members wear service gear daily which carry the AmeriCorps logo, as do RMYC's vehicles. The uniform is more than just a T-shirt, it is the common thread that binds Staff and Members together, both past and present. RMYC takes pride in the uniforms we wear and our communities recognize us for it. We discuss with our Members that wearing RMYC's uniform they are representing themselves, their peers, and youth from across the country. During Orientation for both staff and Members, the history of National Service and AmeriCorps is discussed to lay a foundation of understanding for the service they are embarking on. Finally, at trail heads, RMYC works with the local land manager to place the AmeriCorps and RMYC logos on signage.

Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staff

RMYC has been an AmeriCorps recipient for 17 years, receiving our first AmeriCorps grant in 1998. For 17 years, RMYC AmeriCorps Members have served hundreds of thousands of hours in their communities. We are very familiar with the AmeriCorps provisions and have a strong relationship with the NM Commission for Community Volunteerism and other AmeriCorps programs in the region. Our organization has undergone multiple AmeriCorps, State of New Mexico and A-133 audits, and has no significant findings in our history. Our youth corps model is fundamentally the same since

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our inception; however we are flexible in our program design to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve.

RMYC has a strong management structure. RMYC's Board of Directors is made up of 8 to 15 individuals that serve staggered 2 year terms. Our Board is a diverse group of community leaders, business leaders, RMYC alumni, and committed citizens from the region. The Board meets bi-monthly. In large part our organization's management has remained consistent, knowledgeable and accountable to our leadership. Executive Director Ben Thomas has been with the organization for over ten years and has a very unique perspective of the Corps, as he began his service as an AmeriCorps Member himself. Ben's leadership has built a strong team with tiered levels of support for both program staff and AmeriCorps Members. Management Team, made up of Conservation Program Manager, Program Director and Finance Director, meets weekly and guides the organization with full group input. In addition, a full staff meeting occurs each week to guarantee compliance with rules, review implementation activities and ensure top down as well as bottom up communication flow. RMYC has twenty years of experience managing AmeriCorps grants, federal grants and federal participating agreements. The systems and routines utilized which ensure success in the management of these grants include cooperative project development, accurate budget forecasting and transparent, timely project reporting. RMYC's staff is integrated into every aspect of proposal development, project implementation and grant closeout. These joint efforts ensure consistency and follow through.

RMYC collaborates and plans implementation with the support of many agencies and organizations. Land management agencies such as National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and local businesses, and governments assist in project identification and execution. In 2014, RMYC entered into a five year Participating Agreement with the National Park Service which will offer an increasing number of project options. In addition, RMYC staff sits on the Taos County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Core Team, helping to develop county-wide strategies for forest protection. These groups, along with other nonprofits and individuals support our AmeriCorps Member development objectives and training. RMYC staff regularly meets with these community partners to identify needs and build approaches that allow for successful deployment of AmeriCorps Members.

2. Compliance and Accountability

We maintain no sub grantees nor have multiple service site locations. This allows the organization to easily monitor activities of Members to ensure compliance with AmeriCorps policies. Compliance

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with rules and regulations is addressed with staff and Members at orientations. The staff also participates in regular staff trainings as necessary to address provision changes or shortfalls in provision adherence. Additionally, visits to project sites allow compliance reviews by program staff. The New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism holds monthly meetings with all AmeriCorps state programs to further ensure compliance and accountability to national regulations. For Members, compliance with prohibited activities and AmeriCorps provisions are reviewed during Orientation and reviewed throughout the program year. All Members are trained with a handbook outlining provisions which are again reviewed at the Annual AmeriCorps Statewide Launch. Careful attention is paid to prohibited activities and the Member Agreement, which is reviewed before signing. Furthermore, RMYC Crew Supervisors are present with Members during every single service hour. This direct supervision allows for careful monitoring of ALL activities and prevents any prohibited activity from ever taking place.

RMYC strives for continuous improvement in compliance and accountability. The organization will begin accreditation with the Corps Network in 2015 to audit best practices and peer based standards. The organization also is developing written policies and procedures following New Mexico State Commission standards. Furthermore, RMYC management staff attends CNCS regional and national meetings to remain current on all administrative and fiscal requirements. Finally, if an instance of risk or noncompliance is identified, the issue will be discussed at one of the weekly Management Team meetings held to determine the cause and action plan to remedy the issue and prevent it from happening in the future. Because we do not operate any additional service sites, RMYC can act immediately with this action plan and affect change quickly.

3. Past performance

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps strives to meet all performance measures for both environmental stewardship and opportunity youth in our program. Over the past three years, environmental stewardship goals have been consistently met or exceeded in acres restored/improved and trails constructed/re-constructed. In the previous two years, RMYC reported meeting opportunity youth outcomes. In the 2013-2014 GPR, RMYC reports not meeting progress outcomes. Until December 2014, RMYC had misunderstood 45 CFR §2522.200 which does not allow employment outcomes to be captured for corpsmembers exiting without awards. We believe the chaotic nature and lack of direction from the previous State Commission leadership resulted in RMYC missing this element in the CNCS performance measure. In the future, Training Coordinators will be focused on employment

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skill development which offers exposure to a wide range of careers, greater emphasis on Work Keys assessments, more subsidized internship opportunities, social and emotional skill development and additional industry certifications. These skills will be addressed consistently the beginning of the service term. Furthermore, RMYC will serve as a resource for its national service participants throughout their employment life cycle.

New Mexico has no industrial base, no light manufacturing and limited service sector positions. Jobs are often low paying and scarce or occupations which require advanced degrees, job training and an educational foundation. Youth apply for national service positions at RMYC in order to develop these job skills, serve their community and make a difference. This community condition results in our enrollment rate of 105%. We have three applicants for every position available.

While RMYC continues to work towards 100% retention, realistically, there are a few factors that affect our retention rate, some of which can be addressed while others are inherent in Opportunity Youth characteristics. Each year our retention fluctuates. In 2012-2013, retention stood at 93%, yet 2013-2014 our retention was 84.9%. To maximize our retention capacity, RMYC has adjusted our Member application and administers an Executive Skills inventory to look at an applicant's persistence functioning. In addition, the application and interview process allows for multiple discussions regarding the commitment required and requires a training day which demonstrates the rigorous nature of the service. Multiple slots types and greater crew and project diversity all lead toward greater retention for members. Furthermore, RMYC strives to retain experienced and qualified Crew Supervisors who provide the most direct line of support for our members. Finally, if a member shares their intent to leave, a formal intervention with all Program Staff is staged to work toward solutions that may be causing the dissatisfaction with the program. In some instances, RMYC must remove members from their term of service do to policy infraction, safety concerns, or a lack of commitment to program goals. Although we have developed a tiered discipline strategy to support members in being successful, release of members is sometimes necessary.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. Cost Effectiveness

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps is extremely entrepreneurial in the development of our National Service programming. We secure resources and funding from a multitude of sources and weave them into program support to maximize impact on our members and the communities we serve. We focus on providing the highest-quality and most effective program and the best possible Member experience. RMYC has time and time again been referred to as a model AmeriCorps program in New Mexico and

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nationally, a role we take seriously. We are able to leverage our AmeriCorps funding extensively, increasing the impact of National Service in New Mexico by securing \$1,032,760 in local match, or 66%.

RMYC AmeriCorps cost per Member is less than the maximum allowed of \$13,730 per Member. Our previous AmeriCorps grant #12ACHNM0010004 with the 21st CSC amendment dropped our MSY cost to \$12,096 based on additional EAO slots. This drop was due to the timing in which CNCS awarded funding, as RMYC 21CSC request included both stipended slots and EAO slots. CNCS awarded this request in two phases, the first phase all EAO slots were awarded, thus inadvertently dropping our MSY. Although this was brought to CNCS's attention the awarding was finalized and no remedy was possible. This was a one year change based on 21st CSC. In 2015, RMYC request is for a \$11,921 MSY which is a significant decrease from our original grant (#12ACHNM0010004) MSY cost of \$12,975.

2. Budget Adequacy

RMYC operates efficiently, and a combination of revenue streams provides a strong, consistent and diverse funding base to support our programming. This proposal supports a diverse and essential range of RMYC's crew models. We have created efficiencies in our crew pattern and Members assignments based upon maximizing impacts and member experiences. RMYC is able to exceed required levels of match in each section of the grant with private foundation grants, state and local contracts for services, in-kind donations and fee for service revenue, and we are able to maximize the value of our AmeriCorps grant through effective leveraging and collaboration in our communities.

This program design meets multiple community needs, and continues the tradition of excellence in program execution. RMYC is proud to offer a cost effective means of providing dramatic positive change to Opportunity Youth in our communities and improving our nation's natural resources.

3. Clarification Response

a) Crew Supervisors are not AmeriCorps members, rather they are staff positions.

b) Funding is extremely competitive and limited this year. Having a low Cost Per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. RMYC is committed to providing high quality programming at a cost that is both competitive and fair. In our original proposal we calculated a total cost per MSY at \$12,962.65 which we feel is both reasonable and competitive. However, we continue to strive to

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meet the expectations of CNCS and will work in collaboration to lower the costs without compromising programming. If this joint effort RMYC has revisited our budget and was able to reduce our cost per MSY to \$11,921. We hope that CNCS recognizes these efforts and is aware of the challenge it presents in finding this additional match.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

This new competitive proposal is the first time Rocky Mountain Youth Corps has reached the threshold for external evaluation. Yet, over the past two grant cycles, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps has satisfied the evaluation requirement through Rocky Mountain Youth Corps participation in the CNCS and Abt National Study (\$2522.710) and Public Land Service Corps evaluation. In previous years, our program participation in this national evaluation conducted by CNCS exempted RMYC from the requirement to provide an internal or independent evaluation for the next grant cycle. The Abt National evaluation did provide summary findings for our agency disaggregate from the national portfolio. This research has been sent under separate cover to CNCS as part of our evidence base requirements.

In 2015, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps will once again participate in the Public Land Corps Survey evaluation. The effort to evaluate Conservation Corps' impacts -- a collaborative venture between a team of researchers, led by Mike Edwards and Mat Duerden, and multiple Conservation Corps -- is entering its fourth year. The last three years of evaluations have produced evidence in support of the efficacy of the Conservation Corps experience for participants. While the need to assess participants' impacts remains important for many of the participating corps, there is a growing interest in evaluating community impacts as well as youth outcomes.

Research question remain regarding how the work performed by the Conservation Corps impacts communities and ecosystems as well as youth outcomes. The community impact literature summary, commissioned by the Conservation Legacy, addresses approaches to answering this question across a variety of domains (e.g., health, social, economic, and environment) and provides a foundation for moving forward with this type of evaluation (Edwards, Duerden, Theriault, & Jones, 2014).

Evaluation Project Scope:

The main goals of this collaboration between NC State, BYU, and participating conservation corps would be to: 1: Develop an impact evaluation plan that would satisfy the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) evaluation requirements for AmeriCorps grantees focusing on measuring the impact of primary service activities on service beneficiaries or the community. 2: Through the development of the evaluation plan and subsequent collaborative activities, reach

Narratives

agreement on critical/priority outcome metrics that would be useful for ongoing evaluation and surveillance related to the environmental and community impacts of corps' primary service activities.

While the ultimate goal of this project is to develop a valid framework to measure the impact of Conservation Corps work, the priority of the evaluation plan would be on identifying existing metrics and indicators that may be developed and monitored using less resource-intensive approaches.

Primary performance measures that will guide the evaluation plan will be taken from the National Performance Measures Instructions (Environmental Stewardship Focus Area and Opportunity Youth). Primary research will be conducted by Brigham Young University and North Carolina State University. RMYC has attached a draft budget which will be shared by a five participating corps.

Item	2015-2016 Budget	Budget Justification
Personnel		
Faculty salaries for NCSU co-PIs	\$7,000	NCSU PIs Edwards, Seekamp
Post-Doc	\$2,400	Salary release for post-doctoral fellow with expertise in environmental impacts.
Fringe benefits	\$2,508	NCSU rate of 30%, 8.45% for temp workers
Other Direct Costs		
Travel	\$2,000	Travel to The Corps Network Conference.
BYU Sub-Contract	\$7,000	Includes .05 FTE (+ fringe) for co-PI Duerden and \$2,000 for BYU travel.
Total Direct Costs	\$20,908	
Indirect costs	\$5,436	@ 26%

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Total project cost \$26,344

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. Programmatic Clarification: none needed

B. Budget Clarification

1. Please explain whether staff in Crew Supervisor roles are serving concurrent terms as AmeriCorps members. Crew Supervisors are not AmeriCorps members, rather they are staff members. This response is also noted in the "Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy" narrative section.

2. Funding is extremely competitive and limited this year. Having a low Cost Per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. RMYC is committed to providing high quality programming at a cost that is both competitive and fair. In our original proposal we calculated a total cost per MSY at \$12,962.65 which we feel is both reasonable and competitive. However, we continue to strive to meet the expectations of CNCS and will work in collaboration to lower the costs without compromising programming. In this joint effort RMYC has revisited our budget and was able to reduce our cost per MSY to \$11,921. We hope that CNCS recognizes these efforts and is aware of the challenge it presents in finding this additional match. This response is also noted in the "Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy" narrative section.

C. Performance Measure Clarification:

1. O15 (transition to employment):

We have changed "One year post service" to "30 days after service" AND reduced O15 target # from 27 to 15 economically disadvantaged (are receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements) within 1 month prior to beginning service.

O17 (transition to college course):

We have changed "At one year post service" to "30 days after service" AND reduced O17 target # from 60 to 40.

2. O12 (number of CMs unemployed prior to service):

Yes, we verify that 120 members will self-report (demographics survey) that they were unemployed (not paid, regular employment or not serving in military/national guard) AND are economically

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disadvantaged (receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements) within 1 month prior to beginning service.

O14 (number of CMs with diploma, but no college degree)

Yes, we verify that 126 members will self-report (educational background survey) that they have a high school diploma or equivalent, but no college degree AND are economically disadvantaged (receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements) within 1 month prior to beginning service.

3. We have removed the performance measure outcome EN4 and will use EN4.1 instead. Also, we have changed the target to the number of acres improved instead of the number of project partners reporting land improved.

4. We have taken the word "trails" out of EN4 described instrument

5. We have taken the word "acreage" out of EN5 described instrument

6. Please explain how the program will ensure that each acre for EN4 and EN4.1 and each mile for EN5 and EN5.1 will be counted only once. For acreage we use a GPS track and we load it into our database and then overlay it on our project map. We only report new acreage. For trails, again using GPS and a database tracking all trail projects and only report on the first time a mile is worked on, even if it is improved/treated multiple times.

D. Strategic Engagement Slots: RMYC is not requesting any additional Strategic Engagement Slots

E. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification: RMYC is not requesting any additional MSY with no Program Funds Attached.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics