

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Backcountry Trails Program proposes to have 80 AmeriCorps members who will perform trail work that will result in trail condition being improved in Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks, Big Basin State Park, and the Inyo, Klamath, Shasta-Trinity and Stanislaus National Forests. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for restoring 300 of 400 (75%) miles of trail treated to a safe and environmentally protective condition. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 60 volunteers who will be engaged in performing trail work and trail work-related activities.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$386,044 will be matched with \$1,285,309, \$1,075,309 in public funding and \$210,000 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

A. PROBLEM/NEED: Public Land Management Agencies (PLMAs) throughout California are responsible for managing public lands for public benefit and ecosystem health. National Parks and U.S. Forest Service lands within California receive more than 35 million visitors annually. With more than 15,000 miles of recreational trails in the state, the task of managing the trail systems on these lands to ensure safe and environmentally protective access has become increasingly important.

Consequently, every forest and park has a trails department (headed by a trail manager) whose only focus is to build, repair, maintain, and rehabilitate trails for public use. Unfortunately the problem these trail managers face is they are unable, solely on their own, to adequately address the need to keep the trails safe and environmentally protective due to budget and workforce constraints. The severity and prevalence of this problem is demonstrated by the fact that these constraints have led to an estimated \$1.2 billion of deferred trail work for PLMAs as calculated by the CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation (http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=25972). This tremendous backlog of deferred trail work means there is a very large number of trails that are substantially unsafe and/or environmentally damaging. PLMAs need to use conservation corps crews to perform the trail work they cannot fully perform themselves because they are cost-effective and experienced with project management. A 2012 cost analysis study performed by the National Park Service (NPS Cost Analysis Report, 2012) found the cost of using conservation corps crews to perform maintenance work was 65% less than using in-house or private contractor sources. (p.1)

Narratives

Recreational trails are continuously subject to general use, overuse, misuse, and exposure to natural events (e.g. rain, fires, flooding). This inevitably results in trails sustaining damage over time which in turn can result in trails becoming unsafe and/or environmentally damaging (e.g. aggravated erosion due to rutted trails resulting in sedimentation of sensitive watersheds). When trails are built, repaired, maintained and rehabilitated to the management standards prescribed by the trail manager and in accordance to agency resource management plans and guidelines then the level of damage a trail sustains is minimized and/or prevented altogether, which is the desired outcome of every trail department. Trails that have been neglected for long periods of time and/or not built to prescribed management standards sustain elevated or accelerated degradation that, in order to be restored, must receive extensive treatment (i.e. repair, maintenance, construction, rehabilitation). According to a 2013 US Government Accountability Office report (GAO, 2013) it is these substantially degraded trails that constitute the majority of the backlog of deferred trail work. These trails have been placed on the deferred trail work list because the PLMAs just don't have the resources, workforce (skill and size), or funding necessary to adequately restore the trails. It is these substantially degraded trails the Backcountry Trails Program (BCTP) addresses through its members' service, the leveraged volunteers our members recruit, and through the training our members receive. (p.43)

80 members will be divided into six trail crews. Each crew will be assigned to at least one partnering agency to perform the trail work needed. The trail manager and/or foreman will use a trail condition survey to determine which trails will receive treatment. The condition of a trail will be assessed prior to treatment and given a condition rating that indicates how unsafe and/or environmentally detrimental the trail is and the extent of treatment required to restore the trail. Trails assessed as having one of the two lowest condition ratings are considered by trail managers to be substantially damaged and thus high-need. These trails will receive treatment. These Condition Ratings are defined by the PLMAs and summarized as follows: Condition 1 is critically unsafe and/or environmentally damaging and needs extensive repair; Condition 2 is substantially unsafe and/or environmentally damaging and needs substantial work; Condition 3 is primarily safe and/or minimally environmentally damaging needing only light maintenance; Condition 4 is completely safe and environmentally sound, requiring no work. Trails receiving treatment will be reassessed post treatment to determine if the intervention resulted in a sufficient improvement of trail condition.

The BCTP will be partnering with the following land management agencies: Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks, Big Basin State Parks, and the Inyo, Klamath, Shasta-Trinity and Stanislaus National Forests. These agencies were chosen not only based on their ability to provide additional

Narratives

funding and logistical support of crews, but also because they have demonstrated they each have a very large backlog of deferred trail work they cannot adequately address using their own agency trail crews. Each of our six crews will target a minimum of 60 miles of substantially unsafe and/or environmentally damaging trails at their respective site locations that the PLMA trail departments cannot address on their own using agency trail crews.

The BCTP has a unique design and crew model that differs from the PLMAs' crew model. This not only allows us to address the trail needs the PLMAs cannot address through their own staffing structure, but it allows us to avoid displacing PLMA staff. PLMAs' trail crews are smaller in size (typically two to four people), and do not have the ability to remain in backcountry locations for extended periods of time. As a result these crews are limited in the size and scope of trail projects they can address. Conversely, our crews range from 10-15 people and are able to remain in the backcountry for extended periods of time which makes them a great resource for tackling very large trail projects and a high number of miles of trail in remote, difficult locations that the smaller agency crews either can't reach or it would significantly extend the length of time and/or cost to complete a project.

B. THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGIC MODEL: In partnership with PLMAs, members will use the knowledge, skills and abilities gained from core trainings to perform the necessary trail work needed to restore substantially damaged recreational trails back to a safe and environmentally protective condition suitable for public use and ecosystem health. Our members' intervention enables these trail departments to treat more trails to the proper standard. This results in more trails no longer needing repetitive, short-term repair/maintenance and the backlog is thus reduced and ultimately eliminated. That is how our members' service leads to more sustainable trail practices. Over time, the BCTP helps increase these PLMAs' future workforce candidate pool through the development of a large number of individuals who possess the specialized knowledge/skill required for trail work.

Members will repair, maintain, construct, and/or rehabilitate substantially damaged trails. This trail work includes performing the following core activities: removing fallen debris from the trail and corridor (e.g. trees, rock, dirt); cutting vegetation back from trail and corridor; excavating trail tread; excavating trail drainages; constructing erosion and drainage control/mitigating structures (e.g. water diversion bars, culverts, causeways, soil retainer bars, retaining walls, bridges, trail tread rip-rap) using native stone and wood and other materials; backfilling gullies and ruts; scarifying soil to alleviate vegetation-suppressing soil compaction; installing check dams for down cutting; applying

Narratives

mulching materials to soils; removing non-native plants; re-vegetating denuded sites with on-site native plants; constructing new trail; rehabilitating decommissioned trails; rehabilitating damaged areas near trails; performing other tasks deemed necessary as part of trail work.

These core activities and their resulting output of miles of trail treated are aligned with the priority national performance measure EN5 for at-risk ecosystems under the national service focus area of Environmental Stewardship and meet the definition for treatment as defined in this national performance measure. 80 members will spend eight hours a day, five days a week for 21 weeks performing these core activities for a total of 67,200 hours of intervention. This trail work will result in the outcome of trail condition improvement to a level where the trail is restored and there is a reduction in the amount of deferred trail work needing to be completed. This outcome is aligned with the defined outcome and its measurement of EN5.1.

Members will further assist our PLMA partners in treating damaged trails by recruiting, training and supervising 60 or more volunteers to perform a total of 500 hours of one-time trail work activities. Members will recruit volunteers through letter writing and engaging with recreational trail users.

To put our members further on the path to helping our partnering agencies address their critical trail work needs, members will receive core trainings that are service activity and site-related which improve their knowledge, skills, and ability to deliver the trail work intervention. Each member will receive 110 hours or more of these trainings resulting in a minimum 30% performance improvement rate. These trainings benefit our partnering PLMAs' future workforce needs through the development of members who then leave the program as highly skilled, highly knowledgeable potential future employees. This is a unique contribution to PLMAs' existing efforts to address their critical trail needs because it's a service-to-employment pipeline the agencies cannot otherwise create. This is evidenced by the fact that just over 90% of the PLMA trail work professionals who have worked with our crews the past three years were alumni of the BCTP (BCTP Evaluation Report, 2014, p.3)

With the increasing budgetary and workforce constraints of our partnering PLMAs, it is these extensive trainings and their application to the hands-on experience of performing the service activity that leads to skill refinement and trail work proficiency. In turn, this results in increased trail work production totals, production totals the PLMAs cannot otherwise attain.

C. EVIDENCE BASE: The BCTP has used several tools/methods to measure the effectiveness of our intervention and member development. These tools/methods produced both a Pre-preliminary and

Narratives

Preliminary Evidence Base for program effectiveness. The following tools were used to report on data in our 2014 BCTP Evaluation Report:

Project Assessments-these were completed both pre and post treatment of the trail by our trail sponsors. It recorded pre and post-treatment trail conditions to measure the level of trail improvement, and required sponsors to assess the quality and impact of the work and their satisfaction with the partnership. Results were also used to report on performance measures.

Work Production Logs-these were completed monthly by the trail sponsor and crew supervisor. It recorded number of miles treated and type of treatment a trail received (e.g. wall built, steps constructed, etc.). This data was then compiled in our Work Production Tracker and used to report on performance measures.

Sponsor Surveys---these were completed at the end of the season by trail sponsors and had several key indicator questions the BCTP used to indicate effectiveness with program design. Results are reported in our 2014 BCTP Evaluation Report.

Member Performance Evaluations---these were conducted by the crew supervisor and performed with every member each month of service. The first evaluation was compared to the final evaluation to determine the level of improvement. Improvement in performance is seen as evidence of member skill development. The results are tracked in our Evaluation Tracker and also used to report on performance measures.

Member Surveys---this is a comprehensive survey that covers all components of the member experience and their service. They were completed by members at the end of their service term. Responses were compiled and analyzed and results for key indicator questions were used to determine the overall effectiveness of program design, member development, quality of partnerships, etc.

Alumni Tracker---this tracks the percentage of trail sponsors and BC Trail Camp Supervisors each year who are program alumni. This was used as an indicator for the effectiveness of not just member development, but also our efforts to build a service-to-employment pipeline for our partnering agencies.

The 2014 BCTP Evaluation Report is a comprehensive report that covers important information derived from the data collected by the above tools. In the areas of quality and impact of service provided, partnership satisfaction and member development it provides strong evidence that the BCTP's efforts are contributing to the observed outcomes and thus qualifies as a Moderate Evidence Base.

In 2012 the National Park Service (NPS) conducted a project analysis study (NPS Cost Analysis

Narratives

Report, 2012) to compare the cost of using conservation corps to perform maintenance with the cost of using NPS crews or private contractors. Costs estimates were generated for using the NPS workforce, private contractors, and 15 different conservation corps. The study found that on average, using conservation corps crews instead of NPS crews saved 65% and saved 83% over using contractors. The results of this study demonstrate the BCTP provides a cost-effective resource for PLMAs to manage their trail systems and qualifies as a strong evidence base. (p.1)

Also in 2012 the U.S. Government Accountability Office conducted a study of the current state of trail management in the United States Forest Service (GAO, 2013). This study identified the negative impacts unmaintained trails have on public safety and ecosystems. Without proper maintenance, trails can become dangerous or unusable, and deferring needed maintenance can ultimately add to costs. (p.1) This study found that when trail work is performed to proper standards it results in trails being sustainably built, repaired and maintained thus creating both short and long-term improvements to reducing the backlog of deferred trail work. This study provides a strong evidence base and demonstrates the service the BCTP provides to PLMA is effective in addressing their critical trail work needs. (p.13-16)

D. NOTICE PRIORITY: The BCTP qualifies for the environmental priority consideration by being a member organization of the 21st Century Service Corps (21CSC). Under the program's Legal Applicant, California Conservation Corps (CCC), the BCTP is registered as one of the 100 Projects to Restore America under the category Expanding Outdoor Recreation Access (<http://21csc.org/news-2/expanding-outdoor-recreation-access/>).

E. MEMBER TRAINING: Members participate in a comprehensive training plan designed to orient them to AmeriCorps and provide them the skills needed to deliver high-quality service. This training plan includes orientation, service activity and site-related trainings. The service activity and site-related trainings occur after orientation once the members arrive at their placement sites and they are ongoing throughout the members' entire service term.

The BCTP's orientation is one week and occurs at the start of our members' service term. This orientation helps our members understand the specific components of our program and the community they are serving. Orientation includes AmeriCorps-mandated and program-related trainings which cover: member term of service and contract, member status and benefits, prohibited and un-awarded activities, member rights and responsibilities, suspension and termination rules, the

Narratives

Drug-Free Workplace Act, grievance procedures, sexual harassment and other non-discrimination issues and policies, violence in the workplace, and AmeriCorps Service rules, CCC policies, BCTP standards and expectations, driver training, site assignments, health and safety, program design, staff introductions, overview of community problem, review of the BCTP Member Handbook and Health and Safety Handbook, and pre-arrival phone conversations with supervisors and program staff.

Service activity-related trainings ensure our members are knowledgeable, and prepared for the service they are to perform and include: physical fitness training, Wilderness 1st Aid, conflict resolution, personal health, tool/equipment use and maintenance, journal writing, leave-no-trace techniques, backcountry navigation, backcountry living, public engagement, community development/team building, interpersonal communication skills, program-required emergency response protocols, personal camping gear use/maintenance, volunteer management, and post-service transitioning.

The site-related trainings include: trail work techniques, camp/kitchen chores, off-work activities, local ecosystem conditions, agency policies, trail work and backcountry camp support activities, project and task specific tools/equipment, fire safety, pack animal use and safety, emergency communication procedures, public engagement, camp setup/breakdown, wilderness/park/forest regulations, , trail sponsors roles/responsibilities, job opportunities.

The BCTP continually assesses our members' training needs throughout their service through regular one-on-one check-ins between each member and their supervisor, weekly supervisor and sponsor meetings where member performance is discussed, weekly community meetings that elicit crew input on trainings needs, and monthly member performance evaluations.

F. MEMBER SUPERVISION: Each crew is assigned a BC Trails Camp Supervisor (aka, crew supervisor) that has a minimum of 24 months of supervisory experience with people ages 18-28 years old. The crew supervisor lives and works with the members for the entire service term and is on duty 24 hours a day seven days a week. He/she directly supervises the members, monitors/evaluates their performance, works cooperatively with trail sponsors who provide the logistical support and technical expertise on projects, and reports to the program director and supervisor coordinator /relief supervisor. Crew supervisors continually assess their members' well-being through weekly, individual check-ins and monthly, in-depth performance evaluations. During these times the crew supervisor discusses with the member their physical, mental and emotional state.

Supervisors attend a 10-day Supervisor Training and a one-week Trail Sponsor Training. The

Narratives

Supervisor Training covers standards and expectations, AmeriCorps requirements (including prohibited and un-awarded activities), administrative duties, supervisory duties, roles and responsibilities, member interaction, emergency response protocols, program procedures, and leadership trainings. The Trail Sponsor Training focuses on the working relationship between crew supervisors and trail sponsors and includes discussions on roles and responsibilities, potential problems and solutions, prohibited and un-awarded activities, and logistics. It should be noted volunteers who work with our crews at our placement sites also receive training on prohibited activities during the camp/program orientation they receive when they arrive to camp.

BCTP staff builds strong working relationships with each supervisor by also working individually with them throughout these trainings to address areas of concern. This establishes open lines of communication.

The program director and supervisor coordinator both monitor supervisors' performance and provide direction and guidance through frequent, scheduled communication and site visits. The supervisor coordinator also provides relief crew supervision when supervisors need to be absent. The AmeriCorps coordinator also provides additional support through crew visits.

Trail sponsors provide an additional level of crew oversight by monitoring work progress in collaboration with the crew supervisor and regularly reporting to the program director and supervisor coordinator about crew and supervisor performance and any areas of concern. The program director and supervisor coordinator work directly with the crew supervisors to resolve any problems that arise.

G. MEMBER EXPERIENCE: Through their service members gain extensive knowledge, skills and experience with trail work, tool use and maintenance, crew dynamics, and backcountry living. This type of background is sought after in the field of trail management and other areas of conservation work. This puts our members in a great position to continue conservation work/service in the future.

Members are placed on trail crews of 10-15 people. These crews live and work for 5.5 months in backcountry wilderness locations. The service they perform is extremely physically demanding, requiring them to: (1) carry their personal gear to each base camp; (2) sleep on the ground in a tent; (3) hike up to 20 miles a day while carrying 40-60lbs. on their back; (4) swing heavy tools repetitively; (5) work in rugged terrain at high elevations in adverse weather conditions; (6) learn how to function as a tight-knit crew; (7) cope with being isolated from the outside world; (8) live and work safely in areas far from immediate medical services.

The hard work, isolation, being on a crew, and the duration spent in the wilderness all make the

Narratives

experience very mentally, emotionally, and socially challenging which is what makes the members' service experience so meaningful. Members adopt the program's values of integrity, hard work, community development and personal growth and thus develop stronger personal character.

Opportunities for the members to reflect on their experience come from the following: (a) keeping personal journals; (b) keeping a crew journal; (c) monthly in-depth performance evaluations; (d) weekly community meetings (e) end of the season program surveys that provide feedback on the program, and lastly, (f) the end of the season reflection essay every member writes.

It is the BCTP's focus on having our crews build healthy, well-functioning communities which develops an ethic of community participation in our members. They acquire the skills necessary to build these healthy communities through the community development/team building portion of the curriculum. This leads to their continued civic participation and community impact after their service.

Aside from developing connections with other members on their crew, members also have an opportunity to connect with members on other crews at orientation and at the program debriefing at the end of the season where everyone's experience is recognized which creates an incredibly strong esprit de corps amongst our members.

H. COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION: BCTP is strongly committed to AmeriCorps identification. The BCTP identifies itself as an AmeriCorps program on its website and recruitment and partnership materials. Members (i) take the AmeriCorps oath when they are sworn into service, (ii) wear a CCC uniform daily that has the AmeriCorps patch sewn on the sleeve, (iii) are given AmeriCorps t-shirts and sweatshirts for service events, and (iv) receive training at orientation about the history of AmeriCorps and how to effectively discuss their AmeriCorps service when engaging with the public.

Organizational Capability

A. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING: The CCC is a permanent state department of the State of CA's Resource Agency and was established in 1976. It operates in 27 different locations throughout the state, and is the legal applicant of the BCTP. It manages an annual budget of \$76 million. The CCC has 38 years of experience with program management and has administered over 12 special programs during that time. It has extensive experience managing, as well as, administering many federal, state, and local grants.

The BCTP was established in 1979 and is a special program of the CCC. It operates out of the

Narratives

Fortuna CCC which has 12+ plus years overseeing/managing special programs and has managed an annual budget of at least \$4.5 million over the past 15 yrs. It is this substantial experience that makes the Fortuna CCC Center well suited for administering AmeriCorps grants.

The CCC provides the BCTP with significant administrative support in the following areas: fiscal oversight/management, legal counsel, communication services, business services, and personnel and human resources guidance. This support comes in the form of established systems, processes, procedures, controls, and policies which ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and guards against program mismanagement. The CCC also provides operational infrastructure that includes a fleet of 16 vehicles, office buildings, storage facilities, and additional CCC staff and facilities around the state that are available to help with logistical needs. All of this support is part of a sound CCC management structure that ensures high-quality implementation, operation and oversight of the BCTP.

The BCTP program has developed lasting partnerships with more than 15 PLMA units and several local and private organizations over the past 36 years. We meet annually with all of our partnering organizations so we can engage with the community members who are members of these organizations in our project planning. We elicit input from these members, who are public trail users and land advocates, regarding the trail work needs of public lands in their areas. These partnerships and our engaging with community members have helped shape the BCTP's design through continual input, feedback and collaboration resulting in the continued improvement of our service.

Below is a description of the key roles of the BCTP staff.

Fortuna CCC Center Director (Larry Notheis)-[3 yrs.] the direct supervisor of the BCTP program director and is responsible for program oversight and fiscal control.

Program Director (Karlson Hubbard)-[3 yrs.] responsible for setting up and monitoring overall program operations, setting up contracts, establishing partnerships and securing funding. He hires, trains, and supervises program staff.

AmeriCorps Coordinator (Alysia Ballinger)-[9 mos.] is primarily responsible for grant and member file management and monitoring compliance. She also assists with training and program management.

Supervisor Coordinator/Relief Supervisor (Agnes Vianzon)-[3 yrs.] responsible for coordinating member recruitment; monitoring crew supervisors; monitoring trail sponsor relationships; and providing logistical support to supervisors, members and sponsors through site visits.

Backcountry Trail Camp Supervisor (6 positions, Vacant): responsible for the direct supervision of

Narratives

members and ensuring their safety and well-being at all times. They carry out duties related to trail project management, member development, sponsor relations, etc.

B. COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: The CCC and BCTP will prevent and detect compliance issues with regards to its AmeriCorps program management through the collective oversight provided by CCC leadership, Center Director of the Fortuna CCC Center, BCTP Director, AmeriCorps Coordinator, Supervisor Coordinator, and six Crew Supervisors. This oversight includes regularly scheduled and frequent meetings between the above mentioned personnel to assess and review program implementation and compliance. Open lines of communication and continual communication with CV staff will also help prevent and detect compliance issues.

If an instance of risk or noncompliance on the part of the BCTP is identified the BCTP will hold itself accountable by taking immediate action to investigate, identify, notify CV and rectify the instance. The BCTP will maintain proper documentation in order to have a clear record of the instance in question and the steps taken to resolve the situation. The BCTP will keep the legal applicant informed as well. The BCTP will also take these same steps if an instance of risk or noncompliance is identified at a service site location or with a partnering agency.

The CCC and BCTP will ensure compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations, including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee and service site locations through the training of staff, partner organizations, members and volunteers and through the collective oversight by program staff. Program staff has established a system of regular review and reporting through regularly scheduled staff meetings and site visits to monitor program operations at both the grantee and service site locations.

C. PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEES AND FORMER GRANTEES ONLY: The BCTP-s primary performance target was to clear 500 miles of trail and complete 12 trail projects. Target was met in two of the past three years with the exception being 2013 when serious wildfires caused crew evacuations. [We have since developed a contingency plan that allows for additional project work to be completed in the event of wildfires.]

The targeted outcome for level of improvement of trail was met. Each of the past three years 8 projects were returned to a Class II condition and 4 projects were returned to a Class III condition.

The volunteer recruitment performance targets of a minimum 60 volunteers recruited for 500 hours of service each year was met each of the past three years.

Narratives

The BCTP member development performance targets of 64 members receiving 150 hours of instruction and 64 members improving their performance by 30% were also met, and exceeded, over the past three years.

BCTP achieved a 100% enrollment and 92.5% retention rate in 2014. The extreme physical nature of the service and the remote locations where it is performed are two key factors that led to members exiting the program early. We are continuing to improve communicating the mental, physical, emotional, and social rigors of the program to prospective applicants.

Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

A. COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY: BCTP's budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively. Over the course of 36 yrs. of operation the BCTP has been able to effectively leverage the fiscal support we receive from our program partners with the funding we receive from the CCC to be fiscally responsible. As we begin this new grant cycle the BCTP has decreased its cost per MSY to \$9950 which is below the required amount for programs that have received over 10 yrs. of CNCS funding. This decrease is a result of increased partner funding.

The BCTP is supported by resources from several entities. The CCC provides funding from State General funds, parks and open space and environmental quality bond referendums, and the California Environmental License Plate fund. Other funding comes from reimbursement contracts with PLMAs and local entities, and funding contributions from land conservancies. The BCTP has secured non-CNCS funding for the past 20 yrs. by developing and maintaining several long-term partnerships with federal and state PLMAs. These partners have consistently provided significant cash match to our program. Thus far we have secured funding from the Klamath, Shasta-Trinity, and Inyo National Forests and are anticipating funding contributions from Kings and Yosemite National Parks for approximately \$307,000 next fiscal year.

The BCTP is continuing to pursue new funding opportunities through the development of potential new partners. We are currently in discussion with several other national forests about the potential for providing our services.

The AmeriCorps funding the BCTP receives enables us to fund our AmeriCorps Coordinator position, and it covers approximately 52% of our members' living allowance. This enables us to provide higher quality member support and serve partners who cannot provide cash match. Without this funding the BCTP would not be able to keep this position and it would prevent us from serving those PLMAs who can only provide in-kind support.

Evidence of the BCTP's cost effectiveness to the partners we serve is demonstrated by the results of

Narratives

a cost comparison study conducted by the National Park Service in 2012. It compared the cost of doing general maintenance work (this includes trail work) with conservation corps crews. The study concluded using conservation corps crews cost 65% less than using in-house sources or private contractors (PFMD Report, 2012).

B. BUDGET ADEQUACY: The proposed budget meets core program needs by adequately funding essential program components needed to administer a high quality program. Budget line item amounts were based on cost comparisons of program expenses over the past three years. The overall budget of the BCTP is \$1,682,695 with proposed CNCS funding being 22.94% (\$386,044) and the grantee providing 76.36% (\$1,296,651) of the funding. All activities described in the narrative are addressed in the budget.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

The Backcountry Trails Program (BCTP) has a full-time internal evaluation team that will lead the development and execution of a comprehensive AmeriCorps Program Evaluation. The team consists of the Program Director, Supervisor Coordinator, and the AmeriCorps Coordinator. Based on the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) regulations, because BCTP is applying for less than \$500,000 annually in CNCS funds, it may elect to complete a process or impact evaluation using an internal evaluator.

THEORY OF CHANGE: In partnership with PLMAs, members will use the knowledge, skills and abilities gained from core trainings to perform the necessary trail work needed to restore substantially damaged recreational trails back to a safe and environmentally protective condition suitable for public use and ecosystem health. This will help PLMAs reduce, and ultimately eliminate, their backlog of deferred trail work thereby improving their ability to sustainably manage entire trail systems on their lands throughout CA. Over time, the BCTP helps increase these PLMA's future workforce candidate pool through the development of a large number of individuals who possess the specialized knowledge/skill required for trail work.

BACKGROUND: The BCTP has been in operation for 36 years, and has continuously measured and documented program effectiveness through monthly and post service data collection and analysis. Our evidence of change will be measured using this data which indicates our progress with short and intermediate outcomes regarding: (1) miles of trail treated, and resulting level of trail condition improvement, (2) improvement/increase in member knowledge, performance and skills due to member training, (3) volunteer recruitment, (3) volunteer recruitment.

Narratives

PURPOSE: This evaluation will focus on the impact the BCTP has on helping public land management agencies reduce the number of trails that require extensive, long-term treatment in order to keep them safe and environmentally protective. It will also look at the BCTP's ability to develop its members so they can provide high quality service and so they can continue fill land stewardship roles after service. It will also provide insight into the program's weaknesses through the experience of the alumni.

AUDIENCES AND DECISIONS: The progression of this evaluation will be reported annually to CNCS. Final results of the evaluation will be shared at the end of the three-year grant period, during program year (2017-2018). Results will also be shared with BCTP staff, California Conservation Corps, and BCTP partners and funders. The interim and final report will be presented at a BCTP Advisory Committee meeting to guide conversations for future planning.

QUESTIONS: The evaluation will address the following key questions:

Does the BCTP's service result in trail sustaining their condition improvement over time?

Does the experience provided by the BCTP improve a member's chance of being employed in the field of trail management and/or natural resources?

Does the experience provided by the BCTP improve the likelihood of someone volunteering in their community?

METHODS: Data is collected using the following tools: (a) Project Assessments completed both pre and post treatment of the trail by our trail sponsors and measures the level of trail improvement and quality of work. (b) Work Production Logs completed monthly by the trail sponsor and crew supervisor and records number of miles treated and type of treatment a trail received. (c) Sponsor Surveys---completed by partner agencies after intervention and provides evidence of effectiveness of program design through key indicator questions regarding crew and supervisor performance. (d) Member Performance Evaluations---completed by crew supervisor and performed with every member each month of service. It measures level of knowledge, skill, and performance improvement. (e) Member Surveys---completed by member post service and indicates quality of program design based on quality of member experience. (f) Alumni Survey---online survey to collect information on post service job placement, (g) Mid/Long Term Trail Condition Survey completed by trail managers and records post-treatment condition one, two, and three years later if possible, (h)

Data will then be analyzed to determine statistical correlations between delivered outputs and desired outcomes.

TIMELINE & LOGISTICS: Project Assessment, Work Production Log, Performance Evaluation,

Narratives

Member Survey, Volunteer Recruitment/Service, and Sponsor Survey data will be collected throughout the grant period by BCTP staff and trail sponsor staff.

The creation of the Alumni Survey and collection of alumni contact information will take place during program year 2015-2016 and will be carried out by BCTP and CCC staff.

Alumni Survey data will be collected by BCTP and CCC staff during program year 2016-2017.

Alumni Survey data analysis and reporting will be conducted by BCTP and CCC staff and occur at the end of program year 2017-2018.

BUDGET: Since the evaluation plan will be carried out internally by BCTP and CCC staff, there will be no extra costs.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A: Programmatic Clarification Items:

1) The applicant addresses monitoring generally, but does not provide specific details regarding site visits (when they take place, how often, who is responsible for conducting visits), regularly scheduled meetings and other communications are not defined, and there is no information describing the result of noncompliance findings. Please explain how the program plans to monitor compliance and provide specifics on how the program deals with noncompliance issues.

The BCTP uses the following to monitor compliance:

Program partner meetings: These meetings are with our partnering agencies' trail managers and other appropriate agency representatives if need be. These meetings take place prior, during and after a program year. They are focused on planning and discussing direct service activities for our members, crew logistics, performance measurement objectives, crew performance, work progress, reporting requirements, and areas for compliance with AmeriCorps. These meetings are conducted by the BCTP program director. The AmeriCorps Coordinator and Supervisor Coordinator also participate in the meetings when needed and/or as schedule permits.

The number of meetings that take place can vary and depend on what is called for, but typically a minimum of two pre-season, two during-season, and one post-season meeting with each partnering

Narratives

agency occurs.

Site Visits: Site visits are conducted by the program director, supervisor coordinator, AmeriCorps coordinator, and occasionally by staff members of the legal applicant. Some site visits by BCTP staff are conducted jointly, but the bulk of the site visits occur individually in order to provide more opportunities for monitoring. Site visits generally are scheduled to allow for visits at the beginning (April-May), middle (June-July), and end (August-September) of the season.

During the season the supervisor coordinator conducts a minimum of three site visits per crew. The program director conducts a minimum of two site visits per crew, and the AmeriCorps coordinator conducts a minimum of one site visit per crew. However, the number of overall site visits conducted by BCTP staff is subject to increase based on: the needs of the BC Trail Camp Supervisors and partnering agency trail managers; whether or not issues of non-compliance have been detected; and on performance of members.

Prior to each site visit, and after when possible, the BCTP staff person checks in with the partnering agency trail manager and/or trail staff to gather information on the performance of the crew, individual members, BC Trails Camp Supervisor, and partnering agency trail sponsors. During each site visit the BCTP staff member meets individually with the BC Trails Camp Supervisor, most or all of the crew members, and the partnering agency trail sponsors. These meetings allow for us to assess/monitor the performance of the crew supervisor, agency partners, and crew members and detect any areas of noncompliance. The BCTP staff person(s) conducting the site visit then reports their findings to the program director.

Lastly, our partnering agency trail managers and their trail staff follow our established protocol of reporting to us the progress and performance of the crews if and when they conduct their own site visits for their own agency's purposes.

Should an issue with noncompliance be discovered the BCTP will address it first by investigating the issue to determine the facts surrounding the issue and the specific cause(s). All issues will be immediately reported to the program director who will work with the AmeriCorps coordinator, supervisor coordinator, and service site partners, when necessary, to determine a plan of action to

Narratives

correct the issue. Our CV Program Officer will be informed of the issue and our planned/proposed course of action. We will work with our CV Program Officer to determine what further steps/actions they recommend or require we take to correct and prevent the issue in the future. The program director will also inform our legal applicant of the issue and how it is being handled. The BCTP will institute increased monitoring and oversight through increased site visits and meetings with agency partners to ensure the issue has been resolved.

B. Budget Clarification:

1) Funding is extremely competitive and limited this year. Having a low Cost per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. Applicants submitting with a low cost per MSY will receive higher priority for funding. Please consider decreasing the application's proposed cost per MSY by revising the CNCS share of the program budget, or provide a compelling explanation for why the cost/MSY cannot be decreased. CNCS will review both the individual program cost per MSY and the aggregate cost per MSY after the clarification period and may elect to make further decreases in cost per MSY and/or may be only able to partially fund applicants.

Backcountry Trails has already decreased our cost per MSY to meet the Commission's maximum allowable cost per MSY of \$10,000 for a program with 10 or more years of funding and therefore, is unable to further decrease our cost per MSY. Backcountry Trail's cost per MSY of \$9,651 reflects a significantly lower rate than past years as an AmeriCorps program. Furthermore, the overall match percentage for the Backcountry Trails program at 76.43 percent reflects the highest level of match that we are able to secure at this time.

2) Please respond in 'Clarification Summary' field. In Section I - Other Program Operating Costs, bathrooms and showers are included for \$4,999. Please explain including the line item and justify how it is necessary and reasonable.

The BCTP holds its member orientation off-site from the program offices in a central location relative to all of the placement sites which is cost effective for the program. The orientation site does not have enough toilets and showers to accommodate 80 members so we must contract with a vendor to provide them. This line item for \$4999 for "bathrooms and showers" is the cost the BCTP pays a

Narratives

vendor for this service. The State of CA and our legal applicant's procurement process requires us to find three bids for this service thus ensuring we are paying for the most cost-effective service. The \$4999 is the amount the vendor we contract with charges for this service.

C. Performance Measurement Clarification:

1) The applicant states that past targets have been met and exceeded, but the proposed targets are lower than previous years. Please explain how the program arrived at the proposed targets.

In this grant application we changed the description of the output and outcome of our primary performance measure so it would be fully aligned with the definitions of terms and methods for calculating, measuring, and collecting data as stated in the priority national performance measure for At-Risk Ecosystems under EN5 and EN5.1. The output and outcome in our previous grant application were described as "Miles of trail cleared and number of projects completed," and "Number of projects restored from poor condition to high quality." In our current grant application our output is "Number of miles of trails treated," and "Number of miles of trails where condition improved." By removing the term "projects" and solely using "miles of trails" we are now fully aligned with the language in the national performance. The decision to solely use "miles of trails" as the measurement standard was reached after receiving input from our public land management agency (PLMA) partners. There was a consensus that calculating the trail work performed (treated) by "miles of trails" rather than also by "projects completed" would eliminate confusion, further minimize chance for error and would be a metric that would be universal across all PLMA trail departments.

In regards to reducing the proposed target of number of miles of trails treated in this year's grant application, the national performance measure also indicated there should be an emphasis on only addressing trails that present a "compelling environmental problem, deficiency, risk or priority." After consulting and conferring with our public land management agency partners about the types and conditions of trails we would treat, it was agreed the BCTP and PLMAs would work to ensure our members were working on trails determined by the respective trail departments to require "extensive" and/or "more technical" treatment. This means it could take longer to deliver the trail work intervention per mile of trail and thus result in an overall reduced number of miles treated.

2) Performance Measure EN5 states that the number of miles of trails and/or waterways that are

Narratives

treated, and/or constructed should count each mile only once during the program year. It may be necessary to treat the same mile of trail/waterway more than once, but include in the count only once. Please confirm that the program will ensure duplication does not happen and each mile will only be counted once.

The BCTP will ensure duplication does not happen and each mile will only be counted once through an established trail work production recording process. The name of the trail, number of miles treated, and location of those miles treated will be recorded daily by the BC Trails Camp Supervisor and Trail Sponsor to prevent duplication. Trail maps will also be used to help identify and document which trail sections were treated. These trail work production totals will be reported to both the BCTP and our partnering PLMAs on a monthly basis. The BCTP will enter the totals into our Trail Work Production Tracker. Every mile of trail treated will be recorded in association with the trail name.

Lastly, we train both our BC Trails Camp Supervisors and Trail Sponsors on how to record trail work production in order to ensure the established process is followed without error.

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?

Per our legal applicant's Legal Counsel interpretation of the CA Executive Order S-6-04 which reads, "All state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions shall recruit, appoint, train, evaluate and promote state personnel on the basis of merit and fitness, without regard to age, race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, disability or other non-job-related factors," The BCTP is prohibited from making member selection decisions based on the above protected characteristics.

This means we cannot dedicate specific member slots solely for those with disabilities. Therefore our efforts lie within trying to ensure the BCTP has a diverse applicant pool that includes members of the disability community. We will continue to do this through our recruitment outreach efforts which include distributing recruitment materials and giving recruitment presentations to organizations and communities who serve the disability community or who have members from this segment of the

Narratives

population. This outreach may include but is not limited to the following organizations: American Association for People with Disabilities, Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and National Organization on Disability. We will also try to utilize alumni of the BCTP who are members of the disability community to help with outreach efforts.

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. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies.) In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If you would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs your program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to your budget. Also adjust your performance measure targets, MSY allocations, and executive summary to reflect these additional members.

None.

E. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification:

Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs. These additional No-Cost MSYs are national service positions in which no grant funds will be awarded. In other words, grantees could receive additional AmeriCorps positions but no additional grant funds. Programs will be responsible for using their own or other resources to pay program costs, member support costs and other operating expenses. Keep in mind that full-time AmeriCorps program costs include expenditures for the AmeriCorps living allowance, health care and criminal history checks. Programs are not required to pay living allowances or cover health care for less-than-full-time members. If you wish to request no-cost MSYs, please respond to the following and add the additional slots to your budget and executive summary, and adjust your performance measure targets and MSY allocations:

Narratives

1) The number and type of slots requested. Please confirm that for the MSYs requested, the additional members will only engage in activities aligned with the proposed member activities outlined in the application narrative.

None.

2) A description of resources that will be provided to adequately support the additional members and how they are sufficient to; support the member support costs, management, oversight, program operations, and the program activities.

NA

3) Source(s) of non-CNCS funds. Provide a brief description of the amount, classification (cash or in-kind), source(s) (State/Local, Federal, Private) for all resources secured to manage, monitor, and support these additional members.

NA

4) The organization's capability and capacity to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the additional members.

NA

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics