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Executive Summary

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) proposes to have 13 half-time AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members who will recruit and train new community volunteers to support and expand cultural orientation services. At the end of the first year, the AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members will be responsible for increasing the scale of CO participants/classes and effectiveness of the instruction. In addition, the AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members will leverage an additional 26 volunteers, who will be engaged in refugee client CO tutoring. This program will focus on the CNCS funds in the area of Capacity Building. The CNCS investment of \$N/A will be matched with \$325,000 in federal funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

Rationale: When a refugee arrives at their final destination, they have many questions about the U.S. resettlement program, the local community, and life in America. Finding answers to these many questions and beginning to understand U.S. customs and expectations is often the difference between just surviving the transition and successful integration. Cultural orientation (CO) is that process through which refugee resettlement agencies provide this most basic information necessary for daily life in the U.S. Through a CO process, resettlement case managers inform the client about the resettlement process and American life. In a CO study by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the most cited purpose of CO by case managers is to ease the refugee's transition to life in the U.S. by providing the necessary information to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. As discussed in Current Refugee Orientation Practices in U.S. Resettlement Agencies: Phase One of the Refugee Orientation Impact Study (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004) which was CAL's study of 36 U.S. resettlement agencies through surveys and interviews. CAL, a non-profit established in 1959 by a grant from the Ford Foundation to the Modern Language Association, served as a liaison between the academic world of linguistics and the practitioner's world of language education. Today CAL's current mission is to promote language learning and cultural understanding through research, resources, and policy analysis. CAL staff work closely with federal and non-profit partners serving the language and culture education needs of immigrants and refugees in the United States. Most recently CAL, in partnership with the federal funder for refugee resettlement services and nonprofit service providers conducted a study of 36 refugee resettlement operating sites across the United States and their refugee client CO program models and learning outcomes. This preliminary study evidence shows that CO should be designed to ensure newly arriving refugees acquire the information and skills necessary to

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adapt to both a new community and culture. As CO can be so critical to a new refugee arrivals' success, it has become a fundamental component of refugee resettlement with minimum standards for an orientation outlined in the federal refugee services Cooperative Agreement or contract. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) defines community orientation as a 30 day process beginning at arrival. The topics covered include an orientation on housing and personal safety within five working days after arrival and then the role of the resettlement agency and other community groups, public transportation, personal and public hygiene, community refugee services, importance of English, resident alien status and family reunification procedures, IOM travel repayment, selective service requirements, employment and self-sufficiency, and the health care system. The PRM requirements of a community orientation are focused on the essentials of the resettlement process and community resettlement-related services over a 30 day period. As outlined in the Reception and Placement Cooperative Agreement FY 2012 (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2011) as required refugee core services. CAL noted that this orientation is most often directed or focused on the needs of those refugees who are most likely to be employed or those between the ages of 18 and 65. Although PRM may outline minimum standards, how this orientation is provided can vary significantly among local resettlement agencies. Local CO can vary in terms of the format, number of instructional hours, use of outside presenters, and capacity for assessment. The study of CO practices by CAL, found that local CO programs can be categorized into three different models based on the level of structured intensive and integrated CO programming offered by the agency. In the R&P Model case management staff only provide CO on a case-by-case basis during the client interview or intake for about 45 minutes to two hours. Topics follow the basic guidelines outlined in the federal R&P Cooperative Agreement. The content can vary by case manager and with little or no assessment, beyond answering the client's questions, utilized to evaluate the effectiveness or retention of the orientation process. The R&P Plus Model CO is provided during the intake session but there are additional structured elements, such as regularly scheduled and longer orientation sessions, multiple staff providing the information, use of trained volunteers or mentors, and a local curriculum. A questionnaire is used to evaluate retention of material or to identify areas for additional focus in the future. In the most structured model, the Workshop Model, the initial CO is provided during the intake process and case managers answer any questions or concerns during home and office visits, but formal CO is provided primarily through scheduled, structured, formal sessions, or workshops in a classroom setting. Each CO session is based on a written local curriculum which is interactive and incorporates community experts as guest speakers. Generally, workshops are evaluated through a

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series of pre-and post-workshop tests. Despite standard requirements for CO, the CAL survey demonstrated the wide-range of approaches to this process. Resettlement agencies relying on a less structured approach to orientation and no community support, like the R&P model, generally provide less instructional time or client evaluation/input of the quality of effectiveness of the experience. Whereas the more structured workshop model with volunteer assistance and community speakers offers a more intensive learning opportunity with more information over a longer period of time and an evaluation component. Resettlement agencies using the R&P model are more focused on providing the basics, compared to the workshop model which provides the opportunity to incorporate more topics and in greater depth. Again, this preliminary study indicates that less structured programs without volunteer or community support provide a less intensive learning experience. An LIRS affiliate network survey indicated a similar link between orientation delivery style and overall instructional hours. A 2011 survey of affiliate programs indicated that out of 15 sites that incorporate classroom style instruction only four provided five or less hours and eight sites offered ten or more hours of CO instruction (based on a 2011 survey, The RCAC Premiere Network Survey, with 19 LIRS respondents out of 22 affiliates). On the other hand, sites providing CO through one-on-one instruction, most (nine sites) offered less than five hours and only two sites offered ten or more hours of CO. Within the LIRS network, sites that utilize a classroom style of delivery offer more instructional hours to new arrivals. Both the LIRS and CAL data indicated that the class or workshop styles of CO delivery offer more instructional time to new arrivals. However, the CAL study also indicated that resettlement agencies that have incorporated these types of CO programs are more satisfied with their client outcomes than those agencies that rely on the more basic R&P model. Through this preliminary evidence, CAL concluded that a more structured and intensive program provides more in-depth instruction over a longer period of time to expose clients to more information while ensuring time to process that information. In the survey of refugee clients, improved or enhanced CO classes were specifically noted as a "most needed service" during the first year of resettlement or "transition" into the local community, as concluded from statistical data in An Analysis of Services that Work and Services that are Needed in the First-Year Experience of Refugee Newcomers to the United States (Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2010) which was based on interviews with 53 first-year refugee newcomers in 28 LIRS sites across the U.S. An effective CO program not only provides the most basic information necessary for daily life, it also relieves culture shock, helps set realistic expectations for American life, and eases the transition from assistance to independence to ensure early self-sufficiency and cultural and social long-term integration. In

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addition, the classroom sessions or workshop models' use of community speakers provides new arrivals with more contact with community resources. Presentations and demonstrations by outside speakers not only promote access to the necessary resources, it expands a new arrivals' network of local contacts and friendly faces in the community beyond the resettlement agency staff. In turn, the affiliate networking and consistent engagement in the community to identify these resources and recruit community participation in workshops expands the resettlement agencies' network of contacts and potential refugee advocacy partners. In FY 2011, LIRS began exploring new strategies for expanding communication between LIRS and local resettlement communities. One emerging theme already identified by these national conversations is that new arrivals are less worried with safety and security and more concerned about "fitting in" or "belonging". This was a reoccurring finding cited in conclusions from The Community Conversations Project (LIRS, 2011) based on facilitated conversation with refugees and migrants in Fargo, ND and Philadelphia, PA. In addition, the refugee client experiences survey found that local social services play a significant role in providing key integration services to recent arrivals. Community support through participation in cultural orientation was cited as the third essential form of support after the basic needs and direct services. As concluded from statistical data in An Analysis of Services that Work and Services that are Needed in the First-Year Experience of Refugee Newcomers to the United States (Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2010) which was based on interviews with 53 first-year refugee newcomers in 28 LIRS sites across the U.S. Even the most effective resettlement programs require constant ongoing outreach to maintain positive community support and a welcoming environment. The biggest barrier to incorporating this more structured and intensive model of CO is program capacity to recruit volunteers and community speakers to restructure and staff a more enhanced model of CO delivery. In CAL's study, only 21% of the agencies in the survey had developed a classroom or workshop model and most often these programs were integrated with other programs such as ESL or employment services to leverage resources to support enhanced CO. In FY 2013, LIRS began working with two affiliate programs or resettlement operating sites to establish new CO models or Enhanced Cultural Orientation (ECO) programs over a three-year period. Through funding from ORR, LIRS provided the resources and support to two subgrantee or operating sites to build the volunteer and community capacity to increase the number of CO participants/classes and effectiveness of CO instruction. A recent report LIRS Enhanced Cultural Orientation ORR Project for PY 2015 noted the findings from this project including outcome performance data from the two operating sites. In the first year, through a newly-funded local staff position, each site successfully recruited and trained a base of

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volunteers and community speakers to expand the number of CO classes from a one-on-one orientation format to a series of structured curriculum-based CO group classes. By year two in Los Angeles, preliminary evidence indicated that the average client improvement between pre- and post-tests was 27% with average pre-test scores at 63% and average post-test scores at 91%. A program beneficiary survey showed that 89% of clients reported that the ECO classes were "very helpful" and not a single client has indicated the classes as "not helpful." A refugee resettlement federal monitor, during a recent visit to the LA site, noted refugee clients clearly understood the R&P orientation topics and had a strong understanding of their surroundings and situation. Case managers have noted as learner outcomes have increased, client follow-up CO questions have decreased, allowing staff to focus on other client needs and case management activities. The site in Atlanta has experienced similar outcome indicators and the program is highly regarded by volunteer instructors and classroom assistants. The site frequently recruits and trains former refugee clients as volunteer CO interpreters, and one of them stated in a qualitative feedback form that "though I have been here for three years, I never learned all of this important information until I was able to interpret for ECO. I wish I would have had this class when I came." Both sites use volunteers as instructors, classroom assistants, guest speakers, and interpreters. These volunteers also assist with tracking test scores, documenting attendance, and updating the curriculum through the on-going contribution of a minimum of 50 hours a month to sustain the ECO program. Using the LIRS ECO approach, these two operating sites are developing sustainable and data-driven CO classroom or workshop programs that ensure the long-term integration and self-sufficiency of new arrivals.

Approach: Based on the preliminary evidence from this pilot project, LIRS plans to model the new AmeriCorps program design after the ECO pilot program. LIRS is proposing an AmeriCorps program in the CNCS priority focus area of Capacity Building to expand the scale of CO services and increase the effectiveness of CO across the LIRS network. This program will leverage existing community resources to establish sustainable volunteer-based CO programs over a three-year period. As a joint project of a new AmeriCorps and ORR partnership, the proposed program will establish a Refugee Corps to provide indirect support to local affiliate programs or refugee service sites through the recruitment and training of community volunteers to serve as CO speakers, classroom assistants, translators/interpreters, and mentors. The Refugee Corps member activities are not intended to solely support national or local operations or provide direct service to beneficiaries. The LIRS Refugee Corps program will establish sustainable CO programs that ensures refugee clients achieve self-sufficiency and long-term integration. LIRS proposes to have 13 half-time AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members

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who will recruit and train new community volunteers to expand and support CO services. LIRS plans to partner with 13 affiliate programs or service sites interested in expanding capacity to establish a more structured and intensive classroom or workshop style of CO. As half-time, AmeriCorps members will be supported to complete 900 service hours (including training, Refugee Corps networking, and professional growth opportunities) to be eligible for the half-time \$2,800 education award and receive a living allowance of \$13,265. LIRS has selected a decentralized model in which LIRS national administration offices will contract with 13 pre-selected refugee resettlement service sites to locally administer the program and supervise the new AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members. LIRS will act as the grantee and the 13 local operating sites will be subgrantees and operating sites. Both LIRS national administration and local resettlement service sites are providing the inputs or resources to increase the scale and effectiveness of local CO. LIRS national administration will provide oversight and coordinate the work of the subgrantees or operating sites to ensure each site meets its performance benchmarks and maintains compliance with all AmeriCorps guidelines and reporting requirements. LIRS national program staff will provide training and support to the 13 different programs hosting the AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members. LIRS program staff will manage and support the AmeriCorp/Refugee Corps program activities for the 13 different operating sites. Program staff (with expertise in managing federal programs, the resettlement process, volunteer recruitment, and CO instruction/evaluation) will provide orientation, training, and on-going support to the local program staff and AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps member through webinars and eLearning training. LIRS national finance staff will provide training and support regarding AmeriCorps financial tracking and reporting tools. Finance administration will develop written guidance, coordinate an orientation and on-going training, and provide technical support throughout the program period. LIRS national leadership and program staff will be responsible for working with ORR and the other national resettlement agencies to develop the Refugee Corps identity during this founding year of the new program. In addition, LIRS will link the new members to the LIRS national Refugee Leadership Academy program. LIRS will encourage and support the new AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members in joining the academy and engaging with current members to explore other public and community service options during and after their service with AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps. Local refugee resettlement programs are based in non-profit organizations that provide local administration and financial oversight for local service programs. The selected resettlement service sites or AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps operating sites will designate an experienced refugee resettlement program manager to coordinate the program activities and supervise and support the member. The

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local program manager will be responsible for recruiting and interviewing potential members, conducting criminal background checks and education reviews, and selecting a qualified member. Under the proposed Refugee Corp model, local operating sites will be required to recruit a former refugee or "New American" to fill the position. A core principle of the LIRS Refugee Corps program is to train and support former refugee community members or new Americans that can draw on their resettlement experience and community connections to develop a CO program for newly arriving refugees that better incorporates the needs of clients and assets of the local community. Former refugees will bring a unique knowledge and skillset to both the local program activities and development of a growing nationwide Refugee Corps program. Local refugee resettlement programs have ongoing connections to the communities they serve and will conduct outreach to these ethnic communities, refugee community resources, and mutual assistance associations to recruit qualified candidates. Local operating sites will provide a second and more direct layer of support and training. Each supervisor will provide an AmeriCorps program orientation and training based on national training provided to the supervisors. This AmeriCorps orientation will provide a second review of the rules and regulations including the prohibited activities. Local supervisors will also provide in-depth orientation to the local agency/operating site, resettlement program, and current CO program. The new members will receive the same structured and ongoing intensive training provided to resettlement staff based on a federally-mandated, written staff training plan. The member will be introduced to all operating site/agency staff and participate in resettlement program staff meetings and training opportunities as the AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps member. Supervisors will also coordinate more specialized professional training regarding volunteer recruitment strategies, volunteer training protocols, CO evaluation processes, and data management and evaluation. Each operating sites will be required to submit a written local training plan to LIRS and track both orientation and on-going training hours. Supervisors are also responsible for coordinating and tracking professional skill training and AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps networking opportunities as part of the member's service hours. Local supervisors will coordinate program staff and/or volunteers as mentors to assist with the member's skills development and career/leadership goals. Each operating site will also select and provide at least two AmeriCorps service gear items to their member for daily wear to reinforce the AmeriCorps identity and spirit. To guide local operating sites in managing and evaluating their AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps programs, LIRS outlined the core activities to be completed at each site. These activities define the intervention to be implemented throughout the program period. As outlined in the logic model, each of the 13 half-time (900 hours) members across the 13 different sites will:

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Identify and recruit diverse community volunteers to serve as CO speakers, classroom assistants, translators, instructors, and tutors. Members will spend approximately 30% of their time conducting outreach in the various local communities to develop a volunteer base to grow and support the CO program over the course of one year; and assist in training volunteers on the expanded CO format (curriculum, CO instruction, resettlement process, and client CO tutoring methods) and match refugee clients needing additional CO support or tutoring with the trained volunteers. Members will assist program staff in providing structured training to the new volunteers for 40% of their service time over the course of one year.

The LIRS AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps core activities focus on recruiting and training a volunteer base to specifically support the scale of CO programs and effectiveness of instruction. Members will also spend an estimated 25% of their time assisting with the collection and evaluation of data related to the intervention and expected outcomes. To ensure that each AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps member service period leads to the development of professional skills and life-long engagement in community leadership or public service, the LIRS project design includes skills training for the Refugee Corps members through local and national training and mentoring. Each site will be required to ensure and track 4-5 hours per month (half time member) or roughly 5% of their total service period for professional training, networking, and/or mentoring hours for the Refugee Corps member. Although members will assist in training volunteers, data management, and identifying assessment trends; program staff are responsible for using their CO and resettlement expertise to expanded the CO curriculum/class structure and enhance the CO client assessment process. LIRS has identified specific outputs or benchmarks of progress and success as a result of the activities of intervention. Each operating site will be required to track these output measures and resulting outcomes performance data for both AmeriCorps and LIRS. LIRS will collect and evaluate this common set of measures to monitor local operating site progress and any need for additional technical assistance and training. The sites will be monitored and evaluated based on measures and target goals related to indicators of the increasing scale and effectiveness of the CO program. This data includes one CNCS AmeriCorps aligned capacity building performance output and short-term outcome. LIRS national staff will provide the data collection tools and data management training to both supervisors and the members. To measure the implementation of activities related to the scale of CO programs, each site will measure the number of CO volunteer service hours per month for the CO program. LIRS anticipates the direct product or evidence of the recruitment of volunteers to produce a minimum of 50 volunteer service hours per month or leverage at least 7,800 annual service hours across the 13 sites. As a result

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of this aspect of the intervention, LIRS expects each site to leverage these community volunteer resources for an annual minimum of \$9,300 of in-kind per site or \$120,900 annually across the 13 sites. This particular output and aligned outcome is the primary CNCS National Performance Output G3-3.7 and Outcome G3-3.17 for capacity building focused projects. By the end of the year, each site maintains a minimum of 10 unduplicated trained CO volunteers per site to support the increase in the scale of CO classes for a minimum of a 130 on-going CO volunteers across the 13 sites. In the end, the intervention will establish an on-going volunteer base to staff and manage significant components of each CO program.

The client learning component will provide data indicating the effectiveness of instruction. To measure the implementation of activities related to the effectiveness of instruction, each site will measure the number of CO volunteers per site trained to tutor clients needing additional CO follow-up or tutoring support. LIRS anticipates each site to train a minimum of 2 volunteers for a minimum total of 26 specialized CO volunteer tutors across the 13 sites. As a result of this aspect of the intervention, LIRS expects the average refugee client CO assessment score to increase by at least 15% at all 13 sites across the network. By the end of year, LIRS expects focus on the quality of instruction and client needs to increase the number of clients completing the expanded CO program. New arrivals will see the value in investing in attending all of the CO classes or workshops to ensure a minimum of 60% of annual refugee arrivals will attend and complete the expanded CO program at all 13 sites. The intervention will ensure refugees use knowledge gained in CO classes to achieve self-sufficiency and integrate effectively into their new communities.

Organizational Capability

LIRS background and staffing: For over 70 years, LIRS has led a national network of community service programs to welcome and serve America's most vulnerable newcomers - refugees and migrants. As a national service provider, LIRS staff lead and coordinate a variety of service and protection programs, including refugee resettlement, immigration and legal services, and foster care services. LIRS carries out much of this work through formal partnerships with local service providers and community partners across the country. The LIRS network is structured as an integrated partnership of national administration with 20 independent affiliate offices and 25 sub-offices for a total of 45 community operating sites. LIRS community service programs are contractually managed, trained, and supported through the national administrative office in Baltimore, Maryland. LIRS national administration is comprised of three operational departments: programs and protection, finance and administration, and mission advancement. The LIRS national refugee resettlement

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program or Reception and Placement program (R&P) sits in the programs and protection department. This department houses all of the LIRS service-related units including the: community integration (CI) unit. The CI unit administers the post-arrival refugee (initial refugee services), Matching Grant (MG - refugee employment services), and Preferred Communities (PC - various long-term integration support services) programs. The CI unit staff serve as the liaisons with the different federal program partners, ensure compliance with federal contracts and cooperative agreements, monitor local affiliate offices/sub-offices through on-site visits, provide service and documentation training, and review program service provision and outcome reports. CI includes a quality assurance specialist (QAS) responsible for developing performance monitoring strategies and systems for local site monitoring, routine desk monitoring of program files/documentation, and program outcome reviews. This position is also responsible for tracking monitoring follow-up and analyzing network service provision and documentation trends. The unit is also supported by a training development specialist (TDS) that designs, coordinates, and evaluates training and technical assistance for the network. These two positions are coordinated by a staff member focused on program planning and evaluation. CI unit programming includes the development and management of a federally-funded CO pilot project to demonstrate and document the value of more comprehensive or enhanced CO models (ECO). CI unit staff provide training and administrative oversight of the project to ensure the pilot sites reach each programmatic benchmark and collect and evaluate outcomes data. Although the supervision and local administration funds will be centralized at the affiliate level, LIRS plans to leverage this existing national management expertise and affiliate CO experience to support the new AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps program. The proposed program will be housed in the CI unit with the CI unit director and ECO project coordinator providing national oversight and management of the program. For FY 2015, LIRS has also added a national Cultural Orientation (CO) position to lead the network in strengthening CO instruction, assessment processes, and client outcomes. This former overseas CO manager and trainer will provide essential CO training and support to the members and local affiliate staff. In addition, the CI unit program coordinator, a recent AmeriCorps alum, will provide expertise and support in the development of the LIRS AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps member identity and service experience. CI unit staff work collaboratively with other national administration staff to provide additional professional support to local affiliate service staff. The LIRS Marketing and Communications (MC) department supports local refugee resettlement programs with public relations materials and development of more diversified resources for innovative resettlement programs. The MC department staff in collaboration with the LIRS national Volunteer Coordinator will provide

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AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps sites with refugee resettlement education tools, volunteer outreach materials, volunteer recruitment videos, and eLearning tools for training the volunteers recruited by the member. Each year, national MC staff develop and conduct workshops or training sessions on developing volunteer programs, volunteer recruitment strategies, and community resource development to affiliate program staff. MC staff can utilize existing staff and training products to offer volunteer recruitment and community resources training to the new AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members. Each LIRS affiliate resettlement program is directed by a local director/LIRS Regional Consultant (RC) and housed within a local non-profit organization. The majority of these (90%) are Lutheran-affiliated agencies. The small number of non-Lutheran R&P programs sit in large independent non-profit organizations with access to Lutheran-affiliated resources through LIRS. All of LIRS affiliate resettlement programs receive support and resources from two administrative sources, the national contract administration in Baltimore and the local agency administration in which the resettlement program resides. This administrative partnership ensures two levels of program oversight including: program management support, staff training and personnel support, and service performance and outcomes monitoring. As well as, an opportunity to access two sources of resources including: development resources, public outreach support, and community/faith-based support. LIRS national administration has a collaborative relationship with three national Lutheran church bodies, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), and the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (LELCA). Each national church partner contributes financially to LIRS to support national and local resettlement activities. Lutheran affiliation through LIRS offers access to not only national resource support, but a connection to local Lutheran support and resources that can be accessed by AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps members. LIRS national staff work in collaboration with affiliate partners to develop an annual Resettlement Network Plan which outlines the goals and objectives for network refugee arrivals and service capacity. Developed in collaboration with the elected representatives from the affiliate network (regional consultants advisory committee), these LIRS affiliate priorities and strategies ensure a responsive and sustainable network that can quickly adapt to client and community needs. A national staff review found the proposed AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps program in alignment with the network work plan and LIRS national program priorities. In further preparation for this proposal, LIRS national staff held individual consultations and programmatic reviews with affiliate programs interested in recruiting new community volunteers and committing to the AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps model. As a joint project of AmeriCorps and ORR, ORR staff coordinated with the appropriate State

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Commissions on behalf of LIRS. LIRS maintains a comprehensive profile for each affiliate in its national resettlement database. This profile is a management tool for gathering and analyzing site data related to such factors as client diversity, arrival trends, resettlement-specific services and general social services, community resources, faith-based partners, program staffing patterns, and agency/leadership stability. Through a selective review process, LIRS has chosen thirteen affiliate partners with welcoming resettlement environments, but a clearly identified local need for volunteers and community support to increase the scale and effectiveness of local CO to better support long-term integration and self-sufficiency. These affiliate programs and their parent agencies have also demonstrated the organizational management capacity to effectively manage and evaluate the expansion of volunteer and CO services. To avoid duplication of local, state, or other possible national AmeriCorps resources, LIRS reviewed current staffing and planned 2015 programming with each partner. Compliance and Accountability: LIRS maintains a written contractual relationship for different program services with each of its affiliate programs or subgrantees/operating sites. The programmatic services and the sustainability of any affiliate program is formally reviewed throughout the year. This review process starts with an annual affiliate assessment of local resettlement trends, community capacity, diversity of local community/service providers, financial resources, volunteer support, agency management capacity and structure, service performance and outcomes, and community/public official support against LIRS national program needs. Each affiliate is required to submit an annual service plan, resource development strategy, and site budget for implementing its different programmatic responsibilities. The process ends with a contract agreement outlining accountability for different program service requirements and performance outcomes. For the new AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps sites, the contract will outline the required services, performance benchmarks, and program guidelines. The subgrantee/operating site contract will clearly address the federal requirements regarding prohibited or unallowable activities. This annual assessment process and written contractual agreement will help prevent any LIRS or affiliate (subgrantee/operating site) compliance issues with the proposed AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps service provision and rules/regulations. The LIRS finance and administration (F&A) department oversees all financial and accounting aspects of all LIRS and subgrantee federal contracts or cooperative agreements, including administration of local affiliate program budgets and expense reports, review of affiliate financial audits, submission of financial and service program reports to federal agencies, and all network information technology systems including the development/maintenance of the LIRS national refugee resettlement information database (IRIS). Through existing national F&A staff and

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established financial procedures, LIRS can detect potential compliance issues related to AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps financial and program reporting rules/regulations at both the national and subgrantee/operating sites. The LIRS CI unit staff support service provision and compliance through annual and year-round training. For the proposed program, LIRS will provide national program orientation training and ongoing training to the new AmeriCorps/Refugee Corp members through webinar or eLearning training. These efficient, cost-effective, and broad-reaching training formats will allow LIRS to provide documented and assessment-driven training to support program development and prevent compliance issues. LIRS will leverage existing national technology and training staff to offer several training webinars and CO eLearning tools each year. LIRS also provides these training forums for peer-sharing of best practices. LIRS can use learning technology to coordinate regular training support or as part of a formal corrective action plan. The CI unit staff review subgrantee/operating sites through both on-site monitoring and desk audits to ensure compliance with federal program requirements and LIRS program standards. LIRS will leverage existing monitoring staff and procedures to conduct on-site reviews of the proposed AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps service provision, program management, local staff training plans, documentation, and program outcome indicators. The monitoring staff produce a comprehensive report of the site visit with recommendations or required actions. Follow-up to recommendations and action plans are provided to ensure compliance with all federal guidelines and program performance standards. LIRS action plans often require additional local staff training (on-site or via webinar), reviews of service plans, follow-up site visits, or desk audits. Action plans include strict timelines for completing recommendations and any required follow-up training, desk audits, or site visits. During the proposed three year program, CI unit staff will following existing monitoring schedules to conduct at least one on-site visit to each proposed site. In addition, LIRS can conduct an additional on-site visit in response to substantial technical assistance needs or as follow-up to significant compliance/performance issues. LIRS also has a formal and routine desk audit system led by the CI unit QAS. This system provides an opportunity for LIRS to review subgrantee/operating sites program documentation and outcome indicators without an on-site monitoring visit through documentation that is electronically mailed. A written audit report outlines the findings, recommendations, and required action plans.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

N/A - As a joint Americorps and Office of Refugee Resettlement submission, our guidance was to not submit a budget to Americorps as one will be submitted directly to ORR.

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4-11-15: HHS/ORR has pledged funding to LIRS in the amount of \$325,000. While it has not been secured at this time, it has been explained by HHS/ORR that this amount will be added to a continuation award already provided by HHS/ORR to LIRS for Fiscal Year 2016. HHS/ORR announced their intention to request a budget from LIRS near the end of April/early May.

LIRS is not requesting additional funding beyond the \$325,000 pledged by HHS/ORR as support will be contributed via in-kind resources that derive from both the local Refugee Corps members host site management (for example: in the form of supervision, volunteer recruitment support, office space, etc.) and from national oversight of the program as a whole (for example: office space for national staff, electronic training costs, etc.)

Evaluation Summary or Plan

N/A

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

This response is organized per the April 10, 2015 letter requesting clarification on aspects of the LIRS application.

A.1. LIRS is a national service and advocacy organization serving refugees and migrants since 1939. As a national service provider, LIRS staff lead and coordinate a variety of service and protection programs, including refugee resettlement, immigration and legal services, and foster care services. LIRS carries out much of this work through formal partnerships with local service providers and community partners across the country. The LIRS resettlement network is structured as an integrated partnership of national administration with 20 independent affiliate offices and 25 sub-offices for a total of 45 reception and placement sites in FY 2015. This service network, or each service site, is contractually managed, trained, and supported through the national administrative office in Baltimore, Maryland. LIRS national staff include, contractual management staff who supervise and support all aspects of federal program contracts with local service sites; program evaluation staff that monitor federal program outcomes; training development staff that provide service program,

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volunteer recruitment/management, and operational management training.

In addition, each service site affiliate R&P program is directed by a local director/LIRS Regional Consultant (RC) and housed within a local non-profit organization. All of LIRS affiliate service programs receive support and resources from two administrative sources, the national contract administration and training staff in Baltimore and the local agency administration in which the service program resides. This administrative partnership ensures two levels of management and support for the network of 45 service sites across 22 states. The proposed 13 members will join 13 current service sites within this existing management and support structure. All 13 proposed Refugee Corp members will be recruited, trained, monitored, and supervised by current local site management staff who are in turn managed and trained by existing LIRS national staff.

A.2. The proposed 13 members will not supplement, duplicate, or displace any paid local staff at the proposed 13 existing local service sites. LIRS is proposing an AmeriCorps program in the CNCS priority focus area of Capacity Building to expand the scale of CO services in 13 sites where there is an identified and critical need to develop new long-term CO support services outside the existing federally service program at the local services site. The Refugee Corps member activities are not intended to support funded or paid national or local operational staff or provide direct service to beneficiaries. LIRS is proposing a program that places a Refugee Corp member at 13 sites in need of volunteer recruitment and management services where there is not any specific paid staff to provide this service and support for the local refugee resettlement program. Out of a network of 45 service sites, LIRS has identified 13 sites with the unmet needs through existing paid staff. In addition, the new Refugee Corp program will not supplement, duplicate, or displace any current services. The federal PRM requirements of a community orientation are over a 30 to 90 day service period. This program will recruit and manage volunteers to support a CO program that supports clients beyond the federal CO services and service period. The LIRS AmeriCorps/Refugee Corps core activities focus on recruiting and training a volunteer base to specifically support the capacity to provide additional service or CO expand services beyond the existing funded program.

A.3. All 13 members will work closely with local service staff to recruit, train, and support volunteers. Members will adapt local volunteer recruitment and screening tools for this program. Local volunteer tools and materials are currently accredited by the Council on Accreditation. Outreach strategies will target both established refugee/immigrant populations and the larger volunteer community. This

Narratives

member will work closely with local refugee communities and Mutual Assistance Association's to develop volunteers to better support the needs of cultural orientation.

B. Changes were made in the Budget Narrative section.

C.1. Changes were made in the Performance Measure section.

D.1. While LIRS is not formally recruiting members with disabilities in the traditionally sense of the word, all members recruited and selected must be current or former refugees. Almost all refugees arrive to the United States as non-native English speakers. These individuals must find ways to learn English as a means to survival and ultimately as a way to integrate into their new lives in the U.S. In order to fully implement the Refugee Corps program as being proposed by LIRS, local resettlement partners (affiliates) will need to recruit members with high levels of English skills, but these may still vary by member. To ensure appropriate training and understanding of their new roles and responsibilities, affiliates may need to ensure that interpretation is provided during training and if needed, during supervisory meetings. Should the selected member not speak the same language as the individual clients they are matching with volunteers for enhanced cultural orientation support, the affiliate will also ensure that translation is provided and that members are trained in how to work effectively with a translator.

D.2. LIRS is not requesting additional MSY's to support an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities serving as Refugee Corps members.

E. LIRS is not requesting No-Cost MSY's.

To clarify item #2, from the second round request for clarification dated 4-16-15, all operating sites that will have members from the LIRS Refugee Corps program are stand alone 501(c)(3) organizations.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics