

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (ECDC) proposes to have 10 Refugee AmeriCorps members. Nine will provide refugees with culturally- and linguistically-appropriate job readiness services at ECDC affiliates located in San Diego, Calif.; Denver, Colo.; Clearwater and Tampa, Fla.; Kansas City, Mo.; Omaha, Neb.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Greensboro, N.C.; and Nashville, Tenn. One member will provide educational services to refugee youth at ECDC's affiliate in Silver Spring, Md. From October 1, 2010, through June 30, 2015, the 10 sites have resettled over 11,000 refugees. At the end of the first program year, Refugee AmeriCorps members will have helped 450 refugees on a path to economic self-sufficiency and 40 refugee youth will have received the support needed for their academic success in the U.S. Members also will leverage 180 volunteers who will provide job readiness training, teach English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and Vocational English-as-a-Second Language (VESL), and 20 volunteers who will tutor and mentor refugee youth.

ECDC's Refugee AmeriCorps Project is being conducted in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) under the Preferred Communities (PC) Intensive Case Management Program. On ECDC's behalf, ORR has consulted with the state commissions.

The project period is September 30, 2015-September 29, 2016, and reflects the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Education. The CNCS investment of the education grant will be supplemented with \$250,000 in funding from ORR through its Preferred Communities (PC) Program. This funding will fully cover the Refugee AmeriCorps program costs for 10 members.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. Problem and Need. ECDC is a refugee resettlement agency with 18 affiliate resettlement sites in the U.S. ECDC operates the PC Program at 11 of these sites. ECDC's PC program objective is to provide referrals and direct services to refugees with special needs who are often without a safety net and face multiple obstacles that prevent them from becoming self-sufficient. In FY 2014, the PC sites enrolled and provided medical and mental health referrals, elderly assistance, social adjustment, ESL, and employment services to 377 special needs refugees. In the first half of FY 2015, 281 special needs refugees with social adjustment needs, long-term medical conditions, and mental health issues were enrolled in the program. Among those, 28 were provided employment services of which eight were hired and 38 were referred to extended ESL classes. Despite these achievements, the economic self-

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sufficiency of refugee adults and education of refugee youth remain high needs in the 10 locations indicated in the Executive Summary.

Through our collective resettlement experiences, ECDC and its affiliates have observed that refugees are resilient and resourceful. However, they face significant and multiple challenges in becoming self-sufficient and integrated in the U.S. While refugees receive basic resettlement services, there is an overall lack of sufficient case management that focuses on long-term, sustainable integration. Consequently, special needs refugee adults are unable to obtain and retain employment and many refugee children are unable to adjust to or navigate their new communities effectively. If refugees are not self-sufficient, they will continue to rely on welfare assistance. For example, in 2013, states that had a low refugee employment rate of 40 percent, such as California, where ECDC is proposing one site, public assistance utilization among refugee households was high at 82 percent (2013 ORR Annual Report to Congress). The Migration Policy Institute estimates that it takes refugees 20 to 30 years to integrate economically into their new communities. ECDC's program will address the community needs by placing Refugee AmeriCorps members at sites that have the capacity and experience to support economic and educational interventions.

Focus Area 1 -- Economic Opportunity. The Refugee Act of 1980 emphasizes the need for the achievement of economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible (8 U.S.C §1521). Employment is the most important factor in achieving self-sufficiency. However, because of the unique experiences of refugees, they are often unable to locate and secure employment. For example, within the ECDC affiliate network, 55 percent of the arriving refugees in FY 2014 were unable to read, write, and/or speak English, which is a key element for employability in the U.S. According to ORR's 2013 survey of refugees, a combined 79.1 percent of refugees spoke no English or do not speak English well at their time of arrival in the U.S. In FY 2014, ECDC's Reception and Placement (R&P) Period Reports indicated that affiliate clients who spoke some or good English were 33 percent more likely to obtain employment by 90 days after arrival.

Also, many refugees who come to the United States have spent years in refugee camps with only limited access to employment opportunities or have limited transferable job skills that they can apply to positions in the U.S. Even when employment opportunities do arise, without the proper job readiness skills, refugee newcomers enter the workforce ill-prepared and uninformed about American workplace cultures, norms, and employer expectations, which often result in the refugees not being able to retain their positions for longer than a few weeks. Employers that work with ECDC's affiliate agencies have reported that a lack of soft-skills, such as attendance, communication, and good

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interpersonal relationships with coworkers, is a major barrier to refugees' long-term employment.

While in general there are employment training programs available in the communities where we are proposing members, the number of programs is limited, and the programs do not always address the specific cultural and linguistic needs of refugee populations. For instance, the city of Omaha, Neb., where ECDC is proposing one site, lacks adequate capacity for intensive, culturally-appropriate programming activities focusing on financial literacy and employment readiness concepts. Employment services available there to all employable refugees are limited to an on-site, two-week employment readiness training program. ECDC's Refugee AmeriCorps project will address such limitations by providing opportunities for refugees to gain employment skills.

Focus Area 2 -- Education. Refugee children and youth have specific barriers to education, as their opportunities for ongoing and quality education were limited in refugee situations. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Access to education for refugees is limited and uneven across regions and settings of displacement, particularly for girls and at secondary levels... Refugee education is generally of a very low quality" (UNHCR, "Refugee Education: A Global View," 2011). According to the 2013 ORR Annual Report to Congress, refugees have an average of nine years of education before arriving in the U.S. Within the ECDC affiliate network, 46.8 percent of arriving refugees in FY 2014 had not attained their expected grade level based on their age.

Refugee youth are expected to self-integrate through their school participation, a feat that requires overcoming their lack of literacy and proficiency as well as an interrupted educational history. According to the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees, from 2008 to 2012, youth aged 10-24 made up 29 percent of all Maryland refugee arrivals. It is this population that ECDC's branch office in Silver Spring, Md., aims to serve in Prince George's county. After years in refugee camps, refugee youth either struggle to catch up while learning and testing in a foreign language or drop out of school. Standardized testing can be confusing for foreign-born students, and not all refugee youth understand the importance of a diploma and higher education in general for opening career opportunities and establishing long-term financial self-sufficiency. Also, refugee youth do not know how to react to peer pressure experienced in middle and high school environments.

Moreover, refugee youth often learn English more quickly than their parents and face familial pressures to help financially provide for their family, as well as accompany and interpret for family members during medical or social service appointments. This pressure to care for their family puts refugee youth at risk for setting aside their high school education for the sake of providing a more immediately stable family situation. According to the Maryland State Department of Education "2014

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Maryland Report Card," the four-year graduation rates for Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) students, such as refugees, in Prince George's County, 57-65 percent of LEP students graduated on time over the past four years, compared to the 75 percent on-time graduation rate of their peers, and the four-year dropout rates remain high at 24 percent.

There are limited programs that address the educational needs of refugee children in Prince George's County. All public schools offer newcomer ESL classes. However, they have not always been effective in impacting student success in English language skills, as students continue to receive failing grades in ESL classes. There is only one after-school program at a local middle school for ESL students, and it primarily serves only Spanish-speaking children.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model. ECDC's overall goal is for refugees to become self-sufficient, integrated members of their respective communities. To achieve this goal, ECDC's affiliates will engage Refugee AmeriCorps members who formerly were resettled refugees. They are well-positioned to provide services to others, because they understand the challenges that newcomer refugees encounter and will be able to recount their own experiences, which results in trust building between the members and the refugee clients who will regard the messaging and guidance as credible. For example, refugees may misunderstand or not fully understand from an American the importance of U.S. work ethics such as showing up early or on-time for jobs. However, hearing that message from a former refugee will ease the acculturation process, create more understanding as well as trust and confidence among refugees, which will likely lead to the client's increased job retention and economic self-sufficiency.

Helping refugee youth better understand the American workplace, school systems, and culture will also be achieved through this trust building and shared experience. Thus, the personal experience of each Refugee AmeriCorps member will enrich the empathetic guidance component of the program. In this manner, Refugee AmeriCorps members add a significant and unique element to all of the intensive case management services and support that ECDC's affiliates currently provide to refugees. The following includes ECDC's theory of change as it relates to the two specific interventions. The Logic Model is attached.

Focus Area 1 -- Economic Opportunity. As employment is the primary means of self-sufficiency, the economic opportunity intervention will include activities to help refugees secure and retain employment. Members will implement a job readiness program, so that refugees gain the skills to locate job opportunities, secure a position and understand U.S. workplace culture. Specifically, members will teach refugees how to write a resume, how to search for a job, and how to prepare for

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an interview. Members will also help recruit, screen, train, and coordinate volunteers who will conduct ESL and VESL classes and provide extended orientation about employment in the U.S., giving refugees the confidence to more readily navigate and address the challenges in U.S. employment. Also, members will conduct outreach to potential employers about the benefits of hiring refugees, so that employers are more likely to consider hiring refugees. At the individual refugee level, as each refugee has different needs, members will mentor refugees and assess refugee strengths and areas for professional growth, determining which activities best meet the goal of obtaining and retaining employment, and provide job referrals to refugees. The members will work closely with existing program staff and mainstream volunteers to enhance program activities and outcomes.

As a result of the support the members will provide, 80 percent of refugees who participate in the project among the nine sites will be placed in jobs. Longer-term outcomes will include those employed and retain their jobs will become self-sufficient, participants will increase their social networks, and an increased number of refugees will advance to jobs consistent with their career goals.

Focus Area 2 -- Education. The education intervention at the Silver Spring, Md., site will include activities targeted to children and youth academic achievement and adjustment to life in the U.S. Members will conduct a youth orientation program that covers topics such as adjusting to the U.S. school system, applying to colleges and for scholarships, and exploring careers, so that they understand the importance of education, including higher education, in planning for their future. The Refugee AmeriCorps member will take refugee youth to visit local colleges and universities to expose them to the academic, professional, and social opportunities that higher education offers to students. Also, the member will conduct life skills workshops that include topics on peer pressure, bullying, and communicating with others. It is expected that this will help youth manage stress and family and community expectations, so that they can stay healthy and continue to focus on their education. The member will help recruit, screen, train, and coordinate volunteers who will tutor children, helping them with test preparation or practicing English and math skills, so that they are able to keep up academically, passing grade levels with students their age. The member will increase the capacity of the Maryland agency's existing youth program, resulting in the agency's ability to serve a larger refugee youth population.

As a result of the support the member will provide, 75 percent of participants will improve their academic engagement behaviors and 80 percent of workshop participants will increase their healthy living knowledge. Longer-term outcomes will increased collaboration in the Prince George's County area to serve refugee youth, and more refugee youth establishing and investing in educational goals,

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as well as growing as active community leaders.

3. Evidence Base. The following data and studies provide evidence that the proposed interventions will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change. First, ECDC will present evidence that affiliate agencies have collected from program staff and program participants for the tracking of similar programs. Second, the body of research will include two non-experimental studies and one randomized controlled trial. This evidence places ECDC's proposal in the moderate evidence level to support conclusions for both of the proposed interventions.

Focus Area 1 -- Economic Opportunity. In an analysis of ECDC data, clients who receive employment and extended case management services through the Matching Grant (MG) are more likely to achieve positive employment outcomes. Based on R&P Reports, in FY 2014, ECDC MG participants were more likely to be employed by the 90th day after arrival in the U.S. and continued to increase their rate of employment by the 180th day. Based on a matched sample extracted from R&P data, employable MG clients were found to be twice as likely to have been employed at the 90-day mark than their counterparts who did not receive MG services (odds ratio=2.06, 95% confidence interval: 1.6 to 2.65). At the 180th day from arrival, these MG clients returned an employment rate of 83 percent (no matched group available). These outcomes indicate that longer-term case management, including a strong focus on employment-readiness activities, which the Refugee Americorps project will provide, will have a positive impact on employment rates in communities where members will be placed. Scholarly research on refugee-specific job-readiness programming is limited due to a variety of reasons, including the inability to provide a valid comparison group and lack of resources to conduct longitudinal studies. However, the following studies and publications show preliminary evidence that certain interventions, such as the activities ECDC proposes, will produce positive impact on refugee employment and economic outcomes.

Halpern (2008) in "Refugee Economic Self-Sufficiency: An Exploratory Study of Approaches Used in Office of Resettlement Programs" used qualitative methodology through interviewing a convenience sample of federal staff and resettlement program providers, attending ORR workshops, and conducting a site visit in order to identify key factors contributing to successful refugee employment within programs funded by ORR. Of the 20 key factors identified, the top three cited by interview participants were: 1) Employability Services Pre- and Post-Employment, 2) Individualized Goal-Oriented Approaches, and 3) Staff Characteristics. ECDC's proposed intervention will include activities that address all of the top three factors, including pre-employment training or orientation, post-employment follow-up and support, individualized assessments to identify individual strengths

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and barriers, identifying short- and long-term job and career goals, and a culturally diverse staff with the ability to speak a variety of languages. Because the Refugee AmeriCorps members will be former refugees themselves, the proposed intervention will satisfy the Staff Characteristics factor.

The Manufacturing Institute/Center for Workforce Studies "Improving Workplace Opportunities For Limited English-Speaking Workers" (2006) examined the effect of VESL training in the manufacturing sector. Using qualitative methodology, the researchers interviewed 65 employers and held six focus groups to address challenges and strategies to work with limited English proficiency (LEP) workers. Some employers reported using on-site VESL while others partnered with community colleges, consultants, or agencies to provide this service. Employers using VESL reported increased motivation, retention, and performance among LEP workers than before the launch of the VESL programs. The study also found that many employers were unaware of the community VESL resources that were available to them.

A review of VESL programs the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (Chenven, n.d.) conducted found emerging positive outcomes through VESL programs in the fields of hospitality, manufacturing, and construction. As this research suggests, Refugee AmeriCorps members who conduct employer outreach, facilitate partnerships, recruit volunteers, and develop vocational-specific training will help refugee clients improve their employment outcomes and self-sufficiency. This research is applicable for the stated community need, because refugees most frequently find work in the fields noted above. Helping refugees focus on learning and/or improving English language skills, arranging for tutors to enhance refugee English skills, and referring them to VESL classes will greatly increase refugee employability.

Focus Area 2 -- Education. Similar to economic studies, solid refugee education research is limited, and the target population is often combined with all English language learners or other minority groups. However, refugees face similar disadvantages to these groups such as linguistic challenges, economic disparity, and lack of cultural knowledge of the mainstream education system. Because of this, ECDC considers the following study to be relevant to refugee youth populations.

The Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP), a randomized controlled trial, was designed to offer socio-economically disadvantaged youth opportunities to learn, be involved in the community, and earn stipends. This program encourages continued academic involvement, establishes connections with program providers, increases involvement in the schools and communities, and is substantially similar to the intervention proposed herein. At each of five sites, 50 students were randomly assigned to the experimental or control group and were tracked over the course of the four-year program.

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Participants were given periodic questionnaires and asked to take academic tests. The Brandeis University Center for Human Resources, Heller Graduate School, evaluated the QOP program at these sites. The study has high internal validity due to random assignment, low attrition, and consistent implementation and has good external validity when generalizing results to disadvantaged youth from a variety of cities. Results indicate that the experimental group, after two years, demonstrated higher educational expectations, such as college enrollment ( $p < 0.10$ ). Chi-square testing found that the QOP participants had higher graduation rates than the control group (63% vs 42%,  $p < .10$ ); dropped out less (23% vs 50%,  $p < .10$ ); and began post-secondary education within 6 months of graduation at a higher rate (42% vs 16%,  $p < .10$ ). QOP members were also more likely to receive honors or awards than their peers (34% vs 12%,  $p < .01$ ) and to feel positive about their future (98% vs 86% were "hopeful about the future" and 74% vs 51% agreed that their "life has been a success",  $p < .10$ ). The structure and activities of the QOP inspires the intervention ECDC proposes. ECDC's targeted population reflects similar disadvantages as the youth in the study and the intervention shows the potential of having similar positive effects.

4. Member Training--ECDC Affiliates. During the first week of service, affiliates will provide Refugee AmeriCorps members a job description and employee orientation per standard affiliate staff training requirements and will include them in all aspects of the affiliate's staff development training and meetings. Standard orientation will include an overview of each affiliate's organizational history and mission, information relating to the various services available at the agency, the employee code of conduct, and training on all organizational policies, procedures, and service values.

Affiliates will also provide training specific to the AmeriCorps program, including service expectations, AmeriCorps program guidelines, their rights as an AmeriCorps member, and the rules guiding their service. Affiliates will conduct a skills assessment and create an individualized training and work plan for the member upon hiring. The affiliate supervisor will work closely with the member to ensure that he/she receives training to perform the assignments included on the work plan.

At the beginning of the Refugee AmeriCorps member's participation in the proposed program's implementation, an affiliate staff member experienced in employment programs will provide specialized training to ensure the member gains the specific skills needed to provide job readiness training. Members will shadow employment caseworkers to observe and understand day-to-day program operations, including intake, assessment, skills and barriers assessment, resume preparation, application processes, and current training curriculum. The Silver Spring, Md., site will provide the member training on program guidelines and expectations and the youth programs coordinator will

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work with and provide guidance to the member throughout his or her tenure.

In addition, affiliate sites participate in a variety of workshops, network and industry trainings, as well as inter-agency and community meetings.

Members will also participate in the training, which will serve as professional development opportunities for members throughout their year of service. Affiliate supervisors will be responsible for incorporating the Prohibited Activities document citing 45CFR § 2520.65 and 2012 AmeriCorps Provisions IV.D.3 into training for the Refugee AmeriCorps members and for ensuring that all involved adhere to these rules. Members will sign the document, and affiliates will retain copies in members' personnel files.

Member Training--ECDC. ECDC will provide a template to all sites for the skills assessment and individualized training and work plan. ECDC also will provide training, webinars and/or technical assistance on program requirements and activities throughout the year, and members will participate in ECDC's annual national training and conference.

5. Member Supervision. Refugee AmeriCorps members will be included in affiliates' organizational structures, so the appropriate department managers will provide support, oversight, and mentorship. The supervisor will assist with both the development and implementation of the member's individualized training and work plan, to ensure learning goals are met on a monthly basis and to provide ongoing guidance and support for tasks, progress, and challenges. For accountability of the individualized training and work plan, each member will provide a written report to his/her supervisor regarding the types and number of services delivered, the beneficiaries of the services, the resources used, any challenges encountered, and the impact of services. Supervisors will also be responsible for recommending professional development that is relevant to the members' assignments and individual career goals.

Furthermore, ECDC headquarters staff, including a program specialist and ECDC's self-sufficiency programs manager, will oversee the day-to-day operations of the program, providing training and oversight of supervisors, members, and their activities to ensure that ECDC meets performance outcomes. In the first quarter of the program, staff will provide affiliates with all relevant program materials and conduct a webinar for members' affiliate supervisors on how to follow AmeriCorps program regulations and expectations. On a quarterly basis, ECDC staff will follow up with supervisors to make sure that they stay current on and are following CNCS regulations and expectations. Also, ECDC will provide affiliate supervisors and members relevant information as it is received from CNCS and ORR. On a monthly basis, the ECDC Refugee AmeriCorps program

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specialist will conduct calls with individual sites, providing opportunities for affiliates supervisors and members to share successes and challenges in implementing activities. As some ECDC affiliate sites have experience hosting an AmeriCorps member, ECDC will ensure that new sites have access and connect to the support and guidance of the more experienced sites.

6. Member Experience. ECDC's affiliate network has a long history of training interns and volunteers to provide meaningful service to refugee populations. Members will not only support direct client services, in daily contact with refugees, but also with the diverse staff of ECDC's affiliates, which are ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs). In the course of their duties, members will also interact with community service providers and other representatives in the greater local community. Members will gain professional skills and leadership abilities, which will leave a lasting impact on their own personal development and future career plans, as well as provide them with professional experience they may not have otherwise been able to access. Also, members will gain a broad understanding of the U.S. refugee resettlement program, adult and youth refugee needs, and educational and economic self-sufficiency strategies that will provide a variety of transferable skills such as cross-cultural communication, planning and implementing training, program coordination, community-building, job development, and partnership-building. Participation in the affiliate team, along with regular supervisory meetings, will provide members with opportunities for learning, reflection, and career mentorship.

The services ECDC affiliates provide are a natural draw for anyone who has experienced or empathizes with trauma, war, persecution, or being a refugee newcomer. This context will engage those with a desire to serve as well as inspire future engagement with the newcomer community. ECDC and its affiliates will encourage members, in addition to their primary program responsibilities, to participate in outside or in-house service-oriented events such as AmeriCorps Service Days, community engagement opportunities, and collaborative events, which take place either at the affiliate site or in partnership with other resettlement agencies, the city, and local communities. For example, this may include participating in events to recognize World Refugee Day. During the service year, members will have opportunities to work with many ethnic communities and develop good relationships with each community.

Affiliate agencies hold quarterly meetings with community stakeholders, including representatives from agencies and organizations providing services related to education, social services, health, police/security, transportation, and finances. These meetings not only report on the current services being offered, but they also identify service areas that need enhancement. Members will be included in

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these conversations to provide greater exposure to community contacts, who may provide opportunities for future employment, training, or other benefits. Members will also have opportunities to share experiences with other members. ECDC and its affiliates will encourage members to network with fellow Refugee AmeriCorps members placed at our affiliate agencies nationally, with other local AmeriCorps programs, and to stay connected via the AmeriCorps online resources and alumni networks. ECDC will provide an online message board to facilitate member communication and interaction, experiences, and reflections, along with challenges and best practices. As ECBOs, ECDC and its affiliates will be able to leverage strong refugee community connections to implement a successful local and nationwide recruiting strategy that will attract individuals who bring energy, creativity, and diligence to this program.

To recruit Refugee AmeriCorps members from their respective communities, affiliates will develop job descriptions, which will include a clear explanation of the purpose, role, and duties of the member positions. Affiliates will post or disseminate these descriptions at their agencies, at other refugee service agencies, local ECBOs, ethnic student organizations, and within the wider refugee community. Affiliates will also use social media platforms, websites, and local city, community, and educational institution partners, and ask their boards of directors to spread information about the opportunity. In accordance with the purpose of Refugee AmeriCorps program, affiliates will seek members from one of ORR's eligible service populations, including refugees and asylees. To apply for the position, interested candidates will submit a cover letter, resume, and a short writing sample to the affiliates. The affiliate director and the member supervisor will conduct interviews of top candidates, hiring members based on merit.

7. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification. ECDC staff will orient Refugee AmeriCorps members about the AmeriCorps program mission, benefits, and their role as a service member at the affiliate agency during recruitment and again during the initial training period. In addition to their participation in affiliate staff team meetings and activities, members will attend additional training and professional development activities provided through the AmeriCorps program. Affiliates will instruct members to always introduce themselves as an AmeriCorps/Refugee AmeriCorps member and to include the program in their job title and written correspondence. ECDC and its affiliates will provide members with an identification lanyard that clearly displays the AmeriCorps name and logo.

### **Organizational Capability**

1. Organizational Background and Staffing. ECDC has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program of 10 members serving in 10 communities.

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Located in Arlington, Va., ECDC is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) ethnic community-based organization and has served refugees and immigrants from throughout the world for 32 years. ECDC's Board of Directors sets the agency's objectives and provides oversight in meeting them. ECDC's senior management team includes the president; senior vice president, who also serves as the director of the refugee resettlement program; director of finance; program managers; and the managing directors of ECDC's branch offices. ECDC's 95 employees include refugees, asylees, immigrants, and U.S.-born Americans representing diverse backgrounds. Headquarters staff responsible for the management and oversight of the Refugee AmeriCorps program will include ECDC's senior vice president/director of refugee resettlement and self-sufficiency programs manager, who have a combined 40 years of experience developing, managing, and overseeing federal programs and projects. Upon approval of this proposal, ECDC will hire a program specialist who will handle the day-to-day activities at the national level.

ECDC has an established track record of managing similar federal grants and developing and implementing programs that respond to the needs of refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition to the MG and PC programs, ECDC has been operating the refugee resettlement program for 24 years. The Department of State funds the R&P program. Currently, ECDC has 18 affiliate sites and has resettled over 42,000 refugees since 1991.

ECDC held a conference call to inform affiliates about this unique ORR and CNCS partnership program. Participating affiliates provided us with their program's goals, objectives, outcomes, a logic model, performance measures, and how they would train and supervise members. Affiliates interacted with community members and local partners in planning their individual projects, which are based on their client challenges and needs. As a result, ECDC's proposed intervention reflects a community-based, partnership endeavor (1) to enhance client access to resources and increase employment outcomes for refugee clients; (2) to increase youth learning skills and ability to gain greater knowledge and acceptance at school; and (3) to improve agency volunteer recruitment, matching volunteers with refugees, and the benefits and successes experienced by both refugee participants, volunteers, and project members.

2. Compliance and Accountability. ECDC has managed its grants in accordance with funder guidelines and requirements for over three decades. ECDC adheres to federal regulations for federal funding awards. ECDC develops a work plan for each program, establishes monthly and quarterly outcomes and performance measures, and conducts six-month and end-of-year project evaluations. ECDC has been in compliance and accountable for each and every project undertaken since its

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inception. The legal relationship between ECDC and its affiliates is established through an Affiliate Sub-Contract Agreement for each program in which the affiliate participates. The agreement details the affiliate's administrative, financial, staffing, and programmatic reporting and service delivery responsibilities and requirements in managing and implementing the program. ECDC R&P, MG, and PC staff also serve as primary contracts for affiliates, providing training and technical assistance, and conducting on-site and/or desk monitoring of the agencies.

ECDC and its affiliates will comply with all AmeriCorps and ORR requirements and regulations throughout the project period. ECDC manages its government and private grants using the accounting practices that the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) has established. ECDC maintains an in-house computerized accounting system, Abila MIP Fund accounting software. Monthly financial reports, including a balance sheet and income statement, are prepared on the accrual basis, in conformity with AICPA accounting practices. ECDC has a system of internal controls in place to maintain the integrity of the accounting function.

National staff will focus on (1) providing TA and training to each of the 10 project sites; (2) monitoring program performance and compliance with federal grant regulations; (3) monitoring local offices and preparing monitoring reports; (4) managing grant finances and accounting for funds according to federal grant requirements; (5) submitting timely program and financial reports; and (6) distributing funds in accordance with affiliate sub-contract agreements. Local and national reviews of program methods, activities, and outcomes will be made on a quarterly basis, and program modifications will be made as deemed appropriate. Affiliates will also be responsible for collecting data on a quarterly basis, including demographics about the number of clients enrolled and served; number of volunteers and volunteer hours; number and type of outreach activities and number of attendees; number of clients receiving program services; and types of assistance provided.

Affiliates will be held accountable for meeting the work detailed in their project proposals and logic model, providing detailed financial reimbursement documentation, meeting their performance measurements, and providing appropriate staff recruitment, ongoing training, support, and supervision. The ECDC senior vice president/director of resettlement and the manager of self-sufficiency programs will oversee the program and hold both ECDC and affiliates accountable for project activities and outcomes as well as compliance with AmeriCorps regulations through standardized monitoring and oversight procedures. If an affiliate is found to be out of compliance, an ECDC headquarters staff member will provide individualized technical assistance to bring the site back into compliance.

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ECDC and project affiliates will comply with all federal funding requirements, including those prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, sub-grantee and site locations. At project start-up, ECDC national staff will be trained on project requirements; what is and is not allowable; how ECDC will conduct oversight, monthly and quarterly follow-up; and reporting. Affiliate sub-grantees will receive a sub-contract detailing CNCS project requirements. Affiliate staff will participate in an ECDC-conducted webinar covering project requirements.

### **Budget/Cost Effectiveness**

CNCS and ORR have established a new Refugee AmeriCorps partnership. ECDC's ORR PC-funded budget of \$250,000 for the Refugee AmeriCorps program will support 10 members who will engage in capacity building and support of direct service activities. The budget utilizes the majority of ORR funds for member support of \$203,000 (81.2 percent of the total), with \$47,000 (18.8 percent of the total) for administrative and management support costs for the ECDC national office and the 10 operating sites participating in the program.

The budget will fund a fair member living allowance within the allowable range that CNCS guidelines specify. The budget covers AmeriCorps identification materials and member travel to CNCS training meetings and other operating expenses such as criminal history checks for members. Operating sites have committed to directly cover administrative costs for members.

ORR has requested that ECDC use PC funding to cover a portion of national administrative costs, including national office staffing and staff and member training. At the local level, ECDC affiliates have committed to directly cover administrative costs for members and will raise non-federal funds to support each of their programs.

### **Evaluation Summary or Plan**

Evaluation Summary or Plan -- N/A

### **Amendment Justification**

Amendment Justification -- N/A

### **Clarification Summary**

A. Programmatic Clarification

1. Executive Summary

The Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (ECDC) proposes to have nine AmeriCorps members who will provide refugees with culturally- and linguistically-appropriate job readiness

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services at ECDC affiliates located in San Diego, Calif.; Denver, Colo.; Clearwater and Tampa, Fla.; Kansas City, Mo.; Omaha, Neb.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Greensboro, N.C.; and Nashville, Tenn. One additional member will provide educational services to refugee youth at ECDC's affiliate in Silver Spring, Md. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for helping 450 refugees to be on a path to economic self-sufficiency and helping 40 refugee youth to receive the support needed for their academic success in the U.S. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 180 volunteers who will provide job readiness training, teach English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and Vocational English-as-a-Second Language (VESL), and 20 volunteers who will tutor and mentor refugee youth.

ECDC's program will concentrate on the CNCS focus areas of Economic Opportunity and Education. The CNCS investment of \$57,300 in Segal Education Awards will be leveraged with an investment by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of \$250,000.

2. On ECDC's behalf, ORR has consulted with the state commissions via e-mail on July 20, 2015.

### B. Budget Clarification

1. If we are selected for the CNCS grant, ECDC is prepared to complete and return one pre-award document, an online financial certification, and National Service Criminal History check prior to award of the grant.

### 2. Source of Funds

ECDC's Refugee AmeriCorps Project is being conducted in partnership with ORR under the Preferred Communities (PC) Intensive Case Management Program. ORR will provide \$250,000 cash for member allowances and expenses. ECDC AmeriCorps sites will match up to \$10,000 in cash in addition to ORR's contribution.

3. ECDC has removed the funds from the budget.

### C. Performance Measure Clarification

1. The expectation of completion that will be counted is that participants will complete more than 50% of job training or other skills development services, as appropriate, and verified by case notes, attendance logs, and/or certificates of training completion.

## **Narratives**

2. The Job Placement Form requires the affiliate to contact the human resources department and/or appropriate supervisors at the companies or organizations at which participants are placed in jobs to verify the participant's employment at one month, three months, and six months after placement as well as pay stubs placed in client files.

### **Continuation Changes**

Continuation Changes -- N/A

### **Grant Characteristics**