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## Executive Summary

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) will have fifty (50) AmeriCorps members who will act as peer mentor/ navigators to veterans and military families at colleges and with community partner sites across Washington State. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for outreach to 9,000 veterans and or family members on and off campus, connecting 400 individuals to services and benefits, as well as training for 1,500 faculty, staff, administrators and community stakeholder on veterans' cultural competency and veterans transition increasing success in veterans' transition from military service. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 2,000 volunteers that will be engaged in service projects that support and raise awareness of veterans' across Washington State.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Veterans and Military Families. The CNCS investment of \$630,500.00 will be matched with \$384,458.00 in public funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

### Problem/Need

Veterans across the country are enrolling on college campuses at unprecedented rates. Washington state ranks number nine in the nation for total veterans' population; with the largest growth since 2001 seen in the states Post 9/11 veterans', a largely college group. The states colleges alone saw a 209% increase in the number of veteran students since 2008 (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2014), an increase that correlates with the improved benefits in the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges reports that 22,000 veterans were on Washington community and technical college campuses in 2014, 18% of the total student population. In Washington State, 10.2% of the total population is veterans; college campuses present a unique opportunity to serve a higher concentration of veterans than is found in the general population. With a growing population of veterans who have served in the current wars that exhibit higher levels of drop out, unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration, it is imperative for Vet Corps to be on our states' college campuses. Veterans that are beneficiaries of specific interventions like those done by Vet Corps exhibit a higher than general population graduation rate, employment, and life-time earnings.

Because veterans enter post-secondary education with a vastly different set of life experiences than traditional students, campuses and surrounding communities must be trained and supported on ways to serve veterans and help them achieve their post-secondary goals. From a study done in Los Angeles

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county of systems like those in many Washington counties, we know that 40% of veterans who transition out of the service do so without having identified permanent housing (The State of the American Veteran: The Los Angeles County Veterans Study 2014). Vet Corps members can provide peer-based assistance and referrals to veteran students, helping them overcome obstacles that may be unique to the veteran student population. Because the veteran population is often reticent to seek services from non-veteran / military organizations and typically has more barriers to individual success than traditional students, it is extremely important that the Vet Corps continue its work to prepare veterans to sustain themselves and become vibrant community members.

Vet Corps members, in addition to assisting with individual change; also promote systems change by encouraging campuses to create institutionalized programs focused on supporting veterans. These programs are veteran resource centers, Veterans Day events, veterans tutoring hours and others geared toward student veteran involvement. This increases the opportunity for veterans to connect with, or give back to, their community. In addition, there is significant focus statewide on helping to educate faculty and administration in veteran cultural competencies to truly effect systems change in campus culture. Vet Corps members are uniquely positioned to provide a peer-based model of services, helping veterans, military members and families succeed by offering support and connecting them to available services.

The Vet Corps addresses the needs of individual student veterans by referring them to programs that provide emergency financial assistance to prevent student veterans from becoming homeless; programs that provide emergency financial assistance for other necessities such as food, utilities, transportation; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Counseling through WDVA; service officers who can help connect them to Federal VA Benefits, some of which provide monthly financial benefits and medical treatment; on-campus resources such as Financial Aid, Disability Support Services or Veteran Resource Centers; and community resources that assist in the veteran and family members' overall success.

### Theory of Change and Logic Model

The Vet Corps reaches forty-five college campuses and five community partner organizations in Washington by stationing fifty Vet Corps members across the state. Placing Vet Corps members at participating college campuses ensures the greatest concentration of veterans state-wide is served by the program. Serving on college campuses also ensures the greatest return on services provided. The Vet Corps member is responsible for developing a collaborative relationship with leadership on the

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campus or within the community partner organization. The Vet Corps program has evolved over the years to include campus or community partner leadership in their Vet Corps member selection process, bringing a new level of interest and interaction between the Vet Corps member and campus or community partner organization. The Vet Corps serves to augment existing systems, helping to build capacity on sites as well as in communities to serve veterans and their families.

Recruited solely from the local community all fifty Vet Corps members serve as a direct point of contact for student veterans using a Peer Mentor model. Often, veterans will shy away from reaching out to entities that appear to be more government structured, such as the Federal VA or even college or university-based programs. Vet Corps members are able to relate to student veterans, as veteran-to-veteran, providing inherent trust and credibility that leads to the student veteran being far more willing to ask for help and take action on the resources provided, increasing effective utilization of resources on and off campus across the state. This peer based connection is extended to the family members of veterans, as many of the language barriers and direct cultural connections shared by veterans translate to military family members on campus or in a community for the first time.

One of the many roles Vet Corps members often play is developing opportunities for volunteerism to reach additional veterans on their sites or in their communities. Stand downs, Veterans Week events, Memorial Day events, Martin Luther King Jr. Day events, and events to support specific veterans or veteran populations, all provide opportunity to share information on AmeriCorps and Vet Corps programs. In addition, these programs and events create a far more accepting and supportive veteran culture, on campuses and within communities. Opportunities developed by members also enlist more veterans than just the Vet Corps membership in activities serving their communities. Without the work of the Vet Corps members helping to change culture on campuses and in communities, veterans are at an increased risk of isolation, homelessness, unemployment, dropout, incarceration and suicide.

In 2014-2015, we anticipate that Vet Corps members will produce the following outcomes:

Outreach to 9,000 individual veterans;

Peer mentoring relationships with 400 veterans and military family members;

Connection to the Veterans Innovations Program for 50 veterans needing emergency housing support to prevent homelessness;

Connection to the Veterans Innovations Program or Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program for 100 veterans needing emergency financial assistance for issues such as transportation, utilities or food;

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Connection to the WDVA PTSD Counseling program for 75 veterans;

Train 1,500 faculty, staff, administration and community members about veterans cultural competency and veterans issues.

### Logic Model

#### Summary of the Problem

More veterans are enrolling on college campuses in Washington State using the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill. With the increase in veterans enrollment and evolving needs of the veteran population, individual campuses need support to develop appropriate programs, infrastructure and create culture change to ensure veterans are successful in their higher education goals. By implementing these systems changes, the campus and community would be more prepared to welcome back veterans to Washington state communities, and veterans will be at decreased rate of drop out, unemployment, homelessness, incarceration or suicide.

#### Inputs

Support and buy-in from 50 campuses and community partner organizations, including dedicated space and support of periodic training for Vet Corps members.

Four Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Staff, managing multiple components of both the member experience as well as the regional coordinators and service sites.

Nine Regional coordinators that will supervise and direct Vet Corps members in their geographical region.

Fifty Vet Corps members located on university campuses, or in community partner organizations. All fifty Vet Corps members are military veterans or family members of veterans with the unique ability to serve as peer mentors having navigated the systems for veterans on campuses and in their communities.

#### Core Activities

Each Vet Corps member will tailor activities to fit the unique needs of their target veteran population as well as being physically located on campus being available to student veterans, and or veterans within their community organization for a minimum of 40 hours per week for 40 weeks;

Establishing a collaborative working relationship with college or community leadership, to build capacity around identified gaps for veterans;

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Serving as a peer mentor to a minimum of 2 unique individuals a month if requested;  
Organizing community events/ service projects providing greater visibility for the AmeriCorps/Vet Corps program and reaching out to and engaging veterans who have not yet been contacted;  
Holding informal social events and inviting all veterans and family members to participate;  
Providing information on the programs and services available to veterans on campuses and in the local communities;  
Actively referring veterans to WDVA programs such as the Veterans Innovations Program, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, Traumatic Brain Injury, Incarcerated Veterans, and WDVA PTSD Counseling program;  
Training for all members, regional coordinators, staff, as well as faculty, staff, administrators and community members on veterans' cultural competency and transition;  
Actively referring veterans to their Federal VA benefits such as medical care or making connections to Veteran Service Officers who can assist in filing claims for monthly disability compensation.

### Measurable Outputs

Outreach to 9,000 veterans and family members on campuses and in communities.  
Provide 400 peer mentor interactions.  
Train 1,500 individual faculty, staff and community members.  
Ninety percent (90%) of members retained through the service year.  
Ninety percent (90%) of members complete 3 service projects in a service year.  
All fifty members selected and recruited through formal and collaborative process including site staff, program staff and community members.

### Outcomes

#### Short-Term:

Provide financial assistance to 50 veterans preventing homelessness.  
Provide financial assistance to 100 veterans for food, utilities, transportation or other necessities.  
Refer 75 veterans to PTSD counseling helping veterans cope with stresses of transition and school.

#### Mid-Term:

Increase campus partnership and participation in Vet Corps program activities or with individual members.  
Train 1,500 faculty, staff, administration and community members about veterans cultural

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competency and veterans issues.

Working with SBCTC Increase by 20% the number of veterans referred on campus programs.

Ensure at minimum 100 unique campus/ community programs or events for veterans to participate in.

Long-Term:

Decrease in veterans on academic probation by 10%, State Board and Community Technical College system.

Increase graduation rates by 20% for veteran students on campuses with Vet Corps members.

Increase number of colleges from 13 to 50, participating in veterans supportive practices to include designation as Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Supportive Campus partner designation.

### Evidence Base

Much research has been done on veterans in higher education since the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill was implemented in 2008, the most recent of which is the Million Records Project (MRP) completed by the Student Veterans of America. The MRP identified the success of veterans when supported in their pursuit of post-secondary education, with a secondary data quantitative analysis study designed to report student veteran post-secondary completion rates. MRP, using an experimental design, identifies hurdles that veterans face upon entering higher education, such as students with disabilities, non-traditional characteristics, full-time employment, delayed enrollment, part-time enrollment, financial independence, having dependents, being single parents, and/or not having received a standard high school diploma. The MRP identifies that the fewer non-traditional characteristics a student has, the more likely they are to earn a bachelor's degree. These characteristics are identified as barriers shared by the current generation of veterans as well as previous generations of veterans. Specific to the Vet Corps model being applied currently with the program now, experimental research done by Chris Bellotti, Ph.D. on the WDVA Veterans Conservation Corps program from 2006-2007 identified that focusing on transition assistance and the veteran-to-veteran connections through a cohort group significantly diminishes certain symptoms such as anxiety and depression, reduces barriers to transition, and increases the desire for social contact.

Further collaborating the research that veterans face unique hurdles, The State of the American Veteran: The Los Angeles County Veterans Study 2014 (TSAV) using an experimental model studying

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the similar population to that in Washington State, found that many service members are not prepared for the transition from military service, many veterans have a wide range of needs that cannot be easily provided by a single organization, and that most veterans' support organizations are not organized to provide holistic support and are focused on acute or chronic needs not the overall transition or community integration in preventing the conditions among veterans. The TSAV identifies a significant finding in that over 50% of veterans when identified that not knowing where to seek care was the largest hurdle they faced. The same study identifies that increased community awareness and integration in support of veterans' transition would be the effective tool in mitigating transition difficulties.

The non-experimental Vet Corps independent program evaluation for 2013-2014, conducted by researcher Deborah Feldman, further corroborated the need for community and social support among the veteran population, and more specifically where Vet Corps is uniquely situated to produce a direct impact. The researcher further added in the final evaluation that the program (Vet Corps) model reflects a solid understanding of veterans' needs and is successful in recruiting veterans to serve other veterans. This is likely a cornerstone of the program's overall success in reaching out and serving a large number of veterans, as demonstrated by the extensive number of mentoring and referral services that were reported last year.

### **Notice Priority**

The Vet Corps program seeks to fully support the Veterans and Military Family Community across the State of Washington. Using post-secondary education campuses as focal points, Vet Corps members and staff will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; while also increasing the number of veterans, military service members, and their families served by CNCS-supported programs.

Vet Corps will do this by directly enrolling fifty (50) veterans, family members or members of the military in AmeriCorps services, as well as indirectly engaging thousands of volunteers throughout the member service year.

### **Member Training**

All Vet Corps members will attend mandatory training at the beginning of the year, middle of year and end of the year. Members will be trained on all accepted and prohibited activities. Detailing the member service agreement, members are made aware of all current prohibited activities and are

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required to adhere to these principle outlined in their agreement which is constantly updated in line with CNCS regulations.

Trainings also provide an opportunity to increase the knowledge base of members in service to the identified population. For example, beginning and mid-year training will focus on the specific needs identified by the service group, i.e. Veterans Administration, WDVA, Veteran Service Organizations, Educational Benefits, Financial Assistance, and referrals to a variety of other service providers.

Emphasis is placed on training in the areas of "invisible wounds" such as Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma, and physical wounds such as severe back pain or hearing loss which profoundly impact a student's ability to attend classes and retain information. To increase the access by veterans, members will learn about the resources available through WDVA and other organizations so that they can offer appropriate referrals to veterans and military families. Other training subjects will be skill-based and will vary as the veteran populations' needs evolve and member feedback is evaluated to better direct future skill development.

The Vet Corps program will provide these central trainings by engaging subject matter experts from across the state including other agencies and institutions of higher education. Ongoing training of members will include:

Monthly regionally coordinated training, conducted and organized by the nine regional coordinators;  
Site visits by the program manager and other central administration staff, at least once per service year, focused specifically on the needs identified by site supervisors;

Periodic training on self-care for members, to ensure they do not suffer 'compassion fatigue' as a result of the stress of working with peers.

Training a strong component of the member experience and service delivery will continue throughout the year to ensure all members, as well as regional coordinators and site supervisors, are aware of and avoiding all prohibited activities.

### Member Supervision

Vet Corps members are supervised by WDVA's regional coordinators whose sole purpose is to ensure the Vet Corps members' success in serving veterans and military families. Each Vet Corps member has a chain of support, similar to the military chain of command. The chain includes:

A site-supervisor, who is a staff member at the college or community partner site; The regional coordinator, a WDVA contractor focused on the Vet Corps program; A WDVA Program Specialist; and The Vet Corps Program Manager.

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Each individual in the member's chain of support has a specific role or responsibility to the Vet Corps and the individuals being served by the Vet Corps. This multi-faceted approach ensures the best service to Washington's veterans and military families, while providing many levels and layers of support to the Vet Corps member.

Regional coordinators communicate with Vet Corps members through a variety of methods, such as; regular emails, phone calls, meetings, periodic training either at the local, regional or state-wide level. With each interaction there is an opportunity for the regional coordinator to provide feedback and ask the member whether there are any issues they have questions on or feel the need to explore further. Each of the nine regional coordinators are recruited and selected from the outgoing class of Vet Corps members. All regional coordinators are then AmeriCorps alumni, returning to serve in the leadership role to the individual region. All coordinators are trained once per quarter on AmeriCorps expectations regulations, management methods, and trends in veterans' services.

Training is ongoing for coordinators, and monthly for members, with the biggest portion of training occurring at beginning and middle of each year.

### Member Experience

Members gain valuable leadership experience, the ability to communicate from the highest to lowest levels of organizations and the opportunity to hone their teamwork skills through their Vet Corps service. A learned skill that the program routinely taps into, having members reflect on their experiences in training and or supporting other members.

Veterans, regardless of their reason for joining the military, universally adhere to the principle of service above self. For many, this passion continues long-after they've hung-up their military uniform, and the Vet Corps provides a perfect opportunity to continue serving.

There is no doubt that in today's increasingly competitive workforce, each of the skills outlined above are highly sought after by employers in all industries. Service in the Vet Corps helps members demonstrate these skills outside their military service, something that is often difficult for veterans to demonstrate when translating military skills to the civilian workforce.

The Vet Corps program puts an emphasis on asking members to identify their own path moving forward, and then to champion their own piece of national service. Rather than providing a cookie-cutter approach that each Vet Corps member must follow on their specific site, members are encouraged and even required to think through what would work best for them, their unique site and the local community. This opportunity for reflection and leadership combines many skills acquired

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through military service, but asks the member to use them in new ways. This helps the member grow as an individual and as an eventual leader in their community.

The veteran and military family community in Washington State has a vast and very unique collection of partners who have banded together to serve their communities. Between state, federal, local and non-profit agencies, each community has amassed the set of partners and resources that work to serve their veterans and military members. The Vet Corps has become one of the most valuable of these local partners, and members are welcomed into the fold of leadership offering the opportunity for networking at the local, state and national level leading to members continued involvement as community leaders. Vet Corps members serve on their campuses and in their communities through outreach to veterans and military families. Members offer information and referrals to service opportunities with other AmeriCorps program.

As a program of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Vet Corps members are required to complete ethics training, and are held to the ethical standards expected of all WDVA employees. This is another opportunity for members to use their military background and training, including adherence to the same high ethical and moral standards as they serve local communities.

### **Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification**

Even though the program is known as the Vet Corps, the members identify with AmeriCorps and proudly wear the AmeriCorps logo on the Vet Corps gear and clothing provided to them at the beginning of the service year. The gear and clothing is a half zip sweater and t-shirt both with the AmeriCorps logo. The combination gives the member an opportunity to wear gear while in an office setting as well as on service projects. The AmeriCorps logo is also displayed on letterhead used in correspondence.

Each of our training opportunities provides information and resources on AmeriCorps and the many service opportunities available. It is very natural for these members to identify with an organization larger than themselves, and the mission and vision of AmeriCorps go straight to the heart of the Vet Corps' service-minded members.

Vet Corps members organize and attend events within their communities such as Veterans Day, Martin Luther King Day, Make A Difference Day and AmeriCorps Anniversary events. These are opportunities to get outside their campus or community organization and prominently display the importance and service-orientation of AmeriCorps.

### **Organizational Capability**

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### Organizational Background and Staffing

WDVA is a cabinet level state agency whose director is appointed and accountable to the Governor of the State of Washington. Our agency mission is: Serving Those Who Served, and our vision is All Washington veterans and their families are connected to their earned benefits. WDVA operates two Veteran Service Centers and contracts for veterans claims services with seven Veteran Service Organizations in order to create a Field Services Network that blankets the entire state. The Veterans Services and Behavioral Health Division is led by an Assistant Director who is appointed by the WDVA Director.

WDVA receives and provides oversight and stewardship for multiple federal, state and local grants serving the needs of homeless, unemployed and/or vulnerable veterans and their families. As an example, WDVA is the only state governmental entity that operates a Federal VA Grant and Per Diem Transitional Housing Program. The Building 9 for Veterans Transitional Housing Program has one of the best track records for any Federal VA Grant and Per Diem Program and continues to act as stewards of this vital grant funding.

In addition, WDVA has created partnerships with Joint Base Lewis McChord and Navy Region Northwest to provide direct assistance to transitioning service members in an effort to connect them with benefits and services prior to leaving the military and encountering a crisis situation.

In regard to helping post-secondary institutions prepare for the influx of veterans as a result of the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, WDVA spearheaded the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with our Governor and the executive directors of our Higher Education Agencies. This MOU was originally signed in 2009 and recently updated in 2014 to reaffirm our state's combined commitment to helping veterans' succeed in their post-secondary educational goals. In addition to the MOU, individual campuses have the opportunity to apply for a 'Partners for Veteran Supportive Campuses' Certificate. Eligibility includes a formal commitment, by the college or university president, to follow the 8 Keys to Success outlined by President Obama and adopted by the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Education.

The Vet Corps was formally created in 2009; however, its roots date back to 2007 when the Veteran Conservation Corps (VCC) was created by the legislature to offer veterans who had experienced traumatic events, an opportunity to conduct habitat restoration as a therapeutic activity. The VCC and Vet Corps programs are supported by five full-time WDVA staff that are tasked with administering the AmeriCorps program. During the time Vet Corps has been operated by WDVA, the program has successfully recruited and enrolled over 240 members, including the present team of

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fifty. Lessons over the previous years have influenced the program design and service implementation which have continued to increase efficiency and produced increasing retention rates, increased applications and more inclusion of community partners. The Vet Corps is listed in the Governor's Results Washington process which monitors individual programs and agency processes. The agency's contracts specialists periodically provides training to the VCC and Vet Corps program staff regarding the requirements of agency contracts.

### Compliance and Accountability

WDVA will enlist the support of the WDVA compliance officer to review all state mandated and National Service mandated compliance issues. The Vet Corps program manager will remain in regular communication with the WDVA compliance officer throughout the year to discuss and review issues that arise.

All Vet Corps staff are trained on how to operate a high quality National Service program. A clear description of prohibited activities and ways to avoid undue risks in this program are an integral part of the training.

All site supervisors are briefed on risks and prohibited activities and are tasked with holding regular meetings with the Vet Corps members to review and evaluate successes as well as risk factors. In addition, Vet Corps supervisors and the program manager regularly visit with Vet Corps members to examine time sheets and other documentation to ensure requirements are met and activities are appropriate to the goals and prohibitions of National Service. Two evaluations are also completed by Vet Corps supervisors' site supervisors and the program manager to address problems in a timely manner.

A Program Management Manual is being completed for both the supervisors and the on-site campus and community partner organization supervisors, to ensure consistent communication about appropriate AmeriCorps practices and principles. Training will be conducted once the manual is deployed. In addition, all sites will have an MOU with the WDVA starting in the 2015 service year to ensure a clear understanding of expectations for all participants.

If issues of noncompliance arise that are outside of set policy and procedure, the Vet Corps program manager will immediately contact the Commission to notify them of breaches and submit to whatever investigation is necessary to deal with the consequences or results. All site-supervisors, members and Vet Corps staff will be trained to understand and act on this protocol.

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### Past Performance

While we have experienced challenges with member retention and enrollment in the past, we continue to see increases in our retention rates, which is due to a more structured enrollment and supervision process and the addition of regional coordinators in collaboration with site contacts.

For 2013-2014, we achieved the 100% member enrollment target. Members provided individual services to over 700 active duty military and family members. Members served over 5500 individual veterans and or family members with CNCS supported interventions. Retention dropped below 100% and our program was unable to meet target of 80% of total served able to report CNCS supported intervention is helping them transition.

As part of our constant systems improvement the WDVA partners more and more closely with each of the member sites and have developed recruitment and selection strategies to meet the partner site needs. For example, partner sites participate in the screening and interview process, providing them with more interest in the long-term in the Vet Corps member's success; this includes investment in a completed member term. Involvement of sites now includes an MOU between the partner site and WDVA, further identifying expectations of all parties. This has aided in meeting performance measures, and will continue to assure Vet Corps meets performance measures with greater accountability included. We already see increased enrollments, and compliance among members with new this leadership structure, these changes were also identified in the independent evaluation done by researcher Deborah Feldman.

### Budget/Cost Effectiveness

The WDVA is requesting \$630,500 or \$12,610.00 per MSY; this does not reflect an increase to the cost per MSY, which is currently \$13,430.00 per member. The incremental increase of \$820 per MSY will be funded in by the WDVA as our continued commitment to the program.

Each Vet Corps member cost an average of \$20,529.16, or \$13,430.00 per member and \$7,099.16 per members programmatic funding. Total Vet Corps operating budget is \$1,026,458.00 annually, which is funded by a combination of the CNCS grant \$661,500.00 plus \$364,958.00 WDVA commitment.

The Program costs include nine (9) regional program coordinators who are contracted with at an average individual contract of \$28,000, totaling \$252,000.

Total training budget is \$63,958. This includes (3) training programs throughout the year. This also includes travel expenses for the members to attend the required training sessions.

The normal programmatic travel costs are \$12,500, which is separate and apart from the travel

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associated with the training sessions. WDVA also encourages individualized training related to other veterans services outside of the Vet Corps program, which is budgeted at \$3,000.00.

WDVA also provides health insurance to our Vet Corps members. The program funds around 10 members in need of health care or \$18,000.00 annually.

We've also set aside \$5,500 towards AmeriCorps gear and other identification or promotional items.

The current proposed WDVA cost share percentage is 35% of total \$1,026,458.00 Vet Corps annual budget. WDVA has sufficient resources to cover its share of program costs. As a result, the Vet Corps Program sees a state-wide return in our investments towards the support of veterans completing college, and/or become a successful member of the community.

WDVA provides funding to support this program through its existing resources from: General Fund-State (\$191,958); King County Veterans Service Grant (\$48,000); WA State TBI Commission Grant (\$10,000); Federal Veterans Administration Grant (\$15,000); and Site Participation membership from Colleges (\$100,000).

### Evaluation Summary or Plan

The Vet Corps members reach forty-five college campuses and five community partner organizations in Washington State. Each member is responsible for developing a collaborative relationship with leadership on the campus or within the community partner organization. Each member serves to augment existing systems, helping to build capacity on sites as well as in communities to serve veterans and their families. It is through this service that members impact veterans both at the individual and systems level. Members accomplish the two level approaches through outreach, peer mentoring, and resource referral.

For a full evaluation of the program's effectiveness a framework is needed that will conduct a series of inter-related evaluation activities for the Washington Vet Corps program over the course of three years. The evaluation will identify the outcomes:

Prevention of homelessness of over 50 veterans a year;

75 Veterans will be receive services through the WDVA PTSD program a year;

Increase in campus partnership and participation in Vet Corps program activities;

Training for 1,500 faculty, staff, administration and community members on veteran cultural competency and veterans issues;

Increased number of veterans referred on campus programs;

Increase of campus/ community programs or events for veterans to participate in;

Decrease in veterans on academic probation by 10%, State Board and Community Technical College

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system wide;

Positive impact of 20% on graduation rates for veteran students on the campuses with Vet Corps members;, and

Increase number of colleges from 13 to 50, participating in veterans supportive practices to include designation as Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Supportive Campus partner designation.

The three-year evaluation plan will have 6 major interrelated activities:

1: Focus on critical Management information system (MIS) review and testing, plus revision of internal data collection tools to provide important feedback from stakeholders to the program and inform later studies. Current MIS system is America Learns, providing direct input by members of individuals, highly flexible the system will be designed to be the overarching tool that will consistently collect and provide the comprehensive individual level data on Vet Corps clients and services received.

2: A study of client educational outcomes that will focus on veterans served by the program at community and technical college sites in fall 2015. MIS development in is fundamental to this planning and later implementation of an Outcome Study.

3: A systems Impact study that will examine how Vet Corps activities have influenced support and resources at participating college sites. This initial planning will be exploratory and allow for a more user-centered approach in which program staff and stakeholders help shape each stage of the evaluation. Such input helps to keep the evaluation realistic and on track. Year 1 will provide the basic information needed to structure more detailed implementation planning to follow. [Note: The current plan assumes that the Systems Impact study will focus more on retrospective, rather than prospective approaches. This approach may be modified as a result of Year 1 collaborative planning with the review group slated for month 1 and 2. ]

4: Stakeholder feedback and evaluation plan anticipates that internal data collection tools will be used: short surveys of members, clients and/or site staff, this will provide feedback that will complement and inform both the outcome and systems impact studies.

5: Planning activities, the Outcome Study involves extraction and merging of data from two separate administrative databases (Vet Corps and State Board for Community Technical Colleges). WDVA will work with SBCTC to extract data on the critical educational outcomes for veterans who received Vet Corps services. The final data extraction will be for five full quarters of data collected on a fall 2015

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cohort of veteran students. Basic data analysis and reporting will occur at the end. Results will then be used to inform aspects of data collection for the Systems Change Study.

6: Systems Change Study Implementation/Reporting will examine the program impacts on participating sites' a) awareness/understanding of veterans' issues; b) resources dedicated to serving veterans; c) integration of veterans into campus life; and d) coordination of services for veterans/family members.

The continual evaluation of the Vet Corps members' effectiveness at effective changes to individual level and systems level change will be constantly evaluated by the program both through the MIS system America Learns as well as site survey and systems survey through the SBCTC. Effective utilization of WDVA services will be done internally to the agency, identifying program and service utilization by those supported and referred by Vet Corps members.

Evaluation through the three years will be designed to specifically inform how services are delivered and change programs design and how we interact with members as well as partners. The full evaluation is also intended to provide continual data for independent impact evaluation of Vet Corps program in year three, identifying the overall effectiveness of members to key outcomes across Washington State.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

A. Programmatic clarification items:

1. The Vet Corps Program recruits heavily from the veteran population, which results in over 90% of all new members being veterans having the direct experience, and the baseline needed to serve as peer mentors in their local community. Through the selection process we know most newly enrolled members are aware of veterans' services and the local support structure on and off campus. In order to ensure all members have the knowledge and skills needed to serve as peer mentors, resource referral sources, and event/ volunteer coordinators, they attend a mandatory beginning of the year training at the end of August before the beginning of their service year. This is the first in the ongoing training and professional development program that all Vet Corps members attend as part of their service year. Beginning of the year training is held in a central location in Washington State, allowing for all 50 members to stay together on a college campus for the full three day training period. Some of

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the specific content covered over the three days at the beginning of the year training include, team building (5 hours), AmeriCorps prohibited activities (1 hour), AmeriCorps members service agreements (1.5 hours), Resource management (1 hour), Module one of Peer mentor training (4 hours), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (1 hour), Suicide Prevention (1 hour), Traumatic Brain Injury (1 hour), and Military Sexual Trauma (1 hour), and Vet Corps 101 (1.5 hours). Vet Corps 101 was developed by a group of Vet Corps alumni and is specific to the day-to-day tasks of service as well as volunteer recruitment and management for service projects. Vet Corps members also attend training focused on veteran transition barriers. These trainers focus on both visible and invisible wounds in the context of college culture and also identify the appropriate resources to refer a veteran to.

### B. Budget Clarification

1. Clarification questions are answered within the budget section of e-Grants application.

### C. Performance Measure Clarification

1. State Board for Community and Technical College system wide data. Track referrals using unique identifiers associated with peer mentor interaction to give us unduplicated counts. By combining SBCTC and Vet Corps data, we will track unduplicated individual veterans using unique student identification numbers to track total number that are first referred then served on the college campus.
2. Combining America Learns MIS and WDVA programs, track unduplicated unique identifiers to ensure referrals and CNCS supported interactions lead to financial assistance and through continued interaction prevention of homelessness. Veterans will be referred by Vet Corps members to homeless prevention programs operated by the WDVA. WDVA staff will note that the referral came from a Vet Corps member. Staff will track each veteran and the type of financial assistance provided through this financial assistance program and report back to the Vet Corps Program manager the number of veterans served and the type of financial assistance provided. Financial assistance varies based on the needs of the veteran. It could be rental or mortgage assistance, or it could be funding to repair a vehicle so the veteran can go to classes, or it could be assistance with day care again allowing the veteran to go to classes.
3. Combining America Learns MIS and WDVA programs, we will track unduplicated unique identifiers to ensure referrals and CNCS supported interactions lead to financial assistance for food, utilities, transportation and other necessities. Existing WDVA financial assistance programs will be modified to track all referrals from Vet Corps members. This will allow reporting of actual financial

## Narratives

assistance received by individual veterans referred by Vet Corps Members. Verification of those receiving assistance will be done by combining the data sets from those served by Vet Corps and those that receive financial assistance leading to food, utilities, transportation or other necessities. This financial assistance may not be specific to homelessness, but could be other immediate and severe needs of veterans served by Vet Corps. WDVA Program staff will provide information on the number of unique veterans served and type of assistance received by veterans who are referred by Vet Corps members.

4. Both Outcome 18805 and 18810, will track those specifically referred to WDVA programs. WDVA as a state agency has internally a series of programs specific to providing assistance to veterans in need, assistance is financial loans, grants and awards. Ensuring the unique identification information is taken upon intake all veterans referred to specific programs will be further enrolled into WDVA programs, giving Vet Corps full access to information from intake to attainment of goal, without the Vet Corps member stepping into a role better served by professionally trained case managers and Veterans Benefit officers.

5. OUTPT18812 and OUTCM18813 have been deleted.

### D.Strategic Engagement Slots/

1. Vet Corps does place an emphasis on enrolling Vet Corps members that have used the services from the state and federal VA and have gone through the transition process within their respective communities. In Washington State, approximately 18% of all veterans are service connected disabled veterans. Since Vet Corps recruits 90% or more of its participants from the veteran population, our recruitments are always focused on persons with disabilities. We estimate that because Vet Corps members are often recently transitioned veterans, many with deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan, upwards of 40% of the Vet Corps members are service connected disabled veterans. Because such a large percentage of our population are veterans, often with disabilities, part of the Vet Corps training is focused on all members understanding their own signs and symptoms so they can access medical, mental health or other peer counseling services within WDVA or the Federal VA. Vet Corps places a high priority in training and one-on-one sessions in the members taking care of themselves, so that they have the capacity to provide mentoring, referrals and resources to veterans in their communities.

2. Vet Corps would not seek any more MSY allocations.

E.MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification:

## Narratives

1. There is no request for increased no-Cost MSY<sub>2</sub>s.

### Continuation Changes

N/A

### Grant Characteristics