

Narratives

Executive Summary

Through the Student Conservation Association New Hampshire Corps (SCA NH) 30 AmeriCorps members will provide conservation stewardship to public lands and environmental education to residents and visitors in New Hampshire. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for: 1) providing stewardship to over 65 miles and 35 acres of at-risk ecosystems within the state and 2) providing environmental education to over 2,000 people. AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 500 volunteers to engage in conservation stewardship to the lands of NH. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Environmental Stewardship. The CNCS investment of \$360,000 will be matched with \$398,845: \$286,085 in public funding and \$112,760 in private funding.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

a. Problem/Need: The Student Conservation Association New Hampshire Corps (SCA NH) will address conservation stewardship priorities identified by partners in order to improve, maintain, and protect the at-risk ecosystems and recreation areas in NH through the completion of conservation stewardship projects throughout the state. In addition, the program will address the need for environmental education services to NH youth and adults through providing in-classroom and outdoor based environmental focused education.

In 2010, President Obama started the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in order to connect Americans to the outdoors with jobs, education, recreation, and service [while] protecting and restoring treasured lands and waters (AGO Progress Report, 2012, p. 3). Through this initiative, priorities around job creation and getting young people outside have reinforced the need for conservation stewardship and environmental education across the nation. The New Hampshire Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2012) has identified four key priorities for their 5 year plan: Connecting People to the Outdoors, Consistent Stewardship and Conservation, Economic Vitality, and Education. (p.8) However, federal, state, and local funding has declined significantly in NH over recent years, continuing to limit opportunities for the state to address these priorities. According to the DPR Ten-Year Strategic Development and Capital Improvement Plan (2010), the self-funded structure of the state parks has made it difficult to accomplish many basic repair and maintenance tasks, and provide adequate staffing levels across all NH State Parks (p. 6). DPR concludes this has led to a decline in adequate stewardship and environmental education and emphasizes the need to enhance existing partnerships in order to address these needs in state parks

Narratives

and improve the state's degrading resources.

Other recreation and conservation leaders have also identified needs for conservation stewardship and environmental education service in NH. According to the NH Recreation and Conservation Leaders Survey (2011), the majority of respondents identified volunteerism, environmental education, and increased opportunities for youth to engage in the outdoors as medium or high priority planning areas for outdoor recreation and conservation (p. B-8). The survey results also indicated a need to address challenges related to funding, education, engaging volunteers, as well as initiating and completing stewardship on conservation lands throughout the state. A recent needs assessment completed by the Stewardship Network of New England (2013) of 479 NH residents, nonprofit organizations, conservation commissions, and land trusts identified the top five priorities as the following: building of trail structures, land management, invasive species removal, conservation of shoreline, and education/outreach. The above needs have been supported by SCA NH assessments during annual partner meetings.

Without AmeriCorps funding, the need for environmental education would likely remain unaddressed within the state, reducing the ability for public schools and state conservation organizations to address social conditions related to environmental protection and awareness. Addressing of critical conservation projects would continue to be limited due to reductions in funding allocation and human resources, contributing to reduced service to the state's fragile resources that would otherwise be left to degrade.

b. Theory of change: The SCA NH Corps uses a residential corps program model to facilitate community interventions to increase knowledge in environmental education as well as complete conservation stewardship to public lands to improve and protect NH's natural resources. The 10-month program model is comprised of 30 corps members (all full-time, 1,700 hour positions) living and serving out of Bear Brook State Park in Allenstown, NH. The 30 members will be selected based on their skills and experience related to one of three member positions: 1) Interpretive Ranger (8 positions total); 2) Conservation Stewardship (18 positions total); 3) Manchester Conservation Leadership Corps (CLC) Leader (4 positions total).

Environmental Education Interventions Theory of Change: SCA NH members will engage over 6,500 youth and adults in formal environmental education programs (PM EN3) in order to increase their knowledge of and interest in environmental stewardship and environmentally conscious practices: connect residents and visitors with the outdoors: and foster an ethic of earth stewardship. Specifically, from February to May members will facilitate environmental education workshops, classroom based

Narratives

instruction, and field trips for nearly 1,200 elementary school students to engage them in indoor and outdoor settings where they learn hands on about environmental stewardship topics relevant to NH. From March to October Interpretive Rangers will be placed in NH State Parks, providing formal and informal programs to park visitors (5x per week) as part of the Discover the Power of Parks (DPP) program. DPP is a statewide initiative to expand nature-based educational opportunities within parks to increase understanding of natural resources as well as enhance park visitor experiences. From March to October Manchester CLC Leaders (4 total) will provide environmental education by facilitating weekly (1x per week) education activities and Saturday events (2x per month) for high school students to engage students in educational sessions focused on conservation, leadership, service, stewardship, and green jobs.

Conservation Stewardship Interventions Theory of Change: The completion of environmental stewardship projects on public lands will result in the protection of natural and recreational resources thus ensuring a sustainable long term presence of these resources for the benefit of the community. From May to October Conservation Stewardship members and Manchester CLC Leaders will complete a total of 32 field based conservation stewardship projects. The Conservation Stewardship members will serve on 5-6 member crews for 11 days at a time to complete high priority land management needs for projects partners. The Manchester CLC Leaders will lead crews of 6 high school students on four 14-day projects between July and early-August. Based on the needs identified by partners, conservation stewardship projects will include interventions focused on erosion control, trail maintenance, invasive species removal, building restoration, stonework, and habitat restoration. Techniques utilized in the field will be based on Best Management Practices (BMPs) identified by partner agencies and tailored to the specific needs of the project. As a result of the hands-on structure and intensity of the project format, the Conservation Stewardship members and Manchester CLC Leaders will treat 35 acres of at-risk public land (PM EN4) and 65 miles of trail (PM EN5). Through these projects both the AmeriCorps members and the Manchester CLC High School students will develop leadership, technical, and social skills providing them with essential skills for successful future employment.

SCA NH members will plan and facilitate at least 8 volunteer service projects that introduce volunteers to natural resource management, trail repair and maintenance, habitat restoration, and general conservation stewardship efforts. By combining environmental education and service learning interventions, members aim to increase volunteer knowledge and understanding of conservation issues, while also building the volunteer ethic among NH residents and visitors.

Narratives

The outcome of the program interventions are to increase environmental knowledge and develop understanding of and ethic for environmental stewardship among NH youth and adults as well as improve and protect the state's natural resources. Through providing distinct opportunities for youth and adults to improve community resources by engaging in environmental educational experiences and conservation stewardship projects within their community the program will foster lifelong active participation in environmental stewardship and environmental conscious practices. The 30 SCA NH members, Manchester CLC high school students, and 500 youth and adult volunteers will provide over 50,000 hours of service per year to the lands and people of NH. They will address conservation stewardship priorities identified by partners in order to improve, maintain, and protect the at-risk ecosystems and recreation areas as well as address the need for environmental education services to NH youth and adults. The proposed interventions will enhance existing but under supported environmental education and conservation stewardship efforts and priorities within the state of NH such as the DPP program, school based environmental education, and conservation stewardship projects completed by state organizations and trail clubs. The program will develop and implement the interventions through utilizing successful environmental education and stewardship techniques tested over the 20 year history of the SCA NH program as well as incorporating proven BMP techniques developed by state and national conservation stewardship experts and environmental education approaches developed by industry leading professionals such as Antioch New England Institute, the National Association for Interpretation, and the Project Wet and Project Wild Foundations.

c. Evidence-Base: Environmental Education - The SCA NH AmeriCorps program model is based on the premise that to create the next generation of conservation leaders we need to provide both in-class, indirect, environmental education as well as out- of-class, direct, learning experiences. While this model has been based on our 20 years of experience running the Corps, a 2010 research study by Mat D. Duerden and Peter A. Witt of Texas A&M University supports this approach. This study employed a mixed-methods, quasi experimental design to examine the relationship between nature experience type (e.g., direct and indirect) and learning outcomes (e.g., environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behavior) associated with an environmental education, international immersion program for adolescents. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. Longitudinal data from 108 participant and 49 comparison group members were analyzed to test the study's hypotheses. This study places the level of evidence for the SCA NH Corps Environmental Education component of the program at the Moderate level because this study employed a quasi-experimental design on a similar program that uses a comparable intervention with positive findings on one or more intended outcome.

Narratives

The study found that indirect environmental education is a greater indicator of environmental knowledge (in-class education generated greater results cognitively than out-of class education) but that direct experience with nature is the catalyst needed to affect attitudes and behavior. It was further suggested that having opportunities to freely explore nature, as opposed to a very structured and/or guided experience, further increases the efficacy of the experiential learning process. The study results suggest that practitioners can influence environmental behavior through environmental knowledge and environmental attitude development and the direct and indirect experiences can both be structured to facilitate the connection of these constructs to environmental behavior. SCA NH Corps effectively incorporates this dual approach in both our CLC program and our environmental education programming. Indirect program interventions that develop a baseline of environmental knowledge include classroom based lessons for elementary students utilizing NH State Curriculum Framework Standards; weekly educational trainings for high school students through the CLC program; and structured education workshops conducted through the Discover the Power of Parks Program. Direct program interventions that immerse participants in the natural world and contribute to a connection to the outdoors include elementary school field trips; interpretive nature walks, hikes, and snowshoe trips; service learning projects; and field based environmental education workshops. Citation: Duerden, M., and P Witt. "The impact of direct and indirect experiences on the development of environmental knowledge, attitudes and behavior", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Edition 4, Volume 30, Issue 4, Pages 379-392, 2010.

Conservation Stewardship Evidence supports the efficacy of the use of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) employed by SCA as a foundation for the SCA NH conservation stewardship interventions. BMP's offer project-specific approaches developed through partnerships with land owners, field professionals, and conservation organizations in order to provide the most comprehensive and effective outcomes in addressing stewardship priorities. While these techniques often vary among conservation organizations, SCA NH will utilize the standards and practices tested and published by professional groups such as the US Forest Service (USFS) (Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook, 2007) and the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (Best Management Practices for Erosion Control During Trail Maintenance and Construction, 1994). Both of these documents utilize best practices researched and developed by the US Forest Service's Technology and Development Centers in Missoula Montana and San Dimas California. In addition, the SCA's Lightly on the Land (2006) workbook is highly regarded, peer reviewed resource in the conservation field as a best practice approach to trail design and maintenance- used by leading

Narratives

conservation organizations as well as the USFS and US National Park Service. Post intervention surveys received from SCA NH Corps program partners support the effectiveness of the conservation stewardship interventions. As reported in the SCA NH Corps 2014 Final Progress Report- 100% of our program partners stated in post project evaluations that the interventions conducted by the program were effective and resulted in the improved protection and quality of the resources where the interventions were implemented. The data gathered from conservation professionals places the level of evidence for the SCA NH Corps conservation stewardship interventions outcomes at the Pre-Preliminary Evidence level.

Medium and Long Term Outcomes - SCA has collaborated with the Search Institute of Minneapolis on a qualitative study that identified the intermediate outcomes that SCA programs currently produce in Youth and Young Adult programs (Terri Sullivan Ed.D. 2013). The data for the study was concluded from field observations with 8 SCA crews and corps; 11 focus groups with SCA crew and corps members, interns, and alumni; and 22 interviews with interns, crew and corps leaders, and SCA headquarters staff. The Search Institute articulated these findings in an emerging Theory of Change, which draws from past research to link the intermediate outcomes identified by the study with long-term impact in the lives of SCA program participants. The emerging Theory of Change developed by the Search Institute was adapted in parts from its original version and adopted by SCA as the guiding framework for SCA's education and evaluation methods. Based on the Theory of Change the continuum of conservation leadership by SCA programs includes: 1) understanding conservation basics, 2) developing a connection/commitment to the environment, 3) awareness of and interest in conservation careers, and 4) conservation career exploration (Sullivan, 2013). The SCA NH Corps program model emphasizes key program components necessary in the development of leadership skills and commitment to environmental stewardship, including experiential learning opportunities, a support network of mentors, and opportunities to address challenges within a community setting. This study places the level of evidence for the SCA NH Corps medium and long term outcomes at the Preliminary Evidence level. This study provides confidence that over the long-term, SCA programming produces sustained change in the condition of participants, with conservation stewardship and leadership intersecting as members act as conservation leaders and conservation stewards.

d. Notice Priority: Our proposed program fits within the AmeriCorps funding priority of environment-21st Century Service Corps. SCA is a certified 21st Century Service Corps provider. Our program will address all three of the 21CSC goals:

Narratives

Put Americans to work: Our project will provide AmeriCorps members with service, training, and education opportunities that will enhance their employability. Throughout the program year, SCA NH AmeriCorps members will gain on-the-job experience in environmental education, and conservation stewardship. The SCA AmeriCorps members will work alongside conservation and education professionals full-time for a period of 10 months, gaining practical and professional experience to further their careers. Preserve, protect, and promote America's greatest gifts: The proposed project will result in the protection, restoration and enhancement of public lands and cultural resources throughout the state of New Hampshire. Members will accomplish this by partnering with local agencies including NH Parks, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, and the White Mountain National Forest to develop and implement public education and outreach strategies, and address high priority conservation stewardship projects. Build America's future: SCA is dedicated to the conservation of America's natural resources and the personal development of its youth. SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land. SCA's goals are to offer educational opportunities for volunteers to pursue career and personal goals through public service; to assist in the accomplishment of important conservation tasks through volunteer involvement; to provide career development and leadership training for youth from all socioeconomic backgrounds; and to foster commitments to diversity and volunteerism.

e. Member Training: Members will participate in an extensive training prior to engaging in their service activities. All members will receive program orientation to prepare them to complete their service activities during the year, promote consistency in curriculum delivery, instill a spirit of service and connection to the national AmeriCorps service movement, and encourage them to be engaged, active citizens throughout their lives. Orientation will be conducted during the first week of each member's term of service and will include an introduction to SCA, AmeriCorps, Volunteer New Hampshire, and other program partners. Additional topics include group facilitation, communication, conflict resolution, sexual harassment, leadership skills, an overview of their scope of service, and awareness and understanding of prohibited activities. These topics will be reinforced during weekly community meetings throughout the year. SCA NH staff will consistently reinforce expectations through site observations to ensure compliance and adherence to the prohibited activities. Members will receive training specific to the focus of their service. Experts in the fields of environmental education and conservation stewardship will facilitate training sessions. All 30 members will complete a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification to develop their capacity to assist each other in

Narratives

emergency situations and play a significant role in disaster relief. All 30 members will complete 2 weeks of environmental education training. Topics will include: environmental education best practices, service learning strategies, child and youth development, teaching strategies and techniques, diversity in education, and curriculum planning. Members serving as Interpretive Rangers will complete the Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) training through the National Association for Interpretation. Conservation Stewardship and Manchester CLC members will learn camping skills, crew leadership, trail stewardship, habitat restoration, basic carpentry, and chainsaw use certification. Members will complete training evaluations having the opportunity to provide feedback on content, trainer quality, relevance to their service, and overall effectiveness. Staff will evaluate the results and use the information for future training improvements and will share the results of the evaluations with members through debrief sessions. Members will have opportunities throughout the program to suggest additional trainings. Staff will evaluate the requests for feasibility and schedule trainings when possible.

f. Member Supervision: As a residential program, member supervision will be consistently provided by the five full-time experienced program staff. Staff will provide high quality supervision and member support through the facilitation of weekly program meetings, conducting program site visits and scheduling weekly check-ins with members and service partners. The Education Coordinator will supervise the 8 Interpretive Rangers, the Manchester CLC Program Coordinator will supervise the 4 Manchester CLC Leaders, and the Conservation Coordinator will supervise the 18 Conservation Stewardship members. In addition, 1-2 seasonal staff will be hired as Field Crew Supervisors from late-April through October in order to provide additional supervision to the Conservation Stewardship members. The Program Coordinator and the Program Director provide additional oversight for members. The Program Director will be able to effectively train and support the program coordinators to provide direct supervision to members. Specifically, the Program Director will provide training in member support, program priorities and expectations, prohibited activities and program regulations, scope of service, member disciplinary actions, and mentoring. Trainings will take place during a 3 day Staff Summit prior to the start of the program year, and over the course of the program.

g. Member Experience: The residential setting, the intensity of the work involved (including the specific skills trained for and direct application of skills through services provided) and the full-time, 10 month duration of the SCA NH program year all combine to provide a unique and effective means for members to gain skills and experience highly valued and needed in the conservation and

Narratives

environmental education fields. Member feedback from previous years has consistently shown that members have found the communal living aspect of the residential Corps model to be one of the most life changing aspects of the program. By living in close quarters, in a rustic and somewhat challenging environment, they quickly learn the importance of team work, communication, and supporting one another. Consultation with our program partners and other professionals in the field will guide development of trainings and selection of service activities to best prepare members for future employment. SCA staff will lead structured reflection activities, such as weekly member led community meetings, journal entries and group games with members throughout the program year. Activities will focus on providing opportunity for members to reflect upon the impacts of their service. Instilling a spirit of service and AmeriCorps identity will begin during the recruitment process and continue through all orientation, training and service activities, including participation in National Day of Service events. Members will learn to see themselves as SCA AmeriCorps members and refer to themselves as such to partners and community members. Specifically, members will be trained during orientation and professional development sessions to present an AmeriCorps elevator pitch to project partners and community members while in the field. SCA NH members will serve as part of one of four leadership teams. Leadership Teams will provide members with the opportunity to be engaged in the local communities around the state, coordinating service and volunteer events, and being active citizens in their service community. As part of New Hampshire's state Service Alliance, SCA NH staff and members will work with other AmeriCorps programs in the state to coordinate cross-corps trainings, service events, and gatherings. SCA NH will continue to collaborate with other Corporation-supported programs, such as City Year and VISTA to create service projects that encourage personal and professional networking among the programs and help members understand the broader reach of AmeriCorps and the national movement of which they are a critical part. Cumulatively, these experiences serve as a consistent method of effectively instilling an ethic of service and civic engagement, as demonstrated by the further education, experiences, and careers that past members have engaged in after their service. Member feedback has also shown that the 10 month program duration gave them the time they needed to fine tune and incorporate the skills they gained throughout the process. SCA NH will recruit locally and nationally through position announcements posted on national websites focused on national service and conservation work, announced through social media in an effort to attract applicants from a culturally, economically, educationally, and geographically diverse pool. SCA will recruit at local events and position announcements will be posted around New Hampshire in an effort to include applicants from the communities served.

Narratives

h. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification: Building the members' AmeriCorps identity will begin during member orientation and continue through ongoing activities. Members and staff will demonstrate the program's AmeriCorps identity through the consistent and wide-spread use of the AmeriCorps name and logo on service clothing (worn daily in the field), signage, recruitment and training materials, press releases, program calendars, and the SCA website. SCA NH staff will ensure the display of the AmeriCorps logo on uniforms and printed materials through ongoing site visits and observations in the field. Members will consistently introduce themselves as AmeriCorps members during all service activities. The AmeriCorps identity will be promoted with partners and the public through an overview of AmeriCorps and the national service movement during partner orientations and before volunteer events to reinforce the commitment to the AmeriCorps identity. SCA NH Corps is changing its name in 2015 to the SCA NH AmeriCorps Program to increase the program's AmeriCorps identity.

Organizational Capability

a. Organizational Background and Staffing: Founded in 1957, SCA has been facilitating conservation service learning to youth across the nation for 57 years. 4,000 SCA members provide nearly two million hours of service annually in all 50 states. Over 70,000 alumni continue to practice the ethics and values cultivated over their time with SCA. This experience has given SCA the skills and organizational capability to facilitate the proposed program.

In 2014, SCA NH celebrated its 20th year of AmeriCorps programming, having managed over 600 members serving over one million hours since 1994. During these years, SCA has proven its organizational ability to successfully administer AmeriCorps grants, developing tools to effectively monitor grant-related programmatic and financial systems. These systems are continually evaluated for effectiveness and improvements are made based on internal evaluations and new AmeriCorps regulations. SCA is governed by a 30-member Board of Directors, which operates under a committee structure. SCA's Controller guarantees timely and accurate financial reports for the AmeriCorps programs. SCA's Risk Management Department ensures that the safety of staff and volunteers is a top priority. SCA's Education, Training, and Evaluation Department provides resources and support for facilitating staff and member trainings and assessing outcomes. National-level staff and administrative departments provide services and direct support to SCA NH staff and members throughout the program year. SCA utilizes a rigorous staff recruiting and placement process to assure all program staff are experienced and qualified for the positions in which they serve. Position Descriptions are reviewed annually to assure they meet the needs and requirements of the positions.

Narratives

SCA NH staff must meet or exceed the experience level requirements outlined in the Position Descriptions to be eligible for employment.

Through SCA NH's 20 year history the program has engaged community stakeholders in planning and implementing its interventions through holding annual planning meetings, utilizing partner evaluations and assessments of the program, and frequent communication with organizational staff and community members. SCA NH has worked closely with partners such as NH DPR, The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, White Mountain National Forest, NH Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, Volunteer New Hampshire, The Stewardship Network New England and various user groups and trail clubs to identify needs and develop the intervention plans to address the states conservation stewardship and environmental education priorities as outlined in this proposal.

b. Compliance and Accountability: The Program Director will utilize SCA's AmeriCorps Policy and Procedures Manual, the AmeriCorps State and National Grant Provisions, and other CNCS documents as a critical tools to assure programmatic and financial systems compliance. Program staff will oversee service site compliance, assist in the careful development and review of position descriptions and monitor policy compliance through structured site visits and regular phone support for members and service partners. All service sites and projects will be selected based on demonstrated need, compliance with AmeriCorps guidelines, project appropriateness for member development, financial ability, and program mission. All service partners will sign a service agreement that outlines their programmatic and fiscal responsibilities, prohibited activities, member scope of service, and project details. The program will ensure that members do not violate non-duplication, non-displacement, and non-supplemental requirements and other prohibited activities by openly discussing these issues with service partners and other community stakeholders during the agreements process. If risk of noncompliance is determined to be high, members will not serve at a site. If noncompliance is identified, SCA will determine the cause and communicate with the state commission, and work quickly to assure compliance through corrective actions or removal of a member or team from a service site.

c. Past Performance for Current Grantees: During the 2012-2014 program years, SCA NH achieved program outputs for environmental education service, reaching an average of 1,100 students per year. SCA NH fell short of the projected conservation stewardship outputs of 20 acres and 62 miles improved, having met an average of 17 acres and 56 miles each program year for 2012 and 2013 due to changing priorities identified by conservation project partners. Through communication and a

Narratives

revised strategic plan with conservation partners the program successfully met program conservation stewardship outputs in 2014. The program will utilize this plan to assure it will achieve the conservation stewardship outputs outlined in this proposal. Over the three years SCA NH met its conservation stewardship outcomes. In 2012 and 2013 SCA NH met or exceeded its environmental education outcomes, however in 2014 changes in evaluation and reporting techniques led to the program falling short of its outcome goal of 800 students (achieving 603). SCA NH will be making changes to its education programming and has set appropriate program output and outcome performance goals and is creating service plans and evaluation tools to assure the program will achieve these measures. Programmatic changes include increasing the number of non-classroom based education experiences to better meet the demonstrated needs of our partners and stakeholders. Additionally the program will expand its education programming locations beyond the Manchester area to include areas of the state the program has not traditionally served. Over the last full program year, SCA NH continued the multi-year trend of 100% enrollment, and had a retention rate of 100%. No compliance issues or areas of risk were identified during the past year.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

SCA NH is applying for a fixed grant, to support members serving for 10 months in a full-time capacity. The proposed CNCS cost per MSY is \$12,000, covering 47% of the cash budget. SCA NH is seeking less than the maximum cost per MSY, reducing the previous request by \$1000 per MSY. The program budget will leverage the CNCS contribution of \$360,000, bringing \$398,845 cash match from mixed public and private sources. Additional in-kind contribution will also play an important role in the program budget. The total cash budget of \$758,845 effectively and efficiently covers the costs of a high-quality program designed for 30 AmeriCorps members who will serve over 51,000 hours of service each program year.

SCA has full confidence in the program budget. This budget has been prepared in collaboration with SCA program staff in a process that included review and approval by SCA's National Director for Young Adult Program and SCA's Chief Financial Officer. Additionally the basis for this budget has been refined over the past 20 years to be the most cost-effective in an effort to maintain long-term program sustainability, achieve member outcomes, and address community needs related to program interventions. The diversified funding base has made it possible to maintain continuity over the years, despite the rising costs of program implementation. The residential nature of the program offers additional efficiencies related to the member cost of living and represents a significant cost savings compared to alternative models that are not residential. SCA NH significantly benefits from the

Narratives

resources of SCA's full-time development staff that provide expertise and support to ensure that the SCA AmeriCorps programs are fiscally sustainable by identifying and soliciting philanthropic funding from private foundations and individual donors from across the country. This ensures the stability of the organization as a whole, guarantees support to SCA NH, and leverages funding from CNCS. The budget provides for a complete orientation to adequately prepare members for their term of service, including high-quality member training curriculum, instructional delivery, technical assistance, data collection, and reporting for program outputs and outcomes. Additional costs include advance screening, criminal history checks, staff salaries, benefits, staff travel, staff training and professional development, risk management, communications, technology, office supplies, program vehicles, tools, service clothing and facilities. SCA has secured a portion of the resources needed beyond the fixed grant amount to manage the program effectively and will secure the remainder over the course of the coming year. NH State Parks has expressed its commitment to continuing the 20-year partnership in 2015 and beyond. Its in-kind donation of the program facilities will continue through the term of this grant. The remaining funding will come from fee-for-service partners. Fee-for-service partnerships will be developed through efforts made by the Program Director and include the US Forest Service, National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire's Forests. Philanthropic funding, including individual, corporate, and foundation giving, will be raised through the SCA Advancement department in collaboration with SCA NH program staff.

Evaluation Summary or Plan

The Student Conservation Association New Hampshire Corps (SCA NH) will utilize 30-FT AmeriCorps members to address conservation stewardship priorities identified by the state of New Hampshire (NH) in order to improve, maintain, and protect the ecosystems and recreation areas through the completion of conservation stewardship projects.

Purpose and scope of current evaluation: Prior evaluation efforts have focused on member outcomes, which are critical to SCA's mission to build the next generation of conservation leaders. While the need to assess participant impacts remains important, there is a growing need to demonstrate impact on community and ecosystems. Public Lands Service Coalition (PLSC) conservation corps organizations, including SCA, will partner with researchers at Brigham Young University (BYU) and North Carolina State University (NCSU) on an evaluation that targets the impact of conservation service on communities and ecosystems.

Statement of problem: Reduced funding and resources for state, local and non-profit conservation

Narratives

organizations in NH has led to a diminished ability to address conservation stewardship projects and environmental education initiatives that would improve and protect natural resources and increase the environmental knowledge of the state's youth and adults.

Theory of change: The completion of environmental stewardship projects on public lands will result in the protection of natural and recreational resources thus ensuring a sustainable long term presence of these resources for the benefit of the community.

Research supporting the program's theory of change: While there are no long term studies of the efficacy of this Theory of Change, SCA NH will utilize the standards and practices tested and published by professional groups such as the US Forest Service and the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development.

Summary of Previous Evaluations: Previous evaluations have produced evidence in support of the efficacy of the program experience for participants. Recent evaluations of member outcomes include: Evaluation of SCA Member Outcomes: SCA conducts ongoing internal evaluations of SCA member outcomes. The purpose of this evaluation is an in-depth examination of progress toward the member outcomes using a pre and post self-assessment as well as follow-up assessments at 6 months, 2 years, and 5 years.

Partnership with Search Institute: SCA partnered with Search Institute to better understand the impact of the SCA experience on our youth and build programming in ways that produce the most powerful, lasting outcomes. In year one Search completed a qualitative study of SCA programs, which identified outcomes SCA programs naturally produce, and opportunities to build on program strengths to deepen and expand impact. In the second year SCA designed and tested strategies to build the capacity of programs to consistently deliver inputs that past research associates with SCA's priority outcomes. In the next phase Search will research and test a pre-/post-intervention survey that measures SCA's priority outcomes with greater validity and can be used for a future national impact study.

Evaluation of Conservation Corps Participant Outcomes: SCA recently completed a multi-year evaluation by researchers at BYU and NCSU. The purpose of the evaluation was to build upon PLSC evaluation efforts by assessing the impact of the corps experience on participants in terms of targeted outcomes (e.g. civic engagement, leadership, etc.), their intentions to pursue additional education, and confidence to obtain employment. Statistically significant increases were observed across all outcome measures in contrast to the general population comparison group.

Program design and logic model: From May to Oct. SCA NH members will complete 32 conservation

Narratives

stewardship projects. The SCA members will serve on 5-8 member crews to address high priority projects for program partners. Interventions will include erosion control, trail maintenance, invasive species removal, and building and habitat restoration. Techniques utilized will be based on best management practices identified by partner agencies and tailored to the specific needs of the project. SCA NH members will treat 35 acres of public land (PM EN4) and 65 miles of trail (PM EN5). Through these projects the SCA NH members will develop leadership, technical, and social skills providing them with essential tools for successful future employment.

Evaluation focus: The evaluation will focus on the conservation service outcomes on communities and the environment. Questions remain regarding how the work performed by the Conservation Corps impacts communities and ecosystems. A community impact literature summary, completed by researchers at BYU and NCSU and commissioned by Conservation Legacy, addresses approaches to answering this question across a variety of domains (e.g., health, social, economic, and environment) and provides a foundation for moving forward with this type of evaluation.

Research questions: The evaluation will address the following questions: In which ways do conservation service activities impact ecosystems and communities? What is a sustainable framework of metrics and indicators that conservation corps programs can use to measure the impact of conservation service on ecosystems and communities?

Proposed evaluation design: PLSC conservation corps organizations, including SCA, will partner with researchers at BYU and NCSU on an evaluation that targets the impact of conservation service on communities and ecosystems. The design chosen for this study will be an impact evaluation. The program will work with partners to identify sites where environmental degradation has occurred (for example, proliferation of invasive species, erosion). Because there are many more sites with a need for the conservation service work that the conservation corps program provides, there will be both treatment and control sites. For both groups of sites, conservation professionals will complete a post-assessment that measures the impact of the service on ecosystem and/or community. A strong impact evaluation design that uses control sites means that any improvement to the ecosystem of treatment sites can be attributed to the program's conservation work.

The description above is the preliminary plan. Designing and implementing an impact study of the service on ecosystems and communities is a complex process that will take nine months to prepare and plan. The specific details of the design will be developed during the planning process that is currently underway and will take place through May, 2015. During the first year of the collaboration, researchers and PLSC corps will develop an evaluation plan, and reach agreement on critical/priority

Narratives

outcome metrics that would be used for ongoing evaluation and surveillance related to the impacts of corps service activities. While the ultimate goal of this project is to develop a valid framework to measure the impact of conservation service, the priority of the evaluation plan will be to identify existing metrics and indicators that may be developed and monitored using less resource-intensive approaches.

Primary performance measures that will guide the evaluation plan will be taken from the National Performance Measures Instructions (Environmental Stewardship Focus Area) EN4 Number of acres of national parks, state parks, city parks, county parks, or other public and tribal lands that are improved. EN5 Number of miles of trails or waterways (owned/maintained by national, state, county, city or tribal governments) improved, and/or created.

Relevant outcome measures will be developed in collaboration with PLSC organizations and based on land management plans and objectives identified by their agency partners and existing logic models for programs and projects.

Principle Investigators: Mat Duerden received a Ph.D. in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences from Texas A&M University and a M.S. in Youth and Family Recreation from BYU. He is an Assistant Professor of Recreation Management at BYU. Prior to his appointment at BYU Mat served as Coordinator of A&M's Youth Development Initiative. His research focuses on experience management and youth development with specific interests in program evaluation and outdoor recreation.

Michael Edwards received a Ph.D. in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management from North Carolina State University. He is Assistant Professor in the Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Management at North Carolina State University. Dr. Edwards's research is guided by an idea that developing and managing socially responsible sport and recreational facilities, programs, services, and events will encourage more active lifestyles, reduce health disparities, and provide the tools for sustainable community development.

Timeline: Phase 1 Sept. 2014-Jan. 2015: Collect current output measures and aggregated data reports. Collect information about project partners and current data collection processes from project partners. Discuss potential measures of impacts per data from partners, literature summary, and collaborators. Phase 2 Jan.- 2015 -May 2015 Develop an outcome measurement plan that incorporates relevant data collection methods (e.g., surveys, stakeholder interviews, GIS, monitoring, or visualization). Solicit feedback from partners and stakeholders related to the validity and feasibility of evaluation plan. After the completion of Phase 2, PLSC partner organizations together with the evaluators will

Narratives

develop the final evaluation plan for a study to begin in 2016.

Budget: After the 2014-2015 planning process is complete, a full budget for the study will be created. SCA estimates that its share will be in the \$30,000-50,000 range. This cost will be shared across SCA programs. In anticipation for the next phase, SCA NH is budgeting \$6,000.00 for the evaluation plan.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

A. Programmatic clarification items:

1. High school students are engaged in the program through participation in the Manchester Conservation Leadership Corps (CLC) Program. Four members of the SCA NH program are dedicated as Manchester CLC Leaders for the duration of their position with SCA NH. During the winter months SCA Manchester CLC Leaders attend high school job fairs in an effort to introduce students to SCA and AmeriCorps and invite them to attend weekly education meetings and upcoming service events. During this time SCA Manchester CLC Leaders also visit Manchester's high school classrooms, auditoriums, cafeterias, and career centers with recruitment materials and programming in an effort to engage the students in the program's learning and service events. Youth are engaged through the program's partnership with the Manchester, Hooksett, and Allenstown school district. SCA NH staff work closely with school partners to select the appropriate classes for participation in the SCA education programming. Students from these classrooms are invited to participate in service learning projects, after school programs, and field trips that focus on the SCA NH corps performance measure interventions. Participation in the program interventions is open to all interested students of New Hampshire high schools, with a specific focus on students in the Manchester, Hooksett, and Allenstown school districts.

B. Budget Clarification

1. SCA NH has reduced its request from \$12,300 per MSY to \$12,000 per MSY as outlined in the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy section of the narrative. The Executive Summary has been updated to reflect the new budget.

C. Performance Measure Clarification

1. The program stated 2000 individuals as the intervention outcome based on the number of in-class participants, who the program could practically administer pre and post tests to and a smaller number of participants who would complete only a post intervention test. The program has lowered the

Narratives

outcome number to 1500 to reflect only those participants who demonstrate increased knowledge through completion of pre and post-tests. All changes have been updated in the Performance Measure screens in eGrants.

2. The program has reduced the outcome from 2000 individuals to 1500 individuals to reflect only participants who will demonstrate increased knowledge through completion of pre and post-tests. All changes have been updated in the Performance Measure screens in eGrants.

3. The program is reducing its output measure from 6000 to 2000 participants to reflect only those participants whom the program can practically administer pre and post-tests. The original number of 6000 included participants in single day open education programs where pre and post testing was not feasible due to the less formalized structure of the trainings, program partner preferences, and reduced likelihood of participants completing formal pre-post-tests. All changes have been updated in the Performance Measure screens in eGrants.

D. Strategic Engagement Slots

1. SCA NH will target 10% of our slots to recruiting members with disabilities. SCA's Equal Opportunity Employer Recruitment and Inclusion Policy and Procedure states that SCA's AmeriCorps programs are committed to recruiting diverse and qualified program participants. It is the strong belief of SCA that equal opportunity for all members is central to its continuing success and that all qualified individuals have equal opportunity to apply for and serve in SCA AmeriCorps positions. SCA's AmeriCorps programs do not discriminate against a member because of race, religious creed, religion, color, sex, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, age, physical disability, mental disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity characteristics or their expression in selections, terminations and/or recommendations. SCA AmeriCorps programs prohibit any form of discrimination against persons with disabilities in recruitment, as well as in service, and comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the program, services, or activities of the program, or be subjected to discrimination by the program. Nor shall the program exclude or otherwise deny equal services, programs or activities to an individual because of the known disability of an individual with whom the individual is known to have a relationship or association. SCA AmeriCorps programs make reasonable accommodations in policies, practices, or procedures when the accommodations are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity, and/or impose an undue

Narratives

hardship. Reasonable accommodations may include: making facilities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities; job restructuring; part-time or modified schedules; acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, training materials, or policies; etc. In order to ensure diversity of members, SCA AmeriCorps recruiters attend a broad range of college fairs and conferences, networking with college personnel and presenting information about SCA programs directly to students in class presentations. SCA AmeriCorps positions are posted on the SCA and AmeriCorps recruiting websites for web-based searchable database. Recruitment materials will be placed at Centers for Independent Living. All recruiting materials and postings include SCA's EOE non-discrimination statement and availability of reasonable accommodation for interview and service position.

Members may request reasonable accommodations for interviews or service activities by submitting a request for reasonable accommodation to the program director.

2. N/A SCA is not requesting additional MSY

E. MSY with No Program Funds Attached Clarification:

1. N/A SCA is not requesting additional MSY

2. N/A SCA is not requesting additional MSY

3. N/A SCA is not requesting additional MSY

4. N/A SCA is not requesting additional MSY

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics